

**The
Christian
Outlook & Inlook.
~A Tender Heart~**



A. W. Pink

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The Christian Outlook

The outlook of the natural man is bounded by the things of time and sense. Necessarily so: Being alienated from God and devoid of spiritual life, his interests are narrowed to this sphere, and where his treasure is, there will his heart be also. To “succeed” in this life, to obtain for himself a position of power and prestige in this perishing world, is as far as his ambitions go. To eat, drink, and be merry is the highest ideal of the vast majority of our fellows. Being of the world—as well as in it—the portion of the unregenerate is confined thereto. If his immediate portion be a disappointing one, he lives in hope of improving the same. And what is true of each of its units holds good of the whole: The world may not yet be the paradise they long for, yet they indulge in the wishful thinking that ere long a Golden Age will dawn.

There is much speculation and theorizing upon what is needed to usher in that Golden Age. Many have held that the only thing which obstructed it was some particular form of government, under which they lived: A government which confined the good things of this life to the privileged classes and withheld them from the labouring masses. In support of that theory, force has often been employed, ancient monarchies being overthrown, and republics taking their place. Every form of government that human wit could devise has been tried out: Absolute monarchy, limited monarchy, aristocratic rule, republicanism, democracy, communism—only to find that human nature remained unchanged and discontented as ever. More recently, it was said that Utopian conditions would eventually be reached by a natural process of evolution—that as civilization advanced, things would automatically improve. But such a chimera has been rudely shattered by the world tragedies of our own lifetime.

Others have pinned their faith to what is generally thought of as somewhat vaguely called “Religion.” Its leaders and advocates have felt that the world is suffering from something more serious and radical than surface disorders, and therefore, that the remedy must

deal with what is wrong within. They realise that it is sin which lies at the root of the world's miseries and sufferings, and they aver that religion is the only power which can overcome sin. There are, however, even more brands of religion than there are political philosophies, each one claiming to be the best, if not the only, panacea for all the world's ailments. The devotees of each of these types of religion hold to the idea that if only a sufficient number of their fellows can be induced to endorse their particular creed and adopt their mode of life, there would soon be a vast improvement—that selfishness and injustice would be replaced by righteousness, that wars and wretchedness would give way to peace and happiness.

But the Christian outlook is entirely different from that of either the profane or the religious worldling. Having had his eyes opened to see his own native depravity and made to feel the plague of his own heart, he is under no delusion concerning the state of his fellows. He knows from painful experience that the disease from which his fellows are suffering is far too desperate for any human means to alleviate—still less, to cure—and that priests and Levites are of no avail for the half-dead traveller on life's highway. He realises that all mankind lie under the curse of a holy and sin-hating God, and therefore, that “destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known” (Rom. 3:16-17). If his thoughts be regulated by the Word of Truth, he knows that “the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19), and therefore, that the Ethiopian will sooner change his skin, or the leopard his spots, than that it should be capable of any change for the better.

“Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13). *There* is “The Christian outlook!” That “Nevertheless” is in view of what is stated in the preceding verses. There, we are told that “the heavens [the stellar and atmospheric heavens] shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10, and partly repeated in verse 12). We do not propose to now cross swords with either those who deny, or affirm, there is yet to be a “Millennium” (on that subject, the writer has no definite opinion); rather do we here call attention to the Divinely-revealed fact that at

the close of human history—and in our judgment, no one on earth has or can have even an approximate idea of when that will be—this earth, and all its works, is going to be (not renovated nor purified, but) totally and finally destroyed. *That* will be the end of all the much-vaunted and admired productions of man.

But though the whole of this scene is doomed to destruction, so far from being dismayed and overwhelmed by such a prospect, Christians direct their gaze to something beyond and yet future, and “according to his promise, look for *new* heavens and a *new* earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13). The poor worldling has nought better than his own wishful thinking on which to base his hope of a coming Golden Age. The Christian, who not only knows that this world is going to perish when it has served its Maker’s purpose, but has the definite promise of One who cannot lie that the present mundane system is going to be replaced by a new earth (which will endure not merely for a thousand years, but forever), in which sin shall never enter, but wherein righteousness shall dwell—and as the result thereof, where everlasting peace, blessing, and felicity shall obtain.

“We—whose eyes have been anointed with Divine salve and whose hearts rest upon the infallible Word of God (in such passages as Isaiah 65:17; 66:22)—look—with a spiritual vision—for new heavens and a new earth.” We look with the eyes of *faith*, which are able to see Objects invisible to physical sight (Heb. 11:27) and behold things whose actualization lies in the future, rather than in the present (Heb. 11:1). We look with the eyes of *hope*—not of a mere wishful expectation, but of a confident anticipation of what God will surely bring to pass. We look with the eyes of happiness, as Abraham looked forward to the day of Christ, “saw it, and was glad” (John 8:56). We look with the eyes of *contentment*—for the new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness will satisfy every holy longing and be the summum bonum of all pure desire. Yes, we look beyond the bounds of time to the glorious horizon of eternity.

As the unregenerate behold with horror the devastated cities of Europe and the rubble of what was not long ago its most venerated monuments (and the child of God cannot contemplate such ruins unmoved), as they look with faltering hearts after those things

which they very much fear are soon to come upon the earth; as we are now witnessing the demolishing of Dagon—what man has termed “our Christian civilization”—the eye of faith looks for that which the Lord God shall yet call into existence, which will witness the consummation of His purpose and be the grand finale of redemption. “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (2 Pet. 3:14)—*that* is the practical application. O that grace may be granted both writer and reader to heed it.

The Christian Inlook

There are those who teach that the Christian should never look within, but instead, be constantly occupied with Christ. To the superficial, that may sound very spiritual, yet in reality, it is most absurd and certainly will not stand the test of Holy Writ. To declare that I must never look within is only another way of telling me that I must never *examine myself*. When I look in a mirror, I do not see *myself*, but merely my body: that body is but the house in which the real me dwells. That distinction is drawn by the Holy Spirit Himself in a passage, which at once, makes known to us the relative importance of attending to the outward or to the inner man. Bidding Christian wives to be winsome to their unbelieving husbands, He says, “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be *the hidden man of the heart*, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Pet. 3:1-4).

With rare exceptions, it will be found that those men and women who spend so much money and devote so much time to their clothes and personal appearance are very empty-headed—like some shops which make a big display in their windows, but have little on their shelves. The same holds good religiously and spiritually. The Pharisees were most punctilious in seeing to it that their hands were clean from ceremonial defilement, yet within were “full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness” (Matt. 23:27). And in Christendom today, there are thousands of professors against whom little or nothing could be brought so far as their outward lives are concerned, but whose hearts are totally neglected and an

abomination unto the eyes of the Holy One. To bring our external deportment into harmony with the revealed will of God is not sufficient. He holds us accountable for what goes on *inside*, and requires us to keep check upon the springs of our actions, the motives which inspire, and the principles which regulate us. “Behold [give attention], thou desirest truth in the *inward parts*” (Psa. 51:6).

It is true that we are bidden to run the race set before us “looking unto Jesus” (Heb. 12:1-2), yet that presents only one angle and aspect of our duty. We are also required to “commune with” our own hearts (Psa. 4:4), to keep our hearts “with all diligence” (Prov. 4:23). Christ has enjoined us, “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your *hearts* be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and *cares* of this life” (Luke 21:34). Not look within!—how else can we make conscience of coldness of affection, the swellings of pride, the risings of rebellion, wandering thoughts while engaged in holy duties, evil imaginations which defile the mind? Not look within!—then how shall we “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit” (2 Cor. 7:1), or even discover our need of such cleansing? Look within!—how then shall I be able to ascertain whether I possess that poverty of spirit, mourning for unholiness, meekness, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and purity of heart, upon which the Saviour pronounces His benediction?

It is also true that the Christian needs to be on his guard against becoming too introspective. The secret of a sound and healthy spiritual life lies in preserving the balance between its subjective and objective sides. Salvation indeed comes to the soul by looking outside and away from one’s self unto “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Yet the soul will not look unto Him until it has been made sensible of its depravity and lost condition: “They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick” (Luke 5:31). And let it not be forgotten that salvation itself is both objective and subjective, for it consists not only of what Christ did *for* His people, but also of what He (by His Spirit) does *in* them; and in fact, the former can only be discovered by us personally through the latter. I have no evidence whatever of my justification apart from my regeneration and sanctification. The one who can say, “I am crucified with Christ” (judicially) can also add,

“Christ liveth *in me*” (experimentally); and living by faith in Him is the proof that He “loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

The privilege and duty of the believer is, first, to look unto Christ without him and draw from His fullness; and second, to attend unto matters within so that his heart is a meet abode for Him. Thus, in the Song of Solomon, we find Him saying, “A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse”—God’s people collectively; and therefore, each of them individually; and then, He goes on to speak of the plants and fruits growing therein, which to Him are “pleasant” (Song. 4:12-16). It is a figure of the regenerate soul, in contrast from that of the unregenerate, whose *heart* is likened unto a vineyard utterly neglected and “all grown over with thorns, and nettles” (Prov. 24:30-31). Now, a garden needs much care and attention; and so does *the heart*, if Christ is to dwell in it by faith. Accordingly, we find the believer praying to the Spirit (under the figure of the wind—compare John 3:8) for His help: of the “north wind” to kill the pests, and of the “south” to ripen the fruits. Then he invites his Beloved to “come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits” (Song. 4:16)—an invitation to which He graciously responds (Song. 5:1).

In the Song of Solomon 6:13, a further figure is employed: “What will ye see in the Shulamite? [the Spouse on earth]. As it were the company of two armies.” That is what the Christian sees as he looks within and searches himself, there are two opposing forces: Indwelling depravity and implanted holiness; native corruption and communicated grace; the flesh and the spirit; as weeds and flowers, pests and fruits, in the garden. At first, the believer is horrified and terrified by the strong predominance of the former, and is made to doubt whether a miracle of grace has been wrought within him. But if he apprehends what is so plainly taught in passages like Romans 7:15-25, Galatians 5:17, and Philippians 3:12-13, he will neither be surprised nor dismayed; and if he duly ponders such injunctions as Romans 12:16, 2 Corinthians 7:1, and Colossians 3:5, his duty will be clear. Self must be denied, the cross taken up, sin resisted, lusts mortified—as weeds must be pulled up (again and again!), pests fought—and the graces of the new man tended, nourished, and developed, if the garden of his heart is to be fit for an honoured Guest to be invited into and regaled.

This inward looking, this self-examination and self-discipline accomplish two chief ends: First, it *humbles* the believer into the dust before God—a most salutary experience and necessary daily, if pride and self-righteousness are to be subdued. As the believer makes an increasing discovery of the original corruptions of his soul, as he traces the subtle workings of sin, as he sees it defiling all his best efforts, he cannot but cry, “Unclean, unclean!” (Lev. 13:45) and groan, “O wretched man that I am!” (Rom. 7:24). Second, it deepens his *assurance* and draws out his soul in praise. For as he looks into the mirror of God’s Word and sees himself both naturally and spiritually, as he compares each of his features with the portrait which the Spirit has drawn of both the sinner and the saint, he discovers his identity therewith. As he finds within himself a loathing of sin and self, a hunger and thirst after righteousness, pantings after God and conformity to Christ, he perceives these are what the Spirit has wrought in him; and as he traces the workings (feeble and spasmodic though they be) of faith, hope, love, meekness, perseverance, he learns that the root of the matter is within him, and he exclaims, “I thank God through Jesus Christ” (Rom. 7:25).

Thus, as the Christian looks within, two principal things will be beheld. First, his *fallen nature*—and the more he examines it in the light of Scripture and by the enabling of the Spirit, the more will he perceive its vileness, recognise to what a fearful extent it influences his character and conduct, until he loathes himself and marvels that a holy God has not long since banished him to Hell. And my reader, if *you* are a stranger to such feelings or sentiments, then it is clear you are yet *dead* in trespasses and sins. Second, his *new nature*—and the more he examines his inner man in the light of Scripture and by the power of the Spirit, the more should he be assured that God has “begun a good work” (Phil. 1:6) within him. The very fact that he perceives his corruptions and laments over them is proof that he is no longer dead in sin. The consciousness and evidence he has that there is now within that which causes him (though often unsuccessfully) to strive against sin and confess his failures to God; and that he sincerely desires and diligently endeavours to please God in all things is sure evidence that a principle of grace has been communicated to his soul.

A Tender Heart

“Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place . . . I also have heard thee, saith the LORD” (2 Kings 22:19). This was part of the message which God sent in response to an inquiry made by the godly king Josiah. It occurred at a time when the earthly people of God had sunken very low—so low that “the Book of the Law” had been lost, and was only then recovered (v. 8). The sacred Book was read in the hearing of the king, and so deeply was he affected by its solemn message, “he rent his clothes” (v. 11). As he learned of the greatness of Jehovah’s wrath, which was kindled against his subjects, Josiah sent messengers to inquire of the Lord. The answer was that sore judgment would certainly fall upon Jerusalem, but that the king would be removed from this world before the storm of Divine wrath should burst.

That the above is recorded for our instruction scarcely needs to be pointed out, and deeply important and valuable are the lessons illustrated thereby. It tells us that the One with whom we have to do takes cognizance of the state of our hearts. It reveals to us the fact that God’s dealings with us in Providence are regulated—in part, at least—by the state of our hearts. It announces to us that a *tender heart* is of great price in the sight of the Lord. It makes evident that the tenderness of Josiah’s heart was the reason why Divine judgment did not fall upon his kingdom in his own lifetime. It presents to us the startling and blessed spectacle of a man with a tender heart at a time when spirituality was at its lowest ebb in Israel. It makes clear to us what are the marks or characteristics of a tender heart.

What an excellent thing, then, is a “tender heart.” What delight it gives unto the Lord. Why certainly, for it is the product of His own handiwork. By nature the heart of fallen man is very far from being “tender” *Godwards*, for *that* is what was denoted in the case of Josiah. No, sad to say, it is the very opposite: so far as the Lord is concerned, the heart of every descendant of Adam is hard, callous, stubborn and defiant. Before it can become tender, a miracle of *grace* needs to be wrought upon it. It is to this the words of the Prophet refer: “I will put a new spirit within you [them]; and I will

take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh” (Ezek. 11:19). Whatever be the future application of these words to the nation of Israel, the substance of them is most assuredly made good every time a soul is truly born again.

A “tender heart,” then, stands in direct antithesis from a hard one. It is the opposite of a heart of *stone*, which is cold, lifeless, not responsive. It is a spiritual, a supernatural thing: we stress this because some confuse with it the workings of natural conscience. There are not a few who mistake the fluctuations of natural conscience for a heart made tender in the fear of the Lord, and in this age of superficiality this is scarcely to be wondered at. There are plenty of unregenerate people who have consciences that are—in certain directions—very alert and active: witness the deluded Roman Catholics who would not dream of eating any animal meat during “lent,” yet these very people have no compunction in worshipping images of wood and stone. Verily such religionists “strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.” Such is man the world over until and unless sovereign grace is pleased to bestow upon him a tender heart.

Natural conscience is intensely superstitious. It is most punctilious over self-inflicted austerities, and most watchful against violating self-imposed rules—yet it will commit sins which one who has the fear of God in his heart would not be willingly guilty of for gold or rubies. On the other hand, the very same conscience will stumble over the veriest trifles, regarding which, one who is enlightened by God and regulated by His Word would not feel the least scruple about. Natural conscience will “pay tithes of mint, anise, and cummin,” while it “omits the weightier matters of the Law” (Matt. 23:23). It will refuse to enter Pilate’s judgment hall, “lest it should be defiled” (John 18:28), and that, at the very time when its possessors were venting their hatred against the Christ of God. Thus the distinction between the superstitious workings of conscience in the natural man and the activities of a “tender heart” in the child of God is clear-cut, and there is no excuse for confusing the one with the other.

A heart which has been made tender in the fear of God is one which moves as the Holy Spirit works upon it: moves not away from but toward the One whom the Spirit is here to glorify, for the

Divine will is its orbit. “It is like the mariner’s compass, which having been once touched by the magnet, always turns toward the North. It may indeed oscillate and tremble backwards and forwards, but still it will return to the pole, and ultimately remain fixed at the point whence it was temporarily disturbed. So when the heart has been touched by the Spirit, and has been made tender in God’s fear, it may for a time waver to the right hand or to the left, but it is always trembling and fluctuating till it points toward God, as the eternal centre of its happiness and holiness” (The Gospel Pulpit, 1843).

Let us now be a little more specific. A “tender heart” is not only one of Divine production and is the opposite of a hard and unregenerate heart, but it is a *sensitive* one—just as a tender plant is exceedingly sensitive to chilly winds and biting frosts. A heart that is tender in the fear of God shrinks from all sin and makes conscience of the same. So long as it retains its tenderness, it firmly refuses to trifle with that which the wicked make a sport of. It shuns the very appearance of evil, and hates the garment spotted by the flesh. Its earnest and constant prayer is, “Lead me not unto temptation, but deliver me from evil.” Because it is so sensitive, it trembles at the Word of God (Isa. 66:2), for His holy awe is upon that soul. Consequently, it deems the contents of that Word far too sacred to be made the subject of carnal jangling and argument.

A tender heart is one which has a deep concern for the glory of God and the welfare of His kingdom. Superlatively was this exemplified by the Lord Jesus Christ: who so thoroughly absorbed with the honour of His Father and the furtherance of His cause on earth, His own interests and aggrandizement were completely swallowed up in magnifying the One who had sent Him. And the same principle is found in each of His followers, though with vastly different degrees of manifestation. The tender heart is one in which the love of God is shed abroad, and just so far as that is allowed to dominate and regulate do we seek to please Him. Consequently, a tender heart is one which is deeply grieved, touched to the quick, by everything which dishonours his best Friend—whether it be seen in others or discovered in himself. What more tender than the eye, and what so sensitive to a foreign substance!

A “tender heart” is pliant. The heart of the unregenerate is likened

unto “the nether millstone” (Job 41:24), but that which is wrought upon by the Holy Spirit resembles wax—receptive to His impressions upon it. The stony heart is impervious to pleadings and threatenings alike, but the tender heart is amenable and responsive to the Divine call. Man in his natural state says with Pharaoh, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice?” (Exod. 5:2), but one which has been supernaturally quickened asks, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). The more tender the plant, the more readily it lends itself to being trained or twined around an upright stake. So it is with the child of God. In his “first love” he freely yields himself unto God as one that is alive from the dead, and his members as instruments of righteousness unto God (Rom. 6:13). This tenderness and pliability of heart is evidenced by its possessor humbling himself before God—as was clearly the case with Josiah (2 Kings 22:19).

A tender heart is *conscientious*. It makes its possessor diligent in the performance of duty. If an employer, he will not oppress and be a hard taskmaster, but be just, and considerate, knowing that he also has a Master in Heaven. If an employee, he will not shirk his work, but will do it with all his might whatsoever his hand findeth to do, with good will, “as to the Lord” (Eph. 6:7). It makes its possessor careful in heeding the Divine exhortations and warnings. He lays to heart such a word as, “Take us the foxes, the *little* foxes, that spoil the vines” (Song. 2:15). How tender we are of our eye: no matter how tiny the particle of grit which enters and irritates, we quickly and diligently seek to extract it—equally zealous is a tender heart to remove whatever endangers spiritual fruitfulness.

It makes its possessor considerate of the rights and needs of his fellows. He will not take advantage of kindness nor disregard the welfare of those about him. He will deny himself rather than callously ignore the comfort of his neighbours. When he sees one in dire distress he will not pass by on the other side, but go and endeavour to relieve him. A heart which is tender Godwards is never hard and cruel manwards.

“Because thine heart was tender” (2 Kings 22:19). We have already considered the circumstances and significance of these words. Let us now proffer a few remarks upon how a tender heart may be *preserved*. This is a matter of great importance, for though

such a most desirable possession be obtained as a sovereign gift from God, yet it can only be *retained* by much diligence on our part. This should scarcely need any arguing, yet hyper-Calvinists are likely to demur, supposing that an insistence upon Christian responsibility is the same thing as crying up creature ability. But does not the natural shadow forth the spiritual here, too? Is it not a fact with which we are all familiar that the more “tender” any object or creature be, the more care and cultivation it requires?

“Keep thy heart with all diligence” (Prov. 4:23). This must put an end to all quibbling on the part of objectors: where God speaks there must be an end of all strife. And diligence, great and constant diligence, is required on our part if a tender heart is to be preserved. How? In what directions? First, by guarding against everything which is hostile to it. To be more specific: it is sin which hardens the heart. In exact proportion as sin obtains dominion over us, do we steal ourselves against God. And it is just here that our accountability comes in: “Awake to righteousness, and sin not” (1 Cor. 15:34). Thought we cannot impart a tender heart, we can certainly impair one. “Harden not your hearts” was the Lord’s call to His people of old, and to us also today; and if we are to comply therewith we must fear, hate, and resist *sin*.

Sin is insidious. Scripture speaks of “the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:13). If we are not on our guard, it will steal upon us unawares; unless we are wide awake and alert to the danger, sin will overcome us like the fumes of a deadly gas. That is why the Lord bids us “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Matt. 26:41). Yes, watch as well as pray, and pray as well as watch. We all know what happened to Peter because he failed so to do, and his case is recorded as a solemn warning for us. “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away” (Prov. 4:14, 15). Notice carefully how the same prohibition is iterated and re-iterated again and again in these verses. It is the first approach of sin we most need to resist. It is by making conscience of its earliest stirrings within that a tender heart is preserved.

Every Christian will readily allow that sin is insidious, but it is one thing to recognize this in theory and quite another to be regulated by it in practice. All will agree that one of the most

effective means of victory over sin is to steadfastly refuse its first advances; yet the fact remains that few do so. It is at this very point we must take our stand if a tender heart is to be retained. But how? By guarding against carnality. Things indifferent become a snare if they are not kept within due bounds. That which is lawful is not always expedient. An immoderate use of the creature will bind chains upon us which are not easily snapped. Inordinate affection for those nearest to us will sap true spirituality. Beware, then, of setting your love too much upon mere *things* or creatures.

Nothing will keep the heart tender so much as cultivating the spirit of filial awe. Alas that this is now so rarely insisted upon. “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil” (Prov. 8:13). Necessarily so, for God is ineffably holy, and where He is revered sin is loathed. “By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil” (Prov. 16:6), for two cannot walk together except they be agreed. The more concerned I am not to displease my Master, the more shall I eschew that which He forbids. “Be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long” (Prov. 23:17), for “Happy is the man that feareth *always*” (Prov. 28:14). We must strive to be in the fear of God not only in the first hour of devotion, but throughout the day. The more we live in the conscious realization that the eyes of the Holy One are upon us, the more will our hearts be kept truly tender.

“Because thine heart was tender” (2 Kings 22:19). What a desirable thing is a tender heart. How earnestly we should aspire after one. And when such has been graciously bestowed upon us, what diligence we should exercise in seeking to preserve the same. The tenderness of Josiah’s heart was precious in the sight of the Lord, and in consequence thereof his prayers were answered, as the remainder of our opening text declares. There is nothing like a tender heart, my reader, for obtaining the ear of the Lord. A tender heart is one which is responsive to the voice of God, and unless we possess this how can we expect Him to hear our calls? A tender heart is the only one which truly honours God, as it is the only one which ensures our growth in grace. How deeply important, then, is the question, Have you, have I, really a tender heart? May we be enabled to answer truthfully?

Previously we pointed out some of the principal characteristics of a tender heart, and also sought to indicate those duties which must

be performed if we are to retain this valuable possession. But it is probable that not a few of our readers would prefer for us to tell them how a tender heart may be *recovered*. They are already persuaded of the great excellence of this spiritual treasure, and they also perceive clearly what is necessary in order to retain it. What grieves them is that they are conscious of guilty failure in safeguarding this Divine gift. They are sensible that the fine gold has become dim, that little foxes have spoiled their vines, that their conscience is no longer so sensitive as it once was, that they do not respond so readily to the motions of God's Spirit; that much hardness now resides in their hearts.

It is sadly true that a tender heart may be lost: not absolutely so, but relatively; not permanently, but temporarily. But sadder still is the fact that many who have suffered this deprivation are unconscious of it. It is with them as it was with Ephraim of old: "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he *knoweth it not*; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he *knoweth not*" (Hosea 7:9). They may still attend the means of grace and perform their outward devotions, but their hearts are not in them. They may still be respected by their fellow-Christians and regarded as in a healthy spiritual state, while in reality they are backsliders. Sights from which they once shrank appal them no longer. Things which used to exercise their conscience do so no more. The standard at which they formerly aimed is now regarded as too strict and severe.

Said the Apostle to the Galatians, "Ye *did* run well, who (or "what") hath hindered you?" (5:7). What are the things which destroy tenderness of heart? Ungodly companions is one. Satan will tell the young Christian that he or she may keep old friends and suffer no loss, but God says, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33). Friendship with worldlings will soon have a paralyzing influence upon true spirituality. Prayerlessness is another thing which speedily affects the heart. Unless a close fellowship with God be maintained—and that is impossible if the Throne of Grace is neglected—coldness and hardness will soon steal upon us. Equally so will a neglect of the Word. This will not necessarily mean the omission of reading so many chapters each day, but the absence of actually communing with God therein. The spirit of hypocrisy, pretending to be what we

are not, hardens—for guile and tenderness are incompatible.

Yes, a tender heart may be lost, as truly as first love may be left (Rev. 2:4). Can it be regained? Yes, though not as easily as it may be hardened. How? First, by warming afresh at the fire of God's love. This is ever the most effectual means of removing hardness of heart. What was it that melted and broke you down at your first conversion? Was it not a sense of the Divine grace and a sight of Christ's dying love? And nothing is so calculated to soften the backslider: it is "the goodness of God" which leads to repentance (Rom. 2:4). What was before David when he commenced his contrite confession? This: the Lord's "lovingkindness" and the "multitude of His tender mercies" (Psa. 51:1). When was it that Peter went out and wept bitterly? Was it not when the Saviour "turned and looked upon him" (Luke 22:61)?

Was it not the *sorrow* which Peter saw in that look—a sorrow which issued from love for him—which broke his heart?! The Lord had given him every proof that he was dear unto Him, and how had Peter requited that love? And has not the Lord given you, my brother, my sister, abundant evidence that you are precious in His sight? Did He deem any sacrifice too great to make atonement for your sins? Has He not favoured you above millions of your fellows in bringing you to a saving knowledge of the Truth? Has He not bestowed the Holy Spirit upon you? Has He not borne with your dullness with infinite patience? Can you dwell upon these things with unmoved heart? Surely not. Seek unto Him, then, and your coldness and hardness will indeed be thawed.

Second, by genuine contrition. As it is the allowance of sin which hardens the heart, so it is sorrow for sin which softens it. Hence, when the Lord admonishes the one who has left his first love, His word is, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works" (Rev. 2:5). First, "Remember *therefore* from whence thou art fallen," which looks back to the previous verse. Call to mind the happy fellowship you once enjoyed with the eternal Lover of your soul, when He found delight in you, and your own heart was satisfied. Consider "from *whence* thou art fallen"—no longer leaning on His bosom, but having entered a course which both displeases and dishonours Him. Unless this produces godly sorrow in you, nothing else will, and it is godly

sorrow which “worketh repentance” (2 Cor. 7:10). Take a leaf out of the copybook of the prodigal son: arise, forsake the far country, return to your Father, and pour out your griefs into His welcoming ear.

Third, by the exercise of faith. “And do the first works” (Rev. 2:5). What was the first work you did when you originally came to God in Christ as an empty-handed and contrite sinner? Was it not to cast yourself upon His mercy, to lay hold of His promises, to trust in the sufficiency of Christ’s atoning blood? Well, the same remedy is available now. Did not David cry, “*Create* in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psa. 51:10)?—deal with me now as Thou did at the first! And was he not able to say, “He restorest my soul” (Psa. 23:3)? Precious promises are recorded in the Word which exactly suit your case: “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings” (Jer. 3:22). “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely” (Hosea 14:4). Make these promises your own, plead them before God, and count upon Him making them good in your own case.

In conclusion, a word or two on some of the *evidences* of a tender heart. We mention one or two of these so that writer and reader may *test* himself by them. Is your heart affected by the present state of Christendom? Are you made to sigh and cry, “for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” (Ezek. 9:4)? Is your experience, in some measure at least, that “Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Thy Law” (Psa. 119:53)? “Mine eye shall weep sore and run down with tears, because the Lord’s flock is carried away captive” (Jer. 13:17)—is that how you feel? Again—“I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19): do you respond to the motions of God’s Spirit? Finally, do you mourn over your own hardness and grieve over your callousness? *These* are some of the manifestations of a tender heart.

