

ONCE IN GRACE ALWAYS IN GRACE.

QUITE a large number of people rest themselves very securely upon the fallacy that if they have once been made the objects of divine grace, it means perpetual grace to all eternity, and insures their salvation despite anything they may afterward do or leave undone. This view is an outgrowth of false views of election and predestination,* and is hurtful to many. Like most of errors, this view is supported by misapplications of Scripture. For instance, the following: –

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." – John 15:16.

"My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." – John 10:29.

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" – Rom. 8:31.

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." – Rom. 8:33.

"What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." – Rom. 8:35,37.

"I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." – Rom. 8:38,39.

*MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. I., p.96.

Those who become thoroughly infatuated with the theory that God's grace, having once reached them, must abide with them through all eternity, entirely lose sight of the numerous texts which declare that all who would be permanent and everlasting objects of divine grace and love must abide in Christ, and as the Apostle says, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." They must so run as to obtain the prize of the high calling. We must lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us and run with patience the race set before us in the gospel, if we would win the grand consummation which will mean everlasting grace. It was grace that first contrived the way. It was grace which opened the door to this race-course and invited us to run for the prize. It is grace that holds before our eyes the inspiration of the prize. It is grace that provides strength and succor along the journey in every time of need. But the necessity still remains that we shall "abide," that we shall "run," that we shall not "faint," that we shall not be "overcharged" with the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches.

Mark how the Apostle Peter declares the matter: after telling respecting the cultivation of the fruits of the spirit, he says, "*If ye do* these things, ye shall *never fall*, but so an entrance shall be ministered abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." – 2 Pet. 1:11.

Mark how the Apostle Paul speaks of some and says that if they shall fall away after having tasted of divine grace it will be impossible to renew them again unto repentance. – Heb. 6:5,6. [R2286 : page 108]

Mark how the Apostle John declares, "There is a sin unto death: I do not say that ye shall pray for it." (1 John 5:16.) The sin unto death in the present time could be committed only by those who have tasted of divine grace, which ultimately shall reach every man and *test* every man; because "the grace of God hath been manifested *for all men*" – "to be testified in due time."

Mark our Lord's words on this subject. Speaking of those who had already received the grace of God and had already become members of his body, branches in the true Vine, he says, "I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman; every branch in me that *beareth not* fruit he taketh away." (John 15:1,2.) [R2287 : page 108] "He that *abideth* in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." (John 15:5.) "If any man *abide not* in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withered." (John 15:6.) "Ye are my friends *if ye do* whatsoever I command you." – John 15:14.

Here, then, we have two separate lines of texts, and the question before us properly is, not *which set* of texts will we adopt, for we are not at liberty to choose portions of Scripture which we may prefer, or to reject portions because out of harmony with our theories: rather our theories must be modified, altered, amended, so as to be in fullest harmony with every testimony of the inspired Word. How, then, can these two sets of texts be harmonized? We answer, they can be very simply and very beautifully harmonized by giving to each its proper place and weight: they balance themselves.

The statement that none could pluck us out of the heavenly Father's hand is equally precious and equally important with the one which declares that if we do not bear fruit, the heavenly husbandman will cut us off from membership in the Vine, not permit us to abide in the Vine; but as rejected ones we shall be deprived of all his grace, and hence wither. The point to be noticed is, that so long as our hearts are loyal to the Lord and his Word and his work, neither angels nor devils nor men nor any other creature or thing would be permitted to alienate us or separate us from him who loved us and bought us; but if, on the contrary, we do not earnestly desire to abide in the Vine, and to bear the fruit of the Vine, and to work the works of God, we are thus proving that our hearts are alienated from our Lord, and under such circumstances he would not only *permit* us to leave him, and his work, and his word, but, indeed, would *force* us to do so, – as expressed in

the statement, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away."

From this standpoint all is clear and harmonious: it was by the action of *our own wills*, after we had been favored with a knowledge of the truth, that we consecrated and were "accepted in the Beloved;" and similarly by the actions of *our own wills* we can at any time withdraw from the Lord. He would not compel our loyalty; he seeketh not the worship of slaves, or any compulsory work or service. "He seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23.) As by our own will or volition we placed our hands in the hand of the Lord for guidance, and submitted our wills to his will, to be dead to ourselves and alive to our God, so by the same will and volition we may withdraw ourselves and break our covenant and do despite to the spirit of grace, and bring upon ourselves all the loss which this would entail. But once having been accepted in the Beloved, nothing but our own wills could change this relationship: the ill will of others could not do it; and as for our heavenly Bridegroom, like the Father, he changes not – he is faithful. Nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus so long as our wills are actively enlisted with the Lord and his cause.

It is well, however, for us to note from another standpoint the operations of grace on behalf of those who have received it. For instance, suppose that our hearts are loyal to the Lord in the sense that we do not willingly and intentionally repudiate him, or his people, or his Word, or his work, but that nevertheless from some cause our hearts become overcharged with the cares of this life, or the ambitions of this life, or the strife for the riches of this life, and so our zeal and energy for the Lord and his cause, and our fruit-bearing, are largely hindered (not stopped, but lessened): will the Lord's grace let go of us in such an hour of temptation and trial and abandon us to the Evil One? Will he say to us lightly, You are now choosing the world; I now drop you entirely; go to your choice. Or will he have compassion upon us,

and remembering our frame, that we are dust, go after us as lost or wandering sheep?

The latter, we answer. Once in grace under divine protection and oversight, means *always in grace until we shall have done despite to the spirit of favor*, by sinning deliberately, repudiating either the Lord or his Word or its spirit. The Lord goes after his sheep frequently with the rod of chastisement, reproof, trial, difficulty, persecution, adversities, that he may correct them and bring them again to the narrow way; or as expressed in another place, the branch is pruned, many of the tendrils which were catching hold of all the various attractions of earthly life are pruned off, yet the branch remains a branch in the Vine: the very object of the pruning is to cause that branch to bear fruit more abundantly. "If ye be without chastisement," says the Apostle, "ye are not sons." Every son needs discipline to fit him and prepare him for the **[R2287 : page 109]** Father's service, that he may be pleasing, acceptable as a co-worker with God, not only in the present period but also in the world to come.

These chastisements will be kept up for a reasonable time, often are kept up for years. With some they result in a complete correction in righteousness, bringing the wandering sheep back, so instructed by its experiences that it will never wander more. In other cases this discipline and chastisement are repeated over and over and become a life-long lesson, and the recipients will fail to get the great prize of the high-calling, which is offered only to the overcomers.

A pen-picture of these, who having become the Lord's people by his grace, and who, still clinging to the Lord do not repudiate him, his Word and his people, yet are not overcomers of the world nor proper fruit-bearers, nor "fit for the Kingdom," is given us in Rev. 7:14,15: "These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Because the grace of God in Christ keeps hold of us so long as we do not repudiate him and his principles of righteousness, therefore that grace

will bring us through if we thus abide in him and in his Word, even if it should not bring us through as conquerors and more than conquerors, but must bring us through "great tribulation;" – palm bearers, tho not crown wearers.

In still other cases, however, the chastisements of the Lord merely sour and embitter the hearts which in such cases usually become the more proud, boastful, arrogant and resentful of the rod of correction. They become deaf to the Shepherd's voice, and run to the goats for sympathy and fellowship and counsel, and speedily lose the sheep nature. For such there seems to be no hope held out in the Lord's Word. We should do all that we can to help these, – "pulling them out of the fire" – but if we find it impossible to renew them again unto repentance we may surmise the reason to be that they have ceased to be "sheep," ceased to abide as branches in the Vine.

The proper attitude of heart for all who have received divine grace, is to be anxious to bring forth much fruit and thus to be more and more like our dear Redeemer, daily growing in likeness to him, as well as in knowledge of him. "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit," and such fruit as will remain.
