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Sanctification

BY THE
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PREFACE.

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THE following pages contain the substance of some Sermons preached in the course of my parochial ministry, on the subject of Sanctification, and are published at the request of several members of my congregation.

They contain nothing new, and, being parochial sermons, they are not in the form of a systematic treatise. But I hope they exhibit the doctrine of Sanctification as revealed in Scripture, as embodied in the teaching of the Church of England, and as preached by those who are generally termed the Evangelical Clergy.

They are not so much controversial as practical. My desire has not been to discuss new opinions, but to bring out old truths. I shall be truly thankful if this shall prove to have been done; and I commit them to God, with the earnest prayer that He may make them useful, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to those who long for the fulfilment of the prayer of their most blessed Saviour, — 'Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy Word is truth.'

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E. H.

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SEPARATION UNTO GOD.

p. 1

'Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ; Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.'—1 PET. i. 2.

It is one of the encouraging features of the present day that many of the Lord's people are aiming at a higher standard of Christian holiness than they have ever yet known, and are looking to the great grace of their most blessed Saviour to raise them by His Spirit above the various hindrances which have hitherto impeded their progress. They desire that there should be no impediment in the service of their blessed Saviour. In their worship they would draw very near to Him, and in their life they would glorify His name. But yet, when they seek to do so, and when they fairly look at God's character, God's claims, God's will, and God's glory, they find reason to be humbled to the dust; and the more they realize His infinite mercy in Christ Jesus, the more they learn of the magnitude and multitude of their own shortcomings. Thus it sometimes comes to pass that in many true believers their greatest discouragements are intimately connected with their efforts after holiness, and many of their doubts and difficulties arise from their real desire for true sanctification. The more that they aim at the holiness of God, the more they feel their sin, and the more earnestly that they strive to rise, the more keenly do they feel the pain and humiliation of the ruin of their fallen nature. It is important therefore for those who desire holiness to look carefully into the teaching of Scripture on the great subject of Sanctification; to examine what is really promised, and to learn what the Word of God teaches us to expect. Does it, or does it not, make provision for such difficulties? And if it does, what is the provision? These are some of the questions which I desire now to consider, and I hope it may please God to fulfil to both writer and reader the prayer of the Apostle: 'The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

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Now one of the great difficulties of the subject is, that in all languages certain words are employed to express more than one idea, and that the idea connected with the word often changes as time advances. To a certain extent this applies to the word 'sanctification' in sacred Scripture. It has no less than four distinct meanings in the Word of God; and, if we treat them all as if they were the same, we are sure to be confused. It has its original sense, and three others that have grown out of it. The original sense is separation unto God, or dedication; and the three that have grown out of it are legal cleansing, personal holiness, and the exaltation of the holiness of God. If therefore we wish to understand the teaching of Scripture, we must clearly examine the use of the word in these four senses. May the Lord Himself help us to do so!

If we turn then to the beginning, we shall find that the original sense of the word 'to sanctify' is to set apart unto God.

So in the Old Testament the Hebrew is frequently rendered 'to hallow,' or to set apart as a holy thing.

In this sense it is used of the Sabbath (Gen. ii. 3): 'God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.' He separated it from the ordinary purposes of common life, and set it apart as a day peculiar to Himself. So again the first-born were set apart unto God, and therefore said to be sanctified; as we read, Exod. xiii. 2: 'Sanctify unto Me all the first-born—both of man and of beast: it is mine.' So of the Temple, God said (2 Chron. vii. 16), 'I have chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever.' The same is said of the priests, the vessels of the sanctuary, and the lamb taken from the flock for sacrifice: they were all separated unto God, and thus said to be sanctified. It is in this sense that our blessed Saviour made use of the word, when He said in John, xvii. 19, 'For their sakes I sanctify myself.' No one can suppose for one moment that He made Himself more holy, or cleansed Himself from actual sin, for He had been from all eternity holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. There was no possibility of any increase of holiness in Him. But He did, from the deep love that filled His heart, set Himself apart unto God, to be the one perfect sin-offering for man. As the lamb was sanctified when it was taken from the flock, and set apart for sacrifice, so did He sanctify Himself when He separated Himself from all human fellowship, and, as one set apart unto God, bore alone the whole burden of human guilt.

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Now, this is the sense in which the word is used whenever sanctification is spoken of as something past, or complete. There are passages in which it is described as the past act of God, as, *e.g.* Jude, 1, where God's people are spoken of as being, or having been, 'sanctified by God the Father;' and 2 Thess. ii. 13, where they are described as having been 'chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.' The reason is, that they have already been set apart by the Holy Ghost as a peculiar people unto God. They have been like a branch of the wild olive, cut out from the old tree, and engrafted into the new. That grafting into Christ involved a separation, for it implied a cutting out as well as a grafting in; and therefore, whenever a soul has been incorporated into Christ, there has been in this sense an act of sanctification, or, in other words, of separation unto God. Such passages do not refer to personal holiness; but to the past act of God in separating His elect unto Himself. I have no doubt that this is the meaning of the text. We all know that the work of holiness is the consequence of the gift of pardon. It is not till we are forgiven through the great blood-sprinkling that the real work of holiness begins. But in these words sanctification comes before it, and the sprinkling of the blood is described as the result of the sanctifying act. The reason is, not that this verse is at variance with the rest of Scripture,—God forbid the thought,—but that the word sanctification does not here express our growth in personal holiness, but means God's great act of separation unto Himself by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost. As the Sabbath was set apart unto God, so have we been set apart if we be in Christ Jesus: and it is both our privilege and duty to regard ourselves as chosen out of the world and now belonging, as a peculiar people, unto God. It is with reference to this act of separation that the Apostle addresses God's people in the words, 'Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.'

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If we take the word in this sense the passage will throw a flood of light on three important subjects: the origin of this separation, its result, and the power by which it is accomplished.

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I. Its ORIGIN. This is very clearly the electing love of God. The sanctification, or separation here described, is the application of God's electing love to the individual. Our Lord says (John, x. 16) of us Gentiles, 'Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring.' In the loving purpose of God they were His when He spoke; but they were at that time either not yet born, or still living in heathenism, He said, 'Them also I must bring.' In other words, those who were His by the eternal covenant He must in due time separate unto Himself; and that separation, or that bringing, is the sanctification here described. It is that great act of God in which He carries into effect, or applies, His own eternal purpose.

And think what a stability this gives to the work! If it were the result of our own will it must be liable to all the failures inseparable from the weakness of our will; but as it is the carrying out of His own eternal purpose, it is unchangeable, because it is divine. Man-made conversions soon fall to pieces; but when God calls and separates His own elect, it is for ever. He incorporates them into Christ, and they are one with Him for all eternity.

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Ah, brethren, if you be in Him, you may be exposed to many, and strong temptations; you may be obliged to tread in slippery places, and find your feet very weak under their burden; but in the midst of it all you may rely, not merely on daily mercy, but also on everlasting love; and may take courage in the assurance that, as He changeth not, so you will be kept by His power through faith unto salvation.

II. The passage teaches us also the RESULT. This great result is conversion, as taught us in the words, 'unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.' I can scarcely imagine a better description of the character and blessings of conversion than that contained in these

words, for they present it to us in a double aspect,—on the one hand surrender, and on the other pardon.

Surrender. This is the meaning of obedience, in the passage. It must not be confounded with the holy and loving obedience of the child of God walking in his Father's footsteps, for it is rather the surrender of the once rebellious heart when it receives Christ as its Saviour and King. It is the obedience described in Acts, vi. 7, where it is said that 'a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.' It was the faith to which they were obedient: not the law. They received the message of life, and yielded themselves unto the Lord. It is the obedience of Saul of Tarsus, when, having hated, opposed, and persecuted, he gave up in complete surrender, and said, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' And here lies the great difficulty with a great number. If there be the true separation unto God, there must be surrender, for it is a sanctification unto obedience; and there is no denying that the heart oftentimes recoils from it. Oh, how near have some come,—how beautifully near! almost like the young man whom Jesus loved. But that young man went back after all. He went away very sorrowful; but still he went. I hope you may not do the same! But I stand in doubt of some of you, for though almost, you are not yet altogether: though near, you are not within; though earnest, not yet safe. And why? There is no submission: you cannot give up. There are old prejudices, old thoughts, old likes and dislikes, old confidences; and you cannot make up your mind to give all up, and to surrender your whole soul into the hands of your Lord and Saviour.

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Yet think what a blessing there is connected with such surrender: nothing less than 'the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.' That sprinkling is the personal application of the great atonement to the individual soul. The shedding of the blood was a public act, which might or might not be effectual to individuals; but the sprinkling of it is altogether a personal matter. It is the application to the individual of the great atonement made for every man. So that those who are thus sanctified, or set apart unto God, are set apart unto the sacred privilege of having their sins blotted out for ever; and those who have been brought by the Holy Ghost to the obedience of the faith, are in their own souls sprinkled with the blood of Christ. Not only do they know that there is a fountain open for sin and for uncleanness, but they themselves are cleansed by it, and walk before God in the sacred peace of full forgiveness and perfect love.

Oh, how is it that there can be any backwardness in thus surrendering to Christ! Do you not thirst for that sacred fellowship? Do you not long to be able to say, 'Who hath washed me from my sins in His own blood?' Is there any blessedness to be compared to that of having sin blotted out for ever? Why, then, do you still hold back? Why not give up, and just cast yourself, ruined and helpless, into the arms of your Saviour, that His own most precious blood may be sprinkled on your soul, and that by His great grace you may be His, and His for ever?

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III. But we must hasten to our last subject: the AUTHOR of this most blessed change. This is distinctly said to be the Spirit. 'The sanctification of the Spirit,' as in 2 Thess. ii. 14.

Observe, in passing, how all the three persons of the Holy Trinity appear in the verse. There is the foreknowledge of God the Father, the sprinkling of the blood of the Son, and the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost.

It is from such passages as these that the answer in the Church Catechism is derived: 'I believe in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God.' Every branch or department of sanctification is His work. The original call, the progressive struggle, and the final victory, are all alike by His power. It was when the Holy Ghost descended at Pentecost that 'the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved;' and it is just in proportion as the same Holy Ghost puts forth His power now that souls are separated unto God. There is no real sanctification of any kind whatever unless it be the sanctification of the Spirit. If it is brought about by religious machinery, or any inferior agency, it is not the real thing, and will never lead to the real result. I am most anxious to press this upon you, for I think there is great danger of Christian people losing sight of it. Some people seem to think that everything depends on certain men or certain plans: but you cannot save souls by planning. We cannot bear this in mind too strongly with reference to those missions and mission preachers which are now exciting the deep interest of multitudes. I attach a very high value to those mission efforts: I have engaged in them myself, and I believe the Holy Ghost gave His blessing. But it is not a mission week, nor a mission preacher, that can sanctify or set apart souls unto God: it is God the Holy Ghost working in the heart, breaking down the old man, and constraining the soul to the obedience of the faith. Let no one then wait for a mission week or a revivalist preacher, in looking out for great results. The Holy Spirit is not limited, as some seem to think, to extraordinary means, or extraordinary agencies. It was when the Churches had settled down quietly in their quiet Christian life, that it was said of them that, 'Walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, they were multiplied.' So we may look for this sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost to accompany our quiet Christian work; and I do look for it, and more than that, I thank God for having granted it in a most remarkable manner in these latter days. We will not wait then for some future great occasion. No, indeed: we will not wait even for the morrow. We will look for the mighty power of the Holy Ghost now; this day, this hour, before we part. How many are there amongst us still unsaved! How many that have not yet surrendered to their Lord! Oh, come then, Mighty Spirit: come! Come in power: come at once! Come to subdue,—come to quicken,—come to sanctify,—come to save!

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SANCTIFICATION THROUGH BLOOD.

'For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?'—HEB. ix. 13, 14.

It is impossible to think too much of the most precious blood of our most blessed Lord and Saviour. It throws its sacred power over every department of our Christian life. Our pardon, our peace, our communion, and our holiness, are all dependent on that most precious blood. Lose sight of the blood of Christ, and you lose sight of the very essence of your Christianity.

Our subject to-day is Sanctification through blood. There are three passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews in which we find a reference to such a sanctification: viz., x. 29,—'Hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing;' xiii. 12,—'Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate;' and ix. 13, —'If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?'

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I think we must all admit that these passages do not convey to us the idea of either separation unto God, or of imparted holiness by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. They seem rather to refer to the legal result of blood-shedding, or sacrifice. So I believe they do; and if we would know the real meaning of sanctification in the Word of God, we must not be carried away by the recurrence of a familiar word, but pause to study carefully its real use in this Epistle.

Our first duty then will be to examine what is meant in these passages by the Sanctification through blood. And after having ascertained its meaning, we may proceed to consider its wondrous power.

First, then, what is meant by it?

I am not aware that the expression is ever met with in any portion of the New Testament except the Epistle to the Hebrews, and this may at once suggest the idea that it has a Levitical signification. The great object of that Epistle is to expound the types of the book of Leviticus, and to show their fulfilment in our most blessed Saviour. Accordingly in two out of the three passages there is a direct reference to the ancient types. It is therefore only natural to expect that the phraseology employed in the Book of Leviticus, respecting the types, will reappear in the exposition of those types in the Epistle. And if we would understand the Epistle, we must learn from the Book of Leviticus what was the nature of that sanctification which was effected through blood in the law of types.

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Some people seem to think that these sacrifices produced no result except in so far as they pointed typically to the Lord Jesus. But I do not think they will find that opinion borne out in Scripture. They will find there that, in addition to their typical and prophetic character, these sacrifices were, at the time of their being offered, effectual in God's purpose for the bestowal of certain most important blessings. Thus this passage says, 'If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:' the blood then of bulls and of goats did actually 'sanctify to the purifying of the flesh.'

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There was a certain act of sanctification there and then wrought through the application of that blood. It was not merely that in it through faith believers laid hold on the future atonement by the coming Saviour, but there was something done for them at the time; so that after the sacrifice they were in a position different to that in which they stood before it.

Take the two cases referred to in this verse. First, there is the sprinkling of the blood of the bullock, as on the day of atonement. On that occasion the altar was sprinkled with the blood. (Levit. xvi. 19.) Now the altar was not actually purified by the sprinkling, as if it had been washed with water. Yet you read, 'He shall sprinkle of the blood upon it—and cleanse it, and hallow,' or sanctify, 'it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.' In that case the altar was cleansed from legal guilt. In consequence of its contact with the sin of guilty man it was regarded before God as an unclean thing, and by the sprinkling of blood it was sanctified, or legally cleansed. Before the sprinkling it was polluted, but afterwards it was clean, or, in other words, all legal impurity was removed.

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The purifying of the flesh by the sprinkling of the ashes of an heifer was of exactly the same character. The clearest account of it is given in Num. xix., the passage to which the Apostle apparently refers. There you find the description of certain persons who were accounted unclean: as, *e.g.*, those who had touched a dead body. And those persons, being unclean, were cut off from the sanctuary. But when, after seven days, they were sprinkled with the ashes of the heifer, their legal uncleanness was removed, and they were restored to the congregation as clean persons. They were not really more pure than they were before, but they were no longer accounted as defiled, and thus they were reinstated into all their privileges.

The sprinkling of blood and of the ashes, therefore, did produce a real result. It did not change the inward state of the heart, but it did alter the position. It was God's appointed ordinance for the removal of legal guilt; and it did remove it. It was effectual for its purpose, and after it had taken place the uncleanness was no more: it might soon accumulate again, and become possibly worse than ever; but the past defilement was gone, and the unclean man was clean.

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But it did not touch the heart or conscience. It was an outward act affecting the outward person, and restoring a man to the sanctuary and congregation; but, if his heart was broken by the bitter sense of indwelling sin, it could not restore him to God: if his conscience was grieved by the bitter memory of sad sin, the ashes of the heifer could not heal that. Suppose a man had something weighing on his conscience: he might bring his kid to the altar; but unless he was able in that sacrifice to see the coming Christ, he would have the bitter pain of past transgression still festering in his heart. He might be sprinkled with the ashes of the heifer, and take his place in the sanctuary of God as if all was right; but that would not take away his burden. If that were all he would go back from the sanctuary with a heavy heart. He would be just like thousands amongst ourselves who have experienced the utter failure of any external remedy for the wounded conscience. They have been through the whole outward routine of a correct Christianity,—prayers, Bible reading, Church services, sacraments,—and you may truly say they are sanctified according to the flesh. But there is a heartache still within the soul; there is an uncleanness there too deep to be touched by anything external,—so deep that it baffles every effort to cleanse it, and appears to rise with fresh power at the very time that they endeavour to apply their remedy. It is this that has always been the great difficulty in our endeavours to serve the living God, for till this burden is removed it is sure to keep us in a position of bondage and inability. I once saw some poor prisoners driven to their work with a long and heavy chain riveted on their ankles; and what heart or power could they have for service? And what power can he have who is toiling on in dreary discouragement with the chain of unforgiven sin riveted on his soul? It is only the free man that can walk with God and serve Him.

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And now let us turn back to the text, and see how it deals with the difficulty. It draws the contrast between the purifying of the flesh and of the conscience, and it shows how the sprinkling of the ashes of the heifer could accomplish the one, but how the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ could alone affect the other; for it is that, and that alone, that could 'purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.' The reason is obvious. That atonement wrought out by Him, was the atonement planned in the eternal covenant of God, and, when the time came, completed on purpose to meet the case of all sin,—not merely of outward acts, but the deep inward corruption of the heart; not merely by external restoration, but by complete, internal restoration to God's love. It concerns the depths of the soul; and so completely blots out all sin, that the soul itself, whatever it has been, is now in Him spotless before God. This is the one secret both of peace and service. Till your conscience is thus purged through the blood of Christ, you will never know what it is really to serve the living God.

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And now look at the great contrast of the text, and mark well the difference between those sacrifices and ours.

The sacrifice in the type was of very little value. The poor kid was led to the altar, and no one mourned its death; the poor scapegoat was left alone in the wilderness, and no one gave it a thought: a few shillings, or even pence, would replace it with another. It was picked out from the flock by what we should call mere chance, and no one missed it afterwards.

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But how different is our Sacrifice! Consider for a moment the description given of it in this verse.

(1) Our Lamb was 'Christ,' the Messiah, the Son of God! As St. Peter said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.'

(2) Our Sacrifice was offered in the eternal purpose of God; or, according to the text, 'through the eternal Spirit.' It was not an accidental selection, but a gift predetermined in the counsel of Jehovah, so that He is described by St. Peter as 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.'

(3) Our Sacrifice gave Himself as a freewill offering to God. 'He offered Himself.' The calf, or the goat, was chosen by its owner, and, when chosen, had no knowledge of anything that was before it: it had no voice in the whole transaction, and knew nothing of what it was to bear. But our Blessed Saviour, He foresaw the whole. He knew the whole burden; He realised the whole sorrow; and keenly felt its bitterness. In His human nature He shrank from the cup. It was so oppressive to Him that He threw himself before God 'with strong cryings and tears, and was heard in that He feared.' And yet, with the whole horror of the dreadful burden fully before Him, and with the full and entire knowledge of what it was to be forsaken of God, He was so resolute in carrying out the great plan of the covenant of life, that He yielded up His own will, and offered Himself as a sin-offering to God.

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(4) Our Sacrifice was 'without spot.'

It was required that the poor kid should be without blemish; partly to show that God does not accept blemished gifts, but chiefly because it was typical of the coming Christ. But the fact that there was no spot, either within or without, did not add to its real value: the spotted kid would have fetched as much as the unspotted, in the market. But when it says of our Sacrifice that He was 'a lamb without blemish and without spot,' what a tale it tells of His sinless holiness! His perfect sinlessness had stood the test of the whole of pre-existent eternity. We all know how first

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impressions of character become modified by time: imperfections, unseen at first, soon begin to crop up; there are very few of whom you can say that you have known them for twenty or thirty years, and never heard a word escape their lips that you would be sorry to speak in your dying hour. But there was a oneness for all eternity between the Father and the Son; yet eternity itself could discover no flaw, so that when the time came for the great sacrifice, He was without spot, even before God. He that was the sin-bearer was Himself sinless; and if you think what is involved in the statement that 'He knew no sin,' then you may form some idea of the great fact that sin, even our sin, was imputed to Him; or, in other words, that 'God made Him to be sin for us.'

Looking then at the contrast between the sacrifices, the one, in comparison to the other, is infinitely little. The poor calf, or kid, was nothing,—far less than nothing in comparison of the Son of God. There was nothing in it that could stand comparison for a moment. If you look at the sacrifice of the Son of God, the voluntary offering through the eternal Spirit of the spotless and Holy One, the sacrifice of the kid vanishes. It disappears altogether; it is no more than a grain of dust on the side of a mountain.

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Yet those sprinklings under the law were effectual for their purpose. There was no failure in them: they accomplished all for which they were intended; every promise made respecting them was fulfilled. The legal cleansing in all cases was complete.

Now then, I come to the point. If these sacrifices, so insignificant, so valueless, and to the eye of man so powerless, were effective for their purpose,—shall not that most marvellous wonder in the whole history of the Godhead, the sacrifice of the Son of God, be effective for His? It is true their concern was with the flesh, His with the conscience; but is there any one prepared to say, 'They never failed: but He may'? Can any one of us admit for one moment, that the man who was sprinkled with the ashes of an heifer was invariably reinstated as a clean man in the sanctuary; and that there can be the least shadow of the possibility of a doubt that the blood of Christ is completely restored to fellowship with God?

Look at Him as the Son of God, as the anointed Messiah, as the Spotless Lamb, as offering Himself in obedience to the Father's eternal will; and tell me, ye that cannot trust Him,—Can such a sacrifice as that fail? Shall that which is infinitely little succeed, and that which is infinitely great fail? Can you believe that the blood of a poor little kid was sufficient, but the blood of the Son of God insufficient? Think then of the ancient Jew walking home after his sacrifice, notwithstanding all that had passed, now clean and reinstated. Then think of the most precious blood of Christ, the Son of God, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world,—slain too for those very sins that weigh on the conscience; and consider why should not you go home this day, as that Jew did in ancient times, Free?—in the position of those described by St. Paul, when he said, 'Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God'?

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THE CLEANSING BLOOD.

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'But 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.'—1 JOHN, i. 7.

It should be the earnest desire of our hearts, in commemorating the great facts of the crucifixion of our blessed Saviour, to know the fellowship of His sufferings, and realise all that He endured. On this account it is well to dwell on His wounds, His sorrows, His tears, His prayers, and His bitter cry: but it is well to look also at the power of His precious blood, and at the great results accomplished in the covenant of God by that wonderful blood-shedding of the Son of Man.

I scarcely know which branch of the subject is the more important of the two, and I propose to-day ^[27] to consider the latter, and to draw your thoughts to the power of the blood, as taught us in these familiar and most sacred words, 'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.' May God so teach us by His Spirit, that we may know in our own experience the cleansing power of the blood of Christ!

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There are two questions which will require our careful study, in order to a right understanding of the text. To whom do the words apply? and what do they mean?

To whom do they apply?

They are often applied in a loose and haphazard way to all kinds of characters to whom they do not in the least belong, as drunkards, Sabbath-breakers, and all descriptions of unconverted men. But the most cursory glance at the text shows that it has no reference to such characters, and applies exclusively to those who are walking in the light. '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 blessing is made in this text entirely dependent on our walking in the light; and if we are not walking in the light, it does not belong to us. The man who is still living the life of the unconverted cannot claim it, for he has never known the light, and his poor soul is still darkened by sin; nor can the backslider, who once saw the light, and now has turned back into the darkness of the world; for, though he was in the light once, he is not walking in it now.

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There are other passages which apply to such persons, and invite them to reconciliation through the precious blood of Christ: but this text does not. It applies to those who have been brought into the light, and now are walking in it; not seeking it, nor groping after it, but in it,—and

enjoying a holy fellowship both with God's people and with God. There cannot be a higher standard, or, to use modern terms, a higher life. It is a life in the very presence of God Himself,—a life in which every step is lightened by the sunbeam of His love. Fellowship, light, love, and joy, abound through the whole of it. The persons possessing it are happy, loving, peaceful believers, rejoicing in the sacred privilege of companionship with God; and yet of them the text declares, 'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.'

And now, what is meant by the expression 'Cleanseth us from all sin?' I find that it is sometimes supposed to mean, 'the inward cleansing of the soul,' or the purifying of the heart by the Holy Ghost, as in Acts, xv. 9: 'Purifying their hearts by faith.' But I know of no other passage of Sacred Scripture in which this is the meaning of cleansing by blood; whereas there are many in which it means the removal of all legal guilt, as in Heb. ix. 13, 14, where the blood of the Jewish sacrifice is said to 'sanctify to the purifying of the flesh,' and the blood of Christ 'to purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.' The word in that passage in the Hebrews for 'purging,' is the same as here rendered 'cleanseth;' and, if there were nothing in the context to decide it, the general use of the language of Scripture would be sufficient. But the context appears to leave no doubt on the subject. The ninth verse clearly shows that the subject of the forgiveness of sin is the subject of discussion: 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' And then in the opening of the next chapter you find the full explanation of the text. The first two verses are in fact little more than an expansion of it. The first verse sets before us the highest possible standard of sinless holiness: 'My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.' After which the Apostle proceeds to show the provision which God has made for us under the sense of sin: 'If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sin.' This is an expansion of the short statement of the text: 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' It teaches of Christ Jesus, the righteous Advocate and the perfect Propitiation; it shows that the blood is the blood of atonement, and the cleansing the blotting out of the guilt of sin through the propitiation; it points the contrite believer, deeply humbled for sin, to what is now passing at the right hand of God, where the Son of God now stands as his Advocate, having completed the sacrifice, and sprinkled the blood before the mercy-seat. That sprinkled blood is the cleansing power, and the cleansing is the blotting out of guilt so completely that the soul stands before God as free from all legal pollution as if it had never been defiled. It is perfectly true that there are other passages in which we read of inward holiness as a purification of the heart: as *e.g.*, 1 John, iii. 3. But that is quite a different thing to the cleansing through blood described in our text, the real meaning of which is the removal of all guilt from the guilty sinner by the transfer of it, according to the covenant, to the great sin-bearer: 'The Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.'

Now, this being the case, it appears to me that there are two great practical conclusions which irresistibly follow:—

First, that those who are walking in the light have sin in them which needs the cleansing blood. I know very well, and thank God for the blessed assurance that 'Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.' I know, too, that our blessed Saviour is the great deliverer, and that He will so surely and so effectually save His people from their sins, that every one of them, without a single exception, will finally be presented without a single spot, or stain, before His throne. But that is not the question. The question is whether in saving us it pleases Him to put an end, while we are in the flesh, to the deep corruption of our human nature, or to give us invariably such a victory that we shall never have reason to repent and deplore its power. If this verse stood alone it would decide the point, for it shows the deep need of the cleansing blood, even for those who are walking in the light. It describes two gifts as the sacred privilege of their life in Christ Jesus: fellowship one with another, and cleansing through the power of His blood. It proves, therefore, beyond the possibility of doubt, that whatever meaning we attach to the word 'cleanseth,' there is sin which requires to be cleansed, even in those who are walking in the light. But it does not stand alone, for the 8th and the 10th verses explain to us the reason of the need: the one teaches that we 'have sin,' and the other, that we 'have sinned;' the one speaks of the deep corruption of our nature, the other of the action to which this corruption has given rise; and both teach the same thing,—viz., that those who are walking in the light have sin in themselves and in their conduct,—sin which requires cleansing; that if 'they say they have no sin, they deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them;' and 'if they say they have not sinned, they make Him a liar, and His word is not in them.'

I believe then that the compilers of our Articles were walking in the light when they wrote that, 'The infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated;' that the compilers of our Prayer-book were walking in the light when they taught us to confess, 'We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us;' and that old Hooker was writing in the light when he said, 'If God should yield unto us, not as unto Abraham, if fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, yea, or if ten good persons could be found in a city, for their sakes this city should not be destroyed; but and if He should make us an offer thus large; search all the generations of men since the fall of our father Adam, find one man that hath done one action which hath passed from him pure, without any stain or blemish at all; and for that one man's only action, neither man nor angel shall feel the torments which are prepared for both. Do you think that this ransom to deliver men and angels could be found to be among the sons of men? The best things which we do have somewhat in them to be pardoned.'

But there is a second lesson: viz., that while there is the deep need, there is the ample provision; for, although no ransom could be found among the sons of men, there is a perfect ransom in the most precious blood of the Son of God. The propitiation is complete, and, through the wonderful mercy which God has shown in His covenant, that precious blood cleanseth from all sin.

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There are two points in this sentence to which I would draw your special attention.

(1.) It is *all* sin that is cleansed. Sin after baptism, as well as sin before it; sin committed in the light, as well as sin in the days of darkness; sin of omission, and sin of commission; sin of act, sin of word, sin of thought, sin of temper, sin of desire, sin of heart, sin in the acts of religion, and sin in daily life; sin that is not noticed as it ought to be, and sin that leaves an inexpressible pain on the conscience. It is all included in the one word '*all*.' 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from *all* sin.'

(2.) It is a continuous cleansing: that is, continued day by day as long as the walk lasts. It is well explained by those words, John, xiii. 10: 'He that is,' or hath been, 'washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.' The first great washing took place when you were first brought to Christ, as represented in your baptism; and now as you are walking home through a defiling world, you require the continual cleansing of the feet. And this is what is promised in the text. We are walking, and the blood is cleansing. It might be rendered, 'If we are walking in the light, the blood is cleansing us from all sin.' The walk is continuous, and the cleansing continuous likewise. As we are taught in the Lord's Prayer to ask for daily forgiveness with the same regularity as we ask for daily bread; so we are taught to trust the cleansing power for every step of the daily life. Day after day, and night after night, we return to the same fountain, and there experience the same power; and so it will be to the end, when all this earthly walking shall cease, and the ransomed spirit shall appear spotless before God.

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But let us not speak of the blood, and its cleansing power, without remembering well what we mean by it. We do not mean the material blood which flowed from the feet and hands, or trickled down his careworn face from beneath the crown of thorns; nor that which after death gushed from His pierced side; for we can never be sprinkled by that. Still less do we mean what some suppose to be actual blood in the transubstantiated cup. We mean nothing material: for nothing material can cleanse the soul. We mean the sacrifice of the life of the Son of God as an efficacious offering for the life of the sinner.

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In the sacred history of that mysterious death, we read His bitter cry: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' This cry it is utterly impossible to explain on any other principle than the imputation of sin. I am not one of those that would dare to speak of impossibilities with God. But when I think of the eternal and spotless holiness of the Lord Jesus, of His perfect purity and His blameless life, I find it utterly impossible to myself to imagine on what principle He could have been forsaken at such a moment by one with whom he had been one for eternity, if it had not been that sin, not His own, was imputed to Him; or in the words of Sacred Scripture, that 'The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.' And then, when I turn to the dying cry, 'It is finished,' I see the completion of the work. What He had undertaken He had borne: what He covenanted to do was done. The covenanted ransom was paid; the covenanted sacrifice offered; the covenanted life given; and then, the burden being gone, He yielded up His soul into the Father's hands, and said, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.' This explains what we mean by the power of the cleansing blood. We mean the full and perfect freedom given to all those who are in Christ Jesus; because He, as their Head, has paid their penalty. We look on Him forsaken, and believe that we shall never be. We look on Him bearing the full penalty of the law, and we know that because He has borne it, the awful curse will never rest on us. We listen to Him crying, 'It is finished,' and we know that nothing more can be needed in sacrifice; that the whole redemption as planned in God's eternal purpose is complete; and that therefore, as He did, so may we commend into a loving Father's hand all we are, and all we care for, saying, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit, for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.' We need no priest's absolution; and we cannot endure the thought of any continuation, or repetition, or any thing approaching to propitiatory sacrifice. We believe that the whole work is finished according to the purpose of God Himself, and that 'the blood of Jesus Christ his Son,' without any addition of any kind whatever,—simply and alone,—'cleanseth from all sin.' Thus we agree, heart and soul, with the grand old words of HOOKER: 'Let it be counted folly, or frenzy, or fury, whatsoever, it is our comfort, our wisdom; we care for no knowledge in the world but this,—that man hath sinned, and God hath suffered; that God hath made Himself the Son of Man, and that men are made the righteousness of God.'

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PERSONAL HOLINESS.

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THE SANCTIFIED.

'Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's.'—1 COR. i. 2.

I HOPE it has been made clear that the original meaning of the word 'to sanctify,' was 'to set apart

as a holy thing unto God,' and that the Levitical meaning of sanctification through blood was the cleansing from all legal impurity. It is obvious that both these divine acts clearly involve personal holiness.

That which is set apart by the call of God, and cleansed from all guilt, should clearly be kept holy and undefiled from the pollution both of the heart and of the world. Such persons should be like the vessels of the sanctuary: 'sanctified and meet for the Master's use.'

This leads us to that which is the ordinary meaning of the term in religious books: viz. personal holiness. By personal holiness is meant the sacred work of God the Holy Ghost within the soul; the reflection of the character of our Blessed Lord; the law put into the inward part, and written on the heart by the Spirit of God. This is the meaning of such texts as 1 Thess. v. 23: 'The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' The separation is a past act, for if we are in Christ Jesus, we have been already separated unto God; but this is an abiding condition, for real holiness is a present matter of daily life. Now both these parts of sanctification are brought out in the words which I have read as our text, for it is addressed 'to them that are,' or have been, 'sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.' The first clause refers to the past act, and represents those believers as having been set apart unto God, or separated as a peculiar people unto Himself; the second describes their present condition as inseparable from their high calling; for, having been set apart, they are now called to be the saints of God. I need not stop to point out that the word 'saints,' is not limited in Sacred Scripture to those who are in heaven. Still less has it to do with the canonization of Rome, or the seclusion of a monastery. It describes the personal holiness of the Christian in common life, the habitual character of the man walking with God; as in those words of the Apostle Peter (1 Pet. i. 15): 'Be ye holy;' or be ye saints, 'in all manner of conversation.' So that our text means the same as if it had been written, 'To them that have been set apart unto God in Christ Jesus their Saviour, and who, as the result of that sacred call, are now leading holy lives in His presence.'

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My object this morning will be simply to trace the connexion between these two steps of God's sacred work: the past separation unto Him, and the present personal holiness of character. And all I can say is, may the Lord help us in our own experience to understand both of them, and then we shall have no difficulty in perceiving how they are bound together in the work of Salvation!

We shall find them connected by a principle and a power.

I. A PRINCIPLE. It is perfectly clear, as a matter of principle, that there ought to be holiness in all that is consecrated to God. He consecrated, or set apart unto Himself, the Sabbath day, and so He says, 'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.' The Temple, like our own churches, was consecrated to God, and therefore we read, 'Holiness becometh Thine house for ever.' The vessels of the Temple were dedicated, or sanctified to His service, and therefore they should not be touched by unhallowed hands, and the words of sacred Scripture are, 'Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.' On these principles we none like to see a neglected church, a dishonoured Bible, or a careless attitude, in the house of God. On the same principles, we should all be profoundly humbled when unhallowed thoughts,—thoughts of the world, thoughts of vanity, of jealousy, or of self,—in any shape intrude into holy things, and corrupt those sacred hours which are set apart exclusively to God. But if this applies to consecration generally, how pre-eminently does it apply to such a consecration as that described in the text, in which we are said to be 'sanctified in Christ Jesus.' That sanctification is the introduction of the ruined sinner into a covenant union with the Son of God. If you have been thus sanctified in Christ Jesus, you no longer stand alone, to bear your own burden, or plead your own cause. You have been separated from the ruined world, and identified with the Lord Jesus; so that He represented you in bearing your curse when He suffered, and He now represents you at the right hand of the throne of God, while He pleads on your behalf. Thus you are cleansed from all legal guilt. You are sanctified by blood, and charged with no defilement. By the eternal covenant of God He is become your Head, so that in His death you died; in His life you live; in His acceptance you are justified; and in His glory you are glorified.

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But, if you are thus separated unto such a union with Him, is there any room left for one moment's doubt as to what ought to be your character? If you are set apart by Him into this covenant union with Himself, you are set apart into a oneness of mind, of will, and of interest. He represents you in heaven, and you represent Him on earth; as God sees you in Him, so the world sees Him in you. You bear His name; you are sealed with the seal of the covenant; you are made a peculiar people unto the Son of God: and I am sure we must all see the justice of those words of the Apostle Peter, 'As He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.'

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II. POWER. But here lies the difficulty. You really wish to be holy, but you are not; you have endeavoured to overcome your temper, but it is still there; you have striven against wandering thoughts in prayer, but they still interfere most mournfully with your most sacred acts of worship; you wish, and you mean to be, unselfish, but you find selfishness continually cropping up, to your sorrow and vexation of spirit. Now, the question is,—How is this to be overcome? Your resolves will not do it, for you have made hundreds, and failed in them all; and no man on earth can do it for you, for the evil lies far too deep for the reach of man. What then is to be done? We may turn back to our text, and there learn the secret, for in those words, 'In Christ Jesus,' we are taught the power.

We learned, in studying the first act of separation, that it was the work of God the Holy Ghost:

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here it is said to be in Christ Jesus. Some people dwell more on the distinction than I am myself disposed to do: there is such a perfect oneness in the infinite God, that I confess I have but little heart for these refined distinctions. As the Father and the Son are one, so God the Son and God the Holy Ghost are one; and when the Lord Jesus saves the sinner, it is the Holy Ghost that applies that salvation to the soul. Without stopping, therefore, to study any such distinction, let us rather hasten to the practical lesson that sanctification, or consecration, here described, is a sanctification in Jesus Christ. You may look thus to your covenant union with Him, and trust Him by the in-breathing of His own Spirit to make you holy. You may remember that He came to save you from your sins, and not merely from their curse; and that holiness is just as much a gift of the covenant as pardon.

You remember those words, 1 Cor. i. 30: 'But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' They teach us that the Lord Jesus is the source of all practical wisdom and holiness, just as much as of imputed righteousness and redemption. The passage is clearly not speaking of an imputed wisdom, and we have no right to apply it to an imputed sanctification. It refers to the practical wisdom and personal holiness of the man who by God's grace is wise and holy; and teaches that both one and the other are found exclusively in Christ Jesus.

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You may, therefore, trust the Lord Jesus Christ for your sanctification just as much as for your justification; for your personal holiness in daily life, as well as for your safety in the great day of judgment. Look carefully then unto your covenant union with Christ, and think on Him as your covenant Head: then spread out all your difficulties and temptations before Him as your Head. Acknowledge before Him how you have dishonoured His headship by your evil thoughts, your evil words, and your constant failures; and trust Him, as your Head, to form in you His image, and by His own most Holy Spirit to give you the victory. Do not stand at a distance, thinking it your duty to doubt your union, for by so doing you will never overcome. Without that union you will never know what victory means. I am assuming now that in the secret of your own souls you have been verily engrafted into Christ. I know you were sacramentally in baptism, but I am looking deeper than that, for many who are baptized are never saved, and I am speaking now of the real saving union of your soul with Christ Himself. Now, if that is yours through His wonderful grace, accept it, act upon it, trust Him as your living Head; and you will find, as time goes on, that though you cannot overcome, He can; and that He will finally present you, 'holy and unblameable before Him at His coming.' But here we are brought to the old difficulty,—that you have no real evidence in your soul of the existence of such a union with Christ. You know there is your baptismal union, but still you cannot feel safe, and you greatly doubt whether you are amongst those who have been 'Sanctified in Christ Jesus: called to be saints.' This is the reason why many of you cannot come to the sacred feast of the Supper of the Lord, and why many others, who do come, come with a heavy heart. Would to God we might see those absent ones brought near, and those heavy hearts gladdened by the Lord! But in order to that you must grapple at once with the great question of your own personal salvation,—your separation unto God. Till that is settled you will be powerless against yourself. Till you are in Christ, and sanctified in Christ Jesus, you will never be sanctified at all. If you really desire to be really holy, for the sake of that holiness begin at the beginning, and never rest till you are safe. Your safety must come before your holiness, or you will wait for it for ever. Begin therefore with the prayer, 'Lord, save me: I perish.' Throw yourself into His hand for pardon, for acceptance, for life. Never rest till you can appropriate the language of St. Paul: 'Who hath saved me, and called me with an holy calling.' And, when that is given, you may go on to those other words of the same Apostle, and say, 'According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.'

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PROGRESS.

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'But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.'—2 COR. iii. 18.

THE subject of personal holiness is one of overwhelming interest to all those who really desire to walk with God; it is also one which requires our most careful study, for in it lies the chief difficulty of the daily Christian life of the greater number of true believers. They know the truth, and love it; they prize their Saviour far above all that the world can give; they are ready either to live or die in His service; but yet they are so conscious of the power of indwelling sin that sometimes they are led almost to doubt the reality of their Christianity, and begin to question whether they really love their Lord at all. For the help of such persons it seems clearly a duty to look carefully into the subject, and I pray God that He may help us to do so this morning.

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This text will supply us with so much instruction that we will not attempt to examine other passages, but will endeavour to gather from it the standard, the progress, the means, and the power of Christian holiness. May God so bless His word, as to make us holy by His Spirit!

I. THE STANDARD. How many a noble ship has been lost through some inaccuracy in the compass! If the compass points too much to the east or to the west, the most careful commander may wreck his vessel. And if the compass of the soul is in a wrong direction you will find it very hard to walk in a right path. Now, in this text the one standard is the image of the Lord Jesus. We are said to behold the glory of the Lord, and to be changed into His image. There cannot be a doubt

that this refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that by His glory is meant His grace. If there were, it would be settled by these words in John, i. 14: 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' The great manifestation of the glory of God is in the grace and truth of the incarnate Word. If, then, we would be holy, as God is holy, we must be changed into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we are like Him we shall be holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; but not before. So you will find that, when persons speak about their sinlessness, it may generally be traced to their adopting a low standard of holiness. Sometimes people will set up their own experience as a standard, and really seem to think that we are to receive their accounts of their own experience as if it were another Bible. Sometimes we read of a perfection, not absolute, but 'up to the measure of to-day's consciousness.' Accordingly I have read of one described as an eminent Christian, who 'said that a few days more would make twenty-one years that his obedience had been kept at the extreme verge of his light.' I am not sure that I know what the writer means, and I may possibly misunderstand his words; but, if they mean what they seem to mean, I can scarcely imagine anything more delusive. We know very well how the eyes may be blinded, the heart deadened, and the conscience seared by sin; we know that the deeper a man is sunk in sin the less he feels it, and the lower his fall the more profound his want of feeling; and only imagine what must be the result if a deadened, thickened, darkened conscience were to be accepted as the measure of a sinless life. The idea reminds one of these words of St. Paul, 2 Cor. x. 12: 'They measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.' Nay: they go further, and point to the tremendous danger pointed out by our Lord Himself: 'If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.' (Matt. vi. 23.) No: we must have a standard rising high above either consciousness, conscience, or our own light; a standard that never varies; a standard that does not go up and down with our changes of feeling or opinion; a standard as unchanging as the perfect character of God Himself! This is the standard which we find in the Lord Jesus Christ,—in God manifest in the flesh: and what is more, thanks be to God, this is the standard which we shall one day reach! For, though there are many things still hidden, there is one thing we most assuredly know, and that is, that 'when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.'

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II. THE PROGRESS. AS I have just said, when we see the Lord as He is we shall be like Him; and when that comes to pass we shall see the perfection of the promise, He 'shall save His people from their sins.' He will so completely save them that whereas He finds them corrupt, ruined, and enemies to God by wicked works, He will finally present them holy and unblameable, without spot and without blemish before the throne. It is impossible to imagine anything more blessed, more wonderful, more divine, than such a change. Now it becomes a question of the deepest interest whether this mighty change is accomplished by one instantaneous act, or gradually. Is it, like justification, a completed thing? or is it a progressive work, commenced at the new birth, but not complete till we see Him as He is? There cannot be a more important practical inquiry. And now you may see the importance of the distinction drawn between the different senses of the word 'sanctification;' or, as it might be better expressed, the different parts of that blessed work. If you speak of sanctification as the original act of God in separating us unto Himself, then it is a completed thing, for we are described as 'having been sanctified in Christ Jesus.' If, again, you speak of it as a legal cleansing from all past guilt, it is complete, for being washed in the precious blood we are already clean. But if you regard it as the personal holiness of daily life, the purifying the heart through faith by the indwelling power of the Holy Ghost, then I am prepared to maintain from the whole testimony of the whole Word of God from one end to the other, that so long as we are in this world of conflict the sacred work is not complete, but progressive. How people can speak of sanctification in this sense as an immediate work, I am at a loss to understand. Hundreds of passages might be quoted to prove its progressive character, and to show the reason of its present incompleteness: viz., the abiding power of indwelling sin. I have only time to refer to two. In the first place, this verse describes us as changed, or being changed, from glory to glory. We are described as in the process of transformation, or metamorphosis; by His grace passing from glory to glory, or from one degree of grace to another. The work is in progress, thanks be to God! and we have the bright hope of the completed likeness of the Lord. But that bright hope is not yet realized, nor will it be till we see Him as He is. I will take only one other passage, and select it because it corresponds very closely to the text. It is a passage addressed to the believers in Rome,—to persons who are described as being 'beloved of God called to be saints.' (Rom. i. 7.) There can be no doubt then that the work of personal holiness was begun in them: yet what does St. Paul say to them? (Rom. xii. 2.) 'Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed (or metamorphosized) by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.' Is it not clear then that those persons who were beloved of God, and called to be saints, were still to be reaching forth after higher attainments? There was so much evil in them that they still required to be warned against conformity to the world, and so far were they from their high standard, that they required nothing less than a transformation or metamorphosis (it is the same word as in the text), in order to bring them into a personal experience 'of the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.' Be sure then there is no resting-place in Christian holiness for the saints of God. The Lord may have done great things for us, whereof we are glad. He may have given us such an insight into His grace that we now love that which we once cared nothing for, and hate that which we once loved: He may have led us to say from the bottom of our hearts, 'I delight to do Thy will, O my God.' But our motto must still be, 'Forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' The more we love Christ, the more must we be deeply humbled that we love Him so little; and the more we look at the blessed prospect of a real and perfect sinlessness, the

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more must we be ready to say, as St. Paul did, 'Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.'

III. But some of you will be ready to say that that is just where your difficulty lies. You do really desire to be going forward, and to be making progress, but it seems as if you could not. You are like a person in a nightmare, who wishes to run, but cannot. Let us then consider what is God's great instrument, whereby He imparts progress to the soul. On this subject this text is quite decisive, for it shows that God's great instrument is the view of the Lord Jesus Christ through faith. In the passage to which I have already referred in 1 John, iii. 2, we find that the perfect view of the Lord Jesus will lead to perfect likeness, so in these words the partial view leads to progressive likeness. When the view is perfect the likeness will be perfect too; now that the view is imperfect, only as through a glass, the likeness is imperfect likewise. But still it is growing more and more; for 'we all,'—not merely special Christians, who have attained what they call 'the higher life,'—'beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.' Now I believe it is impossible to press this too strongly on all those who desire holiness, for there is a perpetual tendency in every one of us to turn the eye inward on ourselves, instead of keeping it fixed on Him. Some are occupied with what they feel, or do not feel, or wish to feel, or wish they did not feel; and some by what they do, or mean to do, or think they ought to do,—till the whole mind becomes bewildered, and the whole soul entangled. Remember that you may be entangled by your religious efforts, as well as by your sins: nothing indeed entangles people more than confused and mistaken religion. So that if you really want to be like Him, you must sweep away all your entanglements like so many cobwebs, and, just as you are, look straight at Him. For example, you say you do not feel sin, and you do not feel anything like the sorrow for it that you know you ought to do. I have no doubt you are perfectly right, and it is very sorrowful, very sinful, and very sad. But how is it to be overcome? I know of only one way, and that is a very simple one, too simple for many of you,—and that is a look: you must behold Christ. Remember the case of the Jews. Nothing yet has melted their hearts: their great national afflictions have utterly failed: but in God's time there will be a change. We shall see those people mourning,—so mourning that they will be led with broken hearts to the Fountain open for sin and for uncleanness. And what will be God's instrument for producing such a change? By what means will He effect it? By a look: a simple look! You find it described in Zech. xii. 10: 'They shall look on Me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him.' That one look will accomplish more than 1800 years of bitter, and most afflictive, discipline. And it is just the same with ourselves. One look at our loving and living Saviour will do more towards softening the heart than hours spent in the scrutiny of feeling, or whole books of self-examination. If you want to grow in grace, in tenderness of conscience, in holy abhorrence of sin, in purity of heart, in lowliness of spirit, and in thankful love for your blessed Saviour,—then look on Him, keep your eyes on Him. Think on His Cross, how He died for you; on His life, how He lived for you; on His advocacy, how He pleads for you; on His perfect character, His love, His holiness, His purity, His power, His grace, His truth: for by such a look, and such a look alone, can you ever hope to be changed into His image.

But remember one expression in the text: viz. those three words, 'With open face.' The look that transforms is a look with an open face: there must be nothing between. There must not be a veil over it, as there is over the Jews, as you read in verse 15. Every barrier must be removed. The great barrier of the curse is gone, through the blood of atonement; and we must not now set up fresh barriers of our own creation. We must remember the hymn:—

'Just as I am: Thy love alone
Has broken every barrier down;'

and just as we are,—humbled, unworthy, cold, and unfeeling, but yet admitted into the very presence of the Lord,—we must look with open face at the Son of God Himself; and I hope we may be able to say, as David did, 'They looked to Him, and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed.'

IV. But the look is not enough; for besides all means there must be a power. We cannot will ourselves into the likeness of our Saviour, any more than an animal can will itself into a man: the great transformation must be by the power of a life-creating agent. So, when I turn again to this text, I find that it is not the look alone which effects the change, but that it is God the Holy Ghost making use of the look, and by divine omnipotence transforming the soul into the image of the Lord Jesus. In the last words of the text it is all ascribed to Him, as in the words, 'Even as by the Spirit of the Lord,' or, as the margin has it, 'Even as by the Lord the Spirit.' I have no time to dwell on this subject as I should like to do; but I cannot conclude without begging the careful attention of all those who are almost tempted to think that there is something in their constitution which blocks the way against their progress. They see others going forward while they stand still; they hear of others filled with peace in believing, while they are still hampered by doubt, so that they begin to think they shall never rise, and are never intended to rise, above their present condition. I quite admit that it may be perfectly true, that there is something peculiar in your case; something peculiar, it may be, in your habits, in your disposition, in your temper, in your temptation. Let us admit it, for most people have their peculiar difficulties. But, admitting it, I pray you to consider whether there is not a Divine power in the Lord the Spirit, which is quite sufficient to overcome that peculiarity. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? Think then on God the Holy Ghost: think of Him as working out the great salvation purchased for us through the precious blood of the Son of God, and then reflect whether it is possible that your

difficulties are beyond His power. They are beyond your own: you have learned that. But are they beyond His? If you have failed, is that any reason why He should? Trust Him then, and behold Christ Jesus. Remember you are dealing with One mighty to save, and that, while you are looking to Jesus, He, working within, may heal your soul. Trust Him then to do it. You know He can; trust Him that He will: and never again admit the thought, that, notwithstanding all you have discovered in your soul, there is any thing there too hard for the Son of God,—anything which may not be overcome by the indwelling power of God the Holy Ghost.

INFECTION OF NATURE.

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'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.'—ROM. vii. 25. ^[64]

THERE are few passages in the whole word of God that have excited a deeper interest amongst truly Christian people than the latter part of the seventh of Romans. It is so closely connected with the practical experience of Christian life, and at the same time it is so much opposed to the beautiful theories of some Christian people, that it has always excited an earnest spirit of inquiry, and engaged the deepest interests of the students of Scripture. I propose to make it the subject of our study this morning: to endeavour to find out what the Scripture really teaches. And in the outset of our study I should wish to give one caution, which I believe to be of the utmost importance for us all: viz., we must not bring the sacred Scriptures to the test of our theories, but must be prepared, if need be, to give up those theories to the authority of Scripture. If we want to live in God's truth, we must be subject to God's Word, and must be content to receive what He teaches as He teaches it. In other words, we must not twist Scripture so as to make it fit our own opinions, but must receive it as from God, and make all our opinions bend before its high authority.

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With this caution before us, there are three subjects to be considered. First, of whom is the Apostle speaking: of himself, or some other man? Secondly, of what period in his Christian life is he speaking: does he refer to the past or to the present? And thirdly, what does the passage teach respecting his spiritual condition at the time he wrote the words?

And now, may God the Holy Ghost, who inspired the Word, lead us all reverently to study, and rightly to understand, His teaching!

I. To whom does it refer? I feel persuaded that we shall all admit that, if any person were to read the chapter without having some previous opinion to support, he would believe that the Apostle was speaking of himself. The word 'I' occurs no less than twenty-eight times in the passage. Such expressions as 'I do,' 'I consent,' 'I allow,' 'I delight,' are found continually; and certainly the natural conclusion would be that when he said, 'I,' he meant himself. I know that it is sometimes said that he personated some other person; a legalist, or one in a lower Christian life. But there is not the least evidence of any such personation in the passage, and he says not one word to lead us to suppose that such was his intention. In iii. 5, he does thus personate an objector; and says, 'But if our unrighteousness commend,' &c. But then he distinctly states that he is doing so in the words, 'I speak as a man.' But there is nothing of the kind here. There is a plain, simple statement in his own name; passing from the 'I,' which pervades the chapter, to 'I, myself,' in the last verse; and I am utterly at a loss to understand on what principle these plain words, 'I myself,' can be supposed to express the personation of some other man.

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II. In answer then to our first question, I am brought to the conclusion that when he spoke of 'I myself,' he meant himself, and not another: and we may pass to our second question. To what period of his spiritual history did he refer: did he speak of the past, or of the present? Was he describing some period of past anxiety out of which he had been delivered, so as to enter on the joys of the eighth chapter? Or was he speaking of his state of mind at the very time, that he was writing the eighth chapter, and declaring, 'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father?' In answer to this I have not the smallest hesitation in saying that, according to every principle of sound exposition, the seventh chapter refers to exactly the same period as the eighth; that it is a description of his own experience at the time he wrote the words; and that we should have just as much authority for saying that the eighth chapter referred only to the future, as that the seventh referred only to the past. For this I give three reasons:—

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(1.) If we wish to understand the Word of God we must receive plain words as we find them in sacred Scripture. We have no right to assume that the present tense stands for the past; that 'I am,' means 'I was;' that 'I do,' means 'I used to do;' that 'I hate,' means 'I used to hate;' and 'I delight,' means 'I used to delight.' If we once begin thus to handle Scripture there is an end to exposition; and if people who thus twist Scripture would be consistent, they ought to go on, and say that the beginning of this verse, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord,' means, 'I used to thank Him, but I do not now.'

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(2.) Again, the transition from the past to the present is clearly marked in the passage. In the parenthesis which extends from the seventh verse to the end of the chapter, we find the three tenses,—past, present, and future. From verse seven to verse thirteen it is all in the past, and is a description of a certain portion of his past life. 'I was alive;' 'the commandment came;' 'sin revived;' 'I died;' 'I found it to be unto death;' and 'sin deceived me, and by it slew me.' It is a description of the great work of God in breaking down his pharisaism, and bringing him to Christ. I believe it all took place during those solemn three days at Damascus. But from the

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fourteenth verse to the end, all is changed, and the present tense is employed. 'I am;' 'I do;' 'I allow;' 'I delight;' 'I hate;' 'I thank God;' 'I serve.' The only exception is in the twenty-fourth verse, where we find the future: 'who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' This distinction of the tenses is alone enough to prove the point, for it would be just as reasonable to maintain that the past means the present, as that the present means the past.

(3.) Once more. The noble thanksgiving of verse twenty-five is supposed to be the point of transition from the sadness of the seventh chapter to the joys of the eighth; the conclusion of his conflict in the discovery of the Lord Jesus. There can be no doubt that this passage does describe the act of faith rejoicing in the Divine Deliverer. It describes the believer grasping the victory, and rising through grace above the conflict within his soul. We quite admit it, and fully accept that explanation of the words. But now, here is the remarkable point: this account of a struggle within the soul is found—where? Not only before the thanksgiving of victory, but also after it; proving thereby that it is deeply felt, even by those who can give thanks for an overcoming Saviour. And more than that. People draw a distinction between what they call the unhappy seventh and the happy eighth; but this verse comes between the thanksgiving of the seventh chapter and the assurance of no condemnation in the eighth. It follows the thanksgiving, and leads on immediately to the grand, and most blessed declaration, with which the eighth chapter opens: 'There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.'

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On the whole, therefore, I conclude that the Apostle was speaking of himself, and not of another: and that he spoke of himself at the very time that he was assured of no condemnation in the present, and no separation for all eternity: of a perfect safety in his union with the Lord Jesus Christ. We may pass then to our last subject.

III. What does the passage teach us respecting the experience of the Apostle at the time when he wrote the Epistle? Perhaps I ought to limit the question by rather saying, What was his experience with reference to the law? For the whole object of the passage is to bring out the holiness of the law, and to prove from his own case that the 'commandment was holy, and just, and good.'

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(1.) The first thing that is conspicuously clear is that he had discovered its true character. When he was a legalist he had no idea of its exalted standard; but, when God called him, his eyes were opened to behold its perfection. It is a curious fact that those who hope to save themselves by their doings are almost certain to entertain but low and limited notions of the law: they think of it as some low standard within their own reach; so they are always endeavouring to fulfil it, and though always failing, are never really troubled at their failure; but, when God opens their heart, they discover its exalted holiness, and find themselves to be nothing better than dead men before it. This is just what had happened to St. Paul. He lived in early life as an earnest, religious, and well-conducted young man, and he was satisfied with himself. 'Touching the righteousness which is in the law,' as he says himself (Phil. iii. 6), he was 'blameless.' He went through all the Jewish worship as correctly as possible, and omitted nothing; but he knew nothing of the claims of the law on his whole heart and all his powers; he simply regarded it as a collection of rules,—and he thought he did well. So he says, in verse nine, 'I was alive without the law once.' His ignorance of the law made him think himself alive; but God had after a time opened his eyes, and he discovered its exalted holiness. He saw it expounded in the teaching of our Lord, and exhibited in His life; he found it was nothing less than the perfect will of a perfect God; and all his own poor, feeble, miserable doings shrank away as dead things before the holiness of God; and thus he adds, 'The commandment came, and I died.'

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Now this change had taken place when he wrote the Epistle, so that the law was no longer to him a mere skeleton of form, but had appeared before him as the great expression of the mind of God. And now how did he regard it? This leads to a second point.

(2.) He approved it, and delighted in it. He approved it, for he said, 'I consent unto the law, that it is good.' Nor did he regard it as a yoke of bondage about his soul. It was not a rigid code by which he was forced against his will. How any person can suppose that this passage is the language of an unregenerate, or unconverted man, I cannot imagine. Did you ever know an unconverted man to delight in the perfect holiness of God? Such holiness condemns, restrains, and frightens him. But St. Paul said, 'I delight in the law of God after the inner man.' The fact was he had experienced the great promise of the New Covenant: 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it on their hearts.' God, the Holy Ghost, had written the law on his heart, and now he loved it. To please God was his greatest joy, and to do His will was the chief desire of his soul. He could say, as David did, 'Oh, how I love Thy love: it is my meditation all the day!' He was not content with the measure of his own consciousness, or the standard of his fellow-men, or a vain idea of doing his best, or doing no harm to any one. He did not split hairs about the distinction between being blameless and being faultless. He had seen the Lord in His beauty, and adored Him in His holiness, so now it was the whole mind and will of God that filled his soul, and the great desire of his heart was expressed in such words as those of the Psalmist, 'Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God: Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.' And does not this teach us a lesson of inexpressible importance respecting ourselves? In Christ Jesus we are not driven by a slave master, and compelled by the lash into obedience. We 'love the law,' because we 'love the Lord.' We find His will, and His word, to be dearer unto us than thousands of gold and silver; and we experience the blessedness described by our blessed Saviour when He said, 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.'

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(3.) But all this while he was painfully conscious that he was infinitely below its standard. The

very fact of hungering and thirsting after righteousness implies in itself that your hunger is not yet supplied: so in this passage St. Paul teaches us that he was still very far from what he most earnestly desired to be. He felt what I may term the bitter provocation of shortcoming: 'The good that I would I do not, but the evil that I would not that I do.' There was the unceasing consciousness of falling utterly short of the high standard set before him in the law. He does not say this to justify sin, for he tells us how he hated it; but he teaches us, as plainly as words can teach anything, that at the very time when God had by His great grace so changed his heart that he had discovered the law and was delighting in it, there was still in him what the ninth Article describes, when it says, 'The infection of nature doth remain yet in them that are regenerate.' The old, fallen, sinful human nature was not extinct in him, and this ruin of his fallen nature was acting as a clog and drawback on his holy longings after the perfect holiness of God. Thus in his one self there was a contest between grace and nature, between the new man and the old. Of the one he says, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man;' and of the other, 'I know that in me (*i.e.*, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.' By the power of the Holy Ghost he could say, 'To will is present with me;' but through the power of the old nature he was obliged to add, 'How to perform that which is good I find not.' It was this bitter pain of thus failing to reach the standard of his heart's desire, that drew from him the cry, 'Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Some people think that such language could not have come from an enlightened believer, led by the Spirit, and walking in the sunlight of the eighth chapter. They seem to forget the twenty-third verse of that very chapter, in which he says, 'Ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.' (viii. 23.) For my own part, I believe it was the leading of the Spirit that called it forth, inasmuch as that leading led him to aim at the true standard of the holiness of God. I agree with the wise commentary of old Scott:—

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'This energetic language, which many imagine to describe an unestablished believer's experience, or even that of an unconverted person, seems to have resulted from the extraordinary degree of St. Paul's sanctification, and the depth of his self-abasement, and hatred of sin; and the reason of our not readily understanding him seems to be that we are so far beneath him in holiness, humility, acquaintance with the spirituality of God's law, and the evil of our own hearts, and in our degree of abhorrence of moral evil.'

I have not then the smallest hesitation in taking the passage as I find it, and regarding it as descriptive of the Apostle's own sense of shortcoming before the standard of the law, at the very time of his most peaceful, Christian experience. I wish I had time to follow out the subject, and show how in the midst of his conflict a hallowed peace was flowing into his soul: but that I must leave to another day. But you must not wait till next Sunday, seeking peace, and finding none; you must remember at once that, though you fail, the Lord Jesus Christ never does. You must remember at once that it is with especial reference to this very struggle that we are taught that 'the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.' You must remember at once that in the midst of all your difficulties you have a living Advocate at the right hand of God; and therefore at once, with God's holiness as your standard, God's atonement as your righteousness, and God's Spirit as your guide, notwithstanding all shortcomings, you may say as St. Paul did in the midst of his struggle, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

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GRACE.

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'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.'—ROM. vii. 25.

'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Jesus Christ, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.'—ROM. viii. 1.

I HOPE that your study of this passage during the week has confirmed the conclusions at which we arrived last Sunday,—that St. Paul was speaking of himself, not of another; and that he was describing his experience at the very time he wrote the Epistle. I trust also you have seen from his words that the Lord had opened his eyes to discover the holiness of the law, and changed his heart, so that with his whole soul he loved it. I hope also that it has been clear to you that this exclamation, 'Oh, wretched man that I am!' was the expression of his profound humiliation, under the painful sense of his own shortcoming when measured by the high standard of the holiness of God.

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Now, I believe that if, instead of adopting some artificial standard of our own, we aim at the perfection of God's holiness, as taught in the Word of God and exhibited in the life of the Son of God, we are sure thus painfully to feel the contrast between what we are and what we ought to be. Of course if we measure ourselves by ourselves we may be easily satisfied; but then we know we are not wise, and our satisfaction may be nothing more than delusion. But if we bring ourselves to the test of perfect, spotless, eternal holiness, and honestly look into the workings of our own fallen heart, I cannot imagine why we should shrink from such words as those in our confession, 'We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.'

Are we to understand then that there is nothing but conflict and disappointment before the Christian man, and that the only effect of the opening of the heart by the Holy Ghost, is to lead us to discover, and feel the pain of, sin? If so, I could almost say, 'Let the eye remain closed,' for I verily believe there is no state of mind so painful as when there is the sight of sin without the

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sight of Christ Jesus. When you know neither sin nor a Saviour, you can be content in the world; when you know sin alone without a Saviour, you have all the anxiety of religion without the joy; but it is when you know both, that you may be sorrowful yet always rejoicing; deeply conscious of your own defects, and yet resting peacefully in the right hand of the blessed Lord who has redeemed you by His blood.

This morning, therefore, if God permit, we will endeavour to study what it is in the Saviour that can give us a peaceful, thankful joy, at the very time that we feel most profoundly humbled before the holiness of God. I have not nearly time to discuss the whole subject as I should like to do, and, therefore, must confine your attention to these two verses; standing as they do in immediate connexion with the description of the struggle, they will supply us with exactly the information we require, and teach us how in the midst of the sharpest conflict with sin the believer may enjoy the most perfect peace in Christ Jesus.

There appear to be three lessons plainly taught us.

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I. We have the triumphant hope of final victory. Along with the deepest sense of unsatisfied longings after holiness there is the peaceful spirit of thanksgiving in the assurance of a coming triumph. The passage does not refer to a deliverance that had already taken place, but to one still future; and the thanksgiving was not for any thing past, but for a great work still remaining to be accomplished. So the deliverance from the text is not a deliverance from the curse, for that had taken place already; nor a deliverance from the sentence of the law, for from that the Apostle was already free; but a deliverance from the power of indwelling sin, which kept him back from the holiness at which he aimed. He said, therefore, 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' He had found by experience that he could not deliver himself; but in the midst of his own failure he could look up to the great Deliverer, and with profound thanksgiving bless God for the undoubting assurance that in God's own time he would be completely transformed into the very likeness of his Lord. His language is explained by his own words, in Phil. iii. 20, 21: 'From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself.' 'The body of this death,' in the text, is the same as the 'vile body,' or 'body of humiliation,' in the Philippians; and the deliverance of the text is the transformation of that body into the likeness of the Lord Christ Jesus, at the appearing of our Blessed Saviour. This is exactly the same as what the Apostle John expected when he said (1 John, iii. 2), 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.' So that, on the whole, we are taught that the time is most undoubtedly coming when those who are thirsting after the holiness of God will be perfectly satisfied; when the vile body shall be changed; and when not a spot, or blemish, will remain in any one of the saints of God.

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Ye then who are humbled and cast down because of your infinite shortcomings, ye must not be disheartened, but must trust your Saviour. He came to save His people from their sins, and in His own time He will do it. If you be in Him, He has already set you free from the curse; He has already given you the earnest desire to do His will; He has already so far secured the victory that, 'Sin shall not have the dominion over you.' And the time is soon coming when He will Himself appear in His glory, and then all conflicts will be over, and you will be like Him, for you shall see Him as He is. Like St. Paul, therefore, you may begin at once to give Him thanks. You remember the case of Jehoshaphat, and how he put the singers in front of his little army, to praise God for the promised victory, even when the enemy stood there in the fulness of his strength. So you too may rise at once in the spirit of thanksgiving: for in Christ Jesus your victory is far more certain than that of Jehoshaphat. You may press on, therefore, with the utmost vigour, with a victory full in view; and, though as yet you fall infinitely short of His most perfect character, you need not wait till you have overcome your difficulties, but may even now say, as St. Paul did, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

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II. But you could not do this if all the while the power of sin were shutting you out from God. And this leads us to a second point of the utmost possible importance: viz., that now, in the midst of the struggle, and during the time of imperfection, in Christ Jesus we are free from all condemnation. If, as we pursue our course, we were to be condemned for all the sin of which we are guilty in either omission or commission, in either thought, word, or act, there could be no peace or hope in our struggle. I am not surprised that poor people who do not know the Gospel go to priests for absolution, or resort to any other man-made expedient in order to endeavour to escape from the misery of the perpetual exclusion from God of which they must be conscious. But in Christ Jesus you need nothing of the kind, for 'there is now no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus.' Observe the force of the 'now' in contrast with the 'shall' of the twenty-fourth verse of the seventh chapter. The complete deliverance is future: so he said, 'Who *shall* deliver me?' But the perfect freedom from all condemnation is present: and therefore he says, 'There is *now* no condemnation.' The 'therefore now' of that verse depends on the sixth verse of the seventh chapter, the intermediate passage being a parenthesis, so that the connexion is as follows: 'Now we are delivered from the law, . . . there is therefore now no condemnation.' The battle is not over, and you have still to fight a hard fight with sin; but now that sin cannot cut you off from God, for you are no longer under the law: you are in Christ Jesus, and He has satisfied the law in your behalf. Your sin undoubtedly deserves condemnation, and you have not a word to say in its defence: but He has already borne that condemnation, so that in Him you are free; and nothing can separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus the Lord. Now, think for one moment of the unspeakable blessedness of this most precious truth. You may review all that

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has occurred through the day,—your prayers, your praises, your wandering thoughts, your conversation, your motives, and your heart's desires,—and oh, how far they will all fall short of the holiness of God! If you are not in Christ Jesus, the thought of them must fill you with anxiety, doubt, and a sense of distance from God; but if you are enabled by His grace to take home to your heart the blessed truth, that *now*, even *now*, before you have gained the victory, there is no condemnation,—then that sin does not separate you from Him. It humbles you, it is true, and deeply grieves you; but it cannot cut you off from God: you are sheltered in the covenant of Grace. 'The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth you from all sin,' and you may kneel before Him in the peaceful enjoyment of a true and uninterrupted fellowship with God. In the spirit of adoption you may cry Abba, Father; and with the happy trust of a child in its father's arms, you may say, 'I will lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.'

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III. But that is not all; for besides this we have the unspeakable privilege of the unceasing leading of God the Holy Ghost. If we were left to ourselves to fight out our battle with sin, to rely on our own judgment, and to overcome by our own powers, we should be overcome before we had struck a single blow. But not only is there a final victory promised to us in the future, and a complete freedom from all condemnation in the present, but there is also another most sacred gift at once enjoyed by all who are in Christ Jesus: viz., the present indwelling of God the Holy Ghost within the soul. This belongs not to the future, but to the present: it is not connected with the 'shall' of verse twenty-four, but with the 'now' of verse one. 'There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk,' or who are walking, 'not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' So, in verse fourteen, we read of a present leading as the privilege of a present sonship: 'As many as are led,' or being led, 'by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' It is impossible to attempt to unfold all the blessings which follow from this most sacred privilege: it conveys to us all that is connected both with companionship and power. Companionship, because He is not one afar off to be reached only occasionally, and that after special efforts: but dwelling within the soul as a Leader, a Comforter, a Witness, an Advocate, a Friend. And a power: for He is not like a mighty arm afar off, omnipotent if we could but reach it; but a very present help: one that knows our weakness better than we do, and perceives our danger before we know it ourselves. One that, dwelling within, can so act on the conscience, and so move the secret springs of the will, that He does not merely make use of us as machines, but constrains us to hate sin and to love holiness; while He Himself imparts a power to shake off our fetters, and as free men to walk with God.

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Surely, then, we may understand the apparent contradiction in the Apostle's words, and see why it was that he was thanking God, although he called himself a wretched man. He called himself a wretched man, because there was that in his ruined nature which kept him back from the exalted holiness at which he aimed: but he could still thank God, for he was sure that before long he would be transformed into the likeness of Christ Himself; and, more than that, he knew that even now, in the days of his conflict, there was a freedom from all condemnation for his failures, and the sacred assurance of the Holy Ghost abiding in his soul to lead him on to victory. Therefore it was that he could give thanks. And, dear brethren, if you are in Christ Jesus, may not you do the same? Is there not the same hope for you? Are not you equally free from condemnation? Is not the indwelling Spirit equally effectual for you? How is it then that your whole souls are not filled with bright hope, and profound thanksgiving? How is it that we do not all unite more heartily and unreservedly in the spirit of the text, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord?'

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HOLINESS THROUGH FAITH.

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'And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.'—ACTS, xv.
9.

I FEAR that I may have almost wearied some of you by dwelling so long as I have on the subject of sanctification, or Christian holiness; but it is one of such overwhelming practical importance, and so intimately connected with the glory of God, that I am persuaded we ought none to grudge any time spent on the study of it. I must ask your attention, therefore, to a phrase which has lately become familiar to some of you, viz. 'holiness through faith.' I like the expression thoroughly, and believe it to be full of truth; for there can be no true holiness except by faith, and no real faith that does not lead to holiness. If we are holy at all we may be perfectly certain that the holiness will be through faith; and if we are real believers we may be equally sure that we shall be holy; therefore it is that in this passage, when the Apostle is speaking of the sacred work of divine purity wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost, he described Him as 'purifying the heart by faith.' This then shall be our subject for this morning, and I hope we may learn two great truths: first, that holiness is not known by faith; and next, that faith is the power by which it pleases God to produce holiness in the soul.

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I. Holiness is not known by faith. This seems so obvious that it may be scarcely thought to require consideration, but from what I have read lately, I am inclined to think it does. Let us then bear well in mind that faith is entirely occupied with things future or unseen. 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' The moment that we can see anything, that thing ceases to be an object of faith. There is an old saying, that 'seeing is believing;' but that is the creed of the materialist, who says he can only believe what he sees; but it will not do for the Christian, or even for the philosopher, for sight supersedes faith, and the very essence of faith is to believe when we cannot see. So our Lord said to Thomas, 'Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed.' You believe that the Lord Jesus is now at the right hand of the Father, and will shortly come again; but when you stand before Him and behold

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Him on His throne, it will no longer be a matter of faith, but of sight. So our justification through imputed righteousness is a matter of faith: it is a divine act of the hidden mind of God, and perfectly invisible to the eye of man. You cannot see your name in the book of life; you cannot see the counsel of God blotting out your sin because of the finished sacrifice, or accounting you righteous in Christ Jesus even at the very time that you know yourself to be a ruined sinner. You cannot see it, for the whole transaction is out of sight: it takes place in heaven, not on earth; in the council-chamber of God, and not within the reach of human vision. This, therefore, is an object of faith, and can only be known by faith. You cannot hope to see your justification, or the imputation of righteousness to your soul; all that you can do is to trust God for it. He has declared in His Word that He has 'made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.' So that we may trust in His assurance, and believe that, the Lord Jesus having been made sin for us, we are accounted righteous in Him, even with the righteousness of God. Yes: and thanks be to God! we may believe it at once, for the Covenant of God is as perfect now as it can be if we wait a hundred years. There is nothing, therefore, to prevent a present and immediate faith in the finished Work, and perfect Word, of a Blessed Saviour. Believe Him, and there is peace; and believe Him now.

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But it is not so with sanctification, or holiness. The seat of holiness, or sanctification, is in our own souls. It is not like the name written in the Book of Life which no man can see; for it is the law written by the Holy Ghost upon the fleshy tables of the heart, and therefore within view of conscience. God has placed a conscience within every one of us: an eye that looks inward, and can see all that is passing within the soul. Are there bad acts, bad words, or bad thoughts? Conscience may see them all. Is there a deep desire to walk with God, and do His Will? Conscience discovers it. So says the Apostle John (1 John, iii. 20, 21): 'If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.' Conscience therefore must decide as to the existence of sanctification, or personal holiness. Justification, or imputed righteousness, is known by faith, not sight: sanctification, or inwrought righteousness, is known by sight, not faith. We should be acting in unbelief if we were to doubt the perfection of imputed righteousness because we cannot see it, for faith is concerned with the unseen; but we should be putting faith into altogether a false position if we were to presume to believe in the perfection of our holiness so long as conscience convinces us that sin is still abiding in the heart. If we are conscious of indwelling sin, and find it ready to break out like a fire at any moment, it is not the office of faith to reckon it dead. No, dear brethren: true holiness is a practical change of heart wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, and perceptible; it is a new character wrought in us by a new power, and springing from new principles. It is not an invisible change, but one known by its results; it is not a matter of faith, but of experience; and so St. John says in his Epistle (1 John, iii. 24): 'Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us.'

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II. But, though holiness is not known by faith, faith is the power by which it pleases God to produce it, and therefore it is well called 'Holiness through faith.' Some people seem to speak of this subject as if they had made a great religious discovery. I often wonder what books they had read, or what sermons they had heard, before they discovered it. They could not have been those of the great divines of the Church of England,—such as Hooker, Bishop Reynolds, or Archbishop Leighton; nor of the great Evangelical Fathers in the Church of England,—such as Venn, Cecil, and Simeon; for holiness through faith is the keynote of all their writings. Over and over again have sermons been preached and books written on such great, full, plain texts as this: 'Put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.'

But, leaving such discussions, let us consider the office of faith in producing holiness, and examine in what way it pleases God to purify the heart through faith.

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We shall find that He does it in two ways.

(1.) By the introduction of new motives and principles. He does not deal with us as though we were without mind, but by the use of the mind which He Himself has given. The refiner refines the silver, but the silver has no voice in the transaction: it is simply acted upon as lifeless matter. But it is not so with the soul: the soul can think, can feel, can sorrow, can rejoice, can love; and when God refines it He calls into activity all its faculties. In purifying the heart He makes use of its powers, and so consecrates them to His most sacred service. For example, there is no greater power in the whole mind of man than love. People will make any sacrifices under the influence of a powerful affection; God therefore takes that faculty of love, and so consecrates it to His own sacred service, that the people of God may say, 'The love of Christ constraineth us.' And now you see in a moment the office of faith. How is that love to grow up within the soul if there be no faith preceding it? If you have no trust in His reconciling grace,—if it is all a matter of uncertainty to you whether He is loving you as a child, or about to cast you as a condemned criminal into hell,—I cannot see what there is to call forth any love within your heart. St. John says, 'We love Him because He first loved us;' so that if there is no trust in His first love the motive is gone, and there is no power by which love in us can be produced. But when, on the other hand, we can believe His boundless grace,—believe that He gave Himself to be sin for us with as little doubt as if we actually saw Him on the cross,—believe that we are already forgiven through His blood, and, though so unworthy, made the righteousness of God in Him,—believe, in short, that He is fulfilling to us that most precious promise in Hosea, 'I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from him,' and all because the Son of God was content in our place to die,—then there is something to call forth love in the hardest heart that ever beat; something that must make sin in all its forms inexpressibly hateful; something to produce those sacred results of

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constraining love described by St. Paul, when he said, 'That they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them, and rose again.'

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If therefore you earnestly desire holiness, remember it must be holiness through faith. Do not fall into the common error of supposing it must be faith through holiness; but keep close to what is taught you in the text: viz., that God purifies the heart through faith. First, get a fast hold on His love to you. Realise that, and you may safely leave your love to Him to follow. But, till you know that, you will never be really holy, for you can never be under the power of the great governing principle of love.

(2.) But this is not all, for true holiness is a Divine gift as much as pardon. It is not an uncommon thing to find a kind of vague idea that we are to find the holiness, and God the pardon; the certain result of which is that there is no progress in the one, and no joy in the other. But that is not the teaching of the Gospel. According to the Sacred Scripture all the Three Persons of the one Godhead are engaged in our sanctification. In this passage, *e.g.*, it is ascribed to God the Father, as its author, and God the Holy Ghost as the agent; in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, our Lord and Saviour is said to be 'made unto us sanctification:' so that He bears the very title of Jesus, because it is His office to 'save His people from their sins.' If, therefore, we are made holy, it is by the power of the Holy Ghost carrying out the purpose of the Father, and dwelling within the soul through the mediation of the Son; it is the sacred act of Divine power carrying into effect the Divine Covenant through the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And here you see in a moment the office of faith. Faith is the act of the soul casting itself on the Covenant, and on the Lord Jesus Christ revealed in Scripture as the Mediator of the Covenant. If you fight your own battle for holiness you may struggle hard, and struggle long, but you are sure to fail. You may try any expedient you please,—rules of life, books of self-examination, anything; but it won't do. The old sin of your fallen heart will keep cropping up just as strong as ever; and you will find yourself a year hence no nearer to the mark than you are now, for the holiness at which you are aiming is not holiness through faith. If you thirst for holiness, you must throw yourself into the arms of the Son of God, that He, by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, may do that which you cannot do,—make you holy; or, according to the text, purify your heart by faith. There is a great danger of our being partial in our trust: of trusting Him for pardon, but not for holiness. But He teaches us to trust Him equally for both. The promise, 'I will put my law into their inward parts, and write it in their hearts,' is just as much a promise of the Covenant as that other promise, 'I will forgive their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.' You may therefore trust Him to write His law on your heart just as much as you may trust Him for the forgiveness of your sin.

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It does not follow from this that the two gifts will be completed at the same time, or in the same way: the writing of the law on the heart is through a gradual process of Divine education; the blotting out of sin, an immediate act complete at once in the mind of God: but both are acts of the great Deliverer, and for both equally it is the joy of our hearts to trust Him. Trust Him, therefore, to work out a holiness in your soul just as you trust Him to have given you the forgiveness of your sin. If you are trusting Him for imputed righteousness,—that is, trusting Him for having wrought out such a work in your behalf that you are already 'made the righteousness of God in Him,'—trust Him also for personal holiness; that by the power of the Holy Ghost your character may be conformed to your position. There are many powers by which you may gain many victories, but there is only one by which you can overcome the world: viz., that described by St. John when he said, 'This is the victory that over-cometh the world, even our faith.' Be sure, then, that that power is sufficient; so that, trusting Christ, you may rest assured of victory. You are not condemned to toil on in a condition of disheartening hopelessness; but you may enter on each day of your life in the happy and peaceful assurance, not that you are perfect, but that you have perpetually at hand a loving Lord fully able by His own omnipotence to overcome in you your besetting sin. So you may go up from the wilderness leaning on the Beloved, and by God's grace may walk with Him to victory. Past failures must teach you your own most terrible corruption; but God's truth may assure you of His sufficiency: so that at the very moment of your own most utter helplessness, when you are ready to cry, 'Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' you may reply to your own question in the triumphant language of the Apostle, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

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CONSECRATION.

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'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.'—ROM. xii. 1.

A GREAT deal has been lately said on the subject of consecration; and we may all rejoice in having our attention directed to it, as we all require a much higher standard than we have ever yet known of self-abandoning dedication to the Lord. We all need to know more fully and more experimentally the real meaning of such words as these: 'Whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.' It is most important then that we understand what we mean by consecration. It is clearly quite distinct from that Divine act of separation in which God, by the power of the Holy Ghost, separates His own elect, and incorporates them into Christ. It is also quite distinct from the submission of the soul when it ceases to go about to establish its own righteousness, and submits itself unto the righteousness of God, though in the inaccurate phraseology of some modern writings it sometimes appears to be confounded with it. To consecrate any thing is to set it apart

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as a holy gift unto the Lord; and, therefore, when we speak of consecration, or self-consecration, we mean that which St. Paul described of the Churches of Macedonia, when he said, 'They first gave their own selves to the Lord.' It is the voluntary act of the loving and believing heart yielding itself up to a blessed Saviour, to be henceforth holy unto God. It is in this sense that I am about to speak of it now,—not considering the word so much as the thing,—and hoping that, by God's great grace, all amongst us who know the Lord may be enabled to yield ourselves, as we have never yet done, to His service.

There are few passages of sacred Scripture which will give us a better summary of the subject than this verse. It contains four points, to which I would draw your particular attention.

I. This consecration is a sacrifice. I need not say that it is not a sacrifice for the blotting out of sin: it cost more to redeem our souls, so we must let that alone for ever. It is the sacrifice of thanksgiving, corresponding to the meat-offering in the law of types,—the sacrifice of the thankful heart presenting its thank-offering to God. Regarding it then as prefigured by the meat-offering, we may learn two lessons respecting it.

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(1.) It implies complete surrender. Under the ancient law every sacrifice was wholly given up to God. Whatever was brought to the altar was given up without reserve. No part of it was taken back to the home of the offerer. People might give what they pleased, but when it was given it was no longer their own, but God's. And so it is with us. If we have given ourselves to the Lord, we are no longer our own: 'Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.' There is, however, this difference between the Jewish sacrifice and ours. In the case of the ancient sacrifices, when the sacrifice was a living animal, it was always put to death, and part of it burned as a sweet savour unto God: but it is not so with us. According to this text, it is a living sacrifice that we are called to offer; it is the continued life that we are to surrender. We are not now called to die for Him, as martyrs and many of our missionaries have done, but to live for Him in that state of life in which it has pleased God to call us. The sweet savour that is to rise from our sacrifice is to be the sweet savour of Christian holiness, the holy fragrance of Christian character.

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(2.) This sacrifice is well pleasing to God. The meat-offering was described as 'an offering made by fire of a sweet savour unto the Lord:' so this sacrifice is said in the text to be 'acceptable unto God.' It does not say that it can fulfil the law, or be perfect before God; for there is a vast difference between that which can fulfil the law and that which can please Him. Nothing imperfect can fulfil the law, but the utterly imperfect service of a loving heart may be well-pleasing in His sight. Thus it is that He declares our sacrifice to be acceptable to Himself; and while we seek to yield all we have to Him, and for His sake 'to do good and to communicate,' we may have the delight and encouragement of knowing that 'with such sacrifices God is well pleased.' (Heb. xiii. 16.)

II. It is a sacrifice of the whole man. In the first verse the body only is mentioned: 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice;' which evidently has reference to the Jewish type, and teaches that we are not to offer the body of a lamb, or a goat, or a heifer, but our own. But the next verse teaches us that the appeal is not limited to the offering of the body, for there we read that we are to be 'transformed by the renewing of our *mind*, that we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.' It is clear, therefore, that the whole man is to be included in the gift. Now I sometimes meet with subtle distinctions between the soul and the spirit, and the emotions and the will, and I am quite ready to admit that they may be all correct and very interesting: but I do not care to stop to distinguish between the different parts or faculties, for God's call lays claim to them all. Whatever they are, and whereinsoever they differ, the desire of our heart should be that they should all as one whole be given up to Him. In whatever position He has placed us,—whether that of parents, children, masters, servants, men of business, men of wealth, tradesmen, labourers, or clergymen,—that position is to be occupied for Him; and whatever faculties He has given us,—whether a powerful intellect, a good memory, a warm heart, a tender conscience, a vigorous body, a good constitution, or an ample fortune,—all, all belong to Him who has redeemed us by His own most precious blood. When we give up ourselves we give up everything,—our wills, and emotions, and powers, and energies, our hearts, and heads, and hands,—to be yielded up to Him, and employed by Him and for Him, as He sees best for His own glory.

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III. This consecration is the result of mercy. The latter words of the text show that it is 'a reasonable service;' or, in other words, that it is not the result of mere feeling, impulse, or emotion, but the deliberate and well-considered decision of a thoughtful mind. The passage corresponds to those words in 2 Cor. v. 14: 'The love of Christ constraineth us because we thus judge;' where you see the union between the heart and the head. The constraining love is the result of the judgment, the blessed fruit of the deep convictions of the understanding: so that those who feel it may give a reason, not only for the hope that is in them, but also for the love that fills their heart. There are certain great facts on which the judgment rests, and the believing assurance of these facts is the means employed by the Holy Spirit to call forth the devotedness of love.

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Now what are these facts? What is it that possesses this love-producing power? In the passage from the Corinthians there is one great fact mentioned: viz., the propitiatory death of the Lord Jesus Christ. 'If one died for all, then were all dead,' 'or died.' They died in Him, inasmuch as they were represented by Him; and it is that great fact which is said to produce the constraining love. In this passage no one fact is mentioned, but the appeal is made to the whole multitude of His mercies: 'I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.' Throughout the Epistle St. Paul had been showing that we are all saved by mercy. In

the eleventh chapter he had enlarged on the mercy by which we Gentiles are now saved in Christ Jesus and the mercy about to be manifested towards the Jews, till he arrives at the conclusion that 'God hath concluded all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all.' Then he bursts forth in the exclamation, 'Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!' and follows it up by the appeal of the text: 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God.' If such mercy has been shown you, if, notwithstanding all your unbelief, by boundless and unmerited mercy you have been saved and made one even with Christ Himself, is it now too much to ask of you that, without delay and without reserve, you yield your whole lives to His service?

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I believe it is impossible for us to be too careful in observing this connexion between consecration and mercy, for in the very vague theology of the present day there is a great deal which certainly has the appearance of teaching that the blessed peace of a union with Christ is to be the result of entire consecration. But we are here taught, not that we are to reach mercy as the result of the completeness of our consecration, but that, having realized mercy, we should yield ourselves in consecration to God. That union with the Lord Jesus must be given through the personal appropriation of the mercy of God in Him; and we should regard with the utmost jealousy any teaching which, either intentionally or unintentionally, turns the thoughts inwards to analyze the extent of consecration, with a view to obtaining the blessing of that union, instead of rather diverting all thoughts to the fulness of mercy in Christ Jesus, and so calling forth out of His fulness the abounding love of a consecrated heart.

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This great truth is well brought out in our Communion Service. You remember those words of self-consecration in which we have so often united, words founded on this very text: 'Here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee.' Now in the first Prayer-book of Edward VI. that prayer stood before the reception of the Lord's Supper, as if we were first to complete an act of self-consecration, and then upon the strength of it feed on Christ: so our Reformers changed its position, and put the prayer after the reception instead of before it, in order to show that when we want to feed on Christ Jesus, to dwell in Him and He in us, we must come to His footstool as poor sinners, forgiven and accepted through His most precious blood; and that when we have been thus permitted to 'sit under His shadow with great delight, and to find His fruit sweet to our taste,' the next thing for us all to do is to kneel down with a full and thankful heart, and yield ourselves, body, soul, and spirit, to His service.

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IV. This consecration should be continually renewed and deepened. In our Communion Service we renew our self-dedication every time that we receive the Lord's Supper, for every time we say the same words: 'Here we offer and present ourselves . . . to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee.' In doing this I firmly believe we are right; and that we are so seems clearly proved by the text. The Romans, to whom these words were addressed, were 'beloved of God, called to be saints' (i. 7); they had 'become servants of God' and had 'their fruit unto holiness.' (vi. 22.) There can be no doubt, therefore, as to their past surrender to His service; but, notwithstanding that, they were exhorted afresh to 'present their bodies a living sacrifice,' and afresh to 'yield themselves unto God.' (vi. 13.) So we are not to look on our consecration as a single act, completed at a certain moment, and afterwards to be regarded as a finished thing; but rather as a habit and attitude of mind, deepening with our depth, strengthening with our strength, and growing with our growth. As we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we shall grow also in the deep sense of mercy. His love passeth knowledge, and it will take eternity to learn its fulness. And His mercy corresponds with His love: it is 'from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him;' it is 'high as the heaven is above the earth;' and as no astronomer can measure the height of the fixed stars, and as no finite mind can take in the idea of an infinite eternity, so none of us, no, not even the most advanced believer, can fathom the depths or scan the heights of the free, unfettered, everlasting mercy of our God. But as we grow in the knowledge of Him and of ourselves, we shall learn more and more of it. The more we know of the covenant of God,—the more we see of the Lord Jesus, in His person, His character, and His work,—the more we know of our own hearts, and discover the exceeding sinfulness of our ruined nature, and the more we see of the perfect adaptation to our utmost wants of the Divine salvation wrought out for us in Christ Jesus,—so much the more shall we know of mercy. Every day in the believer's life brings with it a fresh lesson in mercy, and every prayer that we pray to a reconciled Father should bring home to us with fresh power the deep debt we owe to mercy.

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And now you see in a moment how it is that there should be a continued and constantly repeated renewal of self-consecration. Every fresh discovery of mercy should lead at once to fresh surrender. If you are looking on mercy as some distant thing, which you have often heard of and wish to reach, but cannot, I see not, for my part, how it should have any great power over your life; for, though it looks very beautiful, you cannot say that it has brought any benefit to you. If you have never felt your own deep need of it, and never learned your utter ruin, and have therefore never realised your condemnation before God, I see not how the tidings of mercy should have any great power upon you, for no man really cares for the remedy until he has been taught by God's Spirit to feel his need. But if you have discovered yourself to be utterly and hopelessly lost, condemned alike by your own conscience and by the law of God; and if in the midst of your ruin you have, by God's rich love in Christ Jesus, 'obtained mercy;' if you can look on His mercy in having redeemed you by His blood, in having called you by His Spirit, in having saved you by His grace, in having given you a blessed hope of His everlasting kingdom,—then indeed I cannot doubt that God has long since called you to a real consecration to His service.

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But if this be so, and if God has since been bringing you to a deeper sense of sin, and at the same time opening your heart to understand more of His mercy; if He is step by step making manifest to you 'the depth, and length, and breadth, and height,' and causing you to 'know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge:' then I can see very clearly that all past consecration must appear to your own heart as nothing, and that, 'forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before,' you will be ready again to kneel down at His feet, and with fresh love and fresh thanksgiving, yield yourselves afresh to Him, to be His, and His for ever. You may have long since given yourself to the Lord; but if you are this day really permitted 'to feed on Him—in your heart—by faith—with thanksgiving, you will be prepared to kneel down afterwards and say, 'Here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee.'

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PRAYER.

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'I am Thine, save me; for I have sought Thy precepts.'—PSALM CXIX. 94.

WE studied last Sunday the subject of consecration as taught us in the words of the Apostle Paul, in which he exhorted us to 'present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God.' I trust the result has been that many amongst us have so realised the multitude of God's mercies that, under the deep sense of profound thanksgiving, we have knelt down before Him, afresh to yield ourselves to His service. If so, the question arises, What next? If the sacrifice of ourselves has been offered by us and accepted by God, into what position have we been brought, and what are we to expect in our future life? Are we to expect to be so set free from the impediments of sin, and so filled with holy love and joy that we shall be gently wafted heavenward, without either a conflict or a difficulty? or, are we to expect a stiff, hard warfare to the end, with a certain hope of victory through the perfection of our Leader's power, but with all the accompaniments of a deadly struggle until the victory is won and Satan bruised under our feet for ever? I regard this question as one of the utmost importance, for if we look for that which God has not promised, our very faith will lead to disappointment; whereas if we do not look for that which He has really promised, we shall clearly never rise to the high standard of His Word. To this question then I purpose to turn your thoughts this morning, and I pray God that the Holy Spirit may teach us all, and lead us rightly to understand, and truly to act on, His Word.

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This text appears to throw great light on the subject, for in the first clause the Psalmist actually pleads before God the recognised fact of a past and present consecration. He does not say, 'I wish to be Thine,' or 'I hope to be Thine,' or 'I pray Thee to make me Thine,' but he says, 'Lord, I am Thine,' and no one could say that unless he had already yielded himself to God. But it is not consecration only that is expressed when the believer says, 'Lord, I am Thine;' for the consecration of which I was speaking last Sunday is a human act,—it is our own surrender of our own powers to God; and when we look closely at anything we do we may well remember the words of the prophet, 'How weak is thine heart!' If we can truly say in faith, 'Lord, I am Thine,' we must rely on something a great deal better than our own consecration of ourselves. We belong to the Lord Jesus by virtue of the eternal covenant to which He referred when He said, 'My Father which gave them Me is greater than all;' we belong to Him because we have been made His own by redemption, so as to be parts of the 'Church which He has purchased with His own blood;' we belong to Him because we have been separated unto Him by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, and so been 'sanctified unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;' we belong to Him, for we have been made His own children by adoption, so that He speaks of us, saying, 'I and the children whom Thou hast given Me;' and we belong to Him, for we have been solemnly signed and sealed unto Him in our baptism, and in our own persons have deliberately ratified the covenant. So that when we say, 'Lord, I am Thine,' we do not merely refer to some one particular transaction of our own at some one particular time, but we look at the whole counsel and covenant of God,—at the great and perfect work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost,—before which any feeble effort of our own minds is absolutely nothing; and, reviewing it all, we kneel down, with our hearts full of praise, and wonder, and say with the deepest thanksgiving, 'Lord, I am Thine.'

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It is clear, therefore, that these words, while they include personal consecration on our own part, express that which is infinitely greater: namely, the great grace of God Himself in redeeming us by the precious blood of the Lamb, and separating us as a holy people unto Himself. And now follows the question: When in this highest sense we can kneel down and really say with truth, 'Lord, I am Thine,' what is to follow? The words of the text supply us with a most important answer; for they teach that one of the great results will be believing prayer, and they show that when we are really His, and when we know that we are His, we are not to rest content with that sacred and unspeakable privilege, but to kneel down afresh and say, 'Lord, I am Thine: save me.'

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It is clear from this passage that there was something which David still wanted, although he was the Lord's. He was safe, but he still prayed to be saved; he had been made the Lord's own dear child, but he still prayed, 'Save me.' Let us consider, then, what he wanted, and what he did; and may God the Holy Ghost so apply the passage to our souls, that we may know the double blessing of being His and being saved through His grace!

I. WHAT HE WANTED; or, in other words, what he prayed for when he prayed that he might be saved. There appears to be no reference in the psalm to temporal deliverance, so we need not consider the prayer as referring to it. It was for spiritual gifts that he prayed, and from spiritual difficulties that he desired to be saved. And when we consider these spiritual gifts it is very clear

that it was not acceptance, or reconciliation, for which he prayed, for his mind must have been quite at rest upon that point when he said, 'Lord, I am Thine.' What he was longing for was personal holiness,—that is, a complete conformity to the perfect will of that holy God to whom he belonged and whom he loved. You see this throughout the psalm. He does not pray, 'Pardon me,' 'Receive me,' or 'Blot out my transgressions,' as he does in some other psalms; but he does pray again and again that God's statutes might be written on his heart: 'Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes;' 'Teach me Thy statutes;' 'Deal bountifully with Thy servant, that I may live and keep Thy word;' 'Quicken me after Thy loving-kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Thy mouth.' The whole psalm is full of such prayers, and they show us perfectly clearly that the salvation for which he prayed was the power for holiness from God. So the psalm also teaches us what was the difficulty in the attainment of his wish. There are some allusions to enemies, from which we may infer that there were persons about him who hindered his progress. But the psalm shows clearly that the real difficulty lay in himself, and in the deadness of his own heart. No less than nine times does he pray, 'Quicken me.' And what did that prayer imply? Was it not that he was conscious of a dead, cold state of heart, and was longing for life and warmth? Had there been no element of deadness in his soul, he would not have required to be quickened; but there was that element of deadness, and he himself urged it as a reason for his prayer, when he said (verse 25), 'My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken Thou me according to Thy word.' It was the deep corruption of his human nature which continued to cling to him, even when he was the Lord's, against which he prayed when he said, 'Lord, I am Thine: save me.'

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And now arises the most deeply important practical question: Are we, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, at the very time that we can truly say 'Lord, I am Thine,' to be prepared to meet the same difficulty? In answer to that question, I have not one moment's hesitation in replying that we are. I have read and heard that original sin in certain persons is 'destroyed,' is 'dead, though capable of revival,' is 'rendered inert,' and is 'in suspense;' but I do not believe one word of it. It is far too large a subject for me to attempt to discuss fully in one short sermon: I have not time to give you more than two passages, but I hope they will be sufficient. In Romans viii.,—that grand chapter, so full of the grand tidings of safety, beginning with no condemnation and ending with no separation,—the chapter which some claim as descriptive of what they term 'the higher life,'—in the middle of that chapter we find a description of the sons of God who are led by the Spirit. Now observe carefully the effect of that leading of God's children by the Holy Ghost. We find it in verse 13: 'If ye do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live: for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' The word rendered 'do mortify' means 'are habitually putting to death' (θανατοῦτε). But if original sin were dead already, or inert, why should the children of God, by the power of the Holy Ghost, be habitually putting to death its deeds? The fact that its deeds are to be habitually put to death is a perfectly clear proof that the root of the evil is not dead already.

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One passage more, and I have chosen it because I think it of peculiar importance in its bearing on what is called the 'higher life.' You remember that wonderful insight into heaven which St. Paul describes in 2 Cor. xii., and you remember how it was followed up by the thorn in the flesh,—'the messenger of Satan,' given 'to buffet him.' Now why was it thus followed? Why was this messenger of Satan let loose upon God's chosen servant immediately after this wonderful blessing? He himself tells us the reason: 'Lest I should be exalted beyond measure.' In other words, he was in danger of pride of heart. He was caught up into the third heaven, but he carried with him even there so much of the old evil of his fallen nature that when he came down he was in such danger of being puffed up with pride that it was an act of mercy in God even to permit him to be buffeted by Satan's messenger, in order to keep him in a humble spirit, depending upon grace. Surely we learn the lesson that, whatever be our spiritual attainments, and whatever God has taught us of His mercy, we have still to strive as David did against the active working of indwelling sin, and to pray as he did, 'Lord, I am Thine: save me.'

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II. We see then what the Psalmist WANTED; let us consider next WHAT HE DID.

(1.) When he was conscious that his soul was cleaving to the dust, he was not content to leave it there. He did not say that it could not be helped, and so make it an excuse for sin. He did not do as some people do with reference to their temper,—say they have the misfortune of a bad temper, and therefore consider themselves not to be blamed when they break out in a passion, or settle down in a sulky fit. He resolutely, determinately, and prayerfully grappled with the difficulty. He was conscious of sin, but he could not endure the thought of it. He could say from the bottom of his heart, 'I hate and abhor lying; but Thy law do I love and it was because he loved the law, and hated the sin, that he came before God with the cry, 'Lord, I am Thine: save me!' So we may be perfectly sure that if a person be really born of God, the knowledge of indwelling sin will never lead him to settle down in the apathy of hopelessness; but will arouse him, by the sense of danger, to watch, to pray, to trust, to strive, to conquer, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the power of the Holy Ghost.

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(2.) But while David was thus energetic in his struggle, and allowed no compromise with sin, he was evidently brought to the acknowledgment of his own helplessness. With reference to the past he could say, 'I have sought Thy precepts;' and with reference to the present, 'I love Thy commandments above gold: yea, than much fine gold.' But notwithstanding all his painstaking, he found he could not raise his own heart above the dust, and was still obliged to acknowledge the truth of the words, 'No man hath quickened his own soul.' Thus the words, 'Lord, save me!' implied that he had given up all hope of saving himself; and when we offer the same prayer, there is the same act of self-renunciation as well as faith. I do not say that we shall give up the most

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diligent and devout endeavours after holiness, for we shall 'press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;' but that in the midst of it all we shall both know and acknowledge our own utter helplessness; and thank God for that passage in Rom. v. 6, in which we are taught that 'when we were *yet* without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.' I commend that 'yet' to the careful consideration of all those who are painfully conscious of their own inability to rise.

(3.) But while this prayer implied self-renunciation as well as trust, it implied on the other hand trust as well as self-renunciation. When we pray, 'Lord, save me,' we clearly recognise His saving power. We know (as we are taught in Heb. vii. 25) that 'He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him and therefore we come to God by Him that we may be saved. The saving in that sense is exactly the same as the saving in the text. It is not the first acceptance of the repentant sinner seeking salvation, but it is the habitual saving throughout the life; for the point of the text is that it is continued to the uttermost, or to the end. It is a saving carried on after the first great saving act is complete. I am anxious to press this on your attention, because I am inclined to think that it is the secret of the fresh help which many persons appear to have lately received. I cannot say I am sure of it; for the statements on the subject are so confused, that it is almost impossible to disentangle them. It is possible therefore that I may be entirely mistaken. But, whether it is or not, you will see in a moment the vast difference between knowing that there is a Saviour able to save, and resting in a Saviour who is actually and continually engaged in saving you; between being anxious to obtain the help of a certain physician, and being under that physician's care; between hanging on a wreck and seeing a life-boat near you, and being in the life-boat, and, though still beaten by the storm, safe in the strong arm of the Deliverer. Now this is our position in Christ Jesus. We are not seeking to reach the life-boat, for we are in it, as David was when he said, 'Lord, I am Thine.' The storm is not over, the harbour is not yet reached; but the harbour is in sight, and our Father is at the helm. David clearly prayed to Him as to one who had already begun His saving work, as you will clearly see if you compare the 88th and 93rd verses. In the 88th he prays, 'Quicken me after Thy loving-kindness;' and in the 93rd he shows that the quickening was already begun, for he says, 'I will never forget Thy precepts, for with them Thou hast quickened me.' You will see in a moment what an enormous difference this distinction must make in daily life. If you are looking up to Him as one from whom you are only seeking help, you may be perfectly sure of His sufficiency, but it will not satisfy the anxieties of your soul: but if you are actually enjoying His help, so that you can say, as the Psalmist did, 'My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped,' then you may add, as he did, 'Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise Him.' Look on Him then as one who is engaged in bearing you home; acknowledge what He has done in the past, trust Him for what He will do in the future, and meanwhile rest in what He is doing now,—just as St. Paul did when, speaking of temporal deliverance, he said (2 Cor. i. 10), 'Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver.' That one verse brings before us the past, present, and future,—the 'yesterday, to-day, and for ever,'—the Lord Jesus a very present help, and a help to the end. He has redeemed you by His own most precious blood, and saved you from all condemnation of the law: that is done and perfected for ever. He has sanctified, or separated, you in Christ Jesus, to be a purchased possession unto God: that is done likewise, and done for ever. He has begun a good work in you, and made you new creatures in Christ Jesus: that, too, is done, thanks to His mercy! He is now holding you in His hand, guiding you by His counsel, helping you by His power, and giving you the victory even over the indwelling sin which still lives, though He will not let it reign, within your heart. This is going on now: so that now, even now, He is quickening you, and when you are deeply and profoundly humbled for all that you have done and left undone, and when, under the painful conviction of indwelling sin, you are compelled to acknowledge that your 'soul cleaveth unto the dust,' you may still in happy, peaceful, loving trust, look up to Him who is even now bearing you in His arm, and say, 'Lord, I am Thine: save me.'

THE HOLY NAME SANCTIFIED.

'And He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name.'—LUKE, xi. 2.

WE are all in the habit of using this prayer every day,—for I hope that there is not one amongst us who presumes to think that he has reached a spiritual life beyond it. We use it with the utmost thankfulness,—for it expresses the deep and unceasing wants of the human heart; and, as far as I myself am concerned, I do not think that it occurs too often in our liturgy. This clause may be called 'The child's first prayer.' It is the first desire of the child of God, poured forth morning by morning into his Father's ear. But have you ever considered how it bears on the subject of Sanctification, which we have been recently considering? Are you aware that the two words, to 'hallow' and to 'sanctify,' mean the same thing, and may be interchanged one with another, so that exactly the same idea would have been expressed had the clause been rendered, 'Sanctified be Thy name?' But so it is: and therefore in this prayer we pray every day of our lives that God's own name may be 'sanctified.'

Now it will be clear in a moment to every one of you, that when the expression is thus applied to God Himself, and to His name, it must mean something very different to what it does when it is

applied to ourselves. It cannot mean separation unto God, for it is applied to Him who from all eternity has been essentially separate. Nor can it be used in the sense of 'making holy,' for perfect and unblemished holiness is the very essence of His Godhead. What then does it mean? It means that the holiness of His name should be known and honoured; and that whenever His name is named, there should be the recognition and exhibition of His holiness. It is a prayer, in fact, that His holiness may be glorified, and that throughout the world He may be obeyed and revered as a holy God.

This sanctifying, or hallowing, of the name of God Himself shall be our subject for this morning. And may He Himself grant that His name may be sanctified in this very sermon! Let our prayer be, 'Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.'

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The first point to which I would draw your attention is that He is sanctified in His people. His power is manifest in the world: His holiness in His Church. It is by the Church that is to be known, even to principalities and powers in heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God. The Church of God is gathered from a rebel world in order that God in it may display His holiness, and so make proof of His character. He manifests himself amongst His people, and this manifestation is witnessed by the world. You see this very clearly in such a passage as Ezek. xxxvi. 23: 'The heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.' God would be so sanctified in His people that the heathen should be persuaded of His Godhead. So you read in Levit. x. 3: 'I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me, and before all the people I will be glorified.' Now mark what a lesson there is in this for ourselves. In one sense we all come nigh to God, for we have all been baptized into His name. We all meet in His house as His worshippers; and many of us delight in the sacred privilege of drawing near to Him in His sacramental feast. I hope it may be said of many in the reality of their souls' salvation, as it may certainly be said of all in the externals of their Christianity,—that they are 'a people nigh unto Him.' But if so, He is to be sanctified in us. We who draw nigh unto Him, are to be like the glass reflecting His image: it is in us that His character is to be exhibited, and His holiness made manifest before the world. We are to be changed into His image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord, so that in us ought to be seen that image, and in us the holiness of His name should be exalted amongst men.

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But now follows the question,—In what way and by whom, must His name be hallowed, or sanctified, in His people? In answer to this we shall find, if we study Scripture, that it will be sanctified by His people, and also by Himself. It will be however sufficient for our present purpose if we confine our attention to its sanctification by His people, as described in these words of the prophet Isaiah: 'They shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob.'

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The great question, therefore, for us to consider is, In what way may we glorify God? And the answer is given in the words of our Lord Himself, as written in John, xv. 8: 'Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.' You will observe that it is not merely by feeling, or even by communion with God, but by fruit. I know that joy and peace are amongst the first-fruits of the Spirit, and God forbid that I should say one word that could possibly be understood as spoken lightly of such a gift as communion with God! It is the most sacred privilege that it is possible for a ransomed spirit to enjoy, and nothing but the finished ransom could ever admit us to it. But we must not confound it with the fruit that springs from it, or suppose that to enjoy communion is the same as to be holy. The sap is essential to the life of the tree, but the sap is not the fruit, and there is a great deal of sap in many trees where there is no fruit at all. The fruit is something practical, something contributed, and if it glorifies God, it will be visible to our fellow-men. So our Lord said (Matt. v. 16), 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.'

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Nor must we confine it to a victory over sin. I sometimes meet with books in which this victory appears to be described as the sum and substance of holiness. Now I do not doubt for one moment that it is a part of it; but it is only a part: the negative side, and not the positive. It would not satisfy your mind to be assured there were no thorns on your roses, or no poisonous berries on your vines; you want flowers on the rose, and grapes on the vine. I do not know that there was any harm in the fig-tree that stood by the way-side from Bethany: I never read that it yielded poison; but it bore no fruit, and the Lord withered it. So it is that we stop utterly short of the true character of Christian holiness if we describe it simply as a victory over sin. Suppose that we really had overcome, and that there had been such a conquest in deed, in word, and in thought, that we should have no occasion for the confession, 'We have done those things which we ought not to have done;' we might still be as fruitless as the barren fig-tree, and have reason to throw ourselves, in the deepest and most profound repentance, before His feet, and cry, 'We have left undone those things which we ought to have done.' True fruit is positive service: something that pervades our life. Thus of the fruits of the Spirit, as described in Gal. v. 22,—'Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,'—by far the greater number relate to our practical conduct amongst our fellow-men. In the account of heavenly wisdom given by St. James they are all of the same character: 'The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.' And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.'

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True fruit again is something yielded up to God. When a missionary gives up home, and life itself for the Gospel, that is fruit. When the Sunday-school teacher devotes the day of rest to labour for God, that is fruit. When people bring freely of their substance, and throw large gifts into the treasury of God, that is fruit. When people in family life, heads of families, servants, young people, lay themselves out to make all happy around them, and by their loving, gentle conduct,

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commend the Gospel to all with whom they are brought in contact, that is fruit. It may not be the fruit of the hot-house, enjoyed only by the rich; or like some of those fruits which look so beautiful aloft on our orchard trees, that all admire: for we must remember that some of our best fruits grow in the cottage gardens, close to the ground. So God is often best glorified by the holy, humble, and self-denying zeal of the humble believer, keeping aloof by the ground, and there, in humble life, 'adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.'

But you will observe in our Lord's words, that it is not merely by fruit, but by much fruit, that God is glorified. All trees of the same kind are not equally fruitful, nor are all believers; thus it by no means follows that all believers glorify God, or that those who do so, do so equally. Our Lord Himself describes four degrees in His parable of the sower. First, there are those who are choked by the cares, and pleasures, and riches, of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. The plant is not altogether dead, and there may be a little fruit formed; but there is none ripened, nothing worth having, nothing that glorifies God. I fear there is a terrible number of those choked-up Christians in the Church of God. Then where there is real fruitfulness, there are different degrees. Some yield their thirty, some their sixty, and some their hundred-fold. How earnest ought we to be that every one may be what I may term, hundred-fold Christians,—people abounding in the fruits of the Spirit, spending and being spent for God!

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And why not? The sacred privilege of glorifying God does not belong to some peculiar class of Christians,—to persons who have been suddenly lifted into what they term 'the higher life,'—but to all those who are abiding in Christ Jesus, and have Him abiding in them; for He says, 'He that abideth in Me, and I in him; the same bringeth forth much fruit.' You may have reason therefore to be most deeply humbled under the conviction of indwelling sin, and to be most heartily grieved for the mixed thoughts and motives that have intruded themselves into the holiest acts of your whole lives; you may be utterly displeased with yourselves for the utter poverty of your best services; you may be so convinced of what you consider the peculiar difficulties of your own character, that you may think it quite impossible that you yourselves should ever rise to a high standard of Christian holiness: but there is a power in the Lord Jesus so to raise you above your difficulties that you may not only be saved, but actually raised to such a standard that, though you may not know it, you may bring glory to His name. Nothing could be more hopelessly dead than Aaron's rod, but in one night it 'budded and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded fruit.' Nothing could be more hopeless than the case of David when he was in the horrible pit and the miry clay; but the Lord 'set his feet on a rock and established his goings, and put a new song into his mouth, even praise unto his God,' and the result was that God was glorified in his deliverance; for he adds, 'Many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.' So you may say that you are dead, that you cannot rise, that there is no hope,—and there is no hope in your own efforts at self-quickening,—but He who raised the dead to life can so triumph even over your deadness as to bring out of your dead heart such an abundance of beautiful fruit, through the power of His own grace, that He Himself may be pleased with your loving and faithful service. Nay, more! Though you may never be able to see it, and though you may to the last be humbled to the dust for your shortcomings, He may still fulfil in you, and towards you, the prayer which St. Paul prayed for the Thessalonians: 'That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.'

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Aim then at the highest possible standard. Never settle down contented with anything that falls short of it. Never consider that your case is too difficult for the Lord, the Deliverer, but trust Him so to abide in you with power, that His own words may be fulfilled: 'Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.'

EXPOSITORY NOTES.

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NOTE A.—ROMANS, VII.

I BELIEVE that a great deal of the difficulty felt respecting the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, arises from a mistaken idea that the different chapters are descriptive of consecutive periods of the Christian life. Persons are supposed to be justified in the fifth, brought to a new life in the sixth, and to be living in perfect peace in the eighth, and thus the conflict of the seventh is thought to be out of place. But surely there is no such consecutiveness to be found in the passage.

Both the sixth and seventh chapters are an answer to the question in the first verse of the sixth, 'Shall we continue in sin?' And this answer is founded on the principle that we must not do so, because such conduct would be inconsistent with the great change that has taken place in us. This change is then described under three figures.

(1.) A death unto sin through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ch. vi. 3-15.)

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(2.) A change of service. (Ch. vi. 16-23.)

(3.) A release from the law, as a woman is loosed from the law of her husband when he dies (Ch. vii. 1-6); the result of which is that, therefore, we are now free from condemnation, etc. (Ch. viii. 1). The 'therefore' of this verse depends on the deliverance described in ch. vii. 6, and the

intermediate passage (ver. 7-25) is a parenthesis. It is in the parenthesis that the difficulty is supposed to lie; and by the place which that parenthesis occupies in the argument that it must be explained.

In his argument the Apostle had connected sin with the law, which of course suggested the idea that the law was sinful; an idea which would have been shocking to Jewish minds, and was entirely contrary to his own. In accordance, therefore, with his usual style, he broke off from the direct line of his argument, in order to protect the truth against any such objection; and thus introduced the parenthesis.

This consists of two questions, with their respective answers.

The first is in the seventh verse: 'What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid.' This he answers by a reference to his own history, and by showing that the law, so far from being sin, had served to discover and develop it; and by doing so had slain him. (Ver. 7-12.) Thus far the passage is clearly historical, and the 'I' is his own historical self, as I believe it to be throughout.

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But this answer suggested a further difficulty: viz., that a good thing had been the means of slaying him; and this led to the second question (ver. 13): 'Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid.' To this the answer was that the fault was not in the law, but in himself; for even in his new condition, when he heartily loved the law, the old nature of the flesh was still so powerful that he could not fulfil it as he would. (Ver. 14-24.)

This explains the strong language of the fourteenth verse,—'I am carnal, sold under sin,'—which people find it difficult to reconcile with the account of complete deliverance in the sixth verse.

For my own part I have no difficulty, for

(1.) The explanation is suggested by the account he gives of the 'me' in the eighteenth verse. 'In me, *that is, in my flesh*, dwelleth no good thing.' It is clear that he is speaking there of his fallen human nature; and it is not unreasonable to believe that the explanation there given covers the fourteenth verse as well.

(2.) This is the only meaning that the words can bear in the context. He is showing that his death under the law was not the fault of the law, but of his own nature. And, therefore, he says, 'The law is spiritual, but I am' (by nature, that is) 'carnal, sold under sin.' He does not contradict his own words in ch. vi. 11, where he directs his readers to 'reckon themselves alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord,' for he is not speaking of his position in Christ Jesus, but asserting that by nature he was carnal; so that the law was not to blame for having been made death unto him. There is no difficulty in the use of the present tense if we bear in mind that the old nature is not eradicated by the new birth. He, so far as his nature was concerned, was as bad as ever to the last day of his life.

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The remainder of the parenthesis is a proof of this corruption of his nature derived from his present experience. And the exclamation of the twenty-fourth verse is the cry of a holy man who, being regenerate, loved the law, and longed to be set free from that power of a fallen nature which kept him back from its complete fulfilment. He had been delivered from the law as a condemning power; but he delighted in it as a rule of life, and longed to be free from his evil nature, that so he might obey it without impediment.

NOTE B.—1 JOHN, III. 6.

Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not.

THESE words, if detached from their context and from the remainder of the Epistle, apparently teach the absolute and perfect sinlessness of all those who abide in the Lord Jesus Christ. And if the words, 'sinneth not,' describe an entire freedom from all sin, they clearly do so.

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But this cannot possibly be their meaning; for if it were,

(1.) The remainder of the verse would teach us that if any person should ever sin in thought, word, or deed, he would be thereby proved never to have seen or known Christ. 'He that sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him.'

(2.) In the same manner the eighth and ninth verses would teach us that if any person ever did wrong in any way whatever, he would be of the devil, and not born of God. 'He that committeth sin is of the devil.' (Ver. 8.) 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.' (Ver. 9.)

(3.) This passage would be in direct contradiction to the first chapter, in the seventh verse of which those who are walking in the light are described as being cleansed from sin; in the eighth, as having sin; in the ninth, as confessing it, and being forgiven; and in the tenth, as having sinned.

Some other meaning, therefore, must be sought for the expression, 'sinneth not.' What this meaning is may be gathered from the great object of the Epistle: which was to correct the leading heresies of the day. (See ch. ii. 26.) Of these heresies one of the most prominent was that of the Gnostics, who taught that if a man had the knowledge, or the light, he might live as he pleased in practical life. Against that corrupt notion this passage is directed; and its great object is to show that if there be the new birth, or a union with the Lord Jesus, there is certain to be a practical change of life and character. That this is the meaning is plain from the context. It is

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there proved that he is speaking of practical and habitual religion.

I. OF PRACTICAL RELIGION.

In the seventh verse he shows that all true religion is practical: 'He that *doeth* righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.' Our Blessed Lord was practically righteous, so His people will be the same.

In the eighth verse he shows that the practice of sin is of the Devil: 'He that *committeth* sin is of the Devil.'

In ver. 5-8 he teaches that to destroy the works of the Devil was the great object of the manifestation of our Blessed Redeemer: 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the *works* of the Devil.'

In the tenth verse he asserts that this practical righteousness is the distinguishing test between the children of God and the children of the Devil. It was clearly such conduct as was visible to other men, or the distinction would not have been manifest. 'In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil.'

II. OF HABITUAL RELIGION.

The present tense, indicating a continued habit, is employed throughout the passage. So the word sometimes rendered 'committeth,' and sometimes 'doeth,' is used to express the habit. This may be seen from the use of it in these words of our Blessed Saviour (John, ix. 19): 'None of you keepeth the law.' If we adopt the rendering of that verse, and substitute 'keepeth' for 'committeth' in this passage there will be very little difficulty in understanding the meaning of the Apostle. The fourth verse would then be, 'He that keepeth sin transgresseth also the law;' and the eighth, 'He that keepeth sin is of the Devil.'

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The whole passage teaches us the great importance of being most earnest in urging the necessity of a practically consistent life on the children of God, and in showing that there must be a change in heart, in principle, and in habitual practice, whenever a person is born of God; but it has no reference whatever to the secret heart-struggles of the true believer in his earnest conflict with indwelling sin. They are not the subject of the passage. There are other Scriptures which speak of them, but this refers to practical and habitual conduct.

NOTE C.—ON THE WORD 'PERFECT.'

The word τέλειος is of so frequent occurrence in Scripture that it requires our careful study.

Its original sense is 'complete,' and the corresponding verb τελειόω is to complete, or finish. The derived senses will vary with the subjects to which it applied.

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(1.) In the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, it stands for sincere, upright, undivided in heart.

'Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.' (Gen. vi. 9.)

Amaziah had a great deal of religion about him, but he was inconsistent; and, therefore, it says of him, 'He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart.' (2 Chron. xxv. 2.)

(2.) In Matt. v. 48, it means complete, or comprehensive, as opposed to being limited and partial.

Our Lord is exhorting His disciples to love their enemies as well as their friends (verses 43, 44); and says, 'That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.'

He then goes on to show that there is no value in merely partial love (46, 47); and concludes with the words, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' That is, like Him; show your love to your opponents as well as to your brethren.

(3.) In Heb. v. 14, it is used of those who are 'of full age,' or complete in their growth, and therefore capable of strong meat; as contrasted with those who are babes, and therefore fed on milk. It is the same in Eph. iv. 13, 14; and 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

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(4.) In 1 Cor. ii. 6, it means 'fully initiated.' A mystery was something not known to the world, but revealed to those who were initiated, and those who were initiated were called τέλειοι. So here St. Paul says, 'We speak wisdom amongst them that are perfect,' or the initiated: 'yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.'

I am not sure whether Phil. iii. 15, expresses full initiation, or full manhood. I am inclined to think that it means initiation, as the verse speaks of a yet further manifestation of God's will. 'Let us therefore, as many as be perfect,' or initiated, 'be thus minded: and if in anything you be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.'

At all events it is perfectly clear that it does not mean personal perfection, for St. Paul says, verse 12, 'Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.'

(5.) In Heb. x. 1, it means the complete removal of the guilt of sin through the sprinkling of blood. The law by its sacrifices could never 'make the comers thereunto perfect.' If they could have done so those sacrifices would have ceased to be offered, 'because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.' It should be observed that the passage is not speaking of the purifying of the heart, but of the purging of the conscience. To purify the heart, is to render it so pure that it will love only pure things; to purge the conscience is to remove from it the guilt of which it is conscious in consequence of the impurity of the heart. Thanks be to God, this purifying is complete through the offering of the Lord Jesus Christ once for all; and the comers thereunto are through it perfect before God!

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I know of no passage in which the word is applied to a present sinlessness, or a present perfect purifying of the heart.

NOTE D.—TEMPTATION. HEB. IV. 15.

It is said of our Blessed Saviour, 'For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' And it has been argued that because He was tempted, yet without sin, therefore there is no sin in temptation. I can scarcely imagine a more dangerous fallacy.

The meaning of the word, 'to tempt,' is to test, or to try. So 'God tempted Abraham,' or put him to the test. (Gen. xxii. 1.) Thus our Lord was in all points tried, or tested, like as we are: that is, by the sinless infirmities of the body; by the surrounding circumstances of life; by the influence of man, both friends and foes; by the Devil; and even, we may reverently say it, by God Himself, when He called Him to bear a burden much more heavy than that laid on Abraham. But He was never tempted by any corruption in His own heart or nature, for if He had been He would not have been 'without sin,' even though He had resisted it. There was clearly no sin in being thus tested, nor did He ever sin in yielding.

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Temptation to evil must always be considered in its origin, as well as in its effect. In daily life we think worse of the author of the temptation than of the victim. But no temptation originated in the heart of our blessed Redeemer. According to this text He was 'without sin;' for not only did He never yield, but there was no evil in His heart in which sin could originate. We are not, therefore, justified in quoting the temptation of our sinless Saviour, that came upon Him from without, as proving that there is no sin in those temptations which arise out of the evil of our own hearts. There is certainly sin in such temptation as that described by our Lord Himself, when He said, 'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders,' etc., (Matt. xv. 19); and in that condemned by St. James in the words, 'Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.' (James, i. 14.) In no such cases are we covered by our Lord's example; for, even if we are preserved from falling, the temptation itself is sin, and the result of sin within the soul.

DOCTRINAL NOTES.

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IN the first edition of these Sermons I added a short review of two books that have lately excited some attention in the Church. I understand that their author is himself so much dissatisfied with them, that he has been for some time past engaged in re-writing them. It is, therefore, not worth my while to republish my review, and, instead of it, I have added the following Notes.

Some of them are of a controversial character; but my object is to promote agreement rather than controversy. Several excellent persons, both clergymen and laymen, have lately experienced a remarkable answer to their prayers for an increase of faith, and in consequence of the peculiarities of the channel through which the answer has been given, they have been supposed to have deviated from old paths, and to have embraced new opinions at variance with the Word of God. I fear that this may be the case in some instances, though I hope it is not so to any great extent, for I find that many of them have never read the books to which some of us have thought it our duty to object, and are as earnest for the old truths as ourselves. I have therefore drawn up these Notes, embodying what I believe to be the teaching of Scripture, in the hope that they may prove a basis of union amongst those who are of one heart and one mind in their common desire to exalt the name of their most blessed Saviour.

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The texts quoted must be regarded as only specimens, and not supposed to contain the whole teaching of Scripture on the subject.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

1. The only standard of holiness recognised in Scripture is the perfect character and will of God.

1 Peter, i. 15, 16; Rom. xii. 2.

There is no allusion in the Word of God to any lower standard of any kind whatever. We are never taught there that 'We are not called to walk by the rule of angels, who excel, in strength,' or that 'our standard is not that which it will be in our glorified bodies.' According

to Scripture, our rule is exactly the same as that of angels: our standard is exactly the same as it will be after the resurrection: and our constant prayer is, 'Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.' It is not the object of the Gospel to lower God's standard to man's level, but in, and through, the Lord Jesus Christ, to raise us to His standard, and at length present us as faultless before His throne.

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2. Personal holiness is the work of God.

Of God the Father.

Jer. xxxi. 33; John, xvii. 17.

Of God the Son.

Matt. i. 21; 1 Cor. i. 30.

Of God the Holy Ghost.

Acts, xv. 9; 2 Cor. iii. 18.

3. It is the action of the believer.

Heb. xii. 1; 1 John, iii. 3.

I have seen God's work in holiness described as the same as God's work in the pardon of sin. But there is this essential difference: Forgiveness is an act of God in His own mind alone; holiness is a work of God in the mind of man, controlling and directing all the activities of the mind. Forgiveness is, therefore, altogether external to man, and must be received in trust alone; but holiness is a power and principle of human action, and therefore is developed in human activities. The distinction may be illustrated by repentance and forgiveness. Both are the gifts of our exalted Saviour. (Acts, v. 31.) But God forgives, and man repents.

4. It commences with a new creation in Christ Jesus.

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2 Cor. v. 17; Eph. ii. 10.

5. It is the result of acceptance with God, and of the realization of His mercy.

1 John, iii. 2, 3; Rom. xii. 1.

6. The principle which God employs to produce it is faith.

Acts, xv. 9; 1 John, v. 4.

7. The instrument which He employs to produce it is the truth as revealed in His own Word.

John, xvii. 17.

8. The means by which it will be finally perfected will be the full view of Christ Himself.

1 John, iii. 2.

PRACTICAL RESULTS.

If there is any difference on the subject of Personal Holiness amongst those who hold the great principles of the Gospel, it is not likely to appear so much in General Principles as in their practical application to present life. It is, therefore, clearly important to ascertain what should be the extent, and what the limits, of the Believer's expectation. If we do not expect all that He has promised, we cannot hope to rise to His standard; and if, on the other hand, we expect what He has not promised, we shall involve ourselves in either disappointment or delusion. It is well, therefore, to consider from the Word of God what we are taught to expect, and what we are not taught to expect.

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WE ARE TAUGHT—

1. That when we are created in Christ Jesus old things will pass away, and all things become new.

2 Cor. v. 17, 18.

2. That the Holy Spirit will dwell in our hearts.

John, xiv. 17.

3. That He will purify them.

Acts, xv. 9.

4. That we shall love the Lord Jesus Christ, and acknowledge our love.

2 Cor. v. 14; 1 John, iv. 19.

5. That we shall love the law of God, and delight in it

Ps. cxix. 97; Rom. vii. 22.

6. That we shall be set free from the dominion of sin.

Rom. vi. 14.

7. That we shall overcome external temptation.

1 John, v. 4, 5.

8. That we shall habitually live righteously in practical conduct.

Tit. ii. 12; 1 John, iii. 4-10.

9. That we shall be continually growing in grace.

2 Pet. iii. 18.

10. That in this present life, though we fail to fulfil God's perfect law, we may have the joy of pleasing God, and of actually bringing glory to His name.

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John, xv. 8; Col. i. 10; Heb. xiii. 16.

WE ARE NOT TAUGHT—

1. That the most eminent believers will be sinless.

1 John, i. 7-10.

From that passage we learn that those who are walking in the light, as He is in the light,—

(1) Are continuously being cleansed from sin (ver. 7).

(2) 'Have sin' (ver. 8), 'and have sinned' (ver. 10).

(3) 'Have sin to confess, for which they need forgiveness' (ver. 9).

2. That original sin will ever in this present life be either 'destroyed,' 'dead,' or 'rendered inert.'

Rom. vi. 12.

The words, 'Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof,' are addressed to those who are to 'reckon themselves dead unto sin and alive unto God.' It is clear, therefore, that sin was still alive in them, or else it would have been quite needless to exhort them not to let it reign, and not to obey its lusts.

Compare also Rom. viii. 13; Col. iii. 5.

3. That sin is not sin till we discern it. So that 'to-morrow I may discern evil in things in which to-day I am living without condemnation.' Sin is the transgression of the law, and what will be wrong to-morrow is wrong to-day, whatever we may think of it. If the conscience is so deadened, or seared, or perverted, that it does not perceive sin, that deadness of conscience does not take away the sinfulness of sin, but only adds the sin of not feeling sin to the sin of committing it. The insensibility of a deadened conscience amongst those who have received the Gospel must never be confounded with the ignorance of those who never heard it

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4. That believers attain to 'perfection up to the measure of to-day's consciousness.' As nothing of the kind is found in Scripture, it is difficult to understand exactly what the expression means. But if it mean that believers are kept so holy that there is nothing in either their hearts or lives which their own conscience condemns, the statement is directly opposed to such passages as Heb. ix. 14, x. 2, &c., which show that one great purpose of the precious blood of Christ is to provide a continuous purging of the conscience. If there is never anything on the conscience which requires purging I cannot see that we have any need for the purging blood.

5. That we are to be assured of the existence of our personal holiness through faith, as we are of our justification. Faith is the evidence of things not seen, and, therefore, the only direct evidence of our justification: but personal holiness is within sight of conscience, and it would be an abuse of faith to reckon ourselves holy when conscience shows us that we are not really so. We believe ourselves to be accounted righteous, though we know that we are really guilty; but we must not believe ourselves to be actually holy when our own conscience condemns us of sin.

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1 John, iii. 19-24.

6. That our believing reception of the promise of holiness from the Lord Jesus will supersede prayer.

Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, 36.

7. That our trust in the Lord Jesus for holiness will supersede personal exertion and the diligent use of the means of grace.

Acts, xxiv. 16; 1 Cor. ix. 27; Jude, 21, 24.

8. That there is a higher life distinct from that of which we are made partakers when first brought into union with the 'Lord Jesus Christ,' into which we may enter by a definite act of entire consecration.

No Scripture on this subject.

9. That entire consecration is the means whereby we are to attain to union with the Lord Jesus Christ. The consecration of Scripture follows that union, and does not precede it. The Christians at Rome were first 'baptized into Jesus Christ,' and afterwards, when they were 'alive from the dead,' were exhorted to 'yield themselves to God.'

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Rom. vi. 3, 13.

There can be no doubt that the enjoyment of that blessed union is marred and hindered by any reserve within the soul. But if we are not to rest in it until we are satisfied that our consecration is entire, I see not, for my part, how the heart can ever be at rest unless the conscience is lulled to sleep by shallow and superficial views of sin. All who look at the self-consecration of our most blessed Saviour must be convinced that their own consecration, whatever it is, falls utterly short of such a standard; and if we are to wait for the enjoyment of our union with Him until our consecration is entire, or, in other words, till it is equal to His, that enjoyment seems to be placed at an infinite distance from our reach. Surely the teaching of Scripture is that we are admitted to the union as we are, through His free grace; and then, because we live in Him, we 'live not unto ourselves, but unto Him that died for us and rose again.'

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FOOTNOTES.

[27] Preached on Good Friday.

[64] See Note A.

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