

Spurgeon on 2 Thessalonians 2

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C H Spurgeon Sermons and Notes 2 Thessalonians

Also Miscellaneous Authors - F B Meyer, G Campbell Morgan

2 Thessalonians 3:13 FACING THE WIND

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“But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing,” — 2 Thessalonians 3:13

THE Christian church ought to be an assembly of holy men. Its members should all of them be eminently peaceable, honest, upright, gracious, and Christlike. In the main, and in spite of all our failures, I trust these characteristics may be seen in the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, still, from the beginning there has been a mixture. Judas is the sacred college of the twelve apostles seemed to be a prophecy to us that there would be troubles in Israel evermore. It was so in the church at Thessalonica, to which Paul wrote two epistles, part of the last of which we have just now been reading; there was evidently then a class of people who, because the charity of the church was very large, imposed upon it, and, under pretense of great spirituality, refused to work, busying themselves instead in doing mischief according to the old adage that,

**“Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.”**

We sometimes complain of our churches now. I very greatly question whether an average church of Christ in modern, times is not considerably superior to any church that we have read of in the New Testament — certainly very superior to some of them. In the church at Corinth they tolerated a brother who lived in incest. I trust there is no Christian church, at least in our own denomination, that would endure such a thing for an hour. And when this man had been put out by Paul’s command and proved penitent, then the

church at Corinth, which was a church that did not believe in ministry, you know, (there is a class of Christians of that sort now, which resembles greatly these Corinthians,) because they had once put him out, refused to receive him again though he was penitent and wanted to return. I scarcely know a Christian church that would refuse to receive into its membership again a brother who had erred if he showed signs of true repentance. The churches of to-day, compared with the early churches of Christ, can say that the grace of God has been extended to us, even as unto them; and we have no right to be continually crying down the operations of the Holy Spirit in the churches now, by making unfair comparisons between them and the churches of old. They had their faults, as we have ours. They came short in many respects, even as we do. Instead of bringing a railing accusation against churches as they are, the best thing is for everyone of us to, do his best in the sight of God to make them what they should be, by seeking our own personal sanctification and endeavoring that the influence of a holy life shall, in our case, help to leaven the rest of the mass.

Paul turns from the consideration of those who had grieved him in the church to speak to the rest of the brethren, and he says to them, "But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing." In expounding these words we shall, first, notice that our text contains a summary of Christian life; it is called "well doing." Secondly, we shall see it gives out a very distinct warning against weariness; and it hints at some of the causes of weariness in the Christian life. In the third place, I shall close the discourse by giving some arguments to meet the reasoning of our soul when, at times, it seems to plead its own weariness as an excuse.

I. First, then, brethren, our text contains A Summary Of Christian Life. It is "well doing."

This is all you have to do—you that have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus and renewed in the spirit of your minds. You have to spend your lives in well doing.

Now this is a very comprehensive term, and we are certain that it includes the common acts of daily life. You perceive the apostle had been speaking of some who would not work — "working not at all" he says; and he commands them that they should labor and should eat their own bread. It is clear, then, from the connection, that the work by which a man earns his daily bread is a part of the well doing to which he is called. It is not alone preaching and praying and going to meetings that are to be commended. These are useful in their place. But well doing consists in taking down the shutters and selling your goods; tucking up your shirt sleeves and doing a good day's work; sweeping the carpets and dusting the chairs, if you happen to be a domestic servant. Well doing is attending to the duties that arise out of our relationships in life — attending carefully to them, and seeing that in nothing we are eye-servers and men-pleasers, but in everything are seeking to serve God. I know it is difficult to make people feel that such simple and ordinary things as these are well doing. Sometimes stopping at home and mending the children's clothes does not seem to a mother quite so much "well doing" as going to a prayer-meeting, and yet it may be that the going to a prayer-meeting would be ill-doing if the other duty had to be neglected. It still is a sort of superstition among men that the cobbler's lapstone and the carpenter's adze are not sacred things, and that you cannot serve God with them, but that you must get a Bible and break its back at a revival meeting, or give out a hymn and sing it lustily in order to serve God. Now, far am I from speaking even half a word against all the zeal and earnestness that can be expended in religious engagements. These things ought ye to have done, but the other things are not to be left undone, or to be depreciated in any way whatever. When Peter saw the sheet come down from heaven, you remember, it contained all manner of beasts and creeping things; God said even of the creeping things that he had cleansed them, and they were not to be counted common; from which I gather, among a great many other things, that even the most menial of the forms of service even the commonest actions of life — if they be done as unto the Lord, are cleansed and become holy things, and are by no means to be despised. Do not cry down your church, but make your house also your church. Find fault as you like with vestments, but make your ordinary smock-frock your vestment, and be a priest in it to the living God. Away with superstition! Kill it, by counting every place to be holy, and every day to be holy, and every action that you perform to be a part of the high priesthood to which the Lord Jesus Christ has called every soul that he has washed in his precious blood.

That these common things are well doing is very evident, if you will only think of the result of their being left undone. There is a father, and he thinks that to go to his work— such common work as his — cannot be specially pleasing in God's sight. He means to serve God, and so he stops at home, and he is upstairs in prayer when the factory bell is ringing and he ought to be there. He hears that there is a conference in the morning, so he attends that; and then he has another period of prayer; he spends all the week like that, and then on Saturday night there is nothing for his wife. Now, you see, directly, that he has been ill doing, because it was his duty to provide for his own household; and if a man, being a husband and a father, neglects to find daily food for his wife and little children, all the world cries shame on him. Does not nature itself say, "This man cannot be engaged in well doing"? It cannot possibly be so. Though at first sight the ordinary toil for daily bread looks to be a very commonplace thing, yet, if you only suppose it to be neglected, the leaving of it out is no commonplace thing, but brings all manner of mischief. Suppose, on the other hand, that the Christian woman were to become so very devout — so ashamed to be like Martha — so certain not to be cumbered with much serving that she would not serve at all in Martha's direction, but always sat still and read and prayed, and meditated leaving the children unwashed, and nothing done for the household. The husband — perhaps a worldly man — may be driven away from the house by the want of comfort in it and sent into ill company. He may, indeed, be ruined. You can all see that whatever presence there

might be of well doing about the wife's conduct, it would not, it could not really, be well doing, for the first business of the Christian woman placed in that position is to see to it that her household be ordered aright, even as Jesus Christ would have it. Oh, dear friends, it is an art to balance duties so as never to well, and thou needest have no difficulty in defending thyself. God will not suffer that man ever to be confounded who makes the will of God to be the law of his life. So may it always be with us.

Taking the first condition for granted, in the next place everything is well doing that is done in faith. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." That is to say, even though the thing you do is right, if you do not believe it to be right it is not right to you. There are many things that I may do that you must not do, because you do not think it would be right to do them. Therefore you must refrain. Even, I say again, if the thing be not in itself a wrong thing, yet if it seem wrong to you, it will be wrong to you: therefore do it not. Paul could eat the meat that had been offered to idols without being troubled in his conscience; but there were some who thought that if they ate it they would be partakers with the idol. Paul did not think so, and, moreover, he said, "An idol is nothing in the world. Whatsoever is sold in the shambles I eat asking no question for conscience sake." Still "he that doubteth is condemned if he eat"; if he has his doubts about it, and thinks it should not to, it must not be. He will not to practicing the art of well doing if he does that concerning which his conscience raises any scruple. If thou canst say with Scripture warrant "God permits this and I can do it, feeling that he does permit it," thou art doing well in so doing, not else.

Again, everything that is done out of love to God is well doing. Ah, this is a motive that sways no man till he is born again; but when God, who is love, hath begotten us into his own likeness, then we love God, and love becomes the motive of all our actions. I hope, beloved, this is the mainspring of our doings and goings — that you would be God's servants or God's ministers because you love God, — that you seek to bear up under poverty or to use with discretion and liberality the riches with which you are entrusted because you love God. If a man love not God, how little there can be of well doing about-him, yea, he lacks the very root of it all if he hath not love to God.

Well doing includes doing what we do in the name of the Lord Jesus. How this would stop some professors in a great many actions. Have we not the exhortation, "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." If there is anything you cannot do in the name of the Lord Jesus do it not for to you it will not be well doing. In the name of the Lord Jesus you may go to your daily labor, for he went to his for thirty years, and worked in the carpenter's shop. In the name of the Lord Jesus you may undertake all the duties of your calling if that calling be a right one; and if it be not you have no right to be in it at all, but should get out of it directly. You may do in the name of the Lord Jesus all that men should do if you are a saved soul and your heart be right towards him.

Still further, well doing includes that which we do in divine strength. There is no well doing except we get power to do it from the Holy One of Israel. The Spirit of God is the author of all true fruit in the Christian life. Except we abide in Christ and receive the sap of the sacred Spirit from him, we cannot bring forth fruit, for "without me," says he, "ye can do nothing." But to work in the divine strength is well doing. Poor and feeble though it be, if I do it out of love to Christ and with the little strength I have, owning that I would not have even that but for His grace, my act is an act of well doing. Even though I have to mourn my failures and mistakes, nevertheless I may feel that with a true heart I am striving to glorify God and that I am surrendering myself to the divine impulses so as to be ready to do everything as unto my Master. Then am I living as a Christian should live in well doing.

Brethren, we are very great at well-wishing, and "if wishes were horses beggars might ride": if well-wishing meant anything there would be some very great saints about; but the practice of a Christian should be to do what he knows should be done — well doing. Well-resolving is a very common habit. Well-suggesting and well-criticizing are tempers of mind familiar to most of us. Some of you could take a high degree in criticizing admirably everybody else that does anything, and putting your own hands into your pockets and keeping them there. Well-talking also it a great deal more common than well doing. But the Christian life lieth in none of these things. If God has given thee the life of the Spirit, thou wilt not bring forth only buds and blossoms and flowers, but there will be fruit: the fruit of well doing.

So much then concerning that first point.

II. Now let us turn to the second point, which is this. There it A Warning Against Weariness In Well Doing.

Is it possible, you say, "that a child of God can ever grow weary of doing well?" I suppose so, for I remember another text which says, "Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not," and the marginal reading of this text itself is "Faint not." I suppose that, blessed as it is to be doing good and to be living unto God, yet while the spirit is willing the flesh is weak and there is a danger of our getting weary in the most happy exercise.

The first danger is mentioned in the context. There is a tendency to cease from well doing because of the unworthy receivers of our good deeds. As I have already said, there were those in the Thessalonian church who received the gifts of the faithful, and who sat still and did nothing that was of any good, but became a pest and nuisance to their neighbors. Now, the natural tendency of others in

the church would be to say, "Well, I do not know what others think about it, but I shall give no more." "No," says the apostle, "be not weary in well doing." It is bad that that man should make a bad use of thy gifts, but it will be worse still if he should induce thee to harden thy heart. It is a loss, perhaps, to give to a man who wastes, but it will be a greater loss not to give at all. I remember one who spoke on the missionary question one day saying, "The great question is not, 'Will not the heathen be saved if we do not send them the gospel?' but 'are we saved ourselves if we do not send them the gospel?'" And so it is with regard to Christian gifts. It is not so much a question how far this or that man is benefitted or hurt by what we give; but what about ourselves if we have no bowels of compassion for a brother that is in need? What about the hardening influence on our own soul if we get at last into this condition, that we say, "I am weary in having done what I have done, because I see to what an ill use it is turned"? I believe that to be a common temptation of the present age, and I see that all the political economists and the newspaper men almost as good as tell us that it is one of the wickedest things we can ever do to help the poor at all — it is indeed a dreadful thing, unless we do it through that blessed machinery of the poor law, which seems to be the next thing to the kingdom of heaven in their estimation. There seems to me to be, however, a very long distance between them, and I trust that Christian men will continually by their actions bear their protest against the steeling of the believing, Christian, renewed heart against their fellow-men because they seem to pervert the well doing into evil.

We have need of warning again because idle examples tempt others to idleness. If there were in the church at Thessalonica some who did not work, well there would no doubt be others who would say, "We will do the same. Since that fellow never does a hand's-turn, but only goes about and talks, and makes a good thing of it, why should not I do likewise?" "No," says the apostle "be not weary in well doing. Do not give up your daily work: do not give up any form of service, because others have done so, for you can see, if you look at them, that they turn out to be busybodies. You do not want to become mischief-makers, such as they are, therefore shun their conduct; avoid it with all your might; and to not weary in well doing even if you see others, who, apparently, prosper by doing nothing at all."

Again, I think, the apostle would say to us, "Be not weary in well doing because of unreasonable and wicked men." We read about them just now, and I made a remark about them. Whenever anybody gets very earnest for Christ, and lays himself out for God's glory, there is sure to be a little lot of unreasonable and wicked men who get round him. The birds go flying through the orchard, and they do not say a word to one another till they come to a cherry tree where the cherries are very sweet and ripe. Then they all fall to at once and begin to peck away with all their might. So of an ordinary Christian who is doing little for his Master, nobody says much, except, perhaps, "He is a very good respectable man. Never bothers anybody with his religion. But let him become earnest- let his fruit be ripe and sweet before the Lord, and, believe me, more birds than you ever thought were about will come, and they will peck at the ripe fruit; that which God approves most will to just that which they most violently condemn. If you get into such a case as that, my brother, be not weary of well doing because of your critics. Does it matter, after all, what men think of us? Are we their servants? Do we live on the breath of their nostrils? Do they think that their praises inflate and exalt us? Do they dream that their censures can make us sleep a wink the less or even ruffle our spirits? I trust, if we know the Lord aright, we are of the mind of Ann Askew, who, after she had been racked, sat up with every bone out of joint, and, as full of pain as she could live, said to her tormentors,

**"I am not she that list My anchor to let fall,
For every drizzling mist. My chip's substantial."**

And she bore out the storm, and did not intend to cast anchor because of her persecutors. Glory be to God when he shall have delivered you altogethor from the bleating of the sheep and from the howling of the wolves too, and make you willing to let your enemies say their say, and say it over again as long, as it pleases them, but as for you, your heart is fixed to go on in what you know to be well doing, till thy Master himself shall say to thee, "Well done!"

Once more. There is a temptation to cease from well doing, not only because of unreasonable and wicked men outside the church, but, according to the context, — and I am keeping to that because of busybodies inside the church. Some of these are men: some of them are not. Busybodies there are about everywhere. They do not speak out very distinctly; they whisper, and they do it with a sigh. Perhaps nothing is said, but there is a shrug of the shoulders. "So and so is an excellent woman." What a wonderful work she is doing for Christ!" "Well — yes, but—" "Such and such a man! How greatly God honors him in the winning of souls." "Yes -ah, yes-I suppose it is so." That is the style. And then straightway there are ambiguous voices sounding abroad, and depreciating things said; and I have known some of tender heart that have suffered — I dare not think how much — from the insinuations of idle people who, I hope, did not know the suffering they were causing, or they would have run to give help instead. But there is so much of this thoughtless babbling of innuendos even among those who, we trust, are God's people, that if any such are here I would earnestly entreat them to give up that bad business; and if any brother or sister here has suffered from such people, do not suffer more than you can help, for this idle chatter is not worth a thought. Do not let it prey upon your mind, because well, there is nothing in it. All the dirt that people can fling will brush off when it is dry. You do not expect, do you, to go to heaven on a grassy path that is mowed and rolled for you every morning, with all the dew swept off? If you expect that, you will be mistaken. You may even learn something from what these busybodies say about you. It is not true, of course. But, brother, if they had known you better they might have said

something worse that was true. They picked a fault where there was none. Well, but you know there are some faults that they do not know, and had not you better amend them lest they should pick those next time? The eagle eye of envy and malice should even be sanctified to our good, to keep us the more watchful, and to make us the more earnestly seek to be diligent in well doing. Courage! faint heart; it will all be over by and by, and we shall be before that judgment seat where the talk of friends and the threat of foes will go for nothing. We are being examined here by this and that, but what matters the result of the examination? The Lord weigheth the spirits, and if in those great scales at last we shall, by divine grace, escape from having the sentence pronounced, "Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting," it will be a theme for everlasting joy. Let us look to that verdict and not care for the praise or blame of men.

III. Now I am going to close by bringing up A Few Arguments To Keep My Dear Brethren With Their Face To The Wind.

I want you that are going up hill for Christ, and find the wind blowing very sharp, to set a hard face against a strong wind, and to go right straight on all the same. If you have to fight your way to heaven through every inch of your life, I would encourage you still to keep on. May God's Spirit give you strength to do so!

And, first, you say, "Oh, but this service — keeping your garments always white — is hard work. Well doing needs so much effort. I am afraid I shall be weary." Now, I would ask you to remember that when you had just begun business, and you wanted to make a little money, how early you rose in the morning, how many hours you worked in the day! Why, you that are getting grey now knew that in these days everybody wondered at you, because you threw such strength into everything, you did the work of two or three men. What was all that effort for? For yourself, was it not? My dear brother, can you put all those exertions forth for yourself, and cannot you put out as much effort for Christ? That was only for the worldly things; shall there not be something like that in the spiritual things? It is enough to shame some people — the way they toil to get on in business, and then the little energy they show in the things of Christ. I used to tell a story of a brother I once knew who, at the prayer-meeting, was accustomed to pray in such a way that I was always sorry when he got up, for nobody could hear him; and I always thought that he had a very feeble voice. I had indistinctly heard the brother mutter something to God, and I felt that we had better not ask: him again, for his voice was so thin. But I stepped into his shop one day; he did not know that I was there, and I heard him call, "John, bring that half hundredweight."

"Oh," I thought, "there is a very different tone in the business from what there is in the prayer-meeting." It is symbolical of a great many people. They have one voice for the world, and another voice for Christ. What weight they throw into the ordinary engagements, and what little force and weight there is when they come to the things of God! If that should touch any brother here. I hope he will carefully take it to himself. I am afraid it has to do with a great many of us, and I put it thus — if for the poor things of this world we have often manifested so much vigor, what ought to be expected of us — of us who are under such obligations to divine grace — in the service of such a Master in reference to eternal things.

"But," says one, "such well doing requires so much self-denial. I trust I am a Christian, but I sometimes flag because to deny one's self again and again and again, and to lead a life of constant self-denial is, I am afraid, too much for me." Yes, but, dear brother, recollect what Paul bids you remember. He was thinking of the men that went to the boxing matches, and the men that went to the races among the Greeks, how they had to contend for a crown that was only of parsley or laurel; but weeks and months, before they ran they kept under their body, and brought it into subjection, and denied themselves all sorts of things they would have rejoiced in, till they got the muscles well out and by degrees pulled the flesh off their bones to get them into right condition to enter into the arena. Now, saith the apostle, they do it for a corruptible crown, but we for an incorruptible. I am sure the hardships to which some of those champions in the public games put themselves were enough to make the cheek of professors mantle with crimson when they think that the little self-denials of their life are often too severe for them. May God in infinite mercy help us not to be weary in well doing since these stand before us as examples.

"Ay," says one, "but I grow weary because, though I could deny myself, continued well doing brings such persecution. I am surrounded by people who have no sympathy with me. On the contrary, if they could stamp out the little spark of spiritual religion that I have in me they would be glad to do it." Now, my dear brethren, be not weary in well doing because of this, but look up yonder. I can see in vision a white-robed throng. Each one bears a palm branch, and together they sing an exultant song of triumph. Who are these that thus wear a ruby crown?

**"These are they who bore the cross,
Faithful to their Master died,
Suffered in his righteous cause,
Followers of the Crucified."**

Take down Master Fox's Book of Martyrs, and read a dozen pages; and after that see whether you are able to put yourselves on a par with the saints of old. "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Your persecution is only a silly joke or two

against you, a bit of frivolous jesting — that is all. These things break no bones. O sirs, ask grace to enable you to rejoice and to be exceeding glad when they say all manner of evil against you falsely for Christ's sake. For so persecuted they the prophets that were before you: therefore be not dismayed.

But another says, "No, sir, I could bear anything for Christ, but, do you know I have been trying to do good to my neighbors, to the children of my class, and to the others; and I really think that the more I try to do good to people the worse they are, well doing is followed by so little result. I have labored in vain and spent my strength for naught; and you know, sir, that hope deferred maketh the heart sick. They seem to refuse and reject my message though I put it very kindly." Now, listen to me, if ever you listened in your life. You must not—you dare not—complain of this, because — and I know you well, there came once to your door one who loved you better than you love these people; he knocked with a hand that had been pierced for you, and you refused him admission, He knocked and knocked again, and said, "Open to me for my head is filled with the dew, and my locks with the drops of the night;" but you would not open to him. Then he went his way and you were much worse than before. Sometimes you said you would open, but you did not; And by the month together — ah, perhaps I do not exaggerate when I say, by the year together — "that man of love, the Crucified," came to you again and again and again, and pleaded his wounds and blood with you, and yet you did refuse him. You have admitted him now, but no thanks to you; you would never have done it if he had not put in his hand by the hole of the door, and then your bowels were moved for him; then he came in to your soul, and he is supping with you still. Now, after that, you must never say a word when they shut the door against you. You must, say, "This is how I served my Master. It has come back to me again, good measure, but not pressed down or running over. And so I am well content to bear rebuffs for his sake; since he bore them from me, even from me."

"Still," says one, "I have gone on and on, trying to do good in my sphere; I have given much, and I desire still to do the same, but I do not appear to get much return, well doing does not earn much gratitude. If I had some thanks I would not so much mind. Indeed, I do not seem to be doing good either. If I saw some result I would not be weary." Once more I speak, and then I have done. Dost thou not know that there is one who thus every day bade the showers descend upon the earth; and when they fell he did not say to the rain-drops, "Fall ye on the root crops of the grateful farmers, and let the Christian men have all the benefit of the shower." No, he sent the clouds and they poured out the rain that fell on the churl's land, and watered his property. To-morrow morning, when the sun rises, it will light the blasphemer's bed, as well as the chamber of the saint, and tonight God lends his moon to these that break his laws with a high hand and defile themselves as well as to those who go forth on ministries of mercy. He stops neither rain nor sun nor moon, nor makes a star the less to shine, nor sends less of oxygen into the atmosphere, or the less of health in the winds because man sins. Yet are there whole nations where when God gives his bounties, idols and images are thanked, and not the gracious Giver. There are other nations where, when God makes the vine to produce its fruit, the people turn it into drunkenness. And when he bids the corn be multiplied they turn it into gluttony and surfeit and pride. Yet doth not he restrain his gifts. Therefore do you keep on still, even as the great well-doer God continues unweariedly to work. He has done good to you and to thousands like you. If you were to skip doing good to men what would you be saying to God? "Lord, this race does not deserve that thou should do it any good. Do not any more good." Your conduct in saying that your fellow creatures do not deserve that you should do them any good says, in the most emphatic manner, that you do not think God ought to do them any good; for, if God should do them good, much more should you who are so much less than he. And if you stop your hand, and say, "It is no use doing any more good," you in effect pray God never to do any more good to your fellow men. That is an inhuman prayer and tempts God. I pray you let not the action which really incarnates such a prayer ever spring from us again.

Come, brother, the Lord Jesus Christ has blotted out our sins, he has bought us with his blood, we belong to him and whatever service he gives us to do he will give us the strength to do it. So let us go back to our work with joy. If we have been grumbling, — if we have complained at all, — let us ask his forgiveness, and buckle our harness on anew, saying, "Master, thou shalt not find me skulking, but as long as the day lasts, and thou givest me strength, I will reap in thy fields, or work in thy vineyards, according to thy bidding, thankful for the great honor of being permitted to do anything for thee and even for having to put up with inconvenience for thy sake. Seeing that thou didst endure so much for me, why should I not boar something for thee?" You may have to face a gale of wind, but you may face it gaily in the strength of your Lord. Keep on, and keep an keeping on: you shall be more than conquerors through him that loved you, over all the oppositions of men. Wherefore, be comforted, beloved fellow laborers, and let no brother's heart fail him because of anything that has happened to him. Let no sister's hands hang down, but "be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." I pray God to lead many others to enlist, in this service, but they must first believe in Jesus Christ. When they have so done, then may they also come and share in the blessed warfare, and they shall have their reward. The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake.

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Weariness in Well-Doing
Sermon Notes
by C H Spurgeon

But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. — 2 Thessalonians 3:13

READ the two previous verses, and mark the apostle's censure of those who are busy-bodies, "working not at all."

A church should be like a hive of working bees.

There should be order, and there will be order where all are at work. The apostle condemns disorder in verse 11.

There should be quietness, and work promotes it (verse 12).

There should be honesty, and work fosters it.

The danger is, lest we first tire of work, and then fancy that we have done enough, are discharged from service by our superior importance, or by our subscribing to pay a substitute. While any strength remains, we may not cease from personal work for Jesus.

Moreover, some will come in who are not busy bees but busybodies. They do not work for their own bread, but are surprisingly eager to eat that of others. These soon cause disturbance and desolation, but they know nothing of "well doing."

The apostle endeavors to cure this disease, and therefore gives—

I. A SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

He calls it "well doing."

1. Religious work is well doing. Preaching, teaching, writing books and letters, temperance meetings, Bible classes, tract distributing, personal conversation, private prayer, praise.

2. Charitable work is "well doing." The poor, the widow and the fatherless, the ignorant, the sick, the fallen, and the desponding are to be looked after with tender care.

3. Common labor is "well doing."

This will be seen to be the point in the text, if we read the previous verses. Well-doing takes many forms: among the rest—

Support of family by the husband.

Management of house by the wife.

Assistance in housework by daughters.

Diligence in his trade by the young man.

Study of his books by the child at school.

Faithful service by domestics in the home.

Honest toil by the day laborer.

4. Certain labor is "well doing" in all these senses, since it is common labor used for charitable and religious ends.

Support of aged persons by those who work for them.

Watching over infirm or sick relatives.

Bringing up children in the fear of the Lord.

Work done in connection with the church of God to enable others to preach the gospel in comfort.

Everything is "well doing" which is done from a sense of duty with dependence upon God and faith in his word, out of love to Christ, in good will to other workers, with prayer for direction, acceptance, and blessing.

Common actions become holy, and drudgery grows divine when the motive is pure and high.

We now think it will be wise to gather from the epistle—

II. A WARNING AS TO CAUSES OF WEARINESS IN WELL DOING.

1. Unworthy receivers of charity weary generous workers (verse 10).
2. Idle examples tempt the industrious to idleness (verse 11).
3. Busybodies and disorderly persons in the church hinder many from their diligent service (verses 11-12).
4. Troublers, such as "unreasonable and wicked men," dispirit those who would serve the Lord (verse 2).
5. Our own flesh is apt to crave ease and shun difficulties.

We can make too much of works, and it is equally easy to have too few of them. Let us watch against weariness.

Let us now conclude with—

III. AN ARGUMENT AGAINST WEARINESS IN WELL DOING.

"But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing."

1. Lose not what you have already wrought.
2. Consider what self-denial others practice for inferior things: soldiers, wrestlers, rowers in boat races, etc.
3. Remember that the eye of God is upon you, his hand with you, his smile on you, his command over you.
4. Reflect upon the grandeur of the service in itself as done unto the Lord and to his glorious cause.
5. Think upon the sublime lives of those who have preceded you in this heavenly service.
6. Fix your eye on Jesus and what he endured.
7. Behold the recompense of reward: the crown, the palm.

If others tire and faint, don't be weary.

If others meanly loaf upon their fellows, be it yours rather to give than to receive.

If others break the peace of the church, be it yours to maintain it by diligent service and so to enjoy the blessing of verse 16.

Whetstones

A true Christian must be a worker. Industry, or diligence in business, is a prime element in piety; and the industry God demands is the activity of our whole complex nature. Without this, a man may be a dreamer, but not a "doer"; and just so far as any faculty of our nature is left unemployed do we come short of a complete Christian character. I must be doing — I, my entire self, my hand, my foot, my eye, my tongue, my understanding, my affections — must be all, not only resolving, purposing, feeling, willing, but actively doing. "Let us be doing."

But more than this. I must be "well doing." The Greek word expresses beauty, and this enters into the apostolic thought. True piety is lovely. Just so far as it comes short in the beautiful, it becomes monstrous. But, as used by Paul, it goes far beyond this, and signifies all moral excellence. Activity is not enough; for activity the intensest may be evil. Lucifer is as active, as constant, and earnest as Gabriel. But the one is a fiend and the other a seraph. Any activity that is not good is a curse always and only. Better be dead, inert matter — a stone, a clod — than a stinging reptile or a destroying demon; and herein lies the great practical change in regeneration. It transforms the mere doer into a well-doer. It is not so much a change in the energy as in the direction. — Charles Wadsworth, D.D.

The Hebrews have a saying that God is more delighted in adverbs than in nouns: 'tis not so much the matter that's done, but the matter how 'tis done, that God minds. Not how much, but how well! 'Tis the well-doing that meets with a well-done. Let us therefore serve God, not nominally or verbally, but adverbially. — Ralph Venning

Think nothing done while aught remains to do. — Samuel Rogers

D'Israeli tells the following story of two members of the Port Royal Society. Arnauld wished Nicolle to assist him in a new work, when the latter replied, "We are now old. Is it not time to rest?" "Rest!" returned Arnauld, "have we not all eternity to rest in?" So Gerald Massey sings—

"Let me work now, for all Eternity,
With its immortal leisure, waiteth me."

2 Thessalonians 1

Exposition

by C H Spurgeon

2 Thessalonians 1:1. Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians —

Paul loved to associate his fellow-workers with himself when writing to his brethren and sisters in Christ. Although he had a superior experience to theirs, he put Silvanus, and Timothy, his own son in the faith, with him as his fellow-evangelists in writing to “the church of the Thessalonians” —

2 Thessalonians 1:1. In God our Father —

What a wonderful expression! The Church is in God as God is in the Church, what a blessed dwelling-place for the people of God in all generations: “in God our Father” —

2 Thessalonians 1:1, 2. And the Lord Jesus Christ’s grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the apostle’s usual salutation when he is writing to a Christian church. When he is writing to a minister, it is “grace, mercy, and peace,” for God’s most prominent servants especially need great mercy on account of their heavy responsibilities and many shortcomings; but to the church Paul’s greeting is, “Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

All nations have their special forms of salutation, and this is the Christian’s greeting to his fellow-Christians, “Grace unto you, and peace.” How much there is in this prayer! “grace” — the free favor of God, the active energy of the divine power; and “peace” — reconciliation to God, peace of conscience, peace with all men. My brethren, what better things could I desire for you, and what better things could you wish for your best beloved friends than these, “Grace unto you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ?”

2 Thessalonians 1:3. We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

What a kind of sacred network Christian love makes, intertwisting every believer in Christ with every other believer! “The love of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth.” Oh, that this might really be the case in all the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ!

We do not feel this bond as much as we ought; we often feel ourselves bound to grumble and complain, but I question whether we think enough about being bound to praise God; and if we do not thank God as we ought for ourselves, it is little marvel if we are very slack in the duty of thanking him for others. Herein, then, let us imitate this devout apostle, and let us consider ourselves bound to thank God always for our brethren.

2 Thessalonians 1:3-7. As it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure; which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, —

You will perhaps say that this command is more easily given than carried out; and yet, my brethren, the grace of God always enables us to perform what the precept of God commands. “You who are troubled rest with us.” If you can get even a partial glimpse of the glory that is to follow your trouble, if you can see Christ suffering with you, and realize your union with him, if the blessed Spirit who pledges himself to be with all the Lord’s people, shall be with you, you will find it no hard thing thus to rest: “You who are troubled rest with us,” —

2 Thessalonians 1:4, 5. So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgement of God,

One of the clearest proofs of the judgement to come is to be found in the present sufferings of the saints through persecutions and tribulations; for if they, for the very reason that they love God, have to suffer here, there must be a future state and time for rectifying all this that is now so wrong.

2 Thessalonians 1:5-7. That ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which ye do suffer: seeing it is a

righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us,

For us who believe in Jesus there is a long Sabbath yet to come, to be spent with the apostles and the other holy ones around the throne of God and of the Lamb, even as Paul wrote to the Hebrews, where remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.”

2 Thessalonians 1:7-11. When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting instruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you has believed) in that day. Wherefore also we pray always for you, —

The very people in whom Paul gloried, and over whom he rejoiced, were those for whom he continued still to pray; and he did well, for the highest state of grace needs preserving, and there is a possibility of going beyond the utmost height to which any have yet attained. Hence Paul says, “Wherefore also we pray always for you,”

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2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9. In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

I wonder what those persons, who say that it is not the duty of men to believe the gospel, make of this passage. Paul writes that those who “obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be punished with everlasting destruction.” Then, clearly, the gospel demands and commands man’s obedience, and those who will not believe it shall be punished, not only for their other sins, but for this as their chief and damning fault, that they will not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as set before them in the gospel of his grace.

2 Thessalonians 1:10. “Then he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe —

Which passage means, I suppose, that as Christ will be admired in his own person, so his glory, reflected in all his children, will be a subject of admiration to the whole intelligent universe. The saints of God shall be so pure, so bright, such trophies of the Redeemer’s power to save, that he shall be admired in them. We know that, in God’s great temple of the universe, everything doth speak of his glory; and so, in the great spiritual temple of his Church, every separate saint shall show forth the glory of Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:10, 11. (Because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. Therefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the word of faith with power:

Ministers should be much in prayer for their people. When John Welsh’s wife found him on the ground with his eyes red with weeping, and she found that he had been there supplicating by the hour together, she asked him what ailed him, and he replied “Woman, I have three thousand souls to care for, and I wot not how they all prosper; therefore must I wrestle with God for them all.” Oh, that we felt more the weight of our ministry! It is, perhaps, the great fault of this age that so many, who do preach, yet preach with so little earnestness, and are not sufficiently alive to the value of immortal souls. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would make our ministry to be “the burden of the Lord” upon us!

2 Thessalonians 2

Exposition

by C H Spurgeon

2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2. Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

Paul believed in the Second Coming of Christ, for he beseeches the brethren “by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He felt the power of this great truth. He often exhorts us to be watchful, because of the uncertainty of the time of that coming as far as we are concerned. But there were some who sprang up in his day, as in ours, who professed that they knew a great deal about the Second Advent, when it was to happen, and so on, and

they began to foretell and to prophesy beyond what was really revealed of God. By this means, some persons were terrified, and others driven to a very foolish course of action. It would seem, from this Epistle, that some people forsook their daily calling, and on presence of the near return of Christ, endeavored to live upon the alms of Christian people, instead of themselves working. Many, however, were shaken in mind; so Paul wrote to reassure and strengthen them: "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand."

In the Church of Christ, the teaching has always been that Christ is coming quickly, and that teaching must never be withdrawn, for he is coming quickly, as he said to John in the Revelation. At the same time, this teaching has given an opportunity to certain presumptuous people to prophesy that at such and such a time Christ will come. They know nothing about it, and their prophecies are not worth the breath they spend in uttering them, and we have to-day what the apostle wrote to the Thessalonians:

In his former Epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul had written as if he expected Christ to come immediately, and the people seem to have taken his words so literally as to have lived in expectation of Christ's advent, and perhaps to have exhibited some degree of fear concerning it. He now calms their minds by telling them that Christ would not come until certain events had happened. The history of the world was not complete, the harvest of the Church was not ripe; neither had the sin of man and especially the "man of sin" become fully developed.

2 Thessalonians 2:5–7. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

There was something that hindered the full development of anti-Christ in Paul's day. When that was taken out of the way, then would there be a fuller revelation of this sinful system.

2 Thessalonians 2:8–12. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

We will not attempt to explain all this in detail. It would be too much of a task for a mere exposition; but the Church has always to be on her guard against that which comes as an angel of light, but is really a spirit of darkness.

This is the last sin of all, that ungodly men do not receive the love of the truth." If they were themselves true, they would love the truth; if the grace of God was in them, his own precious truth would be prized by them above everything else, but when men finally reject the truth by which they might be saved, God visits them with terrible judgments.

2 Thessalonians 2:13. But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

How the saints praise one another! How sweet is Christian fellowship! How we rejoice in the blessed love of God to his people when we are assailed by those who battle against his truth! Then is the love of the brethren stronger than ever, and our faithfulness to God is largely increased. The apostle falls back upon the doctrine of electing love: "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." And he admires the methods by which that love effects its purpose: "Salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Men are made holy by the Spirit of God, the holiness is that of life, and of the understanding. They attain to a belief of the truth, as well as to a practice of the divine commands. Oh, happy people who are ordained from the beginning unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth!

2 Thessalonians 2:14. Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How the apostle loved the gospel! It was Christ's gospel, but Paul calls it, "Our gospel." He and his brethren had made it so completely their own, and it had become so much their own in contradistinction to "another gospel, which is not another," that he speaks of it with unction and joy: "He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:15. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

“The things which we have handed out to you, which you have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.” They had heard Paul preach; he had not only written to them; but he had also spoken to them; and he bade them treasure up what he had said, and what he had written, and hold it fast as for dear life. The apostle did not preach that which he afterwards left, as the ostrich leaves its eggs; but he watched over it, and he watched over the people who had heard it, anxious that the truth to which they had listened should prove in them to be the message of everlasting life. Oh, my dear hearers, are there not still some of you who have heard our gospel, to whom we have often and long spoken, and yet, notwithstanding, it has not yet been the message of eternal life to you though it has been to many others? God have mercy upon you, and yet bring you to the feet of Jesus! As for others who come to listen to the Word for the first time may it be the power of God unto salvation on the very first occasion of their hearing it, to the praise of God, and the glory of his Son!

2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

I believe in an established Church, not established by acts of Parliament but established by the purpose and by the presence of God in the midst of it. Oh, to be a member of a Church established in every good word and work! Do you know God’s Word? Seek to know it better still, try to strike your roots down deeply into this fruitful soil, suck out the divine nutriment of it, that you may grow so strong that none shall be able to tear you away from it. Have you begun to work for Jesus? May you be established in that good work! Go on working more and more, with both your hands and all your heart, that somehow you may glorify his blessed name. Let me read these sweet verses again: “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.”

2 Thessalonians 3 Exposition by C H Spurgeon

2 Thessalonians 3:1. Finally, brethren, pray for us,

“Pray for us,” says the apostle, “pray for myself and the brethren who are with me, pray for all the apostles and preachers of the Word.” “Finally, brethren.” If this were the last word we had to say to you, we would make just this request, “Finally, brethren, pray for us.” You cannot tell how much God’s servants are helped by the prayers of his people. The strongest man in Israel will be the better for the prayers of the weakest saint in Zion. If you can do nothing else, you can pray for us; therefore, day and night, be ye at the mercy-seat on our behalf: “Finally, brethren, pray for us.”

A most important request. What can the ministers of the gospel do, if their people cease to pray for them? Even if their own prayers be heard, as they will be, and a measure of blessing be given, yet it will be but a scant measure, compared with what it would be if all the saints united in their intercessions. Whenever we see the word of God very mighty in one place it ought to encourage us to pray that it may be the same in another place, for it is the same word and the hearts of all men are alike, The same spirit can give the same blessing in every place. Hence Paul says, “Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified even as it is with you.” Now, if any of you in your church are enjoying rich prosperity, pray for others, that they may have the same. And, if you are without it, take courage from any church which you see prospering, and ask the Lord to do the same things for you. Very likely if we prayed more for ministers they would be more blessed to us. There is many a man who can not “hear” his minister and the reason may be that God never hears him pray for his minister.

2 Thessalonians 3:1. That the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

“You Thessalonians enjoy the power of the Word. Pray that it may be so everywhere else.” Paul is said to have written this Epistle from Corinth or Athens, and he longed that there the Word of God might prevail as it had done at Thessalonica. Pray just now that, in every part of the world, God’s Word may have free course. There are many who stand in the way of it, pray God that they may be swept out of the way, that the Word of the Lord may have free course. We want the gospel to run, and spread, till the whole earth shall know its blessed

message.

2 Thessalonians 3:2. And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.

All men are not candid, or true: "all men have not faith."

I really do not know which is the worst to put up with — an unreasonable man or a wicked man. A wicked man may do you all sorts of mischief, but you soon know him. But an unreasonable man — you do not know where to find him, and he can attack you from all sorts of places. Alas! there are some very unreasonable Christians, — very good in some points, but very stupid; and a stupid man may set a village on a blaze quite as easily as a wicked man. The stupid man's accident may be as dangerous as another man's design. Pray also "that we may be delivered from wicked and unreasonable men, for all men have not faith," and all men have not sense, I may also add.

2 Thessalonians 3:3. But the Lord is faithful,

What a wonderful contrast this is, and how suggestive of comfort! "All men have not faith. But the Lord is full of faith, faithful," true, he keeps all his promises: "The Lord is faithful."

There is the mercy. Whether men be fools or knaves, the Lord is faithful.

2 Thessalonians 3:3–5. Who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you. And the Lord direct your hearts —

We are taught to pray for this grace. We are here told that we shall have it. Since God is faithful he will keep us from evil.

Our obedience to apostolic ordinances should be of the present and of the future. It should be fixed in our souls. What the Lord has commanded in his church by his apostles should be carefully regarded by us.

You see, Paul does not command the Thessalonians to do anything but what he can pray God to work in them. The command of a man, by itself, is nothing, but when he only asks that to be done which he can pray God to do, then there is power about his message: "We have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you. And the Lord direct your hearts" —

2 Thessalonians 3:5. Into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

May the Lord hear that prayer for all of us, for Christ Jesus' sake! Amen.

The two things go together. When we love God, we long for the glory and the appearing of his Son. The most loving spirits in the world have had most an eye to that glorious coming. Note Enoch who walked with God and prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh." Note Daniel, "a man greatly beloved," and a seer who looked into the future and saw the Ancient of Days. Mark also John who leaned his head on Jesus' bosom, we may say of him that he spoke more of the second coming than all the rest of the apostles. When the heart gets right away from earth and is set upon God, then it is that we begin to long for the manifestation of the Lord from heaven.

2 Thessalonians 3:6. Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

Paul had been to Thessalonica, and had given oral teaching, and now he commits to the book what he had spoken; but he bids them take care not to associate with those who wilfully broke the ordinances of the church which he had taught them. There are some brethren with whom it is ill for us to associate, lest they do us hurt, and it is ill for them that we associate with them, lest we seem to assist them in their evil deeds. Especially is this so in the case of brethren of the glass that he is about to describe — mischief makers, troublers, people that can always tell you the gossip of a congregation, that can tear a neighbour's character to pieces that are able to perceive spots on the sun; people who delight in parading the fault of God's own children, and are never so happy as when they are making others unhappy by what they have to retail. These are the kind of people to whom you should give a wide berth.

2 Thessalonians 3:7-9. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you, neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us.

The apostle had a right to be supported by those among whom he labored. He always insists upon that right;

but for their good, knowing the tendency of that age, he himself abjured that right; and he is indignant that there should be others who did nothing whatever as to Christian ministry, but who availed themselves of the charity of the church at Thessalonica so as to be able to live upon it without work.

2 Thessalonians 3:10. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

A very capital rule, indeed. There are some so very spiritually minded that to soil their hands is also to soil their conscience. They are afraid of hard work. They think it is unspiritual; whereas there is nothing in the world, next to the grace of God, that is more likely to keep men out of mischief than having plenty to do.

The rule of the Christian life is, "If any man will not work, neither shall he eat." If you will not serve God as Christians, you shall not feed on the sweet things of the kingdom to your own soul's comfort.

2 Thessalonians 3:11. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

Not doing their own business, and therefore putting their noses into everybody else's business. If they had minded their own affairs, they would have left other people alone. There are such people alive now. We must not be surprised if we meet them seeing that they were alive in the apostle's days; if they troubled him it must be small marvel if they trouble us.

2 Thessalonians 3:12. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

The best bread and the sweetest, is our own. We are to work for it. We are to work with quietness. I suppose to some that is very hard work, but they must labor after it, for quietness is a Christian grace, it is indeed a high Christian attainment.

2 Thessalonians 3:13-15. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

This kind of Christian discipline ought to be carried out still, in reference not only to this one ease of busybodies, but to all other cases. When a church grows large, there can be no efficient discipline from one man, or from all his officers with him. There must be the discipline of the whole church towards itself, each Christian, according to his measure of grace, seeking the good of the whole; for while every man must bear his own burden, yet is it said, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." "Look not every man upon his own things, but also upon the things of others." The careful desire to promote the Christian welfare of all our fellow members is a very different thing from being busybodies. We must have equal desire not in any way to interfere where we should not.

2 Thessalonians 3:16. Now the LORD of peace himself give ye peace always by all means.

What a sweet benediction! And how he heaps the words together, as if peace was one of the greatest blessings a church could have. Indeed, dear brethren it is the essential to all other blessings. I am quite certain that we never should have enjoyed here the long years of perpetual prosperity which we have had, if it had not pleased the Lord to keep us always in peace. So may we be for many and many a year to come! May no root of bitterness ever spring up to trouble us, but may this text be fulfilled, — "Now the Lord of peace give you peace always by all means."

2 Thessalonians 3:16, 17. The LORD be with you all. The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which it the token in every epistle: so I write.

I suppose he always wrote a part of each epistle. Probably through the failure of his eyesight he was unable to write the whole of it with his own hands, but employed some one of his brethren to be his amanuensis. But, in order that every one might know the epistle to be genuine, there was always a little of Paul's writing, sometimes in big text-hand, as when he says to one church, "You see how large a letter I have written unto you with my own hand."

2 Thessalonians 3:18. The grace of our LORD Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

So with great courtesy and a comprehensive prayer he finishes his letter.

MISCELLANEOUS RESOURCES RELATED TO 2 THESSALONIANS

2 Thessalonians 1:10 x

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed . . . in that day.—2Thess 1.10.

The coming of the Lord to which the Apostle was referring in these words, is that which he had already described as "the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, with the angels of His power in flaming fire" (see verses q and 8). This is the Apocalypse or Unveiling aspect of that Parousia or Presence of the Lord, which is to consummate the age commenced by His first Advent. It will be the Day of the Lord, in all the fulness of the great prophetic phrase. One aspect of it he has already described, that, namely, of punitive judgment. In these words another aspect is named, that, namely, of His vindication in His saints, that is, in those who have believed. In them He will be glorified; in them He will be marveled at. While this implicates the fact of their close identification with Him in that great day of His triumph, its chief value is that it reveals how absolutely perfect His work will be in them. Then they will be "without blemish in exceeding joy"; then their spiritual being will be perfected, their minds completely conformed to His mind; the very bodies of their humiliation will be "fashioned anew and conformed to the body of His glory." The wondrous perfection of the saints will be the central glory of the unveiled One, the Lord Jesus Himself; and their very glory will be such as to direct attention to Him rather than to themselves, for it is He Who will "be marveled at in that day." While that is a radiantly beautiful description of the goal toward which we travel, should it not also be the ideal for our present life : that we should so live that He may be glorified in us daily; and He be marveled at as the One to Whom we owe everything?

2 Thessalonians 1:11

A B Simpson

God's Best (from Christ in the Bible)

Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power." (2 Thes. 1:11.)

There is a good, a better, and a best. It is a good thing to be saved; it is a better thing to be sanctified and consecrated unto the Lord; but there is a best and highest life into which we may enter, even all the good pleasure of His goodness and the highest possibilities of faith and love.

There is such a thing as graduating from college after passing the required subjects and receiving your diploma; but there is also an honor class, and a prize awaiting the successful competitors and the men who reach the highest proficiency.

St. Paul wanted to be the best. "All run," he says, in this great conflict, "but one receives the prize. . . . I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beats the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" -- not lost or cast away from the presence of God, but deprived of the incorruptible crown when the reward is given, and the eternal prize. And in another place he tells us, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The day came when the prize was won, and even he could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

This was the prize to which James and John aspired, and Jesus did not discourage them or tell them that it was unattainable. He told them it was dependent upon their willingness and ability to be baptized with His baptism and to drink of His cup. It was not His to give, except to those for whom it was prepared -- the heroes, the conquerors, the highest and the best.

This principle of hope is an element of human nature, and God appeals to it in the promises of His Word and the recompenses of His kingdom. God is not looking for great quantities today, but for high qualities.

We are in the closing days of the New Testament dispensation, and we may expect the same things that marked the last days of the old economy. Then God had to turn from communities to individuals for the accomplishment of His great purposes. The kingdom of Judah failed to fulfill His expectation and stand as His witness against an evil world; and so He had to reject Israel and Judah and let them go into captivity, and even allow His own glorious temple to fall because His people would not be true to Him.

Then He picked out a little woman named Esther, and a young man called Daniel, and three Hebrews in Babylon; and through these weak instruments He compelled the proud Babylonians to acknowledge His power and bow to His glory, and He wrought in a single generation more for His great name than all the dynasties of Israel had accomplished in centuries.

So again the day is approaching when even His own Church may fail Him. The pure apostolic church of John and Polycarp became the apostasy of Rome, and we need not wonder if the church of the Reformation should have begun already to resemble the picture of Laodicea, "rich and increased with goods" and saying, "I have need of nothing," and about to be rejected with disgust because of its lukewarmness.

God forbid that we should utter aught against its true spirit, but every earnest and true Christian knows that, at best, we have today a small minority for fidelity to the truth, and no sort of approximation of Christian living up to the standard of His Word and the power of His Spirit. It is the old story of Gideon once more, not only the thirty thousand picked out of Israel, but the three hundred picked out of the thirty thousand.

God is looking today for pattern men; and when He gets a true sample, it is very easy to reproduce it in a thousand editions, and multiply it in other lives without limitation.

All the experiences of life come to us as tests; and as we meet them, our loving Father is watching, with intense and jealous love, to see us overcome; and if we fail, He is deeply disappointed, and our great adversary is filled with joy and triumph. We are a gazing stock continually for angels and principalities, and every step we take is critical and decisive for something in our eternal future.

When Abraham went forth that morning to Mount Moriah, it was an hour of solemn probation; and when he came back, he was one of God's tested men, with the stamp of His eternal approbation. God could say, "I know him, that he will . . . do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him."

God is looking for such men today. He is longing to say of us: "I know him. I can depend upon him. I have tried him, and he has not been found wanting."

What is the highest Christian life? What is the life that God is trying to reproduce in the lives of His saints? Is it the repair of wrecked humanity? Is it simply the restoration of Adamic purity? Is it only the bringing back of the human soul to the condition in which it was before the fall? This would be a poor result for such tremendous cost as the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. And what guarantee have we that, if this were accomplished tomorrow, the wreck would not be repeated the next day, and the race as lost as ever?

No, God has accomplished something very much higher; nothing less, in fact, than the new creation of a new race, patterned not after the human, but the divine. "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." "As is the earth, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

God is now aiming to reproduce in us the pattern which has already appeared in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Christian life is not an imitation of Christ, but a direct new creation in Christ; and the union with Christ is so complete that He imparts His own nature to us, and lives His own life in us. It is not an imitation, but simply an outgrowth of the nature implanted within.

We live Christlike lives because we have the Christ life. God is not satisfied with anything less than perfection. He required that from His Son. He requires it from us, and He does not, in the process of grace, reduce the standard, but He brings us up to it. He counts us righteous in justification, and then He makes us righteous in sanctification, and says of the new creation, "He that does righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death," for this very purpose "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." He requires of us a perfect faith, and He tells us that if we believe and doubt not, we shall have whatsoever we ask. The faintest touch of unbelief will neutralize our trust.

But how shall we have such perfect faith? Is it possible for human nature? No, but it is possible to the divine nature; it is possible to the Christ within us. It is possible for God to give it, and God does give it. But Christ is the Author and Finisher of our faith, and He bids us "Have the faith of God"; and as we have it through the imparting of the Spirit of Christ, we believe even as He.

We pray in His name and in His very nature, and we "live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." The love that He requires of us is not mere human love, nor even the standard of love required in the Old Testament, but something far higher. The new commandment is "Love one another," not as yourselves, but "as I have loved you."

How shall such love be made possible? "Herein is our love made perfect, . . . because as he is, so are we in this world." Our love is simply His love wrought in us, and imparted to us through His own indwelling Spirit.

There is no place in life to which we ever come that is so delicate, so difficult, and so critical, as the place where God requires of us some exercise of love which is contrary to nature, and we find ourselves utterly inadequate to it. When we have to meet an enemy with divine forgiveness and with what seems a perfect adjustment of spirit, not ignoring, perhaps, their gross and inexcusable wrongs, but, at the same time seeing them as He sees them, loving them as He loves them, meeting them without resentment, but with a pure divine benevolence -- at such points as these we are thrown upon Christ, and without Him we should sink in despair.

It is here that the life of Christ reveals itself, and the heart is lifted up into a divine sweetness impossible to the natural man, and filled with praise and wonder at the riches of Christ's glorious grace.

This is also the secret of all true service and of all victorious suffering. Someone has expressed it in this striking way: "We can do more than we can." God is constantly calling us to situations where human nature is utterly unequal to the pressure, just that we may show the infinite resources of His grace. Therefore, it is not the patience of the suffering one, but the power of Christ which enables us to bear it, so that we shall be stronger for the very suffering. This was Paul's experience with the thorn in the flesh. The thorn was not removed, but there came to him through it such an influx and afflux of divine strength that he was really better off than if the thorn had not been there; and the spectacle of his victorious spirit brought infinite glory to the name of his divine Lord.

So again our service for Christ is not the best that we can do, for God most frequently uses the weakest instruments, and uses them at their weakest, that the glory may be given to him, and that it may be manifestly His working and not ours.

How shall we glorify God? By doing something for Him that will make Him our debtor, and show how loving, faithful, and capable we are? That would glorify us, not Him. God needs no addition to His happiness from our little store. He is richer by far than we, and all we call our own belongs to Him. The true way to glorify God is for God to show His glory through us, to shine through us as empty vessels reflecting His fullness of grace and power. The sun is glorified when it has a chance to show its light through the crystal window, or reflect it from the spotless mirror or the glassy sea.

There is nothing that glorifies God so much as for a weak and helpless man or woman to be able to triumph, through His strength, in places where the highest human qualities fail us, and carry in divine power, through every form of toil and suffering, a spirit naturally weak, irresolute, selfish, and sinful, transformed into sweetness, purity, and power, and standing victorious amid circumstances for which its natural qualities must utterly unfit it; a mind not naturally wise or strong, directed by divine wisdom, and carried along the line of a great and mighty plan -- this is what glorifies God.

He does not want to see us reflecting our own glory, but, like the heavenly blue and the celestial constellations reflected from the glassy bosom of the lake, He wants to see His own face and His own grace shining through our lives and saying to the world, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me."

So the highest possibilities of Christian life are put within the reach of the feeblest and the most helpless lives. It is all of God; and if it is all of God, it is possible for the weakest of men. And, therefore, in a sense, it is easier to live a high life than to drag along upon the lower plane.

It is easier to stand on a higher plane than below; it is easier to stand on the mountaintop than to stand with one foot on the heights of grace while with the other we are dragging our life along the lower levels. It is easier for a car to run on a track than off, and it is easier to be always on the track than to be sometimes dragged along the pavement stones.

If we are but willing to trust God utterly, and belong to Him unreservedly, He is waiting for vessels "meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

The potter has the clay before him for a beautiful vase, to be embellished with every touch of loveliness, to stand in his palace for the highest and holiest use. But, alas, through no fault of the potter, but because the clay will not suffer His hand to mold it as He would, it is marred in the hands of the potter, and unfitted for His highest destination. One little scratch will cause a hopeless blemish. The highest things must be the most unspotted. The more costly the dress, the more it shows the ink spot. The whiter the muslin, the more easily it takes a stain. The more perfect the French glass, the more quickly does it show a flaw. It may be used for some other purpose, but it is unfitted for the highest place. It must be set aside, and its highest use be ever unfulfilled.

Oh, how very, very sad the disappointments that heaven will reveal; the might-have-beens that will pass before our vision and then vanish forever away; the crowns we might have worn; the high callings we might have won! The potter may take up the clay again and make another vessel. So God takes up our broken lives and does the best He can with them.

O beloved, may God inspire us to choose His highest choice, and let nothing hinder all the good pleasure of His goodness, or keep us from what the Apostle John has said, "that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

Give me, Lord, Your highest choice;

Let others take the rest;
Their good things have no charm for me
For I have got Your best.

2 Thessalonians 1:12 **THAT THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS MAY BE GLORIFIED IN YOU.**

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

WILL you, dear Christian soul, enter into a solemn compact with the Holy Spirit that you will live for this as your supreme purpose, namely, to glorify the name (i.e., the character) of the Lord Jesus? This is his supreme purpose and aim throughout the present age. He seeks the glory of Jesus with the same persistent patience as Jesus sought the glory of His Father, and longs for our fellowship and cooperation. Nothing gratifies the Holy Spirit more than to welcome into partnership those who love the Lord Jesus with a consuming passion, and are prepared to glorify Him, at whatever cost to themselves.

It has made a great difference to my life since I responded to the call of the Spirit, as though He said directly, as once through His servant, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together." One has now a worthy object always in view, whether in speaking or keeping silence; in acting or suffering: in life or death—that the Lord Jesus may be magnified.

Does this seem too high an aim? Then ponder the gracious assurance that the Lord will fulfill every desire of goodness (2Th 1:11). He first instills the desire, and then realizes it; first suggests the outline plan, and then fills in the colors. Take your desires for goodness to Him, and trust Him, in all faithfulness, to realize and fulfill them. They are like the chalice which the child brings to the lake-side; impure, indeed, but capable of being rinsed; and the father, taking it from its hand, plunges it into the pellucid waters, that cleanse and fill to the brim. Thank God for every desire of goodness! But be not content till that which you desire is in actual possession; for He who prompts the desire is well able to fulfill it.

2Thessalonians 2:7 x

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

The mystery of lawlessness cloth already work; only there is One that restraineth now.—2Thess. 2.7

Many opinions have been held concerning what Paul meant here by "the mystery of lawlessness," and to whom he referred when he wrote of "One that restraineth." The difficulty has been largely created by the view that he was thinking of some-thing and someone peculiar to the times in which he wrote. The context shows that he was looking forward to the day of the Lord at the consummation of the present age, to the Parousia, or Presence of Christ, and especially to the Apocalypse aspect of it, in which the "Man of sin" having been also revealed, should be slain. With that in view, he wrote these words, and they naturally apply to the whole age to be so consummated. During that age—this age in which we live, "the mystery of lawlessness," the principle of evil, which at last will be unveiled in the person of the Man of Sin, is already working. But it is also true that, during the same age, there is One Who restrains that working, holds it in check, prevents its final development, and He will continue to do so, until He is taken out of the way. The reference unquestionably is to the Holy Spirit, Who by His work of convincing the world of sin, of righteousness, of judgment, makes impossible the outworking of lawlessness to its final issues. The time will come when the restraining influence will be removed, so that the mystery of lawlessness may be wrought out to its final expression, and that, in order that it may be destroyed by the unveiling of the Lord.

2Thessalonians 2:10 x

Love of the Truth or For the Truth

A. W. Pink

It is not simply a knowledge of the Truth that saves, but a love of it that is the essential prerequisite. This is clear from 2Th 2:10, "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved..."

Since then there is love for the Truth in contradistinction from a love of the Truth, and a natural love for Christ in contrast with a spiritual love of Him, how am I to be sure which mine is? We may distinguish between these "loves" thus.

First, the one is partial, the other is impartial; the one esteems the doctrines of scripture but not the duties it enjoins, the promises of

Scripture but not the precepts, the blessings of Christ but not His claims, His priestly office but not His kingly rule; but not so with the spiritual lover.

Second, the one is occasional, the other is regular; the former balks when personal interests are crossed, not so the latter.

Third, the one is evanescent and weak, the other lasting and powerful; the former quickly wanes when other delights compete, and prevails not to control the other affections; the latter rules the heart, and is strong as death.

Fourth, the former betters not its possessor; the latter transforms the life.

2Thessalonians 2:10

J C Philpot

Daily Portions

"I will be as the dew unto Israel." –Hosea 14:5

Sometimes the Lord, without applying his word with any very great and distinguishing power to the heart, makes his truth to drop with a measure of sweetness into the soul. This is as rain or dew, according to his own gracious declaration, "My teaching shall drop as the rain; my speech shall distill as the dew" (Dt. 32:2). The dropping, then, of his teaching as rain, and the distilling of his gracious speech as dew, kindle in the soul a love of the truth, and wherever this is felt there is salvation, for we read of those who perish that "they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved" (2Th 2:10).

There is a receiving of the truth, and a receiving of the love of the truth. These two things widely differ. To receive the truth will not necessarily save; for many receive the truth who never receive the love of the truth. Professors by thousands receive the truth into their judgment, and adopt the plan of salvation as their creed; but are neither saved nor sanctified thereby. But to receive the love of the truth by the truth as it is in Jesus being made sweet and precious to the soul, is to receive salvation itself. It is in this way that the gospel is made the power of God unto salvation; and therefore the Apostle, speaking of "the preaching of the cross," says that "it is to those who perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." Now it is impossible that this power should be felt without its having an alluring effect upon the soul, whereby it comes out from every

2 Thessalonians 2:13 **GOD HATH FROM THE BEGINNING CHOSEN YOU TO SALVATION**

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

FROM the beginning! Who shall compute the contents of the vast unknown abyss, which is comprehended in that phrase? The beginning of creation was preceded by the anticipation of Redemption, and the love of God to all who were one with Christ.

God's aim and purpose. Salvation.--Not simply our deliverance from the penalty, but from the power of all besetting sin; so that we may be delivered from the fear of our enemies, and serve Him in holiness and righteousness all our days. This He is prepared to give to us; but we must claim it by faith.

God's choice.--Whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate. From all eternity He saw those who would be attracted to Jesus by a Divine affinity, and these were included in His gift to the Son. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me, and they have kept Thy word." We must not presume on the eternal choice; but we may be very grateful that the tendencies emanating from the fall are met, in mid-flow, by the grace and choice of the Almighty.

God's method. Through sanctification of the Spirit.--The Holy Ghost sets us apart from sin, and consecrates us to God. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price." Our sanctification is not the property of our soul, but its possession of the Holy One; not an attribute, but a Person. And belief of the truth. Let the Word of God dwell in you richly. Hide it in your heart, that you may be kept from sin. We are sanctified by the truth in so far as we expose our hearts to its entrance and rule. We are cleansed by the washing of water through the Word.

2Thessalonians 2:13 x

Octavius Winslow

Daily Walking with God

MARCH 9.

But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. 2Thessalonians 2:13

THE work of sanctification is preeminently the product of the Spirit. He is the great Sanctifier of the soul. The implantation of the germ of holiness in regeneration is of Him. For let it still be borne in mind, that a renewed soul has within him the "incorruptible seed" of holiness; and although its growth, in many instances, may be slow, and scarcely perceptible; though, during a long period of his journey, the believer may be the subject of strong corruptions and clinging infirmities, which in a degree act like frosts upon the tender scion, checking its advance to maturity, yet the seed is there, and indwelling sin cannot destroy it, the frosts cannot kill it; it is "incorruptible," cannot be corrupted; and in process of time, under the tender and faithful culture of the Eternal Spirit, it shall deepen and expand its roots, and put forth its branches and its boughs, and then shall appear the fruit, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear;" varying in its degree of fruitfulness among the saints, "in some twenty, some sixty, some an hundredfold," but in all, of the same nature, and the product of the same Spirit.

It has been the constant effort of Satan to divert men from the great point we are now considering. In two ways has he proved successful.

First, in setting them upon the work of mortification of sin before regeneration; and second, in setting them upon the same work after conversion, in their own strength. With regard to the first, sanctification is not the antecedent work of an unbeliever: although it is awfully true that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," yet the attainment of holiness is an utter impossibility so long as the heart remains a stranger to the regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit. Repentance and faith are the first duties in the order of time, with an unconverted man.

And with regard to the second effort of Satan to deceive the soul, equally ruinous is it to all true mortification of sin. No child of God can accomplish this mighty work in his own strength. Here lies the secret, be assured, of all our failure and disappointment in the work. Forgetting that he who would prove victorious in this warfare must first learn the lesson of his own weakness and insufficiency, and, thus schooled, must go forth in the strength that is in Christ Jesus, and in the "power of His might," girt with the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit—forgetting this important truth, we march to the overthrow of our giant corruptions in our own fancied wisdom and power; and the result always has been, and with the same means ever will be, our complete discomfiture. Oh! when shall we learn that we are nothing, that we have "no might," and that our feeblest enemy will triumph if his subjection be attempted in our own insufficiency?

The Holy Spirit is the efficient cause of all holiness in the believer. If we look into the prophecy of Ezekiel, we find clear intimations of the promise of the Spirit to this effect. There God unfolds what may be regarded as the foundation of all sanctification—the removal of the stony heart, the implantation of a new spirit. "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you." "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Let us see the doctrine as more clearly unfolded in the writings of the apostles. "And such were some of you but you are sanctified, but you are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit." We are far from excluding the Father and the Son from any part in this great work—we believe they are deeply interested in it, as the Divine word shows: "Those who are sanctified by God the Father," Jude 1:1KJV (cp 1Co 6:11, 1Th 5:23-note). "Those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus," 1Co 1:2. But the Holy Spirit is the special and immediate Agent to whom the work of sanctifying the believer is assigned.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 x

Chosen to Salvation

A. W. Pink

There are three things here which deserve special attention. First, the fact that we are expressly told that God's elect are "chosen to salvation": Language could not be more explicit. How summarily do these words dispose of the sophistries and equivocations of all who would make election refer to nothing but external privileges or rank in service! It is to "salvation" itself that God has chosen us. Second, we are warned here that election unto salvation does not disregard the use of appropriate means: salvation is reached through "sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth"

It is not true that because God has chosen a certain one to salvation that he will be saved willy-nilly, whether he believes or not: nowhere do the Scriptures so represent it. The same God who "chose unto salvation", decreed that His purpose should be realized through the work of the spirit and belief of the truth. Third, that God has chosen us unto salvation is a profound cause for fervent praise.

Note how strongly the apostle express this - "we are bound to give thanks always to God for you. brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation", etc. Instead of shrinking back in horror from the doctrine of predestination, the believer, when he sees this blessed truth as it is unfolded in the Word, discovers a ground for gratitude and thanksgiving such as nothing else affords, save the unspeakable gift of the Redeemer Himself.

2Thessalonians 2:13, 14 x

J. C. Philpot

Daily Portions

The first work of grace is to kill rather than to make alive; to wound rather than to heal; to bring down rather than to lift up; to reveal the law rather than the gospel. For "balm is useless to the healthy." Salvation with all its super-abounding grace is but an empty sound to those who have never felt themselves cut off from all help or all hope. So, in a sense, there is a calling under and through, if not by the law, in the first teaching and operations of the Spirit of God, bringing the soul under its condemnation as a ministration of death. But when the law has done its office, and the sinner is slain by its killing power, then there comes to his aid and deliverance, what the Apostle speaks of here, the calling by the gospel.

When the gospel utters its melodious voice; when pardon is proclaimed through the sacrifice of Jesus; when peace reaches the heart through atoning blood revealed to the conscience; when the glad tidings of salvation by grace are no longer a mere sound in the letter, but are made the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes; when heavenly light shines into the mind; when divine power attends the word to the soul; when faith is raised up, hope casts its anchor within the veil, and the love of God is shed abroad, then and there is the calling of which the Apostle here speaks--a calling by the gospel.

The sound of the gospel trumpet, like the silver trumpet on the great day of jubilee, reaches the ear and heart of the captive exile and he hastens that he may be loosed (Isa. 51:14). The scene now changes; the storms of God's wrath blow over; the day-star appears in the dawning morn of the gospel day, "a morning without clouds" (2 Sam. 23:4), until the Sun of righteousness in due time rises with healing in his wings. As, then, the gospel is thus made the power of God unto salvation, the soul is enabled to listen to, and embrace it as a joyful sound. Now just in proportion as faith receives it, hope anchors in it, and love embraces it, is evidence given of our being from the beginning chosen unto salvation.

2Thessalonians 2:16

C H Spurgeon

Morning and evening

"Everlasting consolation." — 2Thessalonians 2:16

"**Consolation.**" There is music in the word: like David's harp, it charms away the evil spirit of melancholy. It was a distinguished honour to Barnabas to be called "the son of consolation" (Acts 4:36); nay, it is one of the illustrious names of a greater than Barnabas, for the Lord Jesus is "the consolation of Israel."

"**Everlasting consolation**"—here is the cream of all, for the eternity of comfort is the crown and glory of it. What is this "everlasting consolation"? It includes a sense of pardoned sin. A Christian man has received in his heart the witness of the Spirit (Ro 8:16-note) that his iniquities are put away like a cloud, and his transgressions like a thick cloud (Isa 44:22). If sin be pardoned, is not that an everlasting consolation?

Next, the Lord gives His people an abiding sense of acceptance in Christ (Ep 1:6KJV-note). The Christian knows that God looks upon him as standing in union with Jesus (See in Christ). Union to the risen Lord is a consolation of the most abiding order; it is, in fact, everlasting. Let sickness prostrate us, have we not seen hundreds of believers as happy in the weakness of disease as they would have been in the strength of hale and blooming health? Let death's arrows pierce us to the heart, our comfort dies not, for have not our ears full often heard the songs of saints as they have rejoiced because the living love of God was shed abroad in their hearts in dying moments? Yes, a sense of acceptance in the Beloved is an everlasting consolation.

Moreover, the Christian has a conviction of his security. God has promised to save those who trust in Christ: the Christian does trust in Christ, and he believes that God will be as good as His word, and will save him (He 7:25-note). He feels that he is safe by virtue of his being bound up with the person and work of Jesus (1Pe 1:5-note).

2Thessalonians 2:16

CHRISTIAN HOPE

John Angell James, 1859

A GOOD HOPE THROUGH GRACE - 2Th 2:16

There is a richness of expression in these few words to which no exposition or paraphrase can do justice. Every view we can take of the Christian hope, entitles it to this description.

The Christian's hope is good ABSOLUTELY. Good in its foundation—which is Christ; good in its object—which is heaven; good in its influence—which is holiness; good in its power to support and comfort under all the trials of life; good for all people, from the prince to the peasant; good for all occasions, for prosperity and adversity; good through all the journey of life, and amid all the agonies of death. Whoever tried it and found it otherwise than good? Was this adjective ever more truly or more appropriately applied to any object? Will not the believer who entertains it, and feels its blessed influence, joyfully exclaim, "Yes, if there is anything good on earth, anything in me, anything in true religion—it is this! Whatever good things I have—this is best. I would part with all, rather than this; and if, on the deprivation of property, friends, health, I were asked what I had left, I would answer from the midst of surrounding evils, 'A good hope through grace!' and feel that, having nothing else but this, I should account myself possessing all things."

What multitudes have experienced all this, and found that Christian hope has stood by them, when everything else had fled. As the sun converts clouds to a glorious drapery, painting them with gorgeous hues, and arraying the whole horizon with its magnificent costumes—so a believing and radiant heart lets forth its hope upon its sorrows, and all the blackness flies off; and troubles, that seemed likely to extinguish it, serve only as a theater to display its glory! Is not this good?

The Christian's hope is good COMPARATIVELY. "And this world is fading away, along with everything it craves. But if you do the will of God, you will live forever." 1 John 2:17. How insignificant, trivial, and paltry, are the objects of worldly desire and expectation! What are wealth, rank, fame, pleasure—compared with the glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life, which the believer looks for beyond the grave? They are all of the earth earthly—this is heavenly; they are human—this divine; they are transient—this everlasting; they are unsatisfying, leaving the soul a void unfilled—this replenishing its vast capacity; they are fleeting, shadowy, and precarious—this absolutely certain; they are the toys of children, compared with the occupations of a Newton, when handling his telescope, surveying the heavens, ascertaining and contemplating the stars, with his bosom swelling with the hope of discoveries that will instruct the world and immortalize himself; they leave the poor, craving soul, exclaiming, "Who will show us any good?"—this compels him, with rapture, to exclaim, "I have found it! I have found it!"

Compare this hope with that of the HEATHEN, and see how good it, is. How dim and uncertain were the views of the wisest, and best of these, as set forth in the doubting expectations of Cicero, the loftiest speculations of Plato, and the dying prospects of Socrates. Were these sages of Greece, these lights of the ancient world, to revisit our earth with no more knowledge than they carried away with them, they might thankfully sit at the feet of a heaven-taught Sunday-school girl, and from her lips learn lessons of immortality, which their discoveries never enabled them to reach.

As a proof of this, I refer to their sayings. The hope of immortality is styled by Cicero—"A conjecture or surmise of future ages." Seneca says—"It is that which our wise men only promise—but do not prove." Socrates, at his death, said—"I hope to go hence to good men—but of that I am not very confident; nor does it become any wise man to be positive that so it will be. I must now die, and you shall live—but which of us is in the better state, God only knows." Pliny says—"Neither soul nor body has any more sense after death, than before it was born" Aristotle held "that death was terrible, as putting an end to all things." Plutarch called it "The fabulous hope of immortality." How evident is it, from the experience and testimony of such men, that mere human reason is inadequate to the discovery of a future state; and that nothing could make this certain to man, except a revelation from God. The trial never could have been made with greater advantages than by the philosophers of Greece and Rome; and these confessed that they could arrive at no certainty on the subject. In this state of things the gospel comes with its glorious discoveries, abolishes death—that is, renders its reign but transient; and establishes the fact, not only of the immortality of the soul—but of the resurrection of the body; thus solving the great and stupendous problem of man's nature and destiny—and bringing in everlasting consolation, and a good hope through grace.

MOHAMMEDANISM speaks of its Paradise—but how groveling, how sensual, how unworthy the soul of man. The false prophet accommodates his heaven to the carnal and lowest passions of our nature, and holds out to the faithful little more or better than the lecherous harem of an Eastern despot. He carries his sensual system into the celestial state, and peoples his eternal world with a race of voluptuaries. What a contrast is here presented to the Christian Paradise, where flesh and blood are excluded, with all their grosser appetites and propensities; and not only is the soul perfect in purity—but even the body is too spiritual for the sensual passions of the flesh.

Little better is the Elysium of the classic nations of GREECE and ROME, or rather of their poets—and it was only poetry. If we

consult Homer, Virgil, Pindar, and others, these rise no higher than converse with gods which are themselves stained with crime—and this communion maintained amid green bowers, gliding streams, murmuring springs, verdant meadows, and warbling of birds. Others add mirth and sensual delight. True it is, some of their philosophers turned away in partial disgust from these base views, yet they had nothing better to substitute, which could be relied upon with certainty. Now and then a dim ray of light seemed to pierce the clouds of mortality, and point to a region beyond—but while the eye of reason looked at it, it vanished like a meteor, and left the benighted, bewildered philosopher in all his doubt and darkness. I need not further enlarge upon this, than to contrast Cicero's skeptical statement of the coming day of transition from earth to heaven, with Paul's triumphant confidence, where he says—"We know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!"

There was Paganism, straining her exploring eye over the dark abyss of the grave, with feeble fluttering hope, and strong prevailing fear, holding up her dark lantern—but gaining no discovery—uttering her inquiring voice—but receiving no response—all was dark and silent to her. Here, is Christianity, gazing with steady faith, living hope, and enraptured view, amid the broad daylight of revelation, on those sweet fields beyond the swelling flood which stand dressed with living green, and adorned with the at amaranthine flowers of the celestial Paradise. Oh, precious gospel, which has thus laid open to us not only the GLORY—but the CERTAINTY of a future state of bliss!

It is hardly worth while to bring into the comparison those monstrous, absurd, and groveling representations of the future state, which are the products of MODERN PAGANISM—the transmigration of souls of the Eastern world from body to body, through millions of ages, until they are at last absorbed in the gods; or the hunting grounds and pleasures of the hunt, which form the future of savage tribes. Who can contemplate these varied—but groveling and uncertain expectations, held by the ancient and modern heathen, and not see, comparing them with the Christian faith, the truth and force of the apostle's description, when he calls it a good hope?

Compare it with the hope of the JEW. How scanty were the revelations of a future state under the Old Testament. How seldom did the sun of the celestial world seem to break through the clouds and shadows of the Levitical economy, and throw its luster on the path of even the pious Israelite. In what gloom and deep dejection did he approach the sepulcher. Where in all the law, the psalms, the prophets, do we find those triumphant anticipations of eternal glory, which are so frequent in the writings of holy Paul? Where do we see the ancient believer looking up into heaven with the exulting expectation that he shall soon be there with God and his saints? How rarely did David strike his harp or tune his voice in praise of the heaven to come. How seldom did even the evangelical prophet Isaiah rise high on the wing of prophecy until he bathed his spirit in the flood of the excellent glory, and then descended to tell the visions he had seen. One chapter, I might almost say one verse, of the New Testament, tells us more of the celestial world, as to the reality and nature of its felicities, than all the pages of the Old Testament. So true are the apostle's words already quoted—"He has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel."

Is it not, then, a good hope that Christians have? And then, just for a moment, dwell on its SOURCE, as expressed in this verse, "a good hope through grace." Any hope, the expectation of the smallest favor—even the shortening of the duration of punishment, or lightening the weight of punishment—would be favor. Annihilation would be mercy, for sinners who deserved to be plunged in eternal despair; just as any situation on earth might be esteemed a favor for a man who had been condemned to die, and deserved it. It would have been grace to be merely exempted from the bitter pains of eternal death—though our eternal destiny had been to dwell in some world far from God's presence, and with only some few comforts to make existence tolerable. It would have been a display of grace, rich grace—to bestow upon us all the glories of Paradise for ten thousand ages—and then to extinguish our existence forever. Had we never heard of eternal life, and had this been presented to us as the object of Christian desire and expectation—we would have considered it as a manifestation of abounding favor.

But for sinners who had deserved hell to have such a hope as ours—the hope of everlasting life, with all that can make existence a blessing; to have a hope founded on the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the Son of God; to be brought by the new creating power of God into the possession of this hope—is it not a display of grace which will fill the universe with astonishment, and our eternity with wonder and with praise?

2Thessalonians 2:16, 17

Octavius Winslow

Daily Walking with God.

NOVEMBER 23.

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself; and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work." 2Thessalonians 2:16, 17

Upon the subject of comfort great stress is laid in the sacred word. It is clearly God's revealed will that His people should be comforted. The fullness of Christ, the exceeding great and precious promises of the word, the covenant of grace, and all the dealings of God, bear upon this one point, the comfort and consolation of the saints. A brief reference to the Divine word will convince us of this. This is the very character He Himself bears, and this is the blessed work He accomplishes. Thus, "Blessed be God, even the, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble by the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted of God." 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4. Kindred to this, are those striking words in Isaiah 40:1: "Comfort you, comfort you my people, says your God." This was God's command to the prophet. It was His declared will that His people should be comforted, even though they dwelt in Jerusalem, the city which was to witness the crucifixion of the Lord of life and glory. What an unfolding does this give us of Him who is the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, and that, too, in every place!

To comfort the saints is one important end of the Scriptures: "Whatever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Romans 15:4. And thus the exhortation runs—"Comfort the feeble-minded." "Why comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also you do." "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Why comfort one another with these words." Thus has the Holy Spirit testified to this subject, and thus is it clear that it is the will, and it is in the heart, of God, that His people should be comforted.

The Spirit comforts the believer by unfolding to his eye the near prospect of the coming glory. Heaven is near at hand. It is but a step out of a poor, sinful, sorrow-stricken world, into the rest that remains for the people of God. It is but a moment, the twinkling of an eye, and we are absent from the body, and are present with the Lord. Then will the days of our mourning be ended, then sin will grieve no more—affliction will wound no more—sorrow will depress no more, and God will hide Himself no more. There will be the absence of all evil, and the presence of all good; and they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, shall take their stand before the throne of God, and shall "serve Him day and sight in His temple: and He that sits on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Why, beloved in the Lord, let us comfort one another with these words, and with this prospect.

2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17

Comfort your hearts

J C Philpot

Let this be ever borne in mind—that whatever affliction befalls the children of God, it is laid upon them by the hand of God—and that for the express purpose of putting them into a situation and making them capable of receiving those comforts which God only can bestow. All our trials and afflictions, whether temporal or spiritual, pave the way for what the apostle prays for so earnestly in our text—that the Lord Himself would comfort your hearts.

Observe that Paul makes no mention of earthly comfort. "May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father. . . .comfort your hearts." O none but Jesus Himself and the Father can comfort a truly afflicted heart! But He can and does from time to time comfort His dear people—by a sense of His presence—by a word of power from His gracious lips—by the light of His countenance—by the balm of His atoning blood and dying love—by the work and witness of the Spirit within. And as they receive this consolation from the mouth of God—their hearts are comforted.

2 Thessalonians 3:3 x

C H Spurgeon

Faith's Checkbook

Established and Kept

MEN are often as devoid of reason as of faith. There are with us still "unreasonable and wicked men." There is no use in arguing with them or trying to be at peace with them: they are false at heart and deceitful in speech. Well what of this? Shall we worry ourselves with them? No, let us turn to the Lord, for He is faithful. No promise from His Word will ever be broken. He is neither unreasonable in His demands upon us, nor unfaithful to our claims upon Him. We have a faithful God. Be this our joy.

He will establish us so that wicked men shall not cause our downfall, and He will keep us so that none of the evils which now assail

us shall really do us damage. What a blessing for us that we need not contend with men, but are allowed to shelter ourselves in the Lord Jesus, who is in truest sympathy with us. There is one true heart, one faithful mind, one never changing Love; there let us repose. The Lord will fulfill the purpose of His grace to us His servants, and we need not allow a shadow of a fear to fall upon our spirits. Not all that men or devils can do can hinder us of the divine protection and provision. This day let us pray the Lord to establish and keep us.

2 Thessalonians 3:5 **THE LORD DIRECT YOUR HEARTS INTO THE LOVE OF GOD, AND INTO THE PATIENT WAITING FOR CHRIST.**

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

DIRECT might be rendered "make straight." It is used of the apostle's own coming to these beloved converts in 1Th 3:11-note. It is as though he asked that their hearts might travel easily and swiftly along the road which leads into the love of God, and the patience which, untiring, waits for Christ.

The love of God.--We urgently need, for many reasons, to be brought into the love of God. Only so can our selfishness be conquered and expelled; only so can we become like God in our daily life and conversation; only this is the complete evidence to the world that our holy religion is true; only thus shall we have power to influence the lost and fallen; only so can we know God, "for he that loveth not, knoweth not God." But how can we learn to love? God alone can teach us and guide our way into this sacred art. His Holy Spirit must fill our hearts with His love; we must ever claim and receive it as our power for daily self-sacrifice, and we must be prepared to take every opportunity of sharing the love of God in unselfishness and thoughtfulness for those with whom we come in contact.

The Patience of Christ.--Thus the original might be rendered; and the beloved disciple confesses himself a brother and companion in the patience of Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:9). We all know something of this. Longing for answers to prayers that are still delayed; yearning for the realization of hopes and ideals of which God's Spirit has spoken to us; waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. May we be led into something of that sublime faith and patience with which Jesus sits, until all things are put under Him, and He is satisfied.

2 Thessalonians 3:5 **STEPPING HEAVENWARD**

F. B. Meyer.

Our Daily Walk

"And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ."--2 Thess. 3:5

THE BELOVED disciple greets his companions as sharing "in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" (Re 1:9-note). It is a noble combination; as though the royalty of Christian character were in proportion to the share we have in the quiet waiting of our Lord. He waited patiently from all eternity, until the fullness of the times had come, and the hour of His Incarnation struck; He waited patiently for thirty years in Nazareth, whilst preparing for His life-work. When He returned in triumph to the Father, He sat down at His right hand until His enemies were made His footstool. Throughout the ages He quietly waits, in sure expectation of the destined end, when all rule and authority and power shall be put down. All the anguish of the world lies on His heart; every question as to the righteousness and equity of God is felt by Him. He bears all with unflinching patience, because He sees the end, and knows that at the last God will be All in All. It is into this love and patience that we are to be led.

"Into the Love of God." -- Every time we dare to affirm that, notwithstanding appearances, God is Love; every time that we evince that love to others, even though our own heart is breaking; every time we say No to self and Yes to God, we make further progress into His Love. Dare to believe in the love of God, even when the darkness seems to veil it. Dare to believe that it is over all, and through all, and in all.

"Into the patience of Christ." -- Let us exercise Christ's patience until the sorrows and trials of life have achieved their destined purpose. There is a sufficient explanation for the present condition of the world, if we knew it. Therefore, judge nothing before the time, but be of good cheer, and stablish your hearts, for your God will come and not keep silence. In the meanwhile let us keep the word of His patience, and manifest that patience and faith of the saints.

PRAYER - Most Blessed Lord, guide our wandering feet, we beseech Thee, into the love of God and into Thine own infinite patience. Forgive us that we have so often been impulsive and headstrong, that we have murmured against Thy apparent slowness in answering our prayers. Hush our unquiet hearts with Thine own peace. AMEN.

2 Thessalonians 3:5 x

G Campbell Morgan

Life Applications

The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ.—2Thess. 3.5

That is the true attitude toward life, both with regard to its trials, and its one blessed hope. Our trials are ever likely to produce restlessness; and unless we are careful our very watching for our absent Lord may degenerate into impatience. Therefore it was that Paul expressed this desire for the sorely tried Thessalonians, to whom he had been writing in this letter very specially about future things, and the Lord's Return. I think the very method he adopted in stating his desire is in itself instructive. Let us glance at the desire, beginning where the Apostle ended. What a wonderful thing "the patience of Christ" was, and may we not say is, as He still waits in long-suffering love for the final victory! How He borrows with men! How He still bears with them! That we may have His patience, is surely one of the greatest needs of life. What, then, was the secret of their patience? Surely "the love of God." Christ wrought and waited, secure in His knowledge of His Father's love for Him, and in His love for His Father. That is still the secret of patience. The measure in which we are sure of the love of God is the measure in which, amid all the afflictions of the little while, we shall rejoice in His tarrying, as surely as in the rejoice of His Coming. Finally, for our meditation, notice the Apostle's first words: "The Lord direct your hearts." This also must be His work. Only let us not hinder Him.

2Thessalonians 3:5 x

Octavius Winslow

Daily Walking with God.

DECEMBER 3.

"And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God." 2Thessalonians 3:5

Love to God is the governing motive of the spiritual mind. All desire of human admiration and applause pales before this high and holy principle of the soul. Its religion, its devotion, its zeal, its toils, its sacrifices spring from love. Love prompts, love strengthens, love sweetens, love sanctifies all. This it is that expels from the heart the rival and false claimant of its affections, and welcomes and enthrones the true. It may, at times, like the pulse of the natural life, beat languidly; yet, unlike that pulse, it never ceases entirely to beat. The love of God in the soul never expires. Fed from the source from where it emanates, the holy fire, dim and dying as it may appear at times, never goes out.

Have you this evidence of the spiritual mind, my reader? Does the love of Christ constrain you? It is the first and the chief grace of the Spirit—do you possess it? "Now abides faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of these is love." It is the main-spring, the motive power, of the spiritual mechanism of the soul; all its wheels revolve, and all its movements are governed, by it. Is this the pure motive that actuates you in what you do for God? Or, do there enter into your service and your sacrifice anything of self-seeking, of thirst for human approbation, of desire to make a fair show in the flesh, of aiming to make religion subserve your temporal interests? Oh, search your hearts, and see; sift your motives, and ascertain! Love to God—pure, unmixed, simple love—is the attribute of the spiritual mind; and, in proportion to the intensity of the power of love as a motive, will be the elevated tone of your spirituality. Nor need there be any lack of this motive power. "God is love," and He is prepared to supply it to the mind's utmost capacity. We are straitened in ourselves, not in Him. The ocean on whose margin we doubtfully, timidly stand is infinite, boundless, fathomless. The Lord is willing to direct our hearts into its depths, but we hesitate and draw back, awed by its infinite vastness, or stumbling at its perfect freedom. But to a high standard of heavenly-mindedness, we must have more of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which He has given unto us. We must love Christ more.

THE HOLY SPIRIT
An Experimental and Practical View
by Octavius Winslow

CHAPTER V

"The Sanctification of the Spirit" or

"Through sanctification of the Spirit." 2Th 2:13.

We have already briefly intimated that one most important feature in the work of the indwelling Spirit is the sanctification of the believer. What was merely glanced at in the preceding chapter will now, by the assistance of that same Teacher who has promised to guide into all spiritual truth, be more fully unfolded. While yet upon the threshold of our subject, let it be premised that there is an order, as well as a harmony, in the operations of the Spirit, which it is highly important should be observed. An ignorance or an oversight of this has led to great and fatal perversions of the Gospel, especially that part which relates to the doctrine now under discussion. All the self-righteousness of the Pharisee, and all the self-devotion of the deluded disciple of the papal superstition, have their origin here. Now the order of the Spirit is this: regeneration of the heart first, then its sanctification. Reverse this, and we derange every part of His work and, as far as our individual benefit extends, render it entirely useless. Sanctification is not the first and immediate duty of an unrenewed person. Indeed, it is utterly impossible that it should be so. Sanctification has its commencement and its daily growth in a principle of life implanted in the soul by the eternal Spirit; and to look for holiness in an individual still dead in sins is to look for fruit where no seed was sown, for the actings of life where no vital principle exists. It is to expect, in the language of our Lord, to "gather grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles." The first and imperative duty of an unrenewed man is to prostrate himself in deep abasement and true repentance before God. The lofty look must be brought low, and the rebellious will must be humbled; in the posture of one overwhelmed with a sense of guilt, he must look by faith to a crucified Savior, and draw from Him life, pardon and acceptance. It is most solemnly true that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord"; yet all attempts towards the attainment of holiness before repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will but disappoint the soul that looks for it.

This work of renewal done, sanctification is a comparatively easy and a delightful task. Motives and exhortations to a life of holiness now find a ready response in the heart, already the temple of the Holy Spirit. The "incorruptible seed" sown there, germinates into the plant, and blossoms and ripens into the fruits of holiness. The well of "living water" created there springs up and pours forth its stream of life and purity, adorning and fertilizing the garden of the Lord. Let us then be careful not to disturb the arrangement, and reverse the order of the blessed Spirit in His work. From lack of such care, great errors have arisen, and souls have gone into eternity fearfully and fatally deceived. Especially cautious should they be in this matter who are appointed to the office of spiritual instruction, to whose care immortal souls are entrusted, lest, in a matter involving interests so precious and so lasting, anyone listening to their teaching should pass into eternity ignorant of the one and true method of salvation.

Let the reader prayerfully follow us while we endeavor to unfold the necessity of sanctification in the believer, its gospel nature, and the means employed by the Spirit in its production.

**THE
NECESSITY
OF SANCTIFICATION**

There exists an absolute and solemn NECESSITY for sanctification in a child of God. To remind the reader of this may at first sight appear a needless work, so self-evident, and so immediate an effect of regeneration by the Spirit does it seem. And yet the advanced believer, much more the sincere inquirer after a more perfect knowledge of the will of God, needs to be perpetually reminded of the solemn necessity, for his own happiness and his Father's glory, of a daily growth in all holiness. And as the believer is, after regeneration, an active agent in the furtherance of this great work, and as there is a perpetual proneness, through the many infirmities of the flesh, to settle down in a state of ease and sloth in it, the importance of being reminded of this necessity will immediately appear.

The first ground on which this necessity rests is the holiness of God. The nature of the God whose temple he is pleads for the sanctification of the believer. We have to do with a holy God who, from the very necessity and purity of His being, can have no fellowship with sin. He must hate, He must abhor it. A stronger plea for the sanctification of the child of God can nowhere be found. Let us for a moment trace this argument as it runs like a golden thread through every part of God's Word. We see its commencement in the Old Testament. Lev 11.44, 45: "For I am the Lord your God you shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy . . . I am the Lord that brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: you shall therefore be holy, for I am holy." Lev. 19.2: "Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, You shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy."

And that these commandments and this standard may not seem to belong exclusively to the Old Testament saints, the apostle Peter embodies them, as of equal force and solemnity, in his writings to the saints of the New Testament. 1Pe 1.15, 16-note:

"But as he who has called you is holy, so be holy in all manner of conversation: because it is written, Be holy,

for I am holy."

If this motive to sanctification came clothed with such solemnity and power, and was so felt by the Jewish church, what should be its authority and influence with the church as it now exists! The increased power and solemnity of this motive is drawn from the more resplendent exhibition of God's holiness in the cross of Christ. The saints of the Old Testament were not favored with such a development of the Divine purity as an argument to sanctification. But we possess it; so that if we continue in sin after we have believed, we are "without excuse," and God is "clear when He judges." The cross is God's grand demonstration of His holiness. Here has He, as it were, unveiled His great perfections, and shown what a sin-hating, holiness-loving God He is. What! Could He not pass by His dear Son? Did He give Him up to the "shame and the spitting"? Why did He not withhold his "darling from the power of the dog"? Did justice sheath its sword in the heart of Jesus? Did it smite the Shepherd? And why all this? The answer comes from Calvary, "I, the Lord, am a holy God." And then follows the precept- O how touching!- "Be holy, for I am holy." See how the justice of God (and what is the justice of God but His holiness in exercise?) revealed itself as a "consuming fire" on Calvary. Our dear Lord was "a whole burned offering" for His people; and the fire that descended and consumed the sacrifice was the holiness of God in active and fearful exercise. Here then springs the solemn necessity for sanctification in the believer. The God he loves is holy, his Father is holy- and He has written out that holiness in awful letters in the cross of His well-beloved Son, "Be holy, for I am holy." We must study God in Christ. There we see His holiness, justice, wisdom, grace, truth, love and mercy, all unfolded in their richest glory and most benevolent exercise.

The necessity for sanctification also springs from the work of Christ. The Lord Jesus became incarnate, and died as much for the sanctification as for the pardon and justification of His church; as much for her deliverance from the indwelling power of sin as from the condemnatory power of sin. His work would have been but partial and incomplete if no provision had been made for the holiness of the believer. But He came not only to blot out sin but to rend asunder its chain, not only to remove its curse but to break its scepter. The believer in Jesus may be but imperfectly aware how closely associated his sanctification is with the obedience and death of Christ. Indeed the very death of Christ for sin outside of him, is the death of sin inside of him; no inroads are made upon the dominion of indwelling sin, no conquests obtained, no flesh crucified, no besetting sin laid aside, but only as the believer hangs daily upon the cross. Observe how the Holy Spirit connects the two- the death of Christ and the holiness of the believer: thus in Jn 17.19:

"And for their sakes," says Jesus, "I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

As their High-priest to atone and purify, He set Himself apart as a holy sacrifice to the Lord God for the church's sake. "For their sakes I sanctify myself"- or set myself apart. Oh, what a motive to holiness is this, saint of God! Can you resist it? Yet again the connection is unfolded. Titus 2. 14: "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Ep 5.25, 26-note:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."

Thus clearly does the Holy Spirit unfold the close and beautiful relationship between the death of Christ and the death of sin.

The covenant of grace enforces the sanctification of the believer. "It is the eternal and immutable purpose of God," observes Dr. John Owen,

"that all who are His in a peculiar manner, all whom He designs to bring unto blessedness in the everlasting enjoyment of Himself, shall, antecedently there unto, be made holy."

For the security and attainment of this, all provision has been made in the everlasting covenant of grace. The very election of the believer to eternal life provides for and secures his holiness. There could not possibly be any holiness without election, because election provides the means of its attainment. Thus clearly does the Spirit of truth unfold it. 2Th 2.13:

"We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

Again, Ep 1.4-note:

"According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

Let this be clearly understood. On the ground of no foreseen holiness in the creature, did God thus purpose to save him; but seeing the indispensable necessity of sanctification in order to eternal glory- the impossibility of the one without the other- He chose us in Christ "that we should be holy."

Let not the Christian reader turn away from, or treat lightly, this precious revealed truth of God's Word- an election of a people unto

holiness here, and glory hereafter. The prejudice of education, early modes of thought, a preconceived system, and most of all the neglect of a close and prayerful investigation of God's Word for himself, may lead to the rejection of the doctrine. But he who first objects to it, and then renounces it, without a thorough and prayerful sifting of its scriptural claims to belief, stands on solemn ground, and his attitude may have fearful consequences. What God has revealed, "that call not you common." What He has commanded, do not turn from, lest you be found to have turned from God Himself. Why it has pleased the Lord to choose a people in this way, it is not our province to inquire, nor, we believe, would it be for our happiness to know. We do not attempt to explain the doctrine, much less to account for it. We simply and, we trust, scripturally state it, leaving God to vindicate and bless it. He is the best defender and apologist of His own sacred truth.

"Secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." (Deut 29.29.)

The secret thing in the doctrine of election is why God has done it; the thing which is revealed is that He has done it. Let us not then seek to be wise above what is written, though it is our duty, as an acute writer has remarked, to be wise up to what is written, leaving the more perfect knowledge of the things that are now seen as "through a glass darkly," to that period of perfect illumination when we shall "know, even as we are known." But thus much we know, that it is the eternal purpose of God, revealed and provided for in the covenant of grace, that all who are chosen, called, and justified, shall, with a view to their being glorified, be "partakers of His holiness." Heaven is a holy place, its inhabitants are a holy people, and He whose glory fills the temple is a holy God. Behold then the provision God has made for the sanctification of the believer in the everlasting covenant of grace. The foundation is laid in the death of Christ, it commences in the effectual calling of the Spirit and, by all the precious assurances of grace, wisdom and strength provided in the covenant, it is carried forward to a glorious completion.

We would only specify, as one more consideration pleading for the sanctification of the believer, his own personal happiness. Holiness is necessary to the comfort of the believer, as it is an essential element of his Christian character. Sanctification is a part of the new creation. Although not the first step the soul takes into the new world of holiness, it yet immediately follows. Regeneration is the commencement of the reign of holiness, or (to change the figure) the planting of the germ, which time and the Lord's covenant dealings cause to take deep root and to put forth its lovely and fragrant flower. In proportion as the sanctification of a believer advances, his real happiness advances with it. Holiness brings its own peculiar and high enjoyment. It is from heaven, and conveys into the heart the happiness of heaven; so that he who is most holy has most of the material of heaven in his soul. O how loudly does the happiness of a child of God plead for his holiness! As his soul approximates to the likeness of God, his circumstances, trying as they may be, cannot remove the fine edge of his inward and concealed enjoyments. Indeed, sanctified by the indwelling Spirit, trials only heighten those enjoyments, and are found the most effective helps to the maturing of holiness in his soul.

THE NATURE OF SANCTIFICATION

These are some of the grounds on which the necessity of sanctification is enforced in the Divine Word. It will now be proper to unfold its gospel NATURE.

What is true sanctification? The question is vastly more important than would at first sight appear. Unscriptural views of sanctification have been found to exist, not only among the unregenerate, but even in the church of Christ. Yet every dear child of God who honestly desires to follow the Lord fully and to live as a temple of the Holy Spirit, deeply feels the necessity of the Spirit's teaching in a matter so personal and so momentous as this. How much do we who now write and they who read need, while contemplating this subject, the anointings of the Holy One and the eye that looks at the blood that cleanses from all sin!

Sanctification has been defined as "the work of the Holy Spirit whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness." Briefly and emphatically, it is a progressive conformity of the whole man to the Divine nature. Under the Levitical dispensation the term sanctified had a peculiar meaning. People and things were said to be sanctified which were separated, set apart and offered to God. Thus the furniture of the temple was pronounced holy, or sanctified; the ark, the altar, all the utensils of the temple and the vestments of the priest were regarded as sanctified, because set apart and dedicated to God. For the same reason, people were said to be sanctified who were solemnly consecrated to the service.

The dispensation of ritual having passed away, the word, by an easy and natural accommodation, has assumed a more comprehensive and evangelical meaning; and is now employed to set forth the advance of the believer in a conformity of heart to the will and image of God. In explaining the nature of sanctification, we would first of all establish from the Scripture the spirituality of the Divine law. There is a sense, as we have elsewhere shown, in which the believer is dead to the law. His union to Christ has delivered him from the law as a covenant of works. "You have died to the law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to

another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Again,

"Now we are delivered from the law, that being dead (marg. being dead to that) wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." (Ro 7:4-note, Ro 7:6-note)

This then is the deadness to which the apostle refers. It is a release from the law as a ground of acceptance. The believer is "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph 1:6KJV-note) - pardoned, justified, and sanctified in Christ. He is married to Christ- is one with Christ. As such he is delivered from the law, under whose condemnation he once rested: being dead to that wherein he was held, it can no longer assert its claims, or exact obedience as the condition of life. It can no longer threaten or condemn. Shut up in the faith of Jesus, and receiving pardon and justification through Him, he is beyond the power of the law as a covenant of life, and is screened from its vengeance as a source of condemnation. No single truth has the Holy Spirit more clearly written out than this. He has shown, too, that it forms the basis of sanctification in the justified believer. His release from a covenant of works and his translation into the covenant of grace, his deliverance from the law and his union to Christ, form the ground of all holy liberty, filial obedience and spiritual fruitfulness. Those who are under the law are under the curse- but "there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus"- therefore the believer in Christ is not under the law.

But we come to the sense in which they "that are in Christ Jesus" have yet to do with the law. Released from it as a covenant of life, it yet remains obligatory as a rule of obedience to Christ. If we suppose that the law has lost all authority and use- to be entirely abrogated- we must suppose that the relation of God to His creatures as their moral Governor has also ceased- that, having laid aside all rule of obedience, He has with it abdicated the throne of the universe, and that man has ceased to be the subject of a moral government. But, far from this, the law of God remains in all its dignity, purity and force. The believer in Christ is released from it as a ground of acceptance, but not as a standard of holiness. Is it true that Christ is the standard and pattern of a believer's holiness? Undoubtedly. Then we argue that the moral law was the standard of Christ's holiness; therefore it must necessarily be the standard of the believer's. The whole life of Jesus was a conformity to the purity of the Divine law which was His standard of holiness and His pattern of obedience; therefore in following the example of Christ we are being conformed to the purity of the law "in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

Sanctification, then, is a growing conformity to the spirituality of the Divine law. The sincere believer acknowledges "that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Ro 7:12-note); he knows "that the law is spiritual." (Ro 7:14-note) He therefore "delights in the law of God after the inward man." (Ro 7:22-note) Does his faith in Jesus "make void the law"? "God forbid." Instead, his faith "establishes the law," (Ro 3:31-note) reflects its spirituality, maintains its purity, vindicates its holiness and glorifies its Divine Author. The closer then the resemblance of the believer to the spirituality of the law of God in his life, his temper, and habit of his mind, his principles, his daily walk in the world and out of the world, among the saints or as surrounded by the ungodly, the more thoroughly is the work of sanctification advancing in his soul.

In all this there is a more simple surrender of the will to God. The holy Robert Leighton has remarked that to say from the heart "Your will be done " constitutes the very essence of sanctification. There is much truth in this, more than perhaps strikes the mind at the first view. Before conversion, the will- the governing principle of the soul- is the seat of all opposition to God. It rises against God, His government, His law, His providence, His grace, His Son; to all that appertains to God, the unrenewed will of man is hostile. Here lies the depth of man's unholiness. The will is against God; and so long as it refuses to obey Him, the creature must remain unholy. Now it needs no lengthy argument to show that when the will, as renewed by the Holy Spirit, is made to submit to God, the holiness of the believer must be in proportion to the degree of its submission. There could not be perfect holiness in heaven, were there the slightest preponderance of the will of the creature towards itself. The angels and " the spirits of just men made perfect" are supremely holy because their wills are supremely swallowed up in the will of God. "Your will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven." The will of God is supremely obeyed in heaven, and in this consist the holiness and the felicity of its glorious inhabitants.

Now in exact proportion as God's will "is done on earth" (Mt 6:10-note) by the believer, he drinks from the pure fountain of holiness; and as he is enabled by the grace of Christ in all things to look up to God with filial love and to say, "Not my will, O my Father, but Yours be done," (Lk 22:42) he attains the very essence of sanctification. Let us trace out this subject. It is God's revealed will that His child should be holy- "this is the will of God, even your sanctification." (1Th 4:3-note) When the will of the believer rises and blends itself with God's will here, and in the spirit of sonship responds,

"Lord, is it your will that I should be holy? Then make me so in body, in soul and in spirit. Subdue all my corruptions, break the power of my lusts; bring every thought, affection, word and look into sweet obedience to Yourself; rule in the midst of Your enemies"-

How truly does the work of sanctification advance in the soul!

It is the revealed will of God that His child should maintain a walk in all things pleasing to Him:

"that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in

the knowledge of God." (Col 1:10-note)

When the believer's will fully acquiesces in this, and the heart is drawn out in earnest and agonizing prayer for an upright walk, worthy of his high calling and of the Lord by whom he is called, for more fruitfulness in every good work, and for an increase of faith, love and knowledge of God, who will not say that such a soul is rapidly growing in sanctification?

It is the revealed will of God that the believer should walk as an obedient child:

"O that you had hearkened to my commandments! then had your peace been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea." (Is 48:18KJV)

And, when these are the responsive breathings of his soul:

"I love your commandments above gold, yes, above fine gold; therefore I esteem all your precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way. I will run the way of your commandments, when you shall enlarge my heart " (Ps 119:127-[note](#), Ps 119:128-[note](#))

Such a soul is maturing in holiness, and is becoming fitted "for the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col 1:12-note)

It is the revealed will of God that His child should meekly and silently bow to His chastening hand:

"My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked by him." (Heb 12:5-note)

And when the tried and afflicted believer "hears the rod, and He who has appointed it," (Mic 6:9) and with a humble and filial acquiescence, justifies the wisdom and the love and even the tenderness that sent it- surely such a soul is a rich partaker of God's holiness. In all these particulars, there is a surrender of the will to God, and consequently an approximation to the holiness of His nature. The point we are now considering is one of great importance. It involves as much your holy and happy walk as it does the glory of God. We put the simple questions- can there be any advance of sanctification in the soul when the will is running counter to the Divine will?- and can that believer walk happily when there is a constant opposition in his mind to all the dealings of his God and Father? O no! Holiness and happiness are closely allied; and both are the offspring of a humble, filial, and complete surrender of the will in all things to God. Such an attainment in holiness is not soon or easily gained. Far from it. In many, it is the work of years; in all, of painful discipline. It is not on the high mount of joy, but in the low valley of humiliation, that this precious and holy surrender is learned. It is not in the summer day- when all things smile and wear a sunny aspect- then it were easy to say, "Your will be done"; but when a cloudy and a wintry sky looks down upon you, when the chill blast of adversity blows, when health fails, when friends die, when wealth departs, when the heart's fondest endearments are yielded, when the Isaac is called for, when the world turns its back- when all is gone and you are like a tree of the desert, over which the tempest has swept, stripping it of every branch- when you are brought so low that it would seem to you that you could not be any lower- then to look up with filial love and exclaim, "My Father, Your will be done!" Oh, this is holiness, this is happiness indeed.

It may be that God, your God and Father, is dealing in this way with you now. Has he taken from you health? Has he asked for the surrender of your Isaac? Have riches taken to themselves wings? Does the world frown? Ah! little do you realize how God is now about to unfold to you the depths of His love, and to cause your will sweetly, and filially, and entirely to flow into His. Let me repeat the observation- a higher degree of sanctification there cannot be than a will entirely swallowed up in God's. Earnestly pray for it, diligently seek it. Be jealous of the slightest opposition of your mind, watch against the least rebellion of the will, wrestle for an entire surrender- to be where, and to be what, your covenant God and Father would have you; and so shall you be made a partaker of His holiness.

Furthermore, sanctification includes a growing resemblance to the likeness of Christ. How beautifully and explicitly has the Holy Spirit unfolded this in His Word! This was the exhortation of our dear Lord, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart"; and throughout the writings of His apostles the same truth is exhibited:

"Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Ro 8.29-note.

"Speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." Ep 4.15-note.

Here is the glorious pattern of a child of God. Sanctification is a conformity to the image and the example of Christ. The more the believer is growing like Jesus, the more he is growing in holiness. And on the contrary, the less resemblance there is to Christ in his principles, in the habit of his mind, in his spirit, temper, daily walk, in every action and in every look, the less is he advancing in the great work of holiness. O how many who profess His dear name, and who are expecting to be with Him forever, never pause to consider what resemblance they bear to Him now! Were they to deal faithfully with conscience in the much-neglected duty of self-examination, were they to bring themselves to this great standard- how far below it would they be found to have come! How much in their principles, in their governing motives, in their temper, spirit, and daily conduct, how much in their walk in the world, in their

deportment in the church, and in their more concealed conduct in their families, would be discovered that was unlike Christ! How much that was "from beneath," how little that was "from above"- how much of the "image of the earthy," (1Co 15:49) how little of the "image of the heavenly"! But, look at the image of our dear Lord- how lowly, how holy it is! Look at His poverty of spirit, lowliness of heart, humility of deportment, tenderness, gentleness, forgiveness of injuries, self-denial, prayerfulness, zeal for His Father's glory, yearnings for the salvation of men. O to be like Jesus!- to grow up into Him in all things! This is to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing"; this is to realize "the will of God, even our sanctification." Let it not then be forgotten that an advancing believer is one growing in a resemblance and conformity to the image and example of Christ.

We must include, though in general terms, as involved in the growing sanctification of the believer, an increasingly tender conscience, a soft and gentle walk, deepening views of sin, looking at it more directly in the light of the cross, mourning over, confessing, hating, and crucifying it there. Nor must we omit a more complete investiture of the Christian with the graces of the Spirit; the active graces- faith, love, zeal, self-denial; the passive graces- meekness, patience, gentleness, peace. There are some, and not a few cases, in which all of these features distinguish a believer advancing in sanctification.

THE AGENCY OF SANCTIFICATION - THE HOLY SPIRIT

Having thus briefly considered the nature of sanctification, we now proceed to the main design of this chapter which was to show THE AGENCY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT in its production.

The work of sanctification is pre-eminently the product of the Spirit. He is the great Sanctifier of the soul. We have shown that the implantation of the germ of holiness in regeneration is of Him. For let it ever be borne in mind that a renewed soul has within it the "incorruptible seed" of holiness. Although its growth in many instances may be slow and scarcely perceptible, although during a long period of his journey the believer may be the subject of strong corruptions and clinging infirmities, which, in a degree, act like frosts upon the tender scion, checking its advance to maturity- yet the seed is there. Indwelling sin cannot destroy it, the frosts cannot kill it, it is "incorruptible" and therefore cannot be corrupted. In process of time, under the tender and faithful culture of the eternal Spirit, it shall deepen and expand its roots, and put forth its branches and its boughs, and then shall appear the fruit, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear". It will vary in its degree of fruitfulness among the saints, in "some thirty, some sixty, some an hundredfold," but in all it will be of the same nature and the product of the same Spirit.

It has been the constant effort of Satan to divert men from the great point we are now considering. In two ways has he proved successful. First, in setting them upon the work of mortification of sin before regeneration; and second, in setting them upon the same work after conversion, in their own strength. With regard to the first, we have shown at some length that sanctification is not the work of an unbeliever; that, although it is solemnly true that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," yet the attainment of holiness is an utter impossibility so long as the heart remains a stranger to the regenerating operations of the Holy Spirit. Repentance and faith are the first necessities in order of time for an unconverted man. With regard to the second effort of Satan to deceive the soul, it is equally ruinous to all true mortification of sin. No child of God can accomplish this mighty work in his own strength. Here lies the secret, be assured, of all our failure and disappointment in the work. Forgetting that he who would prove victorious in this warfare must first learn the lesson of his own weakness and insufficiency, and, thus schooled, must go forth in the "strength that is in Christ Jesus," and in the "power of His might," taking the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit- forgetting this important truth, we march to the overthrow of our giant corruptions in our own fancied wisdom and power; and the result always has been, and with the same means ever will be, our complete discomfiture. Oh! when shall we learn that we are nothing- that we have "no might"- and that our feeblest enemy will triumph if his overthrow be attempted in our own insufficiency?

The Holy Spirit is the efficient cause of all holiness in the believer. If we look into the prophecy of Ezekiel, we find clear intimations of the promise of the Spirit to this effect. There God unfolds what may be regarded as the foundation of all sanctification- the removal of the stony heart and the implanting of a new spirit.

Ezek 11.19: "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you."

Ezek 36.26: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."

Let us see the doctrine as more clearly unfolded in the writings of the apostles.

Ro 8.9-note: "You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

1Co 6.11: "And such were some of you:, but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

2Thess 2.13: "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."

1Pe 1.2-note: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit."

We are far from excluding the Father and the Son from any part in this great work- we believe they are deeply interested in it, as the Divine Word shows in

Jude 1:1KJV "Those who are sanctified by God the Father."

1Co 1.2: "Those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus." But the Holy Spirit is the special and immediate Agent to whom the work of sanctifying the believer is assigned.

HOW THE SPIRIT SANCTIFIES THE BELIEVER

Let us now attempt to show IN WHAT WAY HE SANCTIFIES THE BELIEVER.

First, by leading to a deeper acquaintance with the existence and power of indwelling sin. Perhaps the first impression of the reader is, how can this be? How does the breaking up of the deep fountain of inbred sin lead to the quieting of its dark and turbulent waves? But the Holy Spirit works in a way contrary to the dictates of our poor reason- in a way often that we never should have conceived, and by methods we should never have selected. This is one method of His operation in subduing our iniquities, and in making us partakers of the Divine holiness. The knowledge of indwelling sin, its existence and power, is often exceedingly defective at conversion, and this ignorance may continue for years after. We just see sin enough to alarm the conscience, awaken conviction and take us to Christ. As a thing against God, we hate it, mourn over it and seek its pardon through the atoning blood. This is followed by a sweet and lively sense of its blotting out and a growing desire after Divine conformity. But, oh, the unknown depths of sin!- these we have never explored. What infinite wisdom and love are seen in hiding these depths at first from our knowledge! Were the Lord fully to have revealed the hidden evils of the heart at the period when grace was yet in the bud, and faith was feeble, and our views of the Lord Jesus dim, and the "new creature" yet in its infancy, deep and dark despair must have gathered around the soul. With perhaps just knowledge enough of Christ to go to Him as a Savior, with just faith enough to touch the hem of His garment, the eternal Spirit first disclosed to us the existence and the guilt of sin; a full disclosure might have shut us up in hopeless despair. As believers it is sweet to remember the tender love of God in our espousals, to trace the gentleness of His first dealings with us in conversion, and to bear in mind that what He was then, He is at this moment.

But trace the work of the Spirit in the days after our experience. He comes, in accordance with the design of the covenant of grace, to sanctify, having called and quickened us. He is about to enlarge the "kingdom of God within" us, to stamp more deeply and bring out more vividly and broadly on the soul the varied lineaments of the Divine image. He is about to purify the temple more thoroughly, to take a fresh possession for God, to expel every rival that, by slow and imperceptible degrees, may have insinuated itself there; in a word, He is about to sanctify us. And how does He commence the work? By leading us into the chamber of imagery, by disclosing the depths of indwelling sin. Sin whose existence we had never imagined, He shows to have its principal dwelling in the heart. Iniquity that we had never thought of, He reveals as lurking in secret ambush within. O what darkness, what evil, and what baneful principles are found to have existed for so long, where we thought all was light, holiness and rectitude! We start, we shudder, and we shrink away, aghast at the discovery. "What!" says the alarmed soul, does all this evil dwell in me? Have I carried about with me for so long these sinful desires? Have I dwelling in me the seeds of such deep and dark depravity? Wonder of wonders is it, that the flood has not long since carried me away- that these deep evils have not broken out, to the wounding of my peace, and to the dishonoring of my God and Savior." Thus made acquainted with his own heart, almost a stranger to him before, the Holy Spirit awakens in his soul an ardent desire for holiness. In view of such a discovery, where can he fly but to the throne of grace? There, then, he goes weeping, mourning, confessing- and his prayer is, "Lord, subdue these evils of my heart- I am overwhelmed with astonishment. I lie down in shame, and my confusion covers me, that I should have harbored so long these treacherous foes against You, God of holiness and love. Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'" Now the Spirit deepens and strengthens this desire for sanctification; the believer is set upon earnestly seeking holiness of heart; he sees such an iniquity in sin as he never saw before, and seeing it, he abhors it, and abhorring it, he takes it to the Spirit of holiness, that He might overcome and subdue it. Thus, in leading the believer into a deeper acquaintance with the existence and power of indwelling sin, does the blessed Spirit sanctify the soul, by making it the occasion of stirring up its desires for holiness. So do not be cast down at the discovery of the

hidden evil of your heart. Sweet is the evidence it affords to the fact that the Holy Spirit is working there. Whatever be the sin that is brought to light- pride, deceit, carnality, inordinate affection, evil thoughts, unbelief, impatience, whatever it be- He is revealing it to you, not unnecessarily to wound and grieve you- O no, he is a loving and a gentle Spirit- but to beget this desire in your heart, "Lord, conform me to Your image- make me holy as You are holy."

Another process by which the Spirit sanctifies, is by deepening and strengthening the Divine life in the soul. There is, in every believer, a spiritual life. This life is from God. He is therefore said to be a "partaker of the Divine nature." This new and Divine life is, from its very nature, holy, and therefore opposed to the flesh. The flesh and the Spirit are ever hostile the one to the other, "for the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other." Paul, referring to his own experience, corroborates this statement. "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." Now the advance of the believer in true sanctification is just in proportion to the state of the Divine life within him. If it be low and declining, feeble and drooping, then the flesh gains the ascendancy and the root of sin is strengthened. If, on the contrary, the life of God in the soul is deepening and expanding, healthy and vigorous; if the "kingdom of God within," which is the new creation, is filling up every avenue of the mind, extending its conquests, and bringing every thought and affection into captivity to Christ; then the great work of sanctification is advancing, and "the law of the mind" is prevailing against "the law of sin."

There is an idea; fatal to all true sanctification of sin, which some believers, especially those who are young in experience, are prone to entertain, that nothing is to be done in the soul after a man has believed, that the work of conversion having taken place, all is accomplished. So far from this being the case, he has but just entered upon the work of sanctification, just started in the race, just buckled on the armor. The conflict can hardly be said to have begun in conversion; and therefore to rest indolently with the idea that the soul has nothing more to do than to accept of Christ as his salvation- that there are no corruptions to subdue, no sinful habits to cut off, no long-existing and deeply-embedded sins to mortify, root and branch, and no high and yet higher degrees in holiness to attain- is to form a most contracted view of the Christian life, such a view as, if persisted in, must necessarily prove detrimental to the spiritual advance of the believer.

The work of sanctification is a great and a daily work. It commences at the very moment of our translation into the kingdom of Christ on earth, and does not cease until the moment of our translation into the kingdom of God in heaven. The notion, so fondly cherished by some, of perfect sinlessness here, is as fatal to true sanctification as it is contrary to God's Word. They know but little of their own heart, who do not know, that sin (to borrow the language of John Owen), "not only still abides in us, but is still acting, still laboring to bring forth the deeds of the flesh." They know little who do not know that in their "flesh there dwells no good thing," that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and will retain its fleshly nature and propensities to the very last. Let us not exult "as though we had already attained, or were already perfect"; let us not be "ignorant of Satan's devices," (2Co 2:11) one of which is to build us up in the belief that, in the present life, a man may cease from the work of mortification. The Lord keep the reader from cherishing so erroneous an idea. The work of sanctification is the work of a man's life. "When sin lets us alone (as has been remarked) we may let sin alone." But when is the day, indeed, when is the hour, that sin does not strive for the mastery, and in which the believer can say that he has completely slain his enemy? He may, "through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body," (Ro 8:13-note) and if he does, "he shall live"; but as the heart is the natural and luxuriant soil of every noxious weed of sin, and as another springs up as soon as one is cut down, indeed as the same root appears again above the surface with new life and vigor, it requires a ceaseless care and vigilance, a perpetual mortification of sin in the body, until we throw off this cumbrous clay and go where sin is known no more.

In this way does the Spirit deepen the holiness of the child of God. He strengthens the Divine life within him; He invigorates the principle of holiness; waters, and revives, and expands the germ; infuses new life into His own blessed work; gives a new spring to faith, a new impulse to obedience, enlarges the heart with the love of Christ, and excites such a thirsting for holiness as none but God Himself can satisfy.

THE FURNACE OF AFFLICTION

We would not omit to notice the influence of sanctified afflictions, which, through the eternal Spirit, are a powerful means of sanctification to the soul. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted," (Ps 119:71-note) has been the exclamation and the testimony of many of the Lord's covenant and tried people. It is often difficult at the time to justify the wisdom and the goodness of God in His dealings with His saints. David found it so, when he saw with envy the prosperity of the wicked. Job found it so, when in the hour and depth of his afflictions, he exclaimed, "You are become cruel to me: with your strong hand you oppose yourself against me." (Job 30:21) Jeremiah found it so, when in his affliction he said, "He has hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he has made my chain heavy." (La 37) And yet where is the furnace-tried, tempest-tossed believer that has not had to say, "In very faithfulness has he afflicted me" (Ps 119:75-note)? During the pressure of the trial, at the moment when the storm was the heaviest, he may have thought, "all these things are against me" (Ge 42:36); but soon he has been led to justify the wisdom, and the love, and the

faithfulness, and the tenderness of his covenant God and Father in His dealings, and to sing, in sweeter notes than ever,

**It is my happiness below
Not to live without the cross,
But the Savior's power to know,
Sanctifying every loss.**

--Cowper

The furnace is a needed process of sanctification. If not, why has God so ordered it? If not, why is it that so many of His people are "chosen in the furnace of affliction"? Why do all, more or less, pass through it? The furnace is needed. It is needed to "purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." It is needed to consume the dross and the tin which adhere so closely to the precious ore, to burn up the chaff that mingles with the precious grain, to purify the heart, to refine the affections, to chasten the soul, to wean it from a poor, empty world, to draw it from the creature, and to center it in God. O the blessed effects of this sanctified process! Who can fully unfold them? That must be blessed indeed which makes sin more exceedingly sinful, which weans and draws away from earth, which endears Jesus and His precious blood and righteousness, and which makes the soul a "partaker of His holiness." This is the blessed tendency of the sanctified discipline of the covenant. In this way does the Holy Spirit often sanctify the child of God.

Are you a child of affliction? Ah! how many whose eye falls on this question shall say, "I am the man that has seen affliction!" So too was your Lord and Master, and so too have been the most holy and eminent of His disciples. Then "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy." This is the path along which all the Lord's covenant people are led, and in this path, thorny though it be, they pluck some of their choicest flowers, and find some of their sweetest fruits. I am not addressing myself to those who are strangers to sanctified sorrow, whose voyage so far has been over a smooth and summer sea, whose heart's affections have never been sundered, whose budding hopes have never been blighted, whose spring blossoms have never fallen just when the fruit was beginning to appear, or whose sturdy oaks around which they fondly and closely clung have never been stricken at their side; to such I speak a mystery when I speak of the peculiar and costly blessings of sanctified affliction. It is not so with the experienced child of God, the "man that has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath." He is a witness to the truth of what I say. From this mine, he will tell you, he has dug his richest ore. In this field he has found his sweetest fruit. The knowledge of God to which he has here attained- His tender, loving and wise dealings with His people, His glorious character and perfections, His unchangeable love and faithfulness; the knowledge of Christ- His all-sufficiency and fulness, His sympathy and love; the knowledge of himself- his poverty, vileness and unworthiness: O where, and in what other school, could these high attainments have been made but in the low valley of humiliation, and beneath the discipline of the covenant of grace? Thus does the Spirit sanctify the soul through the medium of God's afflictive dispensations; thus they deepen the work of grace in the heart awaken the soul from its spiritual drowsiness- empty, humble, and lay it low- thus they lead to prayer, to self-examination, and afresh to the atoning blood; in this way, and by these means, the believer advances in holiness "through sanctification of the Spirit."

Again, it is by simple, close, and searching views of the cross of Christ that the Spirit most effectually sanctifies the believer. This is the true and great method of gospel sanctification. Here lies the secret of all real holiness, and, may I not add, of all real happiness? For if we separate happiness from holiness, we separate that which, in the covenant of grace, God has wisely and indissolubly united. The experience of the true believer must testify to this. We are only happy as we are holy- as the body of sin is daily crucified, as the power of the indwelling principle of sin is weakened, and as the outward deportment more beautifully and closely corresponds to the example of Jesus. Let us not then look for a happy life apart from a holy one. Trials we may have; indeed if we are the Lord's covenant ones, we shall have them, for He Himself has said, "in the world you shall have tribulation"; disappointments we may meet with- broken cisterns, thorny roads, wintry skies; but if we are walking in fellowship with God, walking in the light, growing up into Christ in all things, the Spirit of adoption dwelling in us, and leading to a filial and unreserved surrender- oh, there is happiness unspeakable, even though in the very depth of outward trial. A holy life is a happy life. This is God's order, it is His appointment, and therefore must be wise and good.

The Spirit especially and effectually sanctifies by unfolding the cross of Jesus. We desire to enlarge upon this point, not only because He Himself presents it in His Word as one of vast importance, but from the sober conviction of our judgment that there is no great advance in holiness without a growing knowledge of Christ, as the sanctification of the believer. A reference to God's Word, will place this truth in its proper light. Mt 1.21:

"And you shall call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."

Not only shall He save them from the guilt and condemnation of sin, but also from the indwelling power or reign of sin, so that "sin shall not have dominion over" them. We shall presently show more fully how, in His sacerdotal office, He accomplishes this.

Again, 1Co 1.2:

"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus."

But the most striking allusion to this important truth is found in the 30th verse, where the Lord Jesus is especially spoken of as made of God the sanctification of His people: "But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Now it is essential to a right reception of the subject that we should know in what points of view Christ is made our sanctification; so that believing in Him and receiving Him as such, we may "grow up into Him in all things."

In the first place, the atoning work of Christ lays the foundation of sanctification. He opens a way by which God, so to speak, can deal with the soul in the great business of its holiness. Only upon the broad basis of His law honored, His holiness secured, and His justice satisfied, can God, in the way of mercy, have communication with the sinner. Here we see the great glory of Jesus as the God-Man Mediator. His atoning work opens a channel through which God, without compromising a single perfection of His nature, can communicate the saving and sanctifying power of His grace to the soul. The obedience and blood-shedding of our adorable Lord, are ever, in the Divine Word, connected with the sanctification of the church. A few examples will suffice to show this.

Speaking of the legal, but imperfect sanctification by the sacrifices under the law, the apostle supplies an argument in favor of the superior sanctification by the blood of Christ.

He 9.13, 14-note: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies 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?"

Again, in Ro 6.3-note, Ro 6:4, 5-note, Ro 6:6-note, the following phrases occur

"Planted in the likeness of his death" "our old man crucified with him" "the body of sin destroyed" "that henceforth we should not serve sin."

Let the reader also consult the following passages: Ro 5.9-note; 1Pe 3.18-note; Col 1.14-note; He 2.14, 15-note; 1Jn 4.10.

Thus does the atoning blood of Jesus lay the foundation of all future degrees of sanctification. The cross of Christ is, so to speak, the starting point of the soul in this glorious career of holiness, and the goal to which it again returns. By it, the body of sin is wounded, and wounded fatally; from it, pardon, and peace, and holiness flow; and through it, the soul daily rises to God in a holy surrender of itself to His service. Let no man dream of true mortification of sin, of real sanctification of heart, who does not deal constantly, closely and believingly with the atoning blood of Jesus. The Holy Spirit brings the cross into the soul and lays it upon the heart to be the death of sin.

"I am crucified with Christ." (Gal 2:20-note)

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." (Php 3:10-note)

"I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal 6:17)

And see how the cross lifted him above the world and deadened him to it-

"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-note)

Thus did Paul breathe after and attain unto holiness.

The intercession of our Lord Jesus pleads for and secures the sanctification of the believer. In this sense it may be said that He is "made of God unto us sanctification." (1Co 1:30KJV) The Christian reader may be but imperfectly aware how closely connected is every spiritual grace and blessing that he receives with the advocacy of Jesus at the right hand of God. (The Lord increase our faith in this great and sanctifying truth!) While yet upon earth, our dear Lord commenced that work of intercession for the sanctification of the church, which He ascended up on high more fully to carry on. This was the burden of His prayer, and it forms, as John Owen observes, "the blessed spring of our holiness"- "Sanctify them through your truth." (Jn 17:17, 19) And not only would He leave it, as it were, as a model of the intercession of His exalted priesthood, but, for our encouragement, He would provide an evidence of its success. To Peter, about to pass through a severe temptation, He says, "I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." (Lk 22:32) Nor did his faith fail. It was sifted, it was severely shaken, it was powerfully tried, but it failed not; not a particle of the pure gold was lost in the refining (1Pe 1:6, 7, 8-note), not a grain of the pure wheat in the sifting: and why?- because Jesus had interceded, and His intercession was all-prevailing (He 7:25-note, Ro 8:34-note). O the vast and costly blessings that flow into the soul from the intercession of Christ! Never shall we know the full extent of this, until we pass within the veil. We shall then know the secret of our spiritual life- of all our supports, consolations and victories; why it was that the spark in the ocean was not quite extinguished, why

the vessel in the storm and amid the breakers did not quite become a wreck; why, when temptations assailed, and crosses pressed, and afflictions overwhelmed, and unbelief prevailed, that our faith still did not fail, and our bark was not driven from its moorings, and that "out of the depths" (Ps 130:1-note) we were enabled to cry, "Thanks be unto God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ." (2Co 2:14) The secret will then disclose itself- the intercession of Jesus our great High Priest.

How sweet and consoling to the believer is this view of our exalted Emmanuel in the hour of bereavement, when confined to his chamber of solitude, or languishing upon his bed of "pining sickness." (Ps 6:2-note) Too deeply absorbed in sorrow, it may be, to give utterance to his anguished spirit in prayer- his bodily frame so weakened by disease, and racked by pain, as to render the mind unfit for close and connected spiritual thought- O how sweet is then the intercession of Jesus; how sweet to know that, in the hour of the soul's extremity when human sympathy and power are exhausted, "Jesus has entered into heaven, now to appear in the presence of God" (He 9:24-note) for His suffering child. And when all utterance has failed on earth; when the heart is broken and the lips are sealed, then to look up and see our elder Brother, the Brother born for our adversity (Pr 17:17), the exalted High Priest waving the golden censer before the throne, while the cloud of His atoning merit goes up before the mercy-seat (He 2:17, 18-note), bearing as it ascends, the person, the name, the circumstances and the needs of the sufferer below- precious gospel, that opens to the eye of faith so sweet a prospect as this! When you cannot think of Him, afflicted soul, He is thinking of you; when you cannot pray to Him, He is praying for you, for "He ever lives to make intercession." (He 7:25-note)

But our Lord Jesus is the sanctification of the believer in still another and blessed sense. View Him as the Head of all mediatorial fulness to His people. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." (Col 1:19-note) "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." (Jn 1:16) Here is sanctification for the believer who is mourning over the existence and power of indwelling sin, feeling it to be his greatest burden and the cause of his deepest sorrow. In the growing discovery of the hidden evil- each successive view, it may be, deeper and darker than the former- where is he to look but unto Jesus? Where can he fly, but to His cross? Hemmed in on every side by a host of spiritual Philistines, no avenue of escape presenting itself, the eternal Spirit leads the soul to a simple view of Jesus, opens to him the vast treasury of His grace, and the free welcome to all comers. And what does he find in that fulness? All that he needs to pardon sin, to hide deformity, to overcome unbelief, and break the power of strong corruption; he finds that there is enough in Christ to make him holy, that, in simply taking his sins to Jesus, they are pardoned; in taking his strong infirmities, they are subdued; in taking his needs, they are supplied; in a word, he finds Christ to be his "wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption." (1Co 1:30)

We close this chapter with a few remarks in the way of caution, direction and encouragement in this great work.

Do not mistake the nature of true sanctification. It is an internal and radical work. It has its seat in the heart. A mere external mortification of sinful habits does not come up to the standard of gospel sanctification. True, this is included in real holiness, yet it may exist without a holy heart. A man may cut off outward sins, and leave the principle of all sin yet remaining in its unsubdued power. We may visit a forest, and level a tall cedar to the earth; yet, if we leave the root deeply embedded in the soil, the vital principle yet remaining in all its vigor, what marvel if, in course of time, that root shall again shoot forth, and branch out as before? True sanctification is a daily mortification of the root of sin in the heart- the continual destruction of the principle. The Word of God bears us out in this;

Gal 5.24-note: "And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

Ro 6.6-note: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

Do not rest short of this. Would you be holy as God is holy, and happy as the saints in glory are happy?- then must you reach after this and rest not until you attain it.

Again we would urge- seek high attainments in holiness. Do not be satisfied with a low measure of grace, with a stunted religion, with just enough Christianity to admit you into heaven. O how many are thus content, satisfied to leave the great question of their acceptance to be decided in another world, and not in this, resting upon some slight evidence, in itself faint and equivocal, perhaps a former experience, some impressions or sensations or transient joys long since passed away; and thus they are content to live, and thus content to die. You should not be satisfied with anything short of a present Christ, received, enjoyed and lived upon. Forget the things that are behind, reach forth unto higher attainments in sanctification, seek to have the daily witness, daily communion with God; and for your own sake, for the sake of others, and for Christ's sake, "give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." (2Pe 1:10-note)

Beware of self-dependence in this work. Remember the words that Jesus once spoke to His disciples, and now speaks to you, "Without me you can do nothing." (Jn 15:5) Self-trust, self-complacency, self-boasting, all must be crucified; and, strong only in the strength that is in Christ Jesus, must the believer gird himself to the work. Our wisdom is to go in our weakness and folly to Jesus. In this lies the great secret of our victory:

"When I am weak, then am I strong." "My grace is sufficient for you." (2Co 12:9-note, 2Co 12:10-note)

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Php 4:13-note)

Do not forget that the truth of God is the great instrument of sanctification.

"Sanctify them through your truth: your word is truth." (Jn 17:17)

There is that in the truth of God, which, when brought into the soul by the power of the Holy Spirit, always sanctifies. It is holy truth; it unfolds a holy God, reveals a holy law, exhibits a holy sacrifice, and enforces by the most holy motives the sanctity of the most holy precepts. In proportion as the renewed mind is brought into a close and constant contact with God's truth, it grows nearer to its spirit. Let then "the word of Christ dwell richly in you in all wisdom" (Col 3:16) and spiritual understanding. Be close, diligent and prayerful students of the Word of God. Do not separate the doctrine from the precept, nor the precept from the promise; every part is essential to the sanctification of the believer; to secure this great end, the doctrine, the precept and the promise must be alike received, and brought into active, holy exercise.

Deal much and closely with the atoning blood of Jesus. There is no victory over the indwelling power of sin, and there is no pardon for the guilt of sin, but as the soul deals with the blood of Christ. The great object of our dear Lord's death was to destroy the works of the devil. Sin is the great work of Satan. To overcome this, to break its power, subdue its dominion, repair its ruins and release from its condemnation, the blessed Son of God suffered the ignominious death of the cross. All that bitter agony which He endured, all that mental suffering, the sorrow of His soul in the garden, the sufferings of His body on the cross- all was for sin.

"He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus 2.14-note

"He gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it and that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." Eph. 5.25, 26, 27-note

See, then, the close and beautiful connection between the death of Christ and the death of sin. All true sanctification comes through the cross! Reader, seek it there. The cross brought into your soul by the eternal Spirit, will be the death of your sins. Go to the cross- oh, go to the cross of Jesus. In simplicity of faith, go; with the strong corruption, go; with the burden of guilt, go; go to the cross! You will find nothing but love there, nothing but welcome there, nothing but purity there. The precious blood of Jesus "cleanses from all sin." And while you are kept low beneath the cross, your enemy dares not approach you, sin shall not have dominion over you, nor shall Satan your accuser condemn you.

Deal much and closely with the fulness of grace that is in Jesus. All this grace in Christ is for the sanctification of the believer. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell," for the necessities of His people; and what necessities so great and urgent as those which spring from indwelling sin? Take the corruption, whatever be its nature, directly and simply to Jesus: the very act of taking it to Him weakens its power; indeed it is half way to victory. The blessed state of mind- the holy impulse that leads you to your secret place, there to fall prostrate before the Lord in lowliness of spirit, brokenness of heart and humble confession of sin, with the hand of faith on the head of Jesus, the atoning Sacrifice is a mighty achievement of the indwelling Spirit over the power of indwelling sin. Learn to take the guilt as it comes, and the corruption as it rises, directly and simply to Jesus. Do not allow the guilt of sin to remain long upon the conscience. The moment there is the slightest consciousness of a wound received, take it to the blood of Christ. The moment a mist dims the eye of faith, so that you cannot see clearly the smile of your Father's countenance, take it that instant to the blood of atonement. Let there be no distance between God and your soul. Sin separates. But sin immediately confessed, mourned over and forsaken, brings God and the soul together in sweet, close and holy fellowship. O the oneness of God and the believer in a sin-pardoning Christ! Who can know it? Only one who has experienced it. To cherish, then, the abiding sense of this holy, loving oneness, the believer (to use the figure of the tabernacle) must wash daily in the brazen laver that is outside- then, entering in within the veil, he may "draw near" the mercy-seat and ask what he will of Him who dwells between the cherubim.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." He10:19, 20, 21, 22-note.

Thank God for the smallest victory gained. Praise Him for any evidence that sin has not entire dominion. Every fresh triumph achieved over some strong and besetting weakness is a glorious battle won. No victory that ever flushed the cheek of an Alexander or a Caesar can be compared with his, who, in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, overcomes a single corruption. If "he that rules his spirit is better than he that takes a city," then he who masters one corruption of his nature has more real glory than the greatest earthly conqueror that ever lived. O how God is glorified, how Jesus is honored and how the Spirit is magnified in the slaying of one spiritual enemy at the foot of the cross! Cheer up, precious soul! You have every encouragement to persevere in the great business

of sanctification. True, it is a hard fight; true, it is a severe and painful contest, but the victory is yours! The "Captain of your salvation" has fought and conquered for you, and now sits upon His throne of glory, cheering you on, and supplying you with all needed strength for the warfare in which you are engaged. Then "fight the good fight of faith," "act like men," "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," for you shall at length "overcome through the blood of the Lamb" and be "more than conquerors through Him that has loved us." Here, beneath the cross, would I breathe for you the desire and the prayer once offered by the apostle of the Gentiles in behalf of the church of the Thessalonians, "And 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." (1Th 5:23, 24-note) Amen and Amen.

[\(The Necessity and the Nature of True Holiness\)](#)

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