

The Doctrine of Sanctification



Part Six

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10. Its Rule

Having considered the distinct acts of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the sanctification of the Church, we must now carefully inquire as to the Rule by which all true holiness is determined, the Standard by which it is weighed and to which it must be conformed. This also is of deep importance, for if we mistake the line and plummet of holiness, then all our efforts after it will be wide of the mark. On this aspect of our subject there also prevails widespread ignorance and confusion today, so that we are obliged to proceed slowly and enter rather lengthily into it. If one class of our readers sorely needed—for the strengthening of their faith and the comfort of their hearts—a somewhat full setting forth of the perfect sanctification which believers have in Christ, another class of our readers certainly require—for the illumination of their minds and the searching of their conscience—a setting forth in detail of the Divinely-provided “Rule.”

In previous chapters we have shown that holiness is the antithesis of sin, and therefore as “sin is the transgression (a deviation from or violation of) the Law” (1 John 3:4), holiness must be a conformity to the Law. As “sin” is a general term to connote all that is evil, foul, and morally loathsome, so holiness is a general term to signify all that is good, pure, and morally virtuous or vicious, praiseworthy or blameworthy, as they express the desires, designs, and choices of the heart. As all sin is a species of self-love—self-will, self-pleasing, self-gratification—so all holiness consists of disinterested or unselfish love—to God and our neighbour: 1 Corinthians 13 supplies a full and beautiful delineation of the nature of holiness: substitute the term “holiness” for “love” all through

that chapter. As sin is the transgressing of the Law, so love is the fulfilling of the Law (Rom. 13:10).

The spirituality and religion of man in his original state consisted in a perfect conformity to the Divine Law, which was the law of his nature (for he was created in the image and likeness of God), with the addition of positive precepts. But when man lost his innocency and became guilty and depraved, he fell not only under the wrath of God, but also under the dominion of sin. Consequently, he now needs both a Redeemer, and a *Sanctifier*; and in the Gospel *both* are provided. Alas that so often today only a half Gospel, a mutilated Gospel, is being preached—whereby sinners are made “twofold more the children of Hell” than they were before they heard it! In the Gospel a way is revealed for our obtaining both pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace. The Gospel presents Christ not only as a Deliverer from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:10), but also as the Sanctifier of His Church (Eph. 5:26).

In His work of sanctifying the Church Christ *restores His people unto a conformity to the Law*. Before supplying proof of this statement, let us carefully observe *what it is* which the Law requires of us. “Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 22:37-40). Christ here summed up the ten commandments in these two, and *every* duty enjoined by the Law and inculcated by the Prophets is but a deduction or amplification of these two, in which *all* are radically contained. Here is, first, the duty required—love to God and our neighbour. Second, the ground or reason of this duty—because He is the Lord *our* God. Third, the measure of this duty—with all the heart.

The grand reason why God, the alone Governor of the world, ever made the Law, requiring us to love Him with all our hearts, was because it is, in its own nature, infinitely just and fitting.

That Law is an eternal and unalterable Rule of Righteousness, which cannot be abrogated or altered in the least iota, for it is an unchanging expression of God's immutable moral character. To suppose that He would ever repeal or even abate the Law—when the grounds and reasons of God's first making it remain as forcible as ever, when that which it requires is as just and meet as ever, and which it becomes Him as the moral Ruler of the universe to require as much as ever—casts the highest reproach upon all His glorious perfections. Such a horrible insinuation could have originated nowhere else than in the foul mind of the Fiend, the arch-enemy of God, and is to be rejected by us with the utmost abhorrence.

To imagine God repealing the moral Law, which is the rule of all holiness and the condemner of all sin, would be supposing Him to release His creatures from giving unto Him the full glory which is His due, and allowing them to hold back a part of it at least. It supposes Him releasing His creatures from that which is right and allowing them to do that which is wrong. Yea, such a vile supposition reflects upon God's very goodness, for so far from it being a boon and benefit to His creatures, the repealing or altering this Law, which is so perfectly suited to their highest happiness, would be one of the sorest calamities that could happen. If God had rather that heaven and earth should pass away than that the least jot or tittle of the Law, should fail (Matt. 5:18), how steadfastly should we resist every effort of Satan's to rob us of this Divine rule, weaken its authority over our hearts, or prejudice us against it.

In the light of what has been pointed out, how unspeakably horrible, that vile blasphemy, to imagine that the Son Himself should come from Heaven, become incarnate, and die the death of the cross, with the purpose of securing for His people a rescinding or abating of the Law, and obtain for them a lawless liberty. What! had He so little regard for *His Father's* interests and glory, for the honour of His Law, that He shed His precious blood so as to persuade the great Governor of the world to

slacken the reins of His government and obtain for His people an impious license? Perish the thought. Let all who love the Lord rise up in righteous indignation against such an atrocious slur upon His holy character, and loathe it as a Satanic slander—no matter by whom propagated. Any Spirit-taught reader must surely see that such a wicked idea as the affirming that Christ is the one who has made an end of the Law, is to make Him the friend of sin and the enemy of God!

Pause for a moment and weigh carefully the implications. How could God possibly vindicate the honour of His great name were He to either repeal or abate that law which requires love to Him with all our hearts? Would not this be clearly tantamount to saying that He had previously required more than was His due? Or, to put it in another form, that He does not now desire so much from His creatures as He formerly did? Or, to state the issue yet more baldly: should God now (since the cross) relinquish His *rights* and freely allow His creatures to despise Him and sin with impunity? Look at it another way: to what purpose should Christ die in order to secure an abatement from that Law? What need was there for it? or what good could it do? If the Law *really* demanded too much, then justice required God to make the abatement; in such case the death of Christ was needless. Or if the Law required what *was* right, then God could not in justice make any abatement, and so Christ died in vain!

But so far from Christ coming into this world with any such evil design, He expressly declared, “Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled, Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:17-19). This is the very thing He condemned the Pharisees for all through this chapter. They, in effect, taught

this very doctrine, that the Law was abated, that its exacting demands were relaxed. They affirmed that though the Law did forbid some external and gross acts of sin, yet it did not reprehend the first stirrings of corruption in the heart or lesser iniquities.

For instance, the Pharisees taught that, murder must not be committed, but there was no harm in being angry, speaking reproachfully, or harbouring a secret grudge in the heart (Matt. 5:21-26). That adultery must not be committed, yet there was no evil in having lascivious thoughts (verses 27-30). That we must not be guilty of perjury, yet there was no harm in petty oaths in common conversation (verses 33-37). That friends must not be hated, yet it was quite permissible to hate enemies (verses 43-47). These, and such like allowances, they taught were made in the Law, and therefore were not sinful. But such doctrine our Saviour condemned as erroneous and damning, insisting that the Law requires us to be as perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (verse 48), and declaring that if our righteousness exceed not that of the scribes and Pharisees we could not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:20). How far, then, was our holy Lord from abating God's Law, or lessening our obligations to perfect conformity to it!

The fact of the matter is (and here we will proceed to adduce some of the proofs for our statement at the beginning of the fourth paragraph), that Christ came into the world for the express purpose of giving a practical demonstration, in the most public manner, that God is worthy of all that love, honour, and obedience which the Law requires, and that sin is as great an evil as the punishment of the Law implies, and thereby declared God's righteousness and hatred of sin, to the end that God might be just and yet the Justifier of every sincere believer. This Christ did by obeying the precepts and suffering the death-penalty of the Law in the stead of His people. The great design of the incarnation, life and death of our blessed Lord was to maintain and magnify the Divine government, and secure the salvation of

His people in a way that placed supreme honour upon the Law.

The chief object before the beloved Son in taking upon Him the form of a servant was to *meet the demands* of the Law. His work here had a prime respect to the Law of God, so that sinners should be justified and sanctified without setting aside its requirements or without showing the least disregard to it. First. He was “made under the Law” (Gal. 4:4)—amazing place for the Lord of glory to take! Second, He declared, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy Law is *within My heart*” (Psa. 40:7, 8)—enshrined in His affections. Third, He flawlessly obeyed the commands of the Law in thought, and word, and deed: as a Child He was subject to His parents (Luke 2:51); as Man He honoured the sabbath (Luke 4:16), and refused to worship or serve any but the Lord His God (Luke 4:8). Fourth, when John demurred at baptizing Him, He answered “Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15)—what a proof of His *love* for the Lawgiver in submitting to His ordinance! what proof of His *love* for His people in taking His place alongside of them in that which spake of death!

The truth is, that it was God’s own infinite aversion to the repeal of the Law, as a thing utterly unfit and wrong, which was the very thing which made the death of Christ needful. If the Law might have been repealed, then sinners could have been saved without any more ado; but if it must not be repealed, then the demands of it must be answered by some other means, or every sinner would be eternally damned. It was because of this that Christ willingly interposed, and “magnified the Law and made it honourable” (Isa. 42:21), so securing the honour of God’s holiness and justice, so establishing His law and government, that a way has been opened for Him to pardon the very chief of sinners without compromising Himself to the slightest degree. “As many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse. . . Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us” (Gal. 3:10, 13).

Christ loved His *Father's* honour far too much to revoke His Law, or bring His people into a state of insubordination to His authority; and He loved *them* too well to turn them adrift from "the perfect Law of liberty." Read carefully the inspired record of His life upon earth, and you will not discover a single word falling from His lips which expresses the slightest disrespect for the Law. Instead we find that He bade His disciples do unto men whatsoever we would that they should do unto us *because* "this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 7:12). In like manner Christ's apostles urged the performance of moral duties by the authority of the Law: "Owe no man anything, but to love one another: *for* he that loveth another hath fulfilled the Law" (Rom. 13:8); "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, *for* this is right: honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise" (Eph. 6:1, 2). The apostle John exhorted believers to love one another as "an old commandment which ye had from the beginning" (1 John 2:7). And, as we shall yet show at length, the Law is the great means which the Spirit uses in sanctifying us.

Here, then, is a "threefold cord" which cannot be broken, a threefold consideration which "settles the matter" for all who submit to the authority of Holy Scripture. First, God the Father honoured the Law by refusing to rescind it in order that His people might be saved at less cost, declining to abate its demands even when His own blessed Son cried, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." God the Son honoured the Law by being made under it, by perfectly obeying its precepts, and by personally enduring its awful penalty. God the Spirit honours the Law by making quickened sinners see, feel, and own that it is "holy, and *just*, and good" (Rom. 7:12) even though it condemns them, and that, before ever He reveals the mercy of God through Jesus Christ unto them; so that the Law is magnified, sin is embittered, the sinner is humbled, and grace is glorified all at once!

There are some who will go with us this far, agreeing that

Christ came here to meet the demands of the Law, yet who insist that the Law being satisfied, believers are now entirely freed from its claims. But this is the most inconsistent, illogical, absurd position of all. Shall Christ go to so much pains to magnify the Law in order that it might now be dishonoured by us! Did He pour out His love to God on the Cross that we might be relieved from loving Him! It is true that “Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom. 10:4)—for “righteousness” (for our justification), yes; but not for our sanctification. Is it not written that “he that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked” (1 John 2:6), and did not Christ walk according to the rule of the Law? The great object in Christ’s coming here was to conform His people to the Law, and not to make them independent of it. Christ sends the Spirit to write the Law in their hearts (Heb. 8:10) and not to set at nought its holy and high demands.

The truth is that God’s sending His Son into the world to die for the redemption of His people, instead of freeing them from their obligations to keep the Law, binds them the more strongly to do so. This is so obvious that it ought not to require arguing. Reflect for a moment, Christian reader, upon God’s dealings with us. We had rebelled against the Lord, lost all esteem for Him, cast off His authority, and practically bid defiance to both His justice and His power. What wonder, then, had He immediately doomed our apostate world to the blackness of darkness forever? Instead, He sent forth His own dear Son, His only Begotten, as an Ambassador of peace, with a message of good news, even that of a free and full forgiveness of sins to all who threw down the weapons of their warfare against Him, and who took His easy yoke upon them.

But more: when God’s Son was despised and rejected of men, He did not recall Him to Heaven, but allowed Him to complete His mission of mercy, by laying down His life as a ransom for all who should believe on Him. And now He sends forth His

messengers to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth, inviting His enemies to cease their rebellion, acknowledge the Law by which they stand condemned to be holy, just and good, and to look to Him through Jesus Christ for pardon as a *free gift*, and to yield themselves to Him entirely, to love Him and delight themselves in Him forever. Is not this fathomless love, infinite mercy, amazing grace, which should melt our hearts and cause us to “present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” which is indeed our “reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1)?

O my Christian reader, that God out of His own mere good pleasure, according to His eternal purpose, should have stopped thee in thy mad career to Hell, made thee see and feel thy awful sin and guilt, own the sentence just by which thou wast condemned, and bring thee on thy knees to look for free grace through Jesus Christ for pardon, and through Him give up thyself to God forever. And that now He should receive thee to His favour, put thee among His children, become your Father and your God, by an everlasting covenant; undertake to teach and guide, nourish and strengthen, correct and comfort, protect and preserve; and while in this world supply all thy need and make all things work together for thy good; and finally bring thee into everlasting glory and blessedness. Does not this lay thee under infinitely deeper obligations to Love the Lord thy God with all thine heart? Does not *this* have the greatest tendency to animate thee unto obedience to His righteous Law? Does not *this* engage thee, does not His love constrain thee, to seek to please, honour and glorify Him?

We trust it has now been clearly proved to the satisfaction of every *Truth-loving* reader that the great object in Christ’s coming here was to magnify the Law and satisfy its righteous demands. In His fulfilling of the Law and by His enduring its penalty, the Lord Jesus laid the foundation for the conforming of His people to it. This is plainly taught us in, “For what the Law could not do (namely, justify and sanctify fallen sinners—neither remit the penalty, nor deliver from the power of sin) in

that it was weak through the flesh (unable to produce holiness in a fallen creature, as a master musician cannot produce harmony and melody from an instrument that is all out of tune) God sending His own Son in the likeness of sin's flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, *that* (in order that) the righteousness of the Law (its just requirements) might be *fulfilled in us*" (Rom. 8:3, 4).

This was the design of God in sending His Son here. "That He would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him (be in subjection to Him) without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74, 75). "Who 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). "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should *live unto righteousness*" (1 Pet. 2:24). These and similar passages, are so many different ways of saying that Christ "became obedient unto death" in order that His people might be recovered to obedience unto God, that they might be made personally holy, that they might be conformed to God's Law, both in heart and life. Nothing less than this would or could meet the requirements of the Divine government, satisfy God's own nature, or glorify the Redeemer by a triumphant issue of His costly work.

Nor should it surprise any to hear that nothing short of heart-conformity to the Law could satisfy the thrice Holy One. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth: for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh *on the heart*" (1 Sam. 16:7). We have read the Old Testament Scriptures in vain if we have failed to note what a prominent place this basic and searching truth occupies: any one who has access to a complete Hebrew-English concordance can see at a glance how many hundreds of times the term "heart" is used there. The great God could never be imposed upon or satisfied with mere external performances from His creatures. Alas, alas, that heart religion is rapidly

disappearing from the earth, to the eternal undoing of all who are strangers to it. God has never required less than the hearts of His creatures: “My son, give Me thine *heart*” (Prov. 23:26).

“Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy *soul* diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life” (Deut. 4:9). “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your *heart*, and be no more stiffnecked” (Deut. 10:16, and compare with Jer. 10:25, 26). “Keep thy *heart* with all *diligence*, for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). “Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and *rend your hearts* and not your garments; and turn unto the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful” (Joel 2:12, 13). The regenerate in Israel clearly *recognized* the high and holy demands which the Law of God made upon them: “Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts” (Psa. 51:6); and therefore did they pray, “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” (Psa. 139:23, 24).

Now as we pointed out in our last, the Lord Jesus affirmed that the full requirements of the Law from us are summed up in, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all thy heart*, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt. 22:37, 39). It was to restore His people to this that Christ lived and died: to recover them to God, to bring them back into subjection to *Him* (from which they fell in Adam), to recover them to the Lawgiver. Christ is the Mediator between God and men, and by Christ is the believing sinner brought *to God*. When He sends His ministers to preach the Gospel it is “to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God” (Acts 26:18). “All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to *Himself* by Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 5:18). To the saints Paul wrote “Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9). Of Christ it is

written “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come *unto God* by Him” (Heb. 7:25); and again, “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18)—to the God of the Old Testament, the Lawgiver!

Let us now consider *how* Christ recovers His people unto a conformity of the Law, *how* He restores them unto the Lawgiver. Since that which the Law requires is that we love the Lord our God with all our hearts, it is evident, in the first place, that we must have *a true knowledge of God Himself*: this is both requisite unto and implied in the having our affections set upon Him. If our apprehensions of God be wrong, if they agree not with the Scriptures, then it is obvious that we have but a false image of Him framed by our own fancy. By a true knowledge of God (John 17:3) we mean far more than a correct theoretical notion of His perfections: the demons have that, yet they have no *love for* Him. Before God can be loved there must be a spiritual knowledge of Him, a heartfelt realization of His personal loveliness, moral excellency, ineffable glory.

By nature none of us possess one particle of genuine love for God: so far from it, we *hated* Him, though we may not have realized the awful fact, and had we done so, would not have acknowledged it. “The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7): those are equivalents, convertible terms. Where there is enmity toward God, there is insubjection to His Law; contrariwise, where there is love for God, there is submission to His Law. The reason why there is no love for God in the unregenerate is because they have no real knowledge of Him: this is just as true of those in Christendom as it is of those in heathendom—to the highly privileged and well-instructed Jews Christ said, “Ye neither *know* Me, nor My Father” (John 8:19, 54). A miracle of grace has to take place in order to this: “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, *to give* the light of the knowledge of the

glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6); “We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, *that we may know Him that is true*” (1 John 5:20).

This true knowledge of God consists in our spiritually perceiving Him (in our measure) to be just such an One *as He actually is*. We see Him to be not only Love itself, the God of all grace and the Father of mercies, but also Supreme, infinitely exalted above all creatures; Sovereign, doing as He pleases, asking no one’s permission and giving no account of His actions; Immutable, with whom there is no variableness or shadow of turning; ineffably Holy, being of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on iniquity; inflexibly Just, so that He will by no means clear the guilty; Omniscient, so that no secret can be concealed from Him; Omnipotent, so that no creature can successfully resist Him; the Judge of all, who will banish from His presence into everlasting woe and torment every impenitent rebel. This is the character of the true God: do you love Him, my reader?

Second, a high esteem for God is both requisite unto and is implied in loving Him. This high esteem consists of exalted thoughts and a lofty valuation of Him from the sight and sense we have of His own intrinsic worthiness and excellency. To the unregenerate He says, “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself” (Psa. 50:21), for their concepts of God are mean, low, derogatory. But when the Spirit quickens us and shines upon our understandings we discern the beauty of the Lord, and admire and adore Him. We join with the celestial hosts in exclaiming, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts.” As we behold, as in a glass, His glory, we see how infinitely exalted He is above all creatures, and cry, “Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” yea, we confess “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee” (Psa. 73:25).

Now this high estimate of God not only disposes or inclines the heart to acquiesce, but to *exult* in His high prerogatives. From a consciousness of His own infinite excellency, His entire right thereto, and His absolute authority over all, occupying the throne of the universe, He presents Himself as the Most High God, supreme Lord, sovereign Governor of all worlds, and demands that all creatures shall be in a perfect subjection to Him; deeming those who refuse Him this as worthy of eternal damnation. He declares, “I am the Lord, and beside Me there is no God: My glory will I not give to another: thus and thus shall ye do, because I am the Lord.” As it would be the utmost wickedness for the highest angel in heaven to assume any of this honour to himself, yet it perfectly becomes the Almighty so to do: yea, so far above all is He, that God is worthy of and entitled to infinitely more honour and homage than all creatures together can possibly pay to Him.

When the eyes of our hearts are open to see something of God’s sovereign majesty, infinite dignity, supernal glory, and we begin to rightly esteem Him, then we perceive how thoroughly right and just it is that such an One *should* be held in the utmost reverence, and esteemed far above all others and exulted in: “Sing unto the Lord all the earth” (Psa. 96:1). A spiritual sight and sense of the supreme excellency and infinite glory of the Triune Jehovah will not only rejoice our hearts to know that He is King of kings, the Governor of all worlds, but we are also thankful and glad that we live under His government, and are *His* subjects and servants. We shall then perceive the grounds and reasons of His Law: how infinitely right and fit it is that we *should* love Him with all our hearts and obey Him in everything; how infinitely unfit and wrong the least sin is, and how just the threatened punishment. We shall then also perceive that all the nations of the earth are but as a drop in the bucket before *Him*, and that we ourselves are less than nothing in His sight.

Third, a *deep and lasting desire for God’s glory* is both

requisite unto and is implied in our loving Him. When we are acquainted with a person who appears very excellent in our eyes and we highly esteem him, then we heartily wish him well and are ready at all times to do whatever we can to promote his welfare. It is thus that love to God will make us feel and act toward His *honour* and interests in this world. When God is spiritually beheld in His infinite excellency, as the sovereign Governor of the whole world, and a sense of His infinite worthiness is alive in our hearts, a holy benevolence is enkindled, the spontaneous language of which is, “Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength: give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name” (Psa. 96:6, 7). “Be thou exalted O God, above the heavens; let Thy glory be above all the earth” (Psa. 57:5). As self-love naturally causes us to seek the promotion of our *own* interests and self-aggrandizement, so a true love to God moves us to put Him first and seek His glory.

This holy disposition expresses itself in earnest longings that God would glorify Himself and honour His great name by bringing more of our fellow-creatures into an entire subjection to Himself. The natural longing and language of true spiritual love is, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” When God is about to bring to pass great and glorious things to the magnifying of Himself, it causes great rejoicing: “Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad . . . He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth” (Psa. 96:11, 13). So too when God permits anything which, as it seems to us, tends to bring reproach and dishonour upon His cause, it occasions acute anguish and distress: as when the Lord threatened to destroy Israel for their stiffneckedness, Moses exclaimed “What will become of *Thy* great name? what will the *Egyptians* say!”

From this disinterested affection arises a free and genuine disposition to give ourselves entirely to the Lord forever, to

walk in His ways and keep all His commandments. For if we really desire that God may be glorified, *we* shall be disposed to *seek* His glory. A spiritual sight and sense of the infinite greatness, majesty, and excellency of the Lord of lords, makes it appear to us supremely fit that we should be wholly devoted to Him, and that it is utterly wrong for us to live to ourselves and make our own interests our last end. The same desire which makes the godly earnestly long to have God glorify Himself, strongly prompts them to live unto Him. If we love God with all our hearts, we shall serve Him with all our strength. If God be the highest in our esteem, then His honour and glory will be our chief concern. To love God so as to *serve Him* is what the Law requires; to love self so as to *serve it*, is rebellion against the Majesty of heaven.

Fourth, *delighting ourselves in God* is both requisite unto and is implied in our loving Him. If there be a heartfelt realization of God's personal loveliness and ineffable glory, then the whole soul must and will be attracted to Him. A spiritual sight and sense of the perfections of the Divine character draw out the heart in fervent adoration. When we "delight in" a fellow-creature, we find pleasure and satisfaction in his company and conversation; we long to see him when absent, rejoice in his presence, and the enjoyment of him makes us happy. So it is when a holy soul beholds God in the grandeur of His being, loves Him above all else, and is devoted to Him entirely—*now* he delights in Him supremely. His delight and complacency is as great as his esteem, arising from the same sense of God's moral excellency.

From this delight in God spring longings after a fuller acquaintance and closer communion with Him: "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is: to see Thy power and Thy glory . . . because Thy lovingkindness is better than life . . . my soul followeth hard after Thee" (Psa. 63:1-8). There is at times a holy rejoicing in

God which nothing can dim: “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; Yet I will *rejoice in the Lord*, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Hab. 3:17, 18). From this delight in God arises a holy disposition to renounce all others and to live wholly upon Him, finding our satisfaction in Him alone: “O Lord our God, other lords besides Thee have had dominion over us but by Thee only *will we* make mention of Thy name” (Isa. 26:13); “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Phil. 3 :8). As the proud man seeks contentment in creature honours, the worldling in riches, the Pharisee in his round of duties, so the true lover of God finds his contentment in God Himself.

That these four things are a true representation of the nature of that love which is required in the first and great commandment of the Law, upon which chiefly hang all the Law and the Prophets, is manifest, not only from the reason of things, but from this: that such a love lays a sure and firm foundation for all holy *obedience*. Only that love to God is of the right kind which effectually influences us to keep His commandments: “Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected” (1 John 2:3-5). But it is evident from the very nature of things that such a love as this *will* effectually influence us so to do. As self-love naturally moves us to set up self and its interests, so *this* love will move us to set up God and His interests. The only difference between the love of saints in heaven and of saints on earth is one of *degree*.

Having shown that the great object in Christ’s coming to earth was to magnify the Law (by obeying its precepts and suffering

its penalty), and that by so doing He laid a foundation for the recovering of His people to the Lawgiver, it now remains for us to consider more specifically *how* He conforms them to the Law. This, as we have just seen, must consist in His bringing them to lay down the weapons of their warfare against God, and by causing them to love God with all their heart. This He accomplishes by *the sending forth of His blessed Spirit to renew them*, for “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us” (Rom. 5:5). It is the special and supernatural work of the Spirit in the soul which distinguishes the regenerate from the unregenerate.

Previously we have shown at length that the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Spirit is an orderly and progressive one, conducting the soul step by step in the due method of the Gospel: quickening, illuminating, convicting, drawing to Christ, and cleansing. That order can be best perceived by us *inversely*, according as it is realized in our conscious experience, tracing it backward from effect to cause. (5) Without the Spirit bringing us to Christ there can be no cleansing from His blood. (4) Without the Spirit working in us evangelical repentance there can be no saving faith or coming to Christ. (3) Without Divine conviction of sin there can be no godly sorrow for it. (2) Without the Spirit’s special illumination there can be no sight or sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, wherein it consists—opposition to God, expressed in self-pleasing. (1) Without His quickening us we can neither see nor feel our dreadful state before God: spiritual life must be imparted before we are capable of discerning or being affected by Divine things.

It is by the Spirit we are brought from death unto life, given spiritual perception to realize our utter lack of conformity to the Divine Law, enabled to discern its spirituality and just requirements, brought to mourn over our fearful transgressions against it and to acknowledge the justice of its condemning sentence upon us. It is by the Spirit we receive a new nature which loves God and delights in His Law, which brings our

hearts into conformity to it. The *extent* of this conformity in the present life, and the harassing difficulty presented to the Christian by the realization that there is still so much in him which is *opposed* to the Law, must be left for consideration in our next chapter.

It has been pointed out in earlier chapters that our practical sanctification by the Spirit is but His continuing and completing of the work which He began in us at regeneration and conversion. Now saving conversion consists in our being delivered from our depravity and sinfulness to the moral image of God, or, which is the same thing, to a real conformity unto the moral Law. And a conformity to the moral Law (as we showed in our last chapter), consists in a *disposition* to love God supremely, live to Him ultimately, and delight in Him superlatively; and to love our neighbours as ourselves, with a practice agreeing thereto. Therefore a saving conversion consists in our being recovered from what we are by nature to such a disposition and practice.

In order to this blessed recovery of us to God, Christ, by His Spirit applies the law in power to the sinners understanding and heart, for “the Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul” (Psa. 19:7). That effectual application of the Law causes the sinner to see clearly and to feel acutely *how* he had lived—in utter defiance of it; *what* he is—a foul leper; what he *deserves*—eternal punishment; and how he is in the hands of a sovereign God, entirely at *His disposal* (see Rom. 9:18). This experience is unerringly described in, “For without (the Spirit’s application of) the Law, sin was dead (we had no perception or feeling of its heinousness). For I was alive without the Law once (deeming myself as good as anyone else, and able to win God’s approval by my religious performances); but when the commandment came (in power to my conscience), sin revived (became a fearful reality as I discovered the plague of my heart), and I died” (to my self-righteousness)—Romans 7:8, 9.

It is then, for the first time, that the soul perceives “the Law is

spiritual” (Rom. 7:14), that it requires not only outward works of piety, but holy thoughts and godly affections, from whence all good works must proceed, or else they are unacceptable to God. The Law is “exceeding broad” (Psa. 119:96), taking notice not only of our outward conduct but also of our inward state; “love” is its demand, and *that* is essentially a thing of the *heart*. As the Law requires love, and nothing but love (to God and our neighbour), so all sin consists in that which is contrary to what the Law requires, and therefore every exercise of the heart which is not agreeable to the Law, which is not prompted by holy love, is opposed to it and is *sinful*. Therefore did Christ plainly declare, “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt. 5:28).

God requires far more than a correct outward deportment: “Behold, Thou desirest truth in the *inward* parts” (Psa. 51:6). The Law takes cognizance of the thoughts and intents of the heart, saying, “thou shalt not *covet*,” which is an act of the soul rather than of the body. When a sinner is brought to realize what the high and holy demands of the Law really are, and how utterly he has failed to meet them, he begins to perceive something of the awfulness of his condition, for “by the Law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). Now it is that the awakened sinner realizes how justly the Law condemns and curses him as an inveterate and excuseless transgressor of it. Now it is that he has a lively sense in his own soul of the dreadfulfulness of eternal damnation. Now it is he discovers that he is lost, utterly and hopelessly lost so far as any self-help is concerned.

This it is which prepares him to see his dire need of Christ, for they that are whole (in their self-complacency and self-righteousness), betake not themselves to the great Physician. Thus the Law (in the hands of the Spirit) is the handmaid of the Gospel. Was not this the Divine order even at Sinai? The moral law was given first, and then the ceremonial law, with its priesthood and sacrifices: the one to convict of Israel’s need of a

Saviour, the other setting forth the Saviour under various types and figures! It is not until sin “abounds” in the stricken conscience of the Spirit-convicted transgressor, that grace will “much more abound” in the estimation and appreciation of his Spirit-opened heart. In exact proportion as we really perceive the justice, dignity, and excellency of the Law, will be our realization of the infinite evil of sin; and in exact proportion to our sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin will be our wonderment at the riches of Divine grace.

Then it is that “God, who commanded the light to shine out darkness, shines in our hearts, unto the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). As an experimental sense of the glory of God’s *righteousness* in the Law and of His *grace* in the Gospel is imparted to the soul by the Spirit, the sinner is moved to return home to God, through the Mediator, to venture his soul and its eternal concerns upon His free grace, and to give up himself to be *His* forever—to love Him supremely, live to Him entirely, and delight in Him superlatively. Hereby his heart begins to be habitually framed to love his neighbour as himself, with a disinterested impartiality; and thus an effectual foundation is laid in his heart for universal external obedience, for nothing but a spontaneous and *cheerful* obedience can be acceptable to God, an obedience which flows from love and gratitude, an obedience which is rendered without repining or grudging, as though it were a grievous burden to us.

It is *thus* that Christ, by His Spirit, conforms us to God’s Law. First, by enlightening our understandings, so that we perceive the spirituality of the Law, in its high and meet demands upon our hearts. Second, by bringing us to perceive the holiness and justice of its requirements. Third, by convicting us of our lifelong trampling of the Law beneath our feet. Fourth, by causing us to mourn over our wicked defiance of its authority. And fifth, by imparting to us a new nature or principle of holiness. Now it is that the Lord puts His laws into our minds and writes them in our hearts (Heb. 8:10). Thus, so far from the

grace of the Gospel “making void the Law,” it “*establishes*” it (Rom. 3:31) in our consciences and affections. A spiritual and universal obedience is what the Law demands.

The principal duties of love to God above all, and to our neighbours for His sake, are not only required by the sovereign will of God, but are in their own nature “holy, just and good” (Rom. 7:12), and therefore meet for us to perform. These are the two main roots from which issue all other spiritual fruits, and apart from them there can be no *holiness* of heart and life. And the powerful and effectual means by which this end is attained is the grand work of the Spirit in *sanctifying* us, for by *that* our hearts and lives are conformed to the Law. He must bestow upon us an inclination and disposition of heart *to* the duties of the Law, so as to fit and enable us unto the practice of them. For these duties are of such a nature as cannot possibly be performed while we have a disinclination from them.

As the Divine life is thus begun, so it is *carried* on in the soul much after the same order. The Spirit of God shows the believer, more and more, what a sinful, worthless, Hell-deserving wretch he is in himself, and so makes him increasingly sensible of his imperative need of free grace through Jesus Christ, to pardon and sanctify him. He has an ever-deepening sense of those two things all his days, and thereby his heart is kept humble, and Christ and free grace made increasingly precious. The Spirit of God shows the believer more and more the infinite glory and excellency of God, whereby he is influenced to love Him, live to Him, and delight in Him with all his heart; and thereby his heart is framed more and more to love his neighbour as himself. Thus “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth *more and more* unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18).

The last paragraph needs the following qualifications: the Spirit’s operations *after* conversion are attended with two differences, arising from two causes. First, the *different state* the subject is in. The believer, being no longer under the Law as a covenant, is not, by the Spirit, filled with those legal terrors

arising from the fears of Hell, as he formerly was (Rom. 8:15); rather is he now made increasingly sensible of his *corruptions*, of the sinfulness of sin, of his base ingratitude against such a gracious God; and hereby his heart is broken. Second, from *the different nature* of the subject wrought upon. The believer, no longer being under the full power of sin nor completely at enmity against God, does not resist the Spirit's operation as he once did, but has a genuine disposition to join with Him against sin in himself; saying, Lord, correct, chasten me, do with me as Thou wilt, only subdue my iniquities and conform me more and more unto Thy image.

A few words now upon *the relation of the Gospel*. First, the grace of the Gospel is *not* granted to counterbalance the rigor of the Law, or to render God's plan of government justifiable so as to sweeten the minds of His embittered enemies. The Law is "holy, just, and good" in itself, and was so before Christ became incarnate. God is not a tyrant, nor did His Son die a sacrifice to tyranny, to recover His injured people from the severity of a cruel Law. It is utterly impossible that the Son of God should die to answer the demands of an unrighteous Law. Second, the Law, as it is applied by the Spirit, prepares the heart for the Gospel: the one giving me a real knowledge of sin, the other revealing how I may obtain deliverance from its guilt and power. Third, *the Law*, and not the Gospel, is the rule of our sanctification: the one makes known what it is that God requires from me, the other supplies means and motives for complying therewith.

Fourth, the Law and the Gospel are not in opposition, but in apposition, the one being the handmaid of the other: they exist and work simultaneously and harmoniously in the experience of the believer. Fifth, the high and holy demands of the Law are *not* modified to the slightest degree by the Gospel: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5 48); "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Pet. 1:15) is *the standard* set before us. Sixth, thus the Christian's rule of

righteousness is the Law, but in the hands of the Mediator: “Being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21)—beautifully typed out in the Law being given to Israel at Sinai after their redemption from Egypt, through Moses *the typical Mediator* (Gal. 3:19). Seventh, herein we may see the seriousness of the God-dishonouring error of all those who repudiate the moral law as the Christian’s rule of life.

“The holy Law of God and the Gospel of His grace reflect the Divine glory, the one upon the other reciprocally, and both will shine forth with joint glory eternally in Heaven. The Law setting forth, in the brightest light, the beauty of holiness, and the vileness and fearful demerit of sin, will show the abounding grace that hath brought the children of wrath thither, with infinite lustre and glory; and Grace will do honour to the Law, by showing in sinners, formerly very vile and polluted, the purity and holiness of the Law fully exemplified in their perfect sanctification; and Christ, the Lamb that was slain, by whom the interests of the Law and of Grace have been happily reconciled and inseparably united, will be glorified in His saints and admired by them who believe” (James Fraser, “The Scriptural doctrine of Sanctification,” 1760).

It is, then, by the regenerating and sanctifying work of His Spirit that Christ brings His people to a conformity unto the Law and to a compliance with the Gospel. “But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18). The “glory of the Lord” is beheld by us, first, as it shines in the glass *of the Law*—the glory of His justice and holiness, the glory of His governmental majesty and authority, the glory of His goodness in framing such a Law, which requires that we love Him with all our hearts, and, for His sake, as *His* creatures, our neighbours as ourselves. The “glory of the Lord” is beheld by us, second, as it shines forth in the glass *of the Gospel*—the glory of His redeeming love, the glory of His amazing grace, the glory of His abounding mercy. And,

as renewed creatures, beholding this, we are “changed (the Greek word is the same as Christ being “transfigured”) *into the same image*, from glory to glory (progressively, from one degree of it to another) by the Spirit of the Lord:” that is, into a real conformity to the Law, and a real compliance with the Gospel.

The Gospel calls upon us to *repent*, but there can be no genuine repentance until we see and feel ourselves to be guilty transgressors of the Law, and until we are brought by the Spirit to realize that we are *wholly* to blame for not having lived in perfect conformity to it. Then it is we clearly realize that we thoroughly deserve to be damned, and that, notwithstanding all our doings and religious performances. Yea, then it is that we perceive that all our previous religious performances were done not from any love for God, or with any real concern for His glory, but formally and hypocritically, out of self-love, from fear of Hell, and with a mercenary hope of gaining Heaven thereby. Then it is that our mouth is stopped, all excuses and extenuations silenced, and the curse of the Law upon us is acknowledged as just. Then it is that seeing God to be so lovely and glorious a Being, we are stricken to the heart for our vile enmity against Him, and condemn ourselves as incorrigible wretches. *Such* are some of the elements of *genuine* repentance.

The Gospel calls upon us to *believe*, to receive upon Divine authority its amazing good news: that a grievously insulted God has designs of mercy upon His enemies; that the Governor of the world, whose Law has been so flagrantly, persistently, and awfully trampled upon by us, has, in His infinite wisdom, devised a way whereby we can be pardoned, without His holy Law being dishonoured or its righteous claims set aside; that such is His wondrous love for us that He gave His only begotten Son to be made under the Law, to personally and perfectly keep its precepts, and then endure its awful penalty and die beneath its fearful curse. But when a sinner has been awakened and quickened by the Holy Spirit, *such* a revelation of pure grace seems “too good to be true.” To him it appears that *his* case is

utterly hopeless, that he has transgressed beyond the reach of mercy, that he has committed the unpardonable sin. One in *this* state (and we sincerely pity the reader if he or she has never passed through it) can no more receive the Gospel into his heart than he can create a world. Only the Holy Spirit can bestow saving faith.

The Gospel calls upon us to *obey*, to surrender ourselves fully to the Lordship of Christ, to take His yoke upon us, to walk even as He walked. Now the yoke which Christ wore was unreserved submission to the will of God, and the rule by which He walked was being regulated in all things by the Divine Law. Therefore does Christ declare, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matt. 16:24), for He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. It is their refusal to comply with this demand of the Gospel which seals the doom of all who disregard its claims. As it is written, “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” (2 Thess. 1:7, 8); and again, “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God!” (1 Pet. 4:17). But such obedience as the Gospel requires can only be rendered by the sanctifying operations of the gracious Holy Spirit.

Marvellous indeed is the change which the poor sinner passes through under the regenerating and converting operations of the Spirit in his soul: he is made a new creature in Christ, and is brought into quite new circumstances. Perhaps the closest analogy to it may be found in the experience of orphan children, left without any guardian or guide, running wild and indulging themselves in all folly and riot; then being taken into the family of a wise and good man and adopted as his children. These lawless waifs are brought into new surroundings and influences: love’s care for them wins their hearts, new principles are

instilled into their minds, a new temper is theirs, and a new discipline regulates them; old things have passed away, all things have become new to them. So it is with the Christian: from being without God and hope in the world, from running to eternal ruin, they are delivered from the power of darkness and brought into the kingdom of Christ. A new nature has been communicated to them, the Spirit Himself indwells them, and a reconciled God now bestows upon them a Father's care, feeding, guiding, protecting them, and ultimately conducting them into everlasting glory.

The Unchanging moral Law of God, which requires us to love Him with all our hearts and our neighbours as ourselves, is the believer's rule of life, the standard of holiness to which his character and conduct must be conformed, the line and plummet by which his internal desires and thoughts as well as outward deeds are measured. And, as has been shown, we are conformed to that Law by the sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit. This He does by making us see and feel the heinousness of all sin, by delivering us from its reigning power, and by communicating to us an inclination and disposition of heart *unto* the requirements of the Law, so that we are thereby fitted and enabled to the practice of obedience. While enmity against God reigns within—as it does in every unregenerate soul—it is impossible for love to give that obedience which the Law demands.

We concluded our last chapter by showing something of the marvellous and radical change which a sinner passes through when he is truly converted to God. One who has really surrendered to the claims of God *approves* of His Law: "I love Thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. Therefore I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way" (Psa. 119:127, 128). And why do not the unregenerate do likewise? Because they have no love for a holy God. But believers, loving a holy God in Christ, must love the Law also, since in it the image of His holiness is displayed. The converted have a real inclination of heart *unto the whole* Law:

“The Law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver . . . *all* Thy commandments are faithful” (Psa. 119:72, 86). There is in the regenerate a fixed principle which lies the same way as the holy Law, bending away from what the Law forbids and toward what it enjoins.

The converted habitually *endeavour* to *conform* their outward conduct to the whole Law: “O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Thy commandments” (Psa. 19:5, 6). They desire a *fuller knowledge* of and obedience to the Law: “Teach me, Lord, the way of Thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy Law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments, for therein do I delight” (Psa. 119:33-35). Should any object that these quotations are all made from the *Old Testament* (waiving now the fact that such an objection is quite pointless, for regeneration and its effects, conversion and its fruits, are the same in *all* ages), we would point out that the apostle Paul described his own experience in identically the same terms: “I delight in the Law of God after the inward man . . . with the mind I myself serve the Law of God” (Rom. 7:22, 26). Thus Christ conforms His people to the Law by causing His Spirit to work in them an inclination toward it, a love for it, and an obedience to it.

But at this point a very real and serious difficulty is presented to the believer, for a genuine Christian has an *honest* heart, and detests lies and hypocrisy. That difficulty may be stated thus: If conversion consists in a real conformity to the holiness of God’s Law, with submission and obedience to its authority, accompanied by a sincere and constant purpose of heart, with habitual endeavour in actual practice, then I dare not regard myself as one who is genuinely converted, for I cannot honestly say that such is *my* experience; nay, I have to sorrowfully and shamefacedly lament that very much in my case is the exact reverse. So far from the reigning power of sin being broken in

me, I find my corruptions and lusts raging more fiercely than ever, while my heart is a cage of all unclean things.

The above language will accurately express the feelings of many a trembling heart. As the preceding chapters upon the Rule of our sanctification have been thoughtfully pondered, not a few, we doubt not, are seriously disturbed in their minds. On the one hand, they cannot gainsay what has been written, for they both see and feel that it is according to the Truth; but on the other hand, it *condemns* them, it makes them realize how far, far short they come of measuring up to such a standard; yea, it plainly appears to them that they do not in any sense or to any degree measure up to it at all. Conscious of so much in them that is opposed to the Law, conscious of their lack of conformity to it, both inwards and outwards, they bitterly bewail themselves, and cry, “O wretched man that I am” (Rom. 7:24).

Our first reply is, Thank God for such an honest confession, for it supplies clear evidence that you are truly converted. No hypocrite—except it be in the hour of death—ever cries “O wretched man that I am.” No unregenerate soul ever mourns over his lack of conformity to God’s Law! Such godly sorrow, dear Christian reader, will enable you to appropriate at least one verse of Scripture to your own case: “My tears have been my meat day and night” (Psa. 42:3), and those words proceeded not from the bitter remorse of a Judas, but were the utterance of one who had exclaimed “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God” (Psa. 42:1). Alas that so many today are ignorant of what constitutes the actual experience of a Christian: defeat as well as victory, grief as well as joy.

Whilst it be a fact that at regeneration a new nature is imparted to us by the Holy Spirit, a nature which is inclined toward and loves the Law, it is also a fact that the old nature is *not* removed, nor its opposition to and hatred of the Law changed. Whilst it be a fact that a supernatural principle of holiness is communicated to us by the Spirit, it is also a fact that

the principle and root of indwelling sin remains, being neither eradicated nor sublimated. The Christian has in him two opposing principles, which produce in him a state of constant warfare: “For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal. 5:17). That “cannot” looks *both* ways: because of the restraining presence of the “spirit,” the “flesh” is prevented from fully gratifying its evil desires; and because of the hindering presence of the “flesh,” the “spirit” is unable to fully realize its aspirations.

It is the presence of and the warfare between these two natures, the “flesh” and the “spirit,” the principles of sin and holiness, which explain the bewildering state and conflicting experience of the real Christian; and it is only as he traces more fully the teaching of Holy Scripture and carefully compares himself therewith, that light is cast upon what is so puzzling and staggering in his experience. Particularly it is in the seventh of Romans that we have the clearest and most complete description of the dual history of a converted soul. Therein we find the apostle Paul, as moved by the Spirit, portraying most vividly and intimately his own spiritual biography. There are few chapters in the New Testament which the Devil hates more than Romans 7, and strenuously and subtly does he strive to rob the Christian of its comforting and establishing message.

As we have shown above, the Christian approves of the Law, and owns it to be “holy and just and good” (Rom. 7:12). He does so, even though the Law *condemns* many things in him, yea condemns all in him which is unholy or ungodly. But more: the Christian *condemns himself*—“For that which I do, I *allow not*: for what I would, that do I not, but what I hate, that do I” (Rom. 7:15). So far from sin affording him satisfaction, it is the Christian’s greatest grief. The more he perceives the excellency of God and what He is entitled to from His creatures, and the more he realizes what a debtor he is to Divine grace and the loving obedience he ought to render out of gratitude, the more

acute is the Christian's sorrow for his sad and continual failures to be what he ought to be and to live as he should.

Our second answer to one who is deeply distressed over the raging of his lusts and fears that he has never been soundly converted, is this: the fact is, that the more holy a person is, and the more his heart is truly sanctified, the more clearly does he perceive his corruptions and the more painfully does he feel the plague of his heart; while he utters his complaints in strong expressions and with bitterness of soul. In God's light we see light! It is not that sin has greater control of us than formerly, but that we now have *eyes to see* its fearful workings, and our consciences are *more sensitive* to feel its guilt. An unregenerate person is like a sow wallowing in the mire: his impurities and iniquities afford him satisfaction, and give him little or no concern, no, not even the unholiness of his outward practice, much less the unholiness of his heart.

There is a notable difference between the sensibilities and expressions of the unconverted and the converted. An unregenerate person, who indulges freely in a course of evil practice, will nevertheless give a *favourable* account of himself: he will boast of his good-heartedness, his kindness, his generosity, his praiseworthy qualities and good deeds. On the other hand, persons truly holy, even when kept pure in their outward behaviour, yet conscious of their indwelling corruptions, will *condemn* themselves in unsparing language. The unholy fix their attention on anything good they can find in themselves, and this renders them easy in an evil course. But a truly sanctified person is ready to overlook his spiritual attainments and fruits, and fixes his attention, with painful consciousness, on those respects in which he *lacks* conformity to Christ.

A Christian will say, I thought I had tasted that the Lord is gracious and that my heart had undergone a happy change, with a powerful determination toward God and holiness. I concluded I had some sound evidence of true conversion and of a heart that

was really regenerated. Yet I knew the effect should be to grow in grace, to advance in holiness, and to be more delivered from sin. But alas, I find it quite otherwise. If there is grace in me, it is becoming weaker, and even though my outward conduct be regulated by the precepts of the Law, yet in my heart sin is becoming stronger and stronger—evil lusts, carnal affections, worldly desires, and disorderly passions, are daily stirring, often with great vehemence, defiling my spirit. Alas, after all, I fear my past experience was only a delusion, and the dread of the final outcome often strikes terror throughout my whole soul.

Dear friend, it is true that there is much in every Christian which affords great cause for self-judgment and deep humbling of ourselves before God; yet this is a very different matter from sin obtaining fuller dominion over us. Where sin gains power, there is always a corresponding *hardening* of heart and spiritual *insensibility*. Sin is served *willingly* by the wicked, and is sweet and pleasant to them. But if *you* sorrow over sin, sincerely and vigorously oppose it, condemn yourself for it, then old things have passed away and all is become new. “Christians may be assured that, a growing sensibility of conscience and heart sorrow for sin, is among the chief evidences of growth in grace and of good advances in holiness, that they are likely to have on this side of Heaven. For the more pure and holy the heart is, it will naturally have the more quick feeling of whatever sin remaineth in it” (James Fraser, 1760).

The *dual* experience of the Christian is plainly intimated in Paul’s statement: “So then with the mind I myself serve the Law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin” (Rom. 7:25). But some one may reply, the opening verse of the next chapter says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who *walk not after the flesh*, but after the spirit.” Ah, note the minute accuracy of Scripture: had it said, “who *act not according* to the flesh” we might well despair, and conclude for a certainty we were not Christians at all. But “walking” is a *deliberate* course, in which a man proceeds *freely*, without force

or struggle; it is the reverse of his being dragged or driven. But when the believer follows the dictates of the flesh, it is *against* the holy desires of his heart, and with reluctance to the new nature! But does not Romans 8:4 affirm, that Christ died in order that “the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us?” Again we answer, admire the marvellous accuracy of Scripture; it does *not* say, “the righteousness of the Law is *now* fulfilled in us.” It is not so, perfectly, in this life, but it will be so at our glorification.

Perhaps the reader is inclined to ask, But *why* does God suffer the sinful nature to remain in the Christian: He could easily remove it. Beware, my friend, of calling into question God’s infinite wisdom: He knows what is best, and *His* thoughts and ways are often the opposite of ours (Isa. 55:8). But let me ask, *Which* magnifies God’s *power* the more: to preserve in this wicked world one who still has within him a corrupt nature, or one that has been made as sinless as the holy angels? Can there be any doubt as to the answer! But why does not God *subdue* my lusts: Would it not be more for His glory if He did? Again, we say, Beware of measuring God with *your* mind. He knows which is most for His glory. But answer this question: If your lusts *were* greatly subdued and you sinned far less than you do, would you appreciate and adore His *grace* as you now do?

Our third answer to the deeply exercised soul who calls into question the genuineness of his conversion, is this: Honestly apply to yourself the following tests. First, in seasons of retirement from the noise and business of the world, or during the sacred hours of the Sabbath, or in your secret devotions, what are your thoughts, what is the real temper of your mind? Do you *know* God, commune with and delight in Him? Is His Word precious, is prayer a welcome exercise? Do you delight in God’s perfections and esteem Him for His absolute supremacy and sovereignty? Do you feel and lament your remaining blindness and ignorance; do you mourn over your lack of conformity to God’s Law and your natural contrariety to it, and

hate yourself for it? Do you watch and pray and fight against the corruptions of your heart? Not indeed as you *should*, but do you really and sincerely do so at all?

Second, what are the *grounds* of your love to God? from what motives are you influenced to love Him? Because you believe He loves you? or because He appears infinitely great and glorious in Himself? Are you glad that He *is* infinitely holy, that He knows and sees all things, that He possesses all power? Does it suit your heart that God governs the world, and requires that all creatures should bow in the dust before Him, that He alone may be exalted? Does it appear perfectly reasonable that you should love God with all your heart, and do you loathe and resist everything contrary to Him? Do you feel yourself to be wholly to blame for not being altogether such as the Law requires? Third, is there being formed within you a disposition to love your neighbour as yourself, so that you wish and seek only his good? and do you hate and mourn over any contrary spirit within you? Honest answers to these questions should enable you to ascertain your real spiritual state.

“The holiness which the Gospel requireth will *not* be maintained either in the hearts or lives of men *without a continual conflict*, warring, contending; and that with all diligence, watchfulness, and perseverance therein. It is our *warfare*, and the Scripture abounds in the discovery of the adversaries we have to conflict withal, their power and subtlety, as also in directions and encouragements unto their resistance. To suppose that Gospel obedience will be kept up in our hearts and lives without a continual management of a vigorous warfare against its enemies, is to deny the Scripture and the experience of all that believe and obey God in sincerity. Satan, sin, and the world, are continually assaulting of it, and seeking to ruin its interest in us. The Devil will not be resisted, which it is our duty to do (1 Pet. 5:8, 9) without a sharp contest; in the management whereof we are commanded to ‘take unto ourselves the whole armour of God’ (Eph. 6:12). Fleshly lusts do continually war

against our souls (1 Pet. 2:11), and if we maintain not a warfare unto the end against them, they will be our ruin. Nor will the power of the world be any otherwise avoided than by a victory over it (1 John 5:4), which will not be carried without contending.

“But I suppose it needs no great confirmation unto any who know what it is to serve and obey God in temptations, that the life of faith and race of holiness will *not* be persevered in *without a severe striving*, labouring, contending, with diligence and persistence; so that I shall take it as a principle (notionally at least) agreed upon by the generality of Christians. If we like not to be holy on *these* terms, we must let it alone, for on any other we shall never be so. If we faint in *this* course, if we give it over, if we think what we aim at herein, not to be worth the obtaining or persevering by such a severe contention all our days, we must be content to be without it. Nothing doth so promote the interest of Hell and destruction in the world, as a presumption that a lazy slothful performance of some duties and an abstinence from some sins, is that which God will accept of as our obedience. Crucifying of sin, mortifying our inordinate affections, contesting against the whole interest of the flesh, Satan, and the world, and that in *inward* actings of grace, and all instances of outward duties, and that *always* while we live in this world, are required of us hereunto” (John Owen, 1660).

From all that has been said it should be evident that the Christian needs to exercise the greatest possible care, *daily*, over the inward purity of his heart, earnestly opposing *the first motions* of every fleshly lust, inordinate affection, evil imagination, and unholy passion. The heart is the real seat of holiness. Heart-holiness is the chief part of our conformity to the spiritual Law of God, nor is any outward work considered as holy by Him if the heart be not right with Him—desiring and seeking after obedience to Him—for He sees and tries *the heart*. Holiness of heart is absolutely necessary to peace of mind and joy of soul, for only a cleansed heart can commune with the

thrice Holy God: then “keep thy heart *with all diligence*, for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23).

In the last paragraph we have said nothing which in anywise clashes with our remarks in the body of this article; rather have we emphasized once more another aspect of our subject, namely, the pressing duty which lies upon the Christian to bring his heart and life into fuller conformity with the Law. It would be a grievous sin on the part of the writer were he to lower the standard which God has set before us to the level of our present attainments. Vast indeed is the difference between what we *ought to be* and what we actually *are* in our character and conduct, and deep should be our sorrow over this. Nevertheless, if the root of the matter be in us, there will be a longing after, a praying for and a pressing forward unto increased personal and practical holiness.

N. B. This aspect of our theme has been purposely developed by us somewhat disproportionately. The supreme importance of it required fullness of detail. The prevailing ignorance called for a lengthy treatment of the subject. Unless we know *what* the Rule of Sanctification is, and seek to conform thereto, all our efforts after holiness will and must be wide of the mark. Nothing is more honouring to God, and nothing makes more for our own true happiness, than for His LAW to be revered, loved, and obeyed by us.

The sixth of seven booklets.

