



The Doctrine of Sanctification



Part Seven

A. W. Pink



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11. Its Instrument

Paul was sent unto the Gentiles “to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are *sanctified by faith* that is in me” (Acts 26:18). Two extremes are to be guarded against in connection with the precise relation that faith sustains to the various aspects of salvation: disparaging it, and making too much of it. There are those who expressly deny that faith has any actual part or place in the securing of the same. On the other hand, there are some who virtually make a saviour out of faith, ascribing to it what belongs alone to *Christ*. But if we adhere closely to Scripture and observe *all* that is said thereon (instead of restricting our attention to a few passages), there is no excuse for falling into either error. We shall therefore make a few remarks with the object of refuting each of them.

“But without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6). We are saved by faith (Luke 7:50). We are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1). We live by faith (Gal. 2:20). We stand by faith (2 Cor. 1:24). We walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7). We obey by faith (Rom. 1:5). Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Eph. 3:17). We overcame the world by faith (1 John 5:4). The heart is purified by faith (Acts 15:9). All duties, for their right motive and end, depend upon it. No trials and afflictions can be patiently or profitably borne unless faith be in exercise. Our whole warfare can only be carried on and finished victoriously by faith (1 Tim. 6:12). All the gifts and graces of God are presented in the promises, and they can only be received and enjoyed by us in a way of believing. It is high worship to be strong in faith giving glory to God. In view of all this, we need not be surprised to read that we are “*sanctified by faith.*”

But *in what way* does faith sanctify us? To answer this question properly we must carefully bear in mind the principal aspects of our subject, which have already been considered by us in the previous

chapters of these booklets. First, faith has nothing to do with the Father's setting us apart and blessing us with all spiritual blessings in Christ before the foundation of the world: it is one of the God-dishonouring and creature-exalting errors of Arminianism to affirm that Christians were elected on the ground that God foresaw they would believe. Second, our faith was in no sense a moving cause to Christ's becoming the Surety of His people and working out for them a perfect holiness before God. Third, faith has no influence in causing the Holy Spirit to separate the elect from the reprobate, for at the moment He does this they are dead in trespasses and sins, and therefore totally incapable of performing any spiritual acts. Fourth, faith will not contribute anything unto the Christian's glorification, for *that* is solely the work of God; the subject of it being entirely passive therein. "Whom he justified, them he also glorified."

Thus faith, important though it be, plays only a secondary and subordinate part in sanctification. It is neither the originating, the meritorious, nor the efficient cause of it, but only the *instrumental*. Yet faith *is necessary* in order to a saving union with Christ, and until that be effected none of the blessings and benefits which are in Him can be received by us. It seems strange that any who are well versed in the Scriptures and who profess to be subject to their teachings, should question what has just been affirmed. Take such a declaration as "them that believe *to* the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:39). True, we are not saved *for* our believing, yet equally true is it that there is no salvation for any sinner *without* his believing. Every blessing we receive from Christ is in consequence of our being united to Him, and therefore we cannot receive the holiness there is in Him until we are "sanctified by faith." Furthermore, faith is necessary in order to the reception of the purifying Truth, in order to practical deliverance from the power of sin, and in order to progress or growth in personal holiness.

Before proceeding further let it be pointed out that the faith which the Gospel requires, the faith which savingly unites a sinner to Christ, the faith which issues in sanctification, is very much more than the bare assent of the mind to what is recorded in the Scriptures concerning the Lord Jesus; it is something far different from the mere adoption of certain evangelical opinions regarding the way of salvation. The Day to come will reveal the solemn fact that

thousands went down to Hell with their heads filled with orthodox beliefs—which many of them contended for earnestly and propagated zealously, just as the Mohammedan does with the tenets and principles of *his* religion. Saving faith, my reader, is the soul's surrender to and reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ as a living, loving, all-sufficient Saviour, and that, upon the alone but sure testimony of God Himself. When we say “an all-sufficient Saviour” we mean One in whom there is a spotless holiness as well as perfect righteousness for those who come to Him.

Faith lays hold of Christ as He is offered to sinners in the Gospel, and He is there presented not only for justification but also for the sanctification of all who truly believe on Him. The glorious Gospel of grace not only heralds One who delivers from the wrath to come but as giving title to approach now unto the thrice holy God. Moreover, faith accepts a *whole* Christ: not only as Priest to atone for us, but as a King to reign over us. Faith, then, is *the instrument* of our sanctification. Faith is the eye which perceives the gracious provisions which God has made for His people. Faith is the hand which appropriates those provisions. Faith is the mouth which receives all the good that God has stored up for us in Christ. Without faith it is impossible to please God, and without the *exercise* of faith it is impossible to make any real progress in the spiritual life.

Many of the Lord's people rob themselves of much of their peace and joy by confounding faith with its fruits; they fail to distinguish between the Word of God believed and what follows from believing it aright. Fruit grows on the tree, and the tree must exist before there can be fruit. True obedience, acceptable worship, growth in grace, assurance of salvation, are what faith produces, and not what faith itself *is*: they are the effects of faith working, and not definitions of the nature of faith. Faith derives its being from the Word of God, and all its fruits are the result of believing. What God has spoken in His Word demands belief from all to whom the Word comes. Faith and the Word of God, then, are related as the effect and the cause, because “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17). When faith comes by the *inward* “hearing,” then we assent to what God has said, and we rely upon His faithfulness to make good what He has promised; until *that* has been effected there can be no fruits of faith.

It is, then, of much importance to correctly define what faith is, for a mistake at this point is not only dishonouring to God, but injurious to the soul and inimical to its peace. Faith is a childlike taking God at His Word and resting on what He has said. It is a depending on Christ to bestow those blessings and graces which He has promised to those who believe. How is a sin-defiled soul to become a partaker of the cleansing efficacy of the blood of the Lamb? Only by *faith*. The purifying virtue of Christ's blood, and the administration of the Spirit, for the application to make it effectual unto our souls and consciences, is exhibited in the promises of the Gospel; and the only way to be made a partaker of the good things presented in the promises is by faith. God Himself ordained this instrumental efficacy unto faith in the Everlasting Covenant, and nothing is more honouring to Him than the exercise of real faith.

Returning to our earlier question, In what way does faith sanctify us? We answer, first, *by uniting us to Christ*, the Holy One. Oneness with Christ is the foundation of all the blessings of the Christian, but it is not until he is actually united to Christ by faith that those blessings are really made over to him. Then it is that Christ is "made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). It is faith which receives Christ's atonement, for God hath set forth Christ "a propitiation *through faith* in His blood" (Rom. 3:25), and His infinitely meritorious blood not only justifies but sanctifies too. Thus there is no intrinsic virtue in faith itself, instead, its value lies wholly in its being the hand which lays hold of Him who possesses infinite virtue. For this very reason faith excludes all boasting (Rom. 3:27), and therefore any "believing" which produces self-gratulation or results in self-satisfaction is most certainly not the faith of the Gospel.

Second, faith sanctifies the believer by enabling him *to enjoy now* what is his in Christ and what will be his in himself in Heaven. Faith sets to its seal that the testimony of God is true when He declares that "we *are* sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10). Faith assures its possessor that though he is still a fallen creature in himself, and as such a sinner to the end of his earthly course, yet in Christ he is perfectly holy, having the same immaculate standing before God as does his Head and Surety; for "as He is, so are *we* in this world" (1 John 4:17).

Thus faith is “the evidence of things *not seen*” (Heb. 11:1) by the natural eye, nor felt by the natural senses. Faith projects us out of this scene entirely and carries the heart into Heaven itself—not a natural faith, not a preacher-produced faith, but Gospel faith, imparted by the Holy Spirit.

But let us not be mistaken at this point. The faith of which we are here treating is not a blind fanaticism. It does not ignore the presence of indwelling sin. It does not lose its eyes to the constant activities of the flesh. It refuses to tone down the vile fruits which the flesh produces, by terming them *peccadillos*, ignorance, mistakes, etc. No, faith has clear vision and perceives the infinite enormity of all that is opposed to God. Faith is honest and scorns the hypocrisy of calling darkness light. But faith not only sees the total depravity of natural self and the horrible filth which fouls every part of it, but it also views the precious blood which has satisfied every claim of God upon those for whom it was shed, and which cleanses from all sin those who put their trust in it. It is neither fanaticism nor presumption for faith to receive at its face value what God as declared concerning the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice.

Third, faith sanctifies as it *derives grace from* the fullness in which there is in Christ. God has constituted the Mediator the Source of all spiritual influences and faith is the instrument by which they are derived from Him. Christ is not only a Head of authority to His Church, but also a Head of influence. “But speaking the truth in love, *may grow up into Him* in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, *maketh increase* of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:15, 16). That “effectual working in the measure of every part” is by supplies of grace being received from Christ, and that grace flows through the appointed channel *of faith*. As the Lord Jesus declared unto the father of the demon-tormented son, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mark 9:28); and to the two blind beggars who cried unto Him for mercy, “According to your faith be it unto you” (Matt. 9:29). How earnest and importunate should we be, in begging the Lord to graciously strengthen and increase our faith.

It is by faith laying hold upon a full Christ that the empty soul is replenished. All that we need for time as well as eternity is to be found in Him; but the hand of faith must be extended, even though it grasp but the hem of His garment, if virtue is to flow forth from Him into us. As Samson's strength was in his locks, so the Christian's strength is in his Head. This the Devil knows full well, and therefore does he labour so hard to keep us from Christ, causing the clouds of unbelief to hide from our view the radiant face of the Sun of righteousness, and getting us so occupied with our miserable selves that we forget the great Physician. As it is by the sap derived from the root which makes the branches fruitful, so it is by the virtue which faith draws from Christ that the believer is made to abound in holiness. Hence the exhortation, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:1).

Fourth, faith sanctifies because *it cleanses the soul*. "And God, which knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as He did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, *purifying* their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:8, 9). It is by faith the heart is "sprinkled from an evil conscience" by the blood of Christ. It is by faith the affections are lifted unto things above, and thereby disentangled from the defiling objects of the world. It is by the exercise of faith that the "inward parts" (Psa. 51:6) are conformed in some measure unto the Rule of righteousness and holiness, for "faith worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6), and "love is the fulfilling of the Law" (Rom. 13:10). It is to be duly noted that in Acts 15:9 the apostle did not say "their hearts *were* purified by faith;" instead, he used the present tense "*purifying*," for it is a *continuous process* which lasts as long as the believer is hereupon earth. This aspect of our sanctification is not complete till we are released from this world.

Fifth, faith sanctifies because it is by this we *hold communion with Christ*, and communion with Him cannot but nourish the principle of holiness within the regenerate. Thus faith is sanctifying in its own nature, for it is exercised upon spiritual objects. "But we all with open face beholding (by faith) as in a glass the glory of the Lord, *are changed* into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). Faith is a transforming grace because it causes the soul to cleave unto the Divine Transformer. As it was faith

which made us to first lay hold of Christ, so it impels us to *continue* coming unto Him; and if the woman who touched the hem of His garment by faith secured the healing of her body, shall not those who cleave to Christ continue obtaining from Him the healing of their spiritual maladies!

Sixth, faith sanctifies because it *appropriates the commandments* of God and produces obedience. We are sanctified “by the Truth” (John 17:17), yet the Word works not without an act on *our* part as well as of God’s. It is naught but blind enthusiasm which supposes that the Scriptures work in us like some magical charm. How solemn is that passage “but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Heb. 4:2). The Word avails us nothing if it be not received into a trustful heart and faith be acted upon it. Therefore do we read, “seeing ye have purified your souls *in obeying* the truth through the Spirit” (1 Pet. 2:22): it is only as the Truth is received upon the authority of God, given a place in our affections, and yielded to by the will, that our souls are “purified” by it. The more faith causes us to run in the way of God’s commandments, the more is the soul delivered from the defiling effects of self-pleasing.

Seventh, faith sanctifies because it *responds to the various motives* which God has proposed to His people, motives to stir them up unto their utmost endeavours and diligence in using those ways and means which He has appointed for preventing the defilements of sin, and for cleansing the conscience when defilement has been contracted. As faith receives the Word *as God’s*, its Divine authority awes the soul, subdues enmity, and produces submission. The effects of faith are that the soul trembles at the Divine threatenings, yields obedience to the Divine precepts, and gladly embraces the Divine promises. Herein, and in no other way, do we obtain unfailing evidence of the reality and genuineness of our faith. As the specie of a tree is identified by the nature of the fruit which it bears, so the kind of faith we have may be ascertained by the character of the effects which it produces. Some of those effects we have sought to describe in the last few paragraphs.

Having presented an outline in our last chapter of the part which *faith* plays in sanctification, we shall now endeavour, under God, to offer consolation unto some of our sin-burdened, doubt-harassed,

Satan-tormented brethren and sisters in Christ. “Comfort ye, comfort ye, *My people*, saith your God.” (Isa. 40:1). And why? Because God’s children are *the most deeply distressed* people on the face of the earth! Though at times they experience a peace which passeth all understanding, revel in that love which passeth knowledge, and rejoice with joy unspeakable, yet for the most part their souls are much cast down, and fears, bondage, groans, constitute a large part of their experience. They may for a brief season be regaled by the wells and palm trees of Elim, but most of their lives are lived in the “great howling wilderness” (Deut. 32:10), so that they are often constrained to say, “Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.”

Such a distressful experience causes many of the regenerate to very seriously doubt whether they are real Christians. They cannot harmonize their gloom with the light-heartedness they behold in religious professors all around them. No, and they need not wish to. The superficial and apostate religion of our day is producing nothing but a generation of flighty and frothy characters, who scorn anything sober, serious, and solemn, and who sneer at that which searches, strips, and abases into the dust. God’s Isaacs must not expect to be understood and still less appreciated by the “mocking” Ishmaels (Gen. 21:9), for though these dwell for a while in Abraham’s household, yet a different mother has borne them. Unless the sin distressed and fear-tormented believer is “as a sparrow alone upon the housetop” (Psa. 102:7), then he will have to say “mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are *against* me” (Jer. 12:9)—there is no oneness, no fellowship.

Many of God’s dear children are like Asaph. “But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not troubled as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain: violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly: concerning oppression, they speak loftily” (Psa. 73:2-8). As Asaph beheld the prosperity of these people he was staggered, supposing that God was with *them* and had deserted *him*.

The spiritual counterpart of this is found in modern Laodicea. There is a generation of professing Christians who appear to enjoy great religious “prosperity.” They have considerable knowledge of the letter of Scripture; they are experts in “rightly dividing the Word;” they have great light upon the mysteries of prophecy; and are most successful as “soul winners.” They have no ups and downs in their experience, no painful twistings and turnings, but go on in a straight course with light hearts and beaming countenances. Providence smiles upon them, and they never have a doubt as to their acceptance in Christ. Satan does not trouble them, nor is indwelling sin a daily plague to them. And the poor Christian, conscious of his weakness, his ignorance, his poverty, his vileness, is sorely tempted to be “envious” of them, for they seem to have “more than heart could wish,” while the longings of *his* heart are denied him, and that which he pursues so eagerly continues to elude his grasp.

Ah, but note well some of the other characteristics of this prosperous company. “*Pride* compasseth them about as a chain” (Psa. 73:6). Yes, they are utter strangers to humility and lowliness. They are pleased with their peacock feathers, knowing not that God views the same as “filthy rags.” “Concerning oppression, they speak loftily” (Psa. 73:8). God’s children *are* oppressed, sorely oppressed, by their corruptions, by their innumerable failures, by the hidings of the Lord’s face, by the accusations of Satan. They are oppressed over the workings of unbelief, over the coldness of their hearts, over the insincerity of their prayers, over their vain imaginations. But these Laodiceans, “speak loftily,” ridiculing such things, and prate of *their* peace, joy, and victory. “Therefore His people, return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them” (Psa. 73:10), for as *real* Christians listen to the “testimonies” of the “higher life” people, they conclude that it would be the height of presumption to regard themselves as Christians at all.

“Behold, these are the ungodly,” continues Asaph, “who prosper in the (religious) world; they increase in riches” (Psa. 73:12). And as he was occupied with them, contrasting his own sad lot, a spirit of discontent and petulance took possession of him. “Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain” (Psa. 73:13)—what is all my past diligence and efforts worth? I am not “prosperous” like these

professors: I do not have their graces or attainments, I do not enjoy the peace, assurance, and victory, *they* have. Far from it: “For all the day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning” (Psa. 73:14). Ah, *that* was holy Asaph’s experience, my reader; is it yours? If so, you are in goodly company, much as the present-day pharisees may despise you.

Then the Psalmist was checked, and realized his wrong in giving way to such wicked sentiments. “If I say, I will speak thus, behold, I shall offend against the generation of Thy children” (Psa. 73:15). Yes, the generation of God’s children *will be* offended when they hear one of their brethren saying it is “vain” to use the appointed means of grace because those have not issued in deliverance from indwelling sin. “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I *their end*. Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places; Thou castedst them down into destruction” (Psa. 73:16-18). How unspeakably solemn! Instead of these prosperous Laodiceans having a spiritual experience high above those whose hearts plague them “all the day long,” they were total strangers to real spirituality. Instead of being among the chief favourites of God, they had been set by Him in the “slippery places” of error and false religion, to be eventually “cast down into destruction.”

What a warning is this, my sin-harassed brother, *not to envy* those who are strangers to the plague of their own hearts, who groan not “being burdened” (2 Cor. 5:4), and who cry not “O wretched man that I am” (Rom. 7:24). Envy not the proud Laodiceans, who are “rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing;” and know not that they are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17). Instead, be thankful if God has made you “*poor in spirit*”—feeling that you are *destitute* of every spiritual grace and fruit; and to “mourn” over your barrenness and waywardness; for none other than Christ pronounces such characters “blessed.” And why should you think it strange if you are among that little company who are *the most distressed people* on earth? Have you not been called into fellowship with Christ, and was *He* not “The Man of sorrows” while He tabernacled in this world? If He sorrowed and suffered so much in enduring the penalty of sin, will you complain because God is now making you groan daily under the felt workings

of the power of sin?

The fact of the matter is that very much of that which now passes for sanctification is nothing but a species of pharisaism, which causes its deluded votaries to thank God that they are not like other men; and sad it is to find many of the Lord's people adding to their miseries by grieving over how far *they* come behind the lofty attainments which they imagine these boasters have reached unto. A true and God-honouring "Christian testimony," my reader, does not consist in magnifying *self*, by telling of attainments and excellencies which, with apparent humility, are ascribed to Divine enabling. No indeed, very far from it. That "witness" which is most honouring to the Lord is one which acknowledges His amazing grace and which magnifies His infinite patience in continuing to bear with such an ungrateful, hard-hearted, and unresponsive wretch.

The great mistake made by most of the Lord's people is in hoping to discover *in themselves* that which is to be found in Christ alone. It is this, really, which causes them to become so envious and discontented when they behold the spurious holiness of some and the carnal attractiveness of others. There is such a thing as "the goodness" of the flesh, which is "as the flower of the field" (Isa. 40:6), yet as the very next verse tells us "the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it." But so easily are the simple deceived today they often mistake such "goodness" for godliness. Why, my reader, a man (or woman) in his personal makeup may be as meek and tractable as a lamb, he may be constitutionally as kind and grateful as a spaniel, and he may be temperamentally as cheerful as a lark; yet there is not a grain of *grace* in these natural qualities. On the other hand, the Christian, in his natural temperament, is likely to be as gloomy as an owl or as wild as a tiger; yet that does not disprove grace within him.

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the *foolish* things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the *weak* things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and *base* things of the world, and things which are *despised* hath God chosen, and things which are not (non-entities, *ciphers*) to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Cor. 1:26-29). If this passage

were *really* received at its face value, many of God's sin-afflicted and doubting children would find the key that unlocks much which is bewildering and grievous in their experience.

In His determination to magnify His sovereign grace God has selected many of *the very worst* of Adam's fallen race to be the everlasting monuments of His fathomless mercy—those whom Luther was wont to designate “The Devil's riff-raffs.” This is very evident too from “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the *poor*, and the *maimed*, and the *halt*, and the *blind*” (Luke 14:21)—the most *unlikely* ones as guests for a royal feast, the waifs and strays of society! There are thousands of moral, upright, amiable people who are never effectually called by the Spirit; whereas moral perverts, thieves, and awful-tempered ones are regenerated. When such are born again they still have vile inclinations, horrible dispositions, fiery tempers, which are very hard to control, and are subject to temptations that many of the unregenerate have no first-hand acquaintance with.

Hundreds more of God's children, whose animal spirits are much quieter by nature and whose temperament is more even and placid, yet are plagued by a spirit of pride and self-righteousness, which is just as hateful in the sight of God as moral degeneracy is to respectable worldlings. Now unless the thoughts of such are formed from the Scriptures, they are sure to entertain erroneous conceptions which will destroy their peace and fill them with doubts and fears, for upon a fuller discovery and clearer sight of the sea of corruption within, they will conclude they have never passed from death unto life. But to call into question our regeneration because we fail to obtain deliverance from the power of indwelling sin, is a great mistake; the new birth neither removes nor refines the flesh, but is the reception of a nature that feels sin to be an intolerable burden, and that yearns after holiness above everything else.

If I have really come to Christ as a leprous and bankrupt sinner, utterly despairing of self-help, and have put my trust in the sufficiency of His sacrifice, the Scripture affirms that God has made Christ to be *sanctification to me* (1 Cor. 1:30) and that I have received a spirit of holiness from Him. Now *faith* accepts this blessed fact notwithstanding an ocean of corruption and the continued raging of sin within. My peace of mind will, then, very

largely depend upon *faith's continued apprehension* of the perfect salvation which God has provided for His people in Christ, and which in Heaven they shall enjoy in their own persons. After the sinner has come to Christ savingly, the Holy Spirit gives him a much fuller discovery of his vileness, and makes him a hundredfold more conscious of how much there is in his heart that is opposed to God than ever he realized previously; and unless *faith* be daily in exercise, the activities of the flesh will slay his assurance—instead, they ought to drive him closer and closer to Christ.

O my Christian reader, what a difference it would make were you to steadily realize the truth that, every temptation you encounter, every defeat you suffer, every distressing experience you pass through, is a call and a challenge for the exercise of *faith*. You complain that you are still the subject of sin, that it cleaves to you as the flesh does to your bones, that it mixes with your duties and defiles every act you perform. You often feel that you are nothing but sin. When you attempt to walk with God, inward evil rises up and stops you. When you read His Word or endeavour to pray, unbelieving thoughts, carnal imaginations, worldly lusts, seek to possess your soul. You strive against them; but in vain. Instead of improvement, things grow worse. You beg of God for humility, and pride rises higher; you cry to Him for more patience, but apparently His ear is closed. Ah, you are now learning the painful truth that in your flesh there dwelleth “*no good thing.*”

Yes, but what is a poor soul to do in such a harrowing case? How is it possible for him to preserve *any* peace in his conscience? When the believer is so sorely attacked by sin and Satan, how is he to defend himself? Nothing but *faith* in the sure Word of God can keep him from sinking into abject despair. This is the very time for him to maintain his trust in the sufficiency of Christ's blood and the excellency of His imputed righteousness. His faith is now being tried by the fire that it may come forth as gold. It is by such experiences *the genuineness* of his faith is put to the proof. The believer is cast into the furnace that faith may conflict with unbelief, and though he will be hard put to it, yet victory is sure. The proof of his victory is faith's perseverance (amid a thousand waverings) unto the end. Remember, my reader, that the test of perseverance is not how we act in the face of success, but how we conduct ourselves under a

long series of defeats. “For a just man falleth seven times, and *riseth up again*” (Prov. 24:16).

Let it not be overlooked that we can no more take our place before God now as accepted worshippers without a perfect holiness, than we can enter Heaven without it; but that perfect holiness is to be found *in Christ* alone—the practical holiness of the Christian is, at present, but a very, very faint reflection of it. The more I feel my utter unworthiness and total unfitness to approach unto God and call upon Him in my *own* name, the more thankful I should be for the Mediator, and the unspeakable privilege of calling upon God in *Christ’s* name. And it is faith which counts upon the glorious fact that the thrice holy God *can* exercise His grace and goodness toward one so vile as I, and that, consistently with His majesty and justice—Christ has honoured the Law infinitely more than my sins dishonour it. One who feels that, as a Christian, he is “an utter failure,” and who is conscious of his continued abuse of God’s mercies, can only draw nigh to God with confidence as he *exercises* faith in the infinite merits of Christ.

As we stated at the beginning, our principal object in writing this chapter is, under God, to comfort His sin-distressed, doubt-harassed, Satan-tormented people. We are not unmindful that among the ranks of nominal Christians there are, on the one hand, many “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth” (2 Tim. 3:5, 7), who will regard as highly “dangerous” much of what we have said; while on the other hand, there are “ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness” (Jude 4), who are likely to abuse the same by adopting it as an intellectual opinion, from which they may derive peace in their defiance of God. Yet notwithstanding these likely eventualities, we shall not withhold a needful portion of the children’s bread.

Those who claim to have received the “second blessing” and be “entirely sanctified” in themselves, have never seen their hearts in the light of God. Those who boast of their sinless perfection are deceived by Satan, and “the truth is not in them” (1 John 1:8). Two things ever go together in the experience of a genuine believer: a growing discovery of the vileness of self, and a deepening appreciation of the preciousness of Christ. There is no solid ground

for a believer to rest upon till he sees that Christ has *fully* answered to God for him. In exact proportion to his *faith* will be his peace and joy. “Ye are *complete* in Him” (Col. 2:10): believers now possess a perfect holiness in the Covenant-Head, but at present they are far from being perfect in the grace which flows to them from Him. God honours and rewards that faith which is exercised upon our holiness in Christ: not necessarily by subduing sin or granting victory over it, but by enabling its possessor to continue cleaving to Christ as his only hope.

O my Christian reader, be content to be *nothing in yourself*, that *Christ* may be your all. O to truly say “He must increase, but I decrease” (John 3:30). Growth in grace is a being brought more and more off from self-complacency and self-dependency, to an entire reliance upon Christ and the free grace of God through Him. This temper is begun in the believer at regeneration, and like the tiny mustard seed it at last develops into a large tree. As the Christian grows in grace he finds himself to be increasingly full of wants, and further off than ever from being worthy to receive the supply of them. More and more the spirit of a beggar possesses him. As the Spirit grants more light, he has a growing realization of the beauty of holiness, of what Christ is entitled to from him; and there is a corresponding self-loathing and grief because he is so unholy in himself and fails so miserably to render unto Christ His due.

Fellowship with God and walking in the light as He is in the light, so far from filling the Christian with self-satisfaction, causes him to groan because of his darkness and filthiness—the clearer light now making manifest what before was unperceived. Nothing is more perilous to the soul than that we should be occupied with *our* achievements, victories, enjoyments. If Paul was in danger of being exalted by the abundance of the revelations vouchsafed him, can the danger be less of *our* being puffed up with thoughts of spiritual progress, spiritual conquests, spiritual excellencies. And yet the cherishing of *such* thoughts is the very thing which is now being increasingly encouraged by the religious quacks of the day. No matter what fellowship with Christ be enjoyed, what growth in grace be made, it will ever remain true that “we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened” (2 Cor. 5:4).

So far from what we have said in this chapter encouraging a real

Christian to entertain low views of sin, it is only in the vital and experimental knowledge of the same that a life of holiness begins. Nothing will cause a renewed soul to hate sin so much as a realization of God's *grace*; nothing will move him to mourn so genuinely over his sins as a sense of Christ's dying love. It is *that which breaks his heart*: the realization that there is so much in him that is opposed to Christ. But a life of holiness is a life of faith (the heart turning daily to Christ), and the fruits of faith are genuine repentance, true humility, praising God for His infinite patience and mercy, pantings after conformity to Christ, praying to be made more obedient, and continually confessing our disobedience. Daydreaming about complete deliverance from indwelling sin, seeking to persuade ourselves that the flesh is becoming less active, cannot counter-balance the humbling reality of our present state; but our corruptions should not quench a true Gospel hope.

Those who have read the previous chapters of this book cannot suppose that we have any design to lower the standard of the Christian life, or to speak peace to deluded souls who "profess that they know God, but in works deny Him" (Titus 1:16). Some indeed may charge us with encouraging light views of the sinfulness of sin, yet it must be remembered that the grand truth of Divine *grace* has ever appeared "dangerous" to mere human wisdom. A worldly moralist must think it subservient of the very foundations of virtue to proclaim to men, *without regard* to what they have done, and *without stipulation* as to what they are to do, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be *saved*." If I believed *that* says the unrenewed man, I would take my fill of sin, without fear or remorse. Ah, but a saving faith from God is always accomplished by a principle which hates sin and loves holiness; and the greatest grief of its possessor is, that its aspirations are so often thwarted. But those very thwartings are *the testings of faith*, and should daily drive us back to Christ for fresh cleansings. Lord, increase our faith.

The seventh of seven booklets.

