

Romans - Commentaries by Hugh Henry Snell

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 2 (1854), No Condemnation. (8:1)

"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."—Rom. 8:1.

There are two things contained in this inspired declaration of the apostle—first, the present standing of believers in Christ Jesus; and secondly, their character.

1. Their position as Christians is one of "no condemnation." Though all around may accuse—yea, they may write bitter things against themselves—yet God justifieth from all things every believer in His Son Jesus Christ (Acts 13:39). In the days of Noah, judgment was upon the earth; nevertheless, all who had entered into the ark were preserved in perfect safety, and brought triumphantly through all the tribulation. In the great deliverance of Israel from Egypt, there was security from all harm for those who had sheltered themselves within the blood-sprinkled doorpost; so that when the Lord smote the first-born of all the families of Egypt with death, He passed over every house that He found sprinkled with the blood of the slain lamb. Also, when an Israelite had unwittingly killed a man, he was free from the power of the avenger of blood as soon as he entered the city of refuge which God had appointed. He was then, immediately in the place of safety, where there was "no condemnation." And so now; the Lord Jesus is the True Ark to preserve all who trust in Him, His blood shelters all who believe in His name, and He is the mercy-seat—the city of refuge—the sure hiding-place—for all who flee to Him; and whoso cometh to Him He will in no wise cast out (John 6:37). He having been made a curse for His people—having borne our sins in His own body on the tree, and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, —no anger, no wrath, nothing condemnatory rains; so that the apostle can boldly say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?"

It is by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ that our souls are brought into this blessed standing, so that we are called to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." We are in Christ Jesus, as it is written, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me" (John 6:5, 6); and again, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (1 John 4:16). We stand in the full value of the worth and merit of another—THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. And so it was with Abraham, "He believed in the Lord, and He counted it unto him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom. 4:6-8). Well may the apostle speak of the exceeding riches of the grace of God! O the infinite wisdom, power, and love of Jehovah, thus to bring righteousness without works to us in our lost condition, "even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe! Wondrous mercy, that the holy Son of God should remove our sins from us, and put His own perfect and everlasting righteousness upon us! But so it is; hence it is written, "There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

2. The character of the persons here alluded to is that "they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The unregenerate know no higher experience than gratifying the desires of the flesh and of the mind; but those who have believed the grace of God, exhibited in the gift of His only begotten Son, have life, are new creatures, have learned the unsatisfying character of things around, and their course and tendency. The grace that removed the bitterness of a self-condemning conscience, that melted and won the rebellious heart, the sense of being in a world that has crucified the Lord of glory, and the hopelessness of every earthly resource but Jesus crucified, endear Him to the affections; while an increasing understanding of the love of God, which passeth knowledge, the everlasting relationship subsisting between them and the Father, their safety and blessing in God their Saviour, and the eternal glory to which they are called, constrain them, more and more, to live not unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again. How can I please God? Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? and such like, are the heart-queries of those who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious." Many a time have they vainly sought happiness in that which is carnal, but now the soul's satisfying portion is Jesus, the "chiefest among ten thousand," the "altogether lovely." According to His mind, and in obedience to His Word, they now seek to walk; for they prove, experimentally, that they have no real happiness apart from Him. They are led of the Spirit to worship and serve God as their Father; their joy consists in apprehending and appropriating the things that are freely given to them of God, and their hope is to be with Him and like Him, whom having not seen they love. The desires of the flesh and of the mind, which they once so fondly cherished, and sought to gratify, are now loathsome and offensive, and their great grief is that they do not more fully mortify the old man with his affections and lusts, and more perfectly show forth the characteristics of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. Lord! strengthen Thou our faith, that we may "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," and "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called!"

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 3 (1855), If God Be for Us, Who Can Be Against Us? (8:31)

Rom. 8:31.

WHAT a word of life! What a weighty word among the many weighty words in the same chapter!

Was Judah against Joseph when he said, "Come, and let us sell him?" (Gen. 38:27). "The patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt; but God was with him and delivered him" (Acts 7:9, 10), and God was for him.

"THE LORD WAS WITH JOSEPH, and he was a prosperous man" (Gen. 39:2). Was Potiphar against Joseph, when he sent him to prison? God was for Joseph: God was with Joseph. That which he did, the Lord made it to prosper (v. 23). Neither Judah nor Potiphar can be against Joseph;

they help him, through pit and prison, to be next to Pharaoh, over all the land of Egypt.

Was Haman against Mordecai, for plotting as he did? So far from being against that man of God, he labors hard for him, honors him, and is the means of his excellent prosperity, and dieth as a fool; while Mordecai is exalted.

Let us not forget that "WHATSOEVER a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Judah delivered himself a bondman to Joseph, whom he had sold to the Ishmaelites (Gen. 37:28-29; 44:33); and Hainan was hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai (Esther 7:10).

All this is of little worth, if it do not lead us to consider the Haman within, and the covetous Judah within, and "Jesus Christ the Son of God, whose blood cleanseth us from all sin;" and also to lay to heart the plotting against the greater than Joseph or Mordecai—the sorrows of the Cross, and the joys of Jesus at the right hand of God.

"Lo, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE AGE." (Precious indeed is the record!) "Amen."

Streams of Refreshing From the Fountain of Life, Law and Grace (8:3-4)

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:3, 4).

It is not by persuasive eloquence, clear reasoning, appalling sights, or by thrilling appeals to the natural feelings, that people are converted to God. No. It is by the word of truth. Our Lord taught this. He said,

If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead (Luke 16:31);

as much as to say, They have the Bible, they hear sound gospel- preaching, and if the truth does not move them, nothing else will make them flee from the wrath to come. Christ is the truth. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of truth; and it is the truth that He uses in converting souls. It is the Spirit's office to guide into all truth; and surely in these days we are made to hear the voice of God very peculiarly, saying,

Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts (Zech. 4:6).

At a time like this, when we see men using human appliances, and contending for expediency; when we so often hear of such sad statements as "handmaids of the gospel," "stepping stones of the gospel," &c., it is most important to see that it is the truth alone which really accomplishes the work of God. We find this often brought before us in the Scriptures. Peter informs us that we are

Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever

and how necessary that those who listen should take heed to what they receive, so that their faith may not stand in the wisdom of men, but on the word of the living and true God, which will never pass away!

Perhaps nothing has so corrupted the truth of the gospel as the common practice of blending the law with it. Few things are more dissimilar, and kept more distinct in the Scriptures, yet they are often so mingled together in the present day as to destroy the simplicity and truth of both law and gospel. It was in this way the truth of Christ was so corrupted among the Galatian saints, that the apostle faithfully told them that Christ had become of no effect unto those who were justified by the law, for they were fallen from grace. It is, then, a matter of great importance to be able clearly to distinguish between law and gospel; for the believer is not under the law, but under grace.

In pursuing our enquiry after the truth of God concerning these subjects, it will be well to consider —

What we are to understand by the law

What were its effects?

What is grace, and its effects?

Notice some points of special contrast between the law and the gospel and

Make some application of the subject

(1 Pet. 1:23).

James says,

Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth (James 1:18).

Paul declares,

In Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the gospel (1 Cor. 4:15).

And our Lord's promise to His disciples was,

Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:32).

These inspired testimonies should be carefully pondered, because they show us the immense value that God puts on the truth, as well as our deep responsibility in relation to it. And oh, how thankful should we be for the Bible! How blessed to have such an unalterable standard of truth! What condescension of the Holy Spirit to come down to reveal and apply the truth to us! How careful should we be to ascertain what the truth of God is! How prayerfully should we search the Scriptures, in dependence on the Spirit's teaching, for the truth! How important that those who preach should

preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:2);

1. WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE LAW?

What the law could not do (Rom. 8:3).

By the law in this text is evidently meant the commands given to Israel on Mount Sinai four hundred and thirty years after the call of Abraham (Gal. 3:17). It made righteous demands upon man, promising life to those who fully obeyed —

This do, and thou shalt live (Luke 10:28);

and pronouncing a curse on those who were disobedient in any degree —

Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them (Gal. 3:10).

Thus we see that the law knew nothing of mercy, but its demands were so strict that an offender in one point was held guilty of all (James 2:10). It is therefore vain and delusive for persons to try to shelter themselves under the idea, that because they are not conscious of having broken all the laws of God, they are not exposed to His just condemnation. Nor is it reasonable. Man's sense of justice towards his fellow-man is, that the breaker of one of the laws of the country has committed an act of rebellion, and is therefore deservedly exposed to punishment. It is not necessary for a man to have perpetrated robbery twenty times before he is pronounced guilty; but if in one instance he is proved to have committed an act of robbery, he is liable to punishment as a breaker of the law. And is God less just than man? Certainly not. He is just in condemning and executing vengeance on all breakers of His holy law. The question of the law is not, how much have you transgressed, or how many breaches of the law are you guilty of? but have you sinned at all? for

the soul that sinneth, it shall die (Ezek. 18:4).

God has only one character of condemnation for sin, that is, death — eternal death.

The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

The law of Moses consisted of two tables, one containing laws relating to man's conduct toward God, and the other to his conduct toward his neighbour.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself (Luke 10:27).

These were the demands of the law. There was nothing unholy or unjust in it, and a person coming up at all times, and in all things, to this standard, would prove himself a righteous person, and would live. We may try to modify the law, or to pare down its sweeping demands, or endeavour to excuse ourselves for not complying with it, in order to meet the exercises of conscience; but the law permits nothing of the kind. If the law is broken, curse must follow. Neither did all the ordinances and sacrifices offered under the law alter this or remove the guilt; because it is impossible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sin: the most these things could do was to give ceremonial cleanness, and to point to that future sacrifice, which would make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness. The law was a rigid test to try and make manifest. If there were no laws in the country, there could be no transgression, and, consequently, no punishment; but if laws were made, the offenders would be made known, and its demands executed, for such is the nature of law; therefore it is written,

The law worketh wrath; for where no law is, there is no transgression (Rom. 4:15).

2. THE EFFECTS OF THE LAW.

It was weak through the flesh (Rom. 8:3);

that is, it was unable to meet man's need, because he was a fallen, helpless sinner. Scarcely had the terrible thunders and terrors of Mount Sinai passed, and the people put themselves under the obligations of the law, when they were found dancing round a golden calf, exclaiming,

These be thy gods, O Israel, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt (Ex. 32:4)!

thus violating the first sentence of the law, which said,

Thou shalt have no other gods before me (Ex. 20:3).

The law, then, at once proved man a transgressor, and justly called for the execution of the sentence of death; accordingly we are told, that there fell of the people that day about three thousand men (Ex. 32:28).

The subsequent history of those under the law was very similar, consisting chiefly of a succession of rebellions and judgments, so that instead of life and righteousness coming by the law, it wrought condemnation and death; no one was justified by it, but every one proved guilty. The demands of the law served to show what was in man, as Paul said,

I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet (Rom. 7:7).

Thus, holy, just, and good as the law was, it proved an insufficient instrument to meet man's necessity, by reason of the weak and corrupt character of the flesh. A man might be a most efficient sculptor; but if the marble was not able to bear the touches of the chisel, the work would be very imperfect. Another man might be an elegant writer, but the paper and ink might be most unfit for him to carry out his design. Every touch of the sculptor's chisel, and every stroke of the artist's pen, would thus only show the worthlessness of the marble, and the inferior quality of the paper. So man, shapen in iniquity, and by nature a child of wrath, with a heart alienated from God, when tried by the standard of God's holy law, is made manifest as coming short, and

found wanting (Dan. 5:27). Therefore,

saith the apostle,

by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20).

No persons, therefore, were saved by the law. Even those who lived under the law were saved by grace; for instance,

David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom, the Lord will not impute sin (see Rom. 4:6-8).

The Lord Jesus was the only law-fulfiller; He obeyed every jot and tittle of it; but we have all sinned, and become subject to the wrath of God. The law could only make sin known, but could not put sin away.

The blindness and ignorance of the human heart is seen in the readiness with which men put themselves under law. Though the trials the children of Israel had experienced after they left Egypt had so proved their weakness, and brought out such murmuring, yet directly the law was given, notwithstanding the dreadful terrors of Sinai, they unhesitatingly covenanted to fulfil all its demands, and said,

All the words which Jehovah hath said will we do (Ex. 24:3).

It was an easy thing to say this; but, alas! their subsequent history proved them to be

a disobedient and gainsaying people (Rom. 10:21).

And is unregenerate man less so now? Is he not the same still? Hath the Ethiopian changed his skin, or the leopard his spots? Has fallen man changed his own heart, or proved himself otherwise than a breaker of God's law? Where is the man that can say, I have loved the Lord my God with all my heart, and with all my soul, and with all my strength, and with all my mind, and my neighbour as myself? Oh, it is well to see what the law is, and what its workings have always been; for perhaps, the deadliest cup of poison ever put into the hands of sinners is a mixture of law and gospel, calculated to deceive, because it is truth perverted, and to leave the soul in the fatal snare of being neither consciously guilty nor pardoned — neither a sinner nor a saint; thus, blinded by tradition and mere nominal religion, they hasten onward to the great white throne to be judged every man according to their works, where they will, when too late, prove that

as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse (Gal. 3:10).

How very solemn is this!

3. WHAT IS GRACE? —

God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, &c. (Rom. 8:3-5).

Grace is the wondrous love of God in saving man, when a sinner, by the death of His only-begotten Son. Man had been responsible for fulfilling the law, and man must obey; man had sinned, and man must be made a curse; therefore the Son of God became man. God sent forth His Son made of a woman, not in sinful flesh, but in the likeness of sinful flesh; thus the holy and just One could fulfil and suffer, in the stead of the unjust and unholy, so as to bring us to God. Thus the grace of God brings salvation to the chief of sinners. Sin having been condemned in the flesh by the cross, God can justly pardon the sinner; and the Righteous One having fully obeyed unto death for us, we are made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21).

Thus we see that grace was manifested in the cross, by God condemning our sin in His own Son, and making us righteous in Him whom He raised from the dead, thus doing what the law could not do. The work of Christ's cross, then, is the ground of our peace and confidence in God. It is in the cross we see that God is the God of all grace, and that Christ's death is the ground of our life and peace.

The grace of God in Christ exactly meets the sinner's necessities. It needs a sinner to display itself upon. A spotless holy angel before the throne may be the subject of Jehovah's love, but cannot taste that the Lord is gracious; it is for man, sinful, rebellious man, that the throne of grace is established. Other creatures of God will behold its wonders, but man realizes eternal redemption through the blood of the Lamb.

With regard to the effects of the grace of God on our souls, eternity itself will only be long enough to unfold; but suffice it to say at present, that grace, not law, gives life and peace, and produces godly walk and conduct. Grace brings life to the dead in trespasses and sins:

I am come,

said Jesus,

that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (John 10:10).

Or, as elsewhere expressed,

None eye pitied thee, . . . to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out, . . . to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, LIVE; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, LIVE (Ezek. 16:5, 6)!

It is life, everlasting life, the soul receives, not by doing, but by believing; not as a future expectation, but as a present blessing:

He that believeth on me hath everlasting life (John 6:47); Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal

life; and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:54).

This life is Christ in us, and we in Him:

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in Him (John 6:56).

As we have before seen, grace, not law, is also the sole ground of peace with God; for He hath made peace through the blood of His cross. Hence the order of the apostolic writings is not peace and grace, but grace and peace —

grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied (1 Pet. 1:2).

Those only have the enjoyment of peace with God who are looking simply as the ground of it to the grace of God to us in the death and resurrection of Christ. Many sincere souls have not peace, because they are looking within for it instead of to Christ. Believing the grace of God, we also bring forth the blessed fruits of righteousness, and are led by the Spirit to be imitators of Christ; hence the righteousness of the law (not the law as law, but the righteousness of the law) is fulfilled in us; and more too, because, in following Christ, we go further than the law, though not under it as law. The practical Christian does not break the law; he loves and serves both God and his neighbour. He also follows Jesus inside the rent veil, and worships the Father as standing in grace, and accepted in the Son of His love. He claims not an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth; but returns blessing for cursing, and loves his enemies. Thus, more than the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in those who walk after the Spirit; for their aim is to exalt Christ, and follow Him who has redeemed them with His own blood, fulfilled the law for them, delivered them from condemnation, and given them eternal life.

Besides this, we have a higher character of righteousness than if we had perfectly obeyed the law, because Christ Himself is our righteousness — He is made of God unto us righteousness. It is more than legal righteousness imputed to us — it is Divine —

the righteousness which is of God by faith (Phil. 3:9);

thus giving us a standing of completeness before God, a nearness to Himself, that nothing could have given but the sovereign grace of God.

4. Let us now notice some POINTS OF CONTRAST BETWEEN THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL.

(1) The law kept persons at a distance from God. At Sinai, the people were commanded

not to go up, or touch the borders of it; whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death (see Ex. 19:12).

The gospel is a message of

good tidings of great joy (Luke 2:10);

it preaches

forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7),

invites men

to come and take the water of life freely (see Rev. 22:17),

and brings the far off nigh to God in Christ, and through His blood.

(2) The law said, Do and live —

this do, and thou shalt live (Luke 10:28);

the gospel says, Believe and live;

I give unto them eternal life (John 10:28).

(3) The law demanded righteousness from man to God in the way of works; the gospel brings righteousness from God to man in the way of faith.

(4) The law required man to love God perfectly; the gospel proclaims God's

perfect love (1 John 4:18)

to man in his guilt and ruin.

God commendeth His love toward us; in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

(5) The law spoke of remembrance of sins without remission; the gospel gives full remission without any remembrance.

Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more (Heb. 8:12).

(6) The law made nothing perfect; the gospel declares that Christ has,

by one offering, . . . perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10:14).

We might enlarge, but this is enough to show how wide the contrast is between law and grace, and how important it is to rightly divide the word of truth (see 2 Tim. 2:15).

5. In applying the points we have considered, we may notice, first, a class of persons who, for lack of clear gospel light, have not peace. They see that the law of ten commandments is of God: they put themselves under it, and acknowledge its just claims upon them; they also own that God should be worshipped, and His ordinances attended to. They are conscious of having sinned, but hope, by redoubling their efforts, to attain to some fitness for God. Sometimes they are well pleased with their progress, and at other times the sense of guilt almost overwhelms them. Endeavouring to come up to an imaginary standard of holiness, they live somewhere between hope and despair, only they are astonished that others can speak with confidence of their peace with God and acceptance in Christ. Dear reader! if such is your experience, allow me to say, that you do right in acknowledging the law, and all its stern demands; but it is better to confess your guilt as a transgressor, than go on trying to patch up the old garment. Oh, look at once to Jesus who was crucified; behold Him as the Substitute which God provided to fulfil the law, to bear all its penalties, and give you an everlasting righteousness, in which you can stand justified from all things before Him. You need not hesitate, for God has given you free permission to come; because He says,

Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Rom. 10:4).

Thus renouncing your own righteousness, and simply believing what God has done in Christ, you will have peace with God, and will be able to say —

There is another class of persons who have known peace, and once tasted the blessed liberty of the gospel, but they did not know the deep importance of trying everything by the Scriptures. At length they were spoiled by the traditions of men, and were persuaded to consider it necessary to add something to the finished work of Christ, by way of making their salvation more secure; which they little suspected overturned the great doctrine of justification by faith, and struck at the root of true Christian peace and joy. At last, prayer became irksome, the Scriptures lost their interest, their sense of the liberty of the gospel declined, and, instead of quiet confidence, bondage, perplexity, and fear possessed them, until they doubted their interest in Christ altogether. They departed from the simplicity of Christ, made a law of something, and got under it, though it might not have been exactly the law of Moses. This was the Galatian error, a type, we fear, of a widespread evil in the present day, when many, instead of growing in grace, have turned from the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, and become entangled again with the yoke of bondage. If any who read these pages feel that this describes their case, we earnestly exhort you to turn at once to God, acknowledge your folly to Him, and earnestly pray that, by the power of the Holy Ghost, you may have Christ so revealed to you, through the Scriptures, in all His personal glory, fullness, fitness, and offices, as to draw your soul out after Him, and make you so realize the perpetual efficacy of His finished and all-prevailing work, as to give you renewed rest and peace, and fill you with abhorrence at having thought of adding ordinances, or anything else, to make your salvation more secure.

There are others — alas! how many — who seem not exercised either about the law or the gospel. Their thoughts and ways have no reference to God. They are without God; therefore they speak and act as if there were no God, and are consequently alike indifferent about His holy law and His gracious gospel. The world, either in reference to its business, cares, or pleasures, is the all-engrossing topic of conversation, and the great attraction of their hearts; and the elevation of man, instead of God, one of the most powerful means of giving energy and force to their abilities. However, the time is drawing near when Christ Himself will be revealed, as the only Potentate, to whom everything must be brought into subjection; when all those who now despise His laws, and reject His blessed gospel, though perhaps prospering in the world, will be made to feel that He who once died on Calvary's cross is Lord of all; for

the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day (Isa. 2:17).

Now Christ calls chief sinners, and cleanses the blackest, foulest sins with His precious blood; but then He will judge righteously, and put all enemies under His feet. May God the Holy Ghost solemnly impress these truths on many hearts!

Death of the Cross, Death of the Cross: No. 4 (6:6,11)

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him."- Rom. 6:6

Not only do we see sins suffered for under divine judgment in the death of Christ, but our "old man"—the nature that did the sins—is also seen there "crucified with him." What usually alarms an awakened conscience first, is the knowledge of sins committed; the consciousness of having done those things which are evil in God's sight. And it is usually after souls have known forgiveness of sins that they become aware of

having a nature in which nothing good dwells; so that the cry of such is, "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing."

Those who have tasted divine grace, and know from the testimony of God's word that their sins are forgiven, desire to live without sinning, and are taught to hate every budding of evil within. Though they have been comforted by the assurance of forgiveness of sins, they are painfully conscious of self-will, pride, and lust stirring within them, and threatening to come out, if not, in unguarded moments, doing so. But even if it has not been manifest to others, they are painfully aware of unclean and unholy workings within; so that, at times, they are almost ready to fear whether they are saved or not; and like one of old they cry out in deep distress, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24.)

Now it is evident this painful condition of soul is not on account of sins committed, but from the experience he has of himself; he does not therefore thus exclaim about his sins, but about himself; not about what he has done, but what he is. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Not who shall deliver me from my sins, but from "the body of this death," or "this body of death." So loathsome is it to the child of God (and only those who are born of God have the consciousness of it), that it seems here to be likened to the ancient practice of a criminal having a dead body chained to him, till, from putrefaction, it dropped off piece by piece. Besides, we do not speak of deliverance from our sins, but of "forgiveness of sins;" neither can we reasonably speak of an evil nature being forgiven, but of our being delivered from it; hence the cry, "Who shall deliver me!"

Many who have forgiveness of sins and peace with God through the blood of the cross, have not the comfort of deliverance from "the body of this death." This is brought to us by the death of the cross. There He who knew no sin was made sin for us; there He was our Substitute before God; there God condemned sin in the flesh, condemned judicially the nature which did the sin; there our old man has been crucified with him. Precious grace to us! There, as before God, we died with Christ, and in Him risen, God hath given to us eternal life; hence we read, "Ye are dead [or have died], and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. 3:3.) The one, therefore, who feels the sadness and misery of bearing about such an evil nature, looks out of himself in simple faith, and finds deliverance wrought for him by the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus distress is turned into thanksgiving, for he says, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." He has deliverance from the burden he had on his soul of a corrupt and evil nature. He sees that his old man has been crucified with Christ; we say he sees it, for faith always sees things from God's stand-point; and he finds three things necessarily result. 1st, That he has a new nature which is born of God, which cannot sin, but serves the law of God; this he calls, "I myself;" and he also carries about with him, as to fact, an evil and loathsome nature, and incapable of improvement, which he calls "the flesh." 2dly, He has given him by divine grace a new standing; the "old man" so completely gone for faith in the judgment of the cross, a new position given him, life in the Spirit, so that he is spoken of as in the Spirit, or in Christ Jesus. 3rdly, His old Adam-standing so gone, that the Holy Ghost says, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." (See Rom, vii. 25; τῷ. 19.) This new standing is so constantly recognized in scripture, that many of the epistles are addressed to those who are "in Christ Jesus."

It is then by the death of the cross that we have deliverance from the nature which did the sins, as well as purgation of the sins themselves; because there in the person of the Son of God, the judgment of sin and sins was fully poured out, and the whole question forever settled for the glory of God. Hence "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." The sacrifice offered being so perfect, and the work so completely finished, that nothing more will ever be done to atone for sin to God, or to remove guilt from the conscience of the sinner who believes; for God declares that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." It is well then to receive the divine testimony to the work of Jesus in the death of the cross, not only as to His having borne our sins, suffered for sins, and died for our sins as a sacrifice offered to God; but that also in His crucifixion our old man was crucified, and consequently, in His resurrection from the dead, we are associated in life with Him. "We are told therefore, "In whom also ye are [or have been] circumcised with the circumcision made without hands in putting off the body of the flesh [not sins of] by the circumcision of Christ." Thus, as to standing our old man is gone, so that we are not in the flesh, but in Christ Jesus; and yet, as to fact, the "old man" is in us, and we are now enjoined to so judge of ourselves according to God, as to "reckon ourselves to be dead (or to have died) indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Horn. vi. 11.)

It is because we have died with Christ, have been -crucified with Him, that we are never told in scripture to crucify the flesh, or, to crucify ourselves, as is sometimes stated. We do read that "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24); that is, they have accepted Christ crucified as their Substitute, they have put off the old man, and put on the new. But though we are never instructed in the word of God to crucify the flesh, yet, because "the flesh" is in us, we are not only enjoined to have no confidence in it, and to reckon ourselves to have died unto sin, but to mortify, or put to death every budding of evil from this evil source. Because "the flesh" is in us, we are told to "walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." We are to "mortify [or put to death] our members which are upon the earth" such as vile passions, evil lusts, &c, and to "mortify [or put to death] the deeds of the body." Peter (putting it in another form) speaks of "laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies," &c. (See Col. 3:5; Rom. 8:13; 1 Pet. 2:1.) It is well, then, whenever we look back and remember the death of the cross, to accept thankfully all that God has revealed concerning the marvelous way in which "perfect love" met our need there, in judging and setting aside forever the nature that did the sins as well as the sins themselves—the corrupt tree, as well as its corrupt fruit. It is when the soul has received Christ as his Savior, he is entitled to know that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made him free from the law of sin and death. There is liberty here. He is now set free from the dominion of sin as well as the guilt of it; he is in Christ Jesus. All is of divine grace.

Again, it is by the death of the cross that the links which tied us to the world are forever snapped. The hatred to Christ manifested in His rejection, and its prevailing cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas," have disclosed its real state of enmity against God. We cannot now love that great sys-tern of men's and Satan's building called "the world," because men hated without a cause our best and dearest Friend; yea, a friend that loveth at all times, and that sticketh closer than a brother. The more the child of God meditates on the Lord's death, the more he enters into the righteous utterances of Jesus, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee." "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." What a world it must be to have cast out and cruelly and unjustly put to death the sinner-loving Son of God, its rightful Prince, and to have gone on quietly crying "progress" and "advancement" ever since, with such a prince as Satan; for when Christ was wickedly rejected, Satan was rightly called "the prince of this world." And not only in this view of "the world" in relation to the Savior's death do we realize that we cannot love that which has thus put such shameful ignominy, and cruel rejection and death on our precious Savior, but still dwelling on the death of the cross, we are made to feel the awful truth, that it must also hate all those who have really identified themselves and their interests with Him. How can it be otherwise? While we boast therefore in the eternal redemption which He has

accomplished for us at such a cost, we cannot but feel that, from the first moment we really took sides with Christ, we had new interests, new delights, and new prospects; and that the world, whether looked at politically, commercially, or religiously, died away from our hearts with the divinely-given view we had of the death of the cross." Is it any wonder then that one like Paul should have so solemnly exclaimed, " God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal. 6:14.)

And further, it is also by the death of the cross that those who have been entangled by the law have died to it, and therefore been delivered from it. Law has nothing to say to a dead man, but it has dominion over a man as long as he liveth. And however he may try to use it as he judges most agreeable or convenient to his own ideas, and call it a rule of life or anything else, it has nothing less to say to any transgressor than curse and death. Hence it is written that as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse." As the law then brings all who are of its works guilty of transgression, and under the curse, how can any be delivered from its just judgment? A man cannot be to Christ sometimes and to the law at others, for it would be like a woman having two husbands, and thus be an adulteress. She must be delivered from the first by death, before she can really be in happy association with Christ the second husband. But the law does not die? This is most true. But you have died to it, and thus deliverance is wrought. In the death of the cross, such see that Christ has redeemed them from the curse of the law being made a curse for them. In the death of Christ their Substitute they died, and thus are delivered from the law. As the apostle further saith, " I, through the law am dead [have died] to the law, that I might live unto God." The law is not dead, but the believer has died with Christ. And to return to the figure of two husbands, being thus freed from the first by death, we can now be married to another. Who is that? Christ risen, One who is on the other side of death, outside the region of sin, or flesh, or law, or the world. Hence we are sweetly taught, " Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Rom. 7:4.)

How strange that in the face of such plain scripture testimony that many should think that Christ came to help them to save themselves, instead of to save them Himself with such a great and eternal salvation! Many speak of making themselves better, instead of bowing to the divine verdict that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Others speak of the world's progress and improvement, as if it were gradually becoming fit for God, instead of owning the righteous testimony of Jesus of its being under sentence of judgment; while not a few are flattering themselves that they keep some parts at least of the law, and thus meriting something toward their everlasting security. May God deliver people from these soul-destroying delusions, and, being convicted of their utterly unclean, and thoroughly undone state, may they turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, the alone Savior of sinners, who has made peace through the blood of His cross, and casts out none who come to Him. O to know more of the infinite glory and everlasting value of the death of the cross!

The Evangelist: Volume 4 (1870), Shall I Ever Lose the Favor of God? (5:8-10)

AN EXTRACT

"If God receives sinners, to what does He receive them? Is it a complete salvation they obtain, or are there conditions still to be met before the final goal is reached and there is complete security? On what, in short, does the ultimate salvation of the believer rest? This is a question which evidently needs answering before the soul can be completely satisfied and at peace. It is one thing to be now in the favor of God, and it is another thing to know I can never lose it. And the more I look at myself, the more I must be in dread of losing it.

"Moreover, there are those who will allow of a free present salvation, who will not allow of one that gives security absolutely for the future. With them the sinner may be saved without works; but the saint may not. The legalism shut out at one entrance gains admittance at another, and the result in either case is the same. Self-sufficiency is built up; self-distrust brought to despair; the work of Christ is practically displaced from its office of satisfying the soul, and the grace of God effectually denied.

"The Scripture speaks as decisively on this point as on any other. On justification by the blood of Christ, it builds the most confident assurance as to the future. It tells us that inasmuch as, when we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much MORE than, being now justified by His blood, WE SHALL BE SAVED from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, MUCH MORE; being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Rom. 5:8-10.)

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 5 (1857), Members of the Body., The (13:3-5)

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."—Rom. 12:3-5.

IN the human body, every member has its special office, and has a peculiar fitness for performing its part. Each member contributes something for the general good of the body, and it never changes its office. Its fitness and suitability for performing it remain as long as it is in the body, unless it be disabled; nor does one member ever exchange its office with another. The eye never takes the place of the ear, nor the ear of the eye. The foot does not usurp the place of the hand, nor the hand of the foot. Each member remains, as at its creation; its office is never exchanged, though it may by exercise grow in strength. My right hand, from constant use, has a greater aptness for performing many acts than it had in childhood, but it is still a hand. So in the members of the body of Christ, there may be a spiritual growth; but they never change their office. It is of momentous importance that this doctrine have influence on our hearts and spirits. We can picture to ourselves nothing more hideous than a natural body with all its members misplaced. A foot, where there should be a hand; an eye taking the place of an ear; and the like. We as imagine nothing more hideous than this, except the like things in the spiritual body—a disordered church; each member doing a part which does not belong to him. The members, instead of filling their respective places, parted, displaced, transposed; can we conceive a greater monster? We should admire the peculiar fitness, in the figures which the Holy Ghost employs. It is

particularly striking in the one we are now considering, comparing the church to the members of the body. Let us imagine that only the eye and the ear should change places; the eye could not hear, nor could the ear see. So in the church, each member is fitted for its place. The Holy Ghost has not given to the foot power to perform that which should rather be done by the hand. We see also in the natural body the union and sympathy of the members, especially if anyone be disabled or injured. In like manner, the whole church is affected by the sin of an individual; one member out of its place disturbs the profit of all. Do not imagine that I am alluding to anything, or any member in particular: this is far, very far, from my mind; but I would press on all the solemn obligation binding on each member, to find out his proper office in the body. This is especially pointed out to us in these verses; but it can only be discerned by the single and spiritual eye. A question will arise in the minds of many, What office can I possibly have in the body? In order rightly to apprehend what is our place, we must ever remember, that there are some offices in the church which are special, such as pastors, teachers, &c. But though only a few, comparatively, are called to fill these, yet no member is excluded from holding some office; and if any desire to know what that is, if he ask wisdom of the Lord to discern it, the Holy Ghost will teach such an one. He shall hear a voice behind him, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it. We are ignorant, but the Spirit of God will instruct us. So much sin and corruption is lodging in our flesh, and too often nourished there, that it is difficult to attain to the knowledge of ourselves, and none but the Spirit of God can teach us. When He is our instructor we shall be delivered from many of the snares of Satan, which so often entangle us. But how does he work? In what way does He instruct His people? By prayerfully studying the written word, and by a better acquaintance with Christ, His person, work, character, offices, &c. "In Thy light shall we see light." In walking with God we learn more of His mind, His character, and His dealings. There is one service to which every child of God is, in a measure, called; we find it in 1 Cor. 13. In the 31st verse of the preceding chapter the apostle says, "But covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet show I unto you a more excellent way;" and this is the way of love. "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." Greatest in regard of the edification of the body, not as it respects our justification. Faith is the greatest, so far as our acceptance with God is concerned. Faith brings sin to God, and sees it laid upon Christ.

All are called to the exercise of love, though all do not exercise an equal measure of it. Our trials are suited to what we are able to bear. The rough wind is stayed in the day of the east wind. But we have also something to bear in love. "Love thinketh no evil." Have we none of us, at times, judged hardly of a brother, without first having gone to him and asked, Did you mean to offend me? Some are more tried than others, and then how lovely it is to see this fruit of the Spirit called forth in them.

May we all seek faithfully to fill up our places in the body, according to the will of God!

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 4 (1856), On the Ministry of the Word. (10:15)

"Preach the word."—2 Tim. 4:2.

"How can they preach, except they be sent."—Rom. 10:15.

"I DETERMINED," said that blessed servant of God, the Apostle Paul, "not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and in power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Cor. 2:2-5.)

Paul's testimony (2 Thess. 1:10)—the testimony of God concerning His Son (1 John 5:9, 10)—the dispensation of the gospel—the stewardship of the mysteries of God committed to Paul (1 Cor. 9:17; 4:1,2), he made known, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; not sounds, but living words, virtues, divine goings forth, clothed in the forms of human speech; yet not of man, neither by man. (Gal. 1:12.) Not merely something about Christ, but the ministration of Life, and of Righteousness (2 Cor. 3); yea, the ministration of the Spirit (Gal. 3:2, 6); the revelation of Christ Himself, by the Holy Ghost; the formation (in those who believed the preaching) of Christ in them, the hope of glory. (Gal. 4:19; Col. 1:27.)

Whoever has such a call desireth not his own ease or reputation, but the honor and glory of Almighty God, and the service of the Lord Jesus, the Master, to whom it belongs to thrust forth laborers into His harvest.

To minister salvation through the death of Christ, for the glory of God, we must ourselves be partakers of the efficacy thereof. We must know, not in word, letter, or form, but in power, the dying of the Lord Jesus. The precious treasure must be put into earthen vessels, that the excellency of strength and sufficiency may be of God, and not of us. The kingdom of God, the display of the grace and glory of Him, who, though crucified through weakness, yet liveth by the power of God, is not in word, but in divine efficiency. To serve the Lord Christ, and not one's own belly, demands the casting into the divine treasury, not that which costs us nothing, not of our abundance, but that whereon we live, even all our living. Thus did He, who was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, whom God sent, who came in the Father's name, serve. He gave His life a ransom for many. He laid it down at the commandment of the Father, and took it again, that we might be with Him in everlasting blessedness.

One greater than those who preach must call, must send, must give gifts, and pay wages. No one goeth on such a warfare at his own charges. The servant's sufficiency is solely of God. Thus to be upheld, and made a co-worker with the Almighty, participating in, and communicating as He in-worketh first to will and to do in the vessel, this is no human institution and arrangement. It is not of men, neither by man, nor through man, but of God the Holy Ghost, and the authority of the risen Head. Who then can prepare himself? Who can lay up in store and forge weapons for such service, and its attendant conflicts with spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies? "To me," said Paul, "who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I might preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." (Eph. 3:8.)

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