

## THE SIN UNTO DEATH

THE HUMAN MIND, with its various qualities, is very much like a legislative body. The vote, or decision, of that body is its will. So the vote or decision of our minds is the will. Once, when we knew no better, the vote was for sin. But when light came in we voted out the mind of the flesh and voted in the mind of Christ and agreed with ourselves, individually, that we would be New Creatures, dominated by that new mind. As we say that the old will died when the will of Christ came in, so we think it proper to say that the old will is being revived, raised from the dead, when we turn again to the "beggarly elements of the world."

What is the influence which revives the old will? It is minding the things of the flesh. If we live after the flesh we shall *die* as New Creatures. (Rom. 8:13.) We mind the will of the flesh when we permit the fleshly desires which we have given up, abrogated, gotten free from, to become again the ruling, or controlling influence of our minds. So, then, the new mind is dead and the old mind, or will, revived when we seek to do the will of the flesh rather than the will of the Lord – to mind earthly things instead of heavenly things, etc.

In the case of all those who have not passed "beyond the veil," the New Creature, which has been begotten of the Holy Spirit, has merely a fleshly body, or organism, in which to exercise itself. This body is not at first fully under the control of the new will. It is the duty of the new will both to rule the body and to bring it completely into subjection, even unto death. After gaining this victory, the New Creature receives the new body which God intended for him. By its opposition to sin the New Creature demonstrates its loyalty to God, its harmony with righteousness. God judges this New Creature, not according to the flesh, but according to the will. If the flesh should gain the victory over the new will and there should be a fall, it would not mean that the new will had ceased, but that it had not been on the alert.

In such a case the Lord might, in time, judge that the new will was not worthy of the highest honors, because it had failed to keep the body under and to sacrifice the fleshly interests. Or, if a wrong course were persisted in, the new will would become so weakened and the flesh so strong that there would be a gradual dying of the new will; and finally it would cease to exist. The Apostle John, in speaking of this matter, declares that these New Creatures are to so keep themselves that "that Wicked One touch them not." (I John 5:18.) Again, he says, "He who is begotten of God cannot sin," so long as the "seed" of God abides in that individual. In other words, so long as the mind, the will, is in complete subjection to the Divine will, he could not willingly, knowingly, intentionally, do that which is opposed to the Divine will, just as a person could not go north and south at the same time. [R4830 : page 170]

### **THROUGH LACK OF KNOWLEDGE, ETC., THE NEW NATURE MAY FOR A TIME LIE DORMANT**

We believe that there are instances in which persons, begotten of the Holy Spirit, have fallen away from zeal and obedience to the new will on account of lack of spiritual nourishment, lack of knowledge, lack of appreciation of things that strengthen the new nature and "Build it up in the most holy faith;" sometimes this is on account of ignorance, superstitions, which cause it to lose its zeal. This might happen when the new will was neither dead nor had given way entirely to the flesh, as might seem to be the case. Thus, while the new will was submitting itself and allowing the old will to have its way, the conduct might be blameworthy through lack of spiritual nourishment, as has been stated. Such persons have been regained through a better understanding of God's Word – by more knowledge; and have been known to turn out very noble Christians, even when the new mind for a time had been dormant. The Apostle warns us against this state saying, "I keep my body under"; "Forget not the assembling of yourselves together"; "Build one another up in the most holy faith." – I Cor. 9:27; Heb. 10:25; Jude 20.

When one, once begotten of the Holy Spirit, has willingly, intentionally adopted the old life of sin, then the "seed" with which he was begotten has perished and he is one mentioned by the Apostle as "twice dead, plucked up by the roots" (Jude 12), one under condemnation of the Second Death, for whom there would be no more sacrifice for sin. (Heb. 10:26.) When he first presented himself to God and was accepted through the merit of Christ, the new will was recognized of God and the person was begotten of the Holy Spirit. Old things had passed away; all things had become new. His *body* was not new; but he had a new *will*, a new *purpose*. When later he willingly left the service of the Lord and willingly, knowingly and intentionally became the servant of sin, his course would imply that his new will had died; that his old will had come to life and had gained the ascendancy.

### **THE NEW WILL CANNOT SIN WHILE IT REMAINS A NEW WILL**

Thus, by losing the Divine will and voluntarily accepting the will of the flesh again, the New Creature could commit the sin unto death. This, however, would not mean that the new will – which is always in harmony with God – could sin. If the will sins it has ceased to be a new will. If one never willingly turns from God, he would never commit the sin unto death. So the losing of this "seed" of the desire, the spirit, to do that which is pleasing to God, would be the step by which one passes from the *life* condition into the *death* condition. We have never as yet had the new life in its fullness. But we could lose the spirit, the new mind. If we lose the spirit, the mind, we lose *all*.

As there was a particular moment in which the Lord accepted us and we were begotten of the Holy Spirit, so, likewise, in the event of the Second Death, there must be a particular moment at which that would take place. Similarly, as we learn of the Lord's will we come gradually to the point of presenting our bodies living sacrifices. As this was a gradual work, so we should suppose that the retrogression, departure from the Lord, would be gradual. A sudden denial of the Lord

does not seem probable, neither would it be in line with the declaration of Scripture. The falling away is a process of retrogression, a departure from the living God and from our covenant with Him. This may be, first of all, a gradual departure from the arrangements by which we have made a covenant of sacrifice with the Lord. This might more and more increase until it becomes a defiance of God, a deliberate and wilful sin.

Stumbling is one thing; but wilful sin is another. The righteous man may stumble many times and yet recover himself. We that are spiritual may recover such a one, remembering ourselves, lest we also be tempted. (Gal. 6:1.) These stumblings are not, however, what is referred to as "the sin unto death." The Second Death condition, according to the Scriptures, we understand to imply the full giving over of the individual, his entire abandonment by the Lord and his going into utter, hopeless destruction, from which there will be no resurrection. But no one could come into this condition without deliberately and wilfully abandoning the Lord and without having received chastisements for the purpose of bringing him back and of restraining him from going into this condition.

### **AFTER BEGETTAL THE WORK OF TRANSFORMATION OF CHARACTER BEGINS**

Our begetting as New Creatures is at the time when we make a full consecration of our lives to the Lord and receive the merit of Christ as necessary to cover our blemishes. God's acceptance of this consecration is manifested by the impartation of the Holy Spirit, spoken of in the Scriptures as the begetting of the Holy Spirit. The work following this begetting is that of renewing the mind – "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Eph. 4:23.) The Apostle was not here speaking to the world, to sinners, or to any one except the brethren. Although the wills of these brethren are already renewed, yet it is another thing to bring every *thought* into harmony with the will of God in Christ. We should demonstrate to ourselves, first, what is the *good* will of God – what is his will as to our

following *righteousness*, etc.; then what is wholly *acceptable* to him; and, thirdly, what is his *perfect* will. (Rom. 12:1,2.) This gradual development is to proceed with those who are Spirit-begotten; and only those who are thus brought to the graduating point will be members of the Bride class, perfected in the First Resurrection – "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the First Resurrection; on such the Second Death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years." – Rev. 20:6. [R4831 : page 170]

We are not to understand that the conduct of one could send another into the Second Death, without his co-operation. No one could intervene to separate us from God. As the Apostle asks, "Who shall separate us from Christ?" (Rom. 8:35.) But whatever influence we have may be used for either the assistance or the injury of another. It is possible for us, not only to so live as to be helpful to others, but to so act as to injure others. Nothing in the example of another could give us eternal life; but the doings and example of one might be an assistance to another; and if we can be of assistance to each other, we can also be injurious.

### **COULD OUR EXAMPLE LEAD ANOTHER INTO THE SECOND DEATH?**

The question, then, comes up, in what way could a brother's example so stumble another that he could go into the Second death? We answer that if one should be influenced by another to violate conscience, one might thus be started on the downward course which would lead him from righteousness. It might be a small matter to begin with, but shortly it would lead off into sin. We should so guard our actions and our words that others [R4831 : page 171] would be made stronger and more tender in their consciences; we should try as far as possible to help them in the right way.

The Apostle speaks of our liberty becoming a stumbling-block to those that are weak – "For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is

weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols?" (I Cor. 8:10.) Thus we might, unintentionally, not only offset the good that we might do, but do harm when we are not aware of it. If the same tongue can curse men and praise God (James 3:9), how careful we should be to speak that only which will be helpful and uplifting and not destructive and injurious!

