

THE NEW CREATURE'S RESPONSIBILITY TO DIVINE LAW

PART II – EXPERIENCE OF THE NEW CREATURE EDUCATIONAL

THE NEW CREATURE is represented by the will, the mind; but there can be no New Creature without a body. God does not give the New Creature its own body in the present life, but permits it to practise on the old body. And according to the New Creature's faithfulness in the old body will be its reward – either as a member of the Little Flock or of the Great Company or – for unfaithfulness, its punishment, Second Death.

The New Creature owns the mortal body, possesses that body. The body is not the New Creature's body except in a possessive sense. If one were living in a cabin temporarily while his house is being built, and someone else were to ask, "Is that your house?" he would say, "No; I am staying here merely until my house is built." So the New Creature occupies the old body. That body is dead because it has been devoted to God in connection with the Sin-offering. – Col. 3:3; Gal. 2:20.

The Lord knoweth our frame. He knows that we are all fallen, imperfect – mentally, morally, physically. His message to the New Creature is, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48.) This means perfection of will, of intent, of endeavor. But God knows that we have this treasure of the new will in a mortal body, which is imperfect. Through Christ He has made provision that every imperfection of our flesh may be forgiven on condition that we come to Him for that forgiveness in the name of our Advocate, Jesus. This arrangement is to our advantage, for it leads us to watch the more carefully in respect to our trespasses and to note

the more carefully that they cannot be forgiven except through the merit of our Redeemer.

THREE BLESSINGS RESULTING FROM FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE

The experience of the New Creature in coming to the Throne of Grace for help is, therefore, educational. It will strive the more diligently, the more earnestly, the more perseveringly, to live according to the will of God, not only in mind, but also in body. The result of faithfully **[R5102 : page 291]** following this course of daily scrutinizing our thoughts and words and doings must be the strengthening, the fortifying of the New Creature against the wiles of the world, the flesh and the Adversary.

Additionally, this course must mean not only a higher and nobler earthly life, even though still imperfect, but a great sympathy for others of the human family and for the Church, who similarly strive against the weaknesses of heredity in the flesh, and also a general enlightenment of the heart sympathetically toward the members of the human family – born in sin, "shapen in iniquity." It must mean thus much of preparation for the future Kingdom – for helping poor humanity up out of the degradation of sin and death.

CAUSES OF SPIRITUAL DECLINE

Although the New Creature cannot consent to sin, cannot sin wilfully, cannot sin with deliberation, and still be a holy mind, it can become slack, careless, inattentive, overcharged with the cares of this life – not sufficiently loyal and alert to fight against the Great Enemy. In this condition it may become more or less stupefied, while the will of the flesh may gain the ascendancy in some particular. The flesh has its cravings, its demands; and it has a plausible way of urging what it thinks to be its rights and privileges. Sometimes the flesh is very persistent along these lines.

If the New Creature become overcharged, become weak through a *failure to eat* the strengthening food which the Father has provided, it may be almost helpless for a time, until at last it becomes non-resistant to sin. To whatever extent the New Creature is to blame for this condition, it will receive stripes, not merely as a matter of justice, but also as a matter of correction, for if it were not corrected it might go on to greater carelessness as to its responsibilities.

We all need to be disciplined in order that we may stand firm for the principles of righteousness. To whatever extent the New Creature fails to resist the flesh, there will be stripes, punishment of some kind, retribution. But even when those punishments come, there will be also manifestations of the Lord's favor.

The experiences of the Prophet David were not altogether like those of the saints, for he was on a different plane from us. But we may apply the general principles [R5102 : page 292] deduced from his experiences. David sinned and the Lord allowed certain chastisements to come upon him. David was contrite and asked forgiveness for those sins. Although he had the light of the Lord's favor, yet the Lord declared that he must be punished for doing those things which he knew were wrong, even though all the while his heart was set on the Lord. The after experiences of the man proved his contrition. He committed sin; he repented; he was forgiven; he was restored to the Lord's favor. Yet in due time he received chastisements for those very sins; and when he received those chastisements, he recognized that they were a just recompense of punishment upon him.

STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF WILFUL SIN

Inattention or carelessness on the part of the New Creature does not necessarily mean the Second Death, unless that carelessness went to the extent of intelligent choice of sin – *wilful* sin. The wilful sinner cuts himself off entirely from Divine favor and lapses into the condition of condemnation to death, out of which he had been lifted. Of this the Apostle speaks, saying, "We are not of those who draw

back unto perdition," destruction – Second Death. Furthermore, it should be noted that none ever steps suddenly from loyalty to disloyalty to God and to righteousness.

Wilful sin coming upon the New Creature destroys him so gradually that he seems not to be conscious of its development at the time. First, the wish, the desire, the pride or the ambition develops; he is not submissive to the Divine will. Later on, an attempt is made to acquire the gratification of the pride of life, the lust of the eye and of the flesh and a corresponding neglect of the heavenly things – of the hope set before us in the Scriptures and of the Covenant of sacrifice which we have made.

A later development of this wrong spirit by and by finds opportunity, under one pretext or another, to put the person into opposition to the Lord, to the truth and to the brethren. He thus gradually passes from being a soldier under the banner of Christ to becoming a co-laborer with the Adversary in opposing the things of God.

As the Apostle says, "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" (James 3:5.) Behold what a great destruction of all the work of grace may be accomplished speedily by a little pride or fond desire or self-gratification! – not that the little beginnings mean the Second Death, but that they will surely lead on toward it unless the individual be recovered. St. James emphasized this thought, saying, "When lust [desire] has conceived, it bringeth forth Sin; and Sin when it is finished [completed] bringeth forth Death." – James 1:15.

THREE METHODS OF ADMONITION USED BY THE LORD

Meantime, while one of the Lord's sheep would be thus straying, would the Great Shepherd be inattentive and allow him to wander without warning? *Surely not!* Through some Divine providence, such as sickness or the coming to the attention of some message from God's

Word, directly or indirectly, or through faithful testimony and witness of the brethren, the Lord will speak to all such straying sheep, pointing out to them the danger of the path they are taking. If they heed well, they shall be recovered fully, and ultimately attain to the highest state as overcomers. But the Lord will not *coerce*.

In the beginning the Lord appealed to our *wills*, and He continues to do so. The Lord will not use force in the selection of the present time; for He seeketh only such to serve Him as worship Him in spirit and in truth. The same *will* which He accepted and which brought us such great blessing can reject God's favors – can receive the grace of God in vain and gradually draw back out of fellowship with the Lord and with the spirit of the Covenant and toward the Second Death.

If the admonitions of the Lord's providences, including the counsel of the brethren, etc., fail, and if there be a measure of ignorance connected with the perverse course, the Lord may give severe chastisements to awaken thoroughly such a person, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, through those chastisements. (I Cor. 5:5.) Many such, the Scriptures assure us, will come up out of great tribulation, washing their robes and making them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. 7:14.) But while they may attain to a good position on the spirit plane, they have lost the great, pre-eminent prize of joint-heirship with the Lord in the Messianic Kingdom, unto which they were called.

ALLOWANCE MADE FOR IMMATURITY OF CHARACTER

It seems to be a correct principle, however, that a person begotten of the Holy Spirit, who had not yet developed strength of character sufficient to qualify him to be a child of God on the heavenly plane, would not have judgment passed upon him until he had enjoyed the opportunity of coming to a knowledge of Present Truth and of demonstrating his loyalty.

This thought seems to be borne out by the Apostle in Hebrews 6:4-6. There, where he says in substance, If those who have tasted of the good Word of God and been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, shall fall away, it will be impossible to renew them, he implies that those who have not had this opportunity for development are not responsible to such an extent and would not be liable to the Second Death. If a babe had done something worthy of stripes, he would be treated according to his infancy. The Apostle Peter says, "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may *grow* thereby." – I Peter 2:2.

These texts seem to suggest a process of development. If one made his consecration today, he would not be counted worthy of the Kingdom today; for only through trials and tribulations shall he become worthy. A certain period of probation would be granted to him, an opportunity to make good his covenant of sacrifice. Then if he failed to make good that covenant of sacrifice, he would be responsible in one of the two ways, as we have seen; either he would receive chastisements of the Lord which would bring him to a realization of his privileges, or if wholly unworthy of God, he would go into the Second Death. Anyone becoming a Christian will have a long enough time in which to make his calling and election sure, if he so run in the race as to obtain.

SELF-IMPOSED DISCIPLINE RECOMMENDED

Sometimes God's people, appreciating their own weaknesses, the blemishes of their flesh, properly feel themselves unworthy of the glorious things which God has in reservation for the Elect. It is their duty to do the best in their power, but not to attempt to judge, to decide their own cases. There is One that judgeth them, even God. Whatever the sin, whatever the circumstances, it should be taken promptly to the Throne of Heavenly Grace in the name of Jesus, to obtain the mercy of God provided thus, and to find increasing help for future times of need.

We must not become discouraged and lose faith and hope, even though obliged to come to that Throne, repentantly, seventy times seven times. To whatever extent, however, the sin be repeated as the result of earthly [R5103 : page 293] weakness of heredity, to that extent there is forgiveness, in the Divine arrangement. But to whatever extent the sin contained a measure of wilfulness, or to whatever extent we failed to use our knowledge and ability to resist it, to that extent the New Creature will be held responsible, and will have certain chastisements imposed. Happy are those people who seek to punish themselves by some discipline, such as fasting. The Apostle says, "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" [chastened of the Lord]. – I Cor. 11:31,32.

We should all keep in memory, however, the fact that God expects of us a demonstration of loyalty to Him and to the principles of Truth and Righteousness – in an overcoming degree. It will not do simply to stand still from week to week and from year to year and to say, "These are my weaknesses and I take them to Jesus." Overcoming is the gaining of some victory by the New Creature over besetting weaknesses as well as over trespasses. Only such as *strive* will be *crowned* and acknowledged of the Lord as overcomers. And their overcoming will be, not of themselves, but of God's grace and the assistance of the Great Advocate. – I John 5:4.

THE NEW CREATURE'S RIGHT TO LIFE

From the time that we become New Creatures in Christ, a right to life on the spirit plane is given us, just as a right to life on the human plane was granted to Adam when he was created. But as he lost that right to life by disobedience to God, so we, as New Creatures, if we sin wilfully, would forfeit that right to live, and we could not be redeemed again, for "Christ dieth no more." (Rom. 6:9.) Those who really accept God's proposition as laid down, heartily consecrate themselves, have passed from death to life, and the Apostle says that these are *alive*.

That right to life, according to the Divine record, is a very different matter from anything we had before. Formerly, we had a right to *die*. Since we became New Creatures we have a right to live, unless we take some adverse step. Therefore, it is a very different thing with the Church from what it is with mankind. The world will gain the right to life under the opportunities offered to them during the thousand years of Christ's reign. We have that right to live now. Our "life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. 3:3.) Men can kill the body, but no man can take from us the right to live. Our eternal life has already begun in a sense. We are on trial now, and if we pass the trial successfully, we shall forever possess that right to life.

Not so with the world. There is no provision by which the world has a right to life. "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." (Rev. 20:5.) Therefore the Church gets eternal life at least a thousand years before the world will be given the right to everlasting life; it is ours now and forever if we continue faithful unto death. Mankind will all be awakened from the tomb, but we do not know what proportion of them will get everlasting life. We hope that many will obtain it. But there is a difference between *having* and *hoping*. We have a right to life because we are in Christ; because the Father so decreed for us.

DEATH OF HUMAN WILL AT CONSECRATION

At the time of our consecration the old creature dies in the sense that the old will dies. The old will, in the Scriptures termed the "old man" (Col. 3:9,10), is reckoned dead at the time of our consecration. But this is not *real* death; and hence there is a continual mortifying until the time of actual death. The Apostle says, "I die daily." (I Cor. 15:31.) His old will was given up. The body of flesh which had belonged to the old creature and which had been reckoned dead since consecration, was not really dead. He was not only reckoned alive as a New Creature, but the flesh body was reckoned to be his body until such time as in God's providence, by the power of the First

Resurrection, he should be clothed upon with his new body. Hence his flesh is the flesh of the New Creature, and his body that belonging to the New Creature.

The New Creature is responsible for the flesh body, and the weaknesses of the old creature are charged up against the New Creature. There is an arrangement, however, by which the New Creature can have the appropriation of the merit of Christ for the weaknesses of heredity. So St. Paul exhorts the Church to come boldly to the Throne of Grace, there to obtain mercy for the shortcomings of daily life. – Heb. 4:16.

DEATH OF THE HUMAN BODY

The New Creature never dies, unless it forfeits its right to life and goes into the Second Death. What dies is the *human body*, which was consecrated to death, but which has been loaned to the New Creature to practise on, as it were. God gives the New Creatures their new bodies in the First Resurrection.

Speaking of the First Resurrection, St. John says, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." (I John 3:2.) This statement is satisfactory to the Lord's people, for though they might without impropriety be curious to know full particulars respecting their spirit bodies – shape, size, elements, etc. – they can well imagine that the new conditions will be so different from present conditions as to be beyond the power of the human brain to comprehend, no matter how particular the description given. But the whole question is settled with the assurance that the Church shall be like her Lord, and see Him – not as He was in the days of His humiliation, the Man Christ Jesus, nor as He appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, robed in flesh in various forms, with various garments – but see Him "as He is," behold His glory, and be like Him, sharing His glory.

To be concluded in our next issue.

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THE TWO WORDS

PROVERBS 18:8,21.

"One day a harsh word rashly said,
Upon an evil journey sped,
And, like a sharp and cruel dart,
It pierced a fond and loving heart;
It turned a friend into a foe,
And everywhere brought pain and woe.

"A kind word followed it one day,
Flew swiftly on its blessed way;
It healed the wound, it soothed the pain,
And friends of old were friends again;
It made the hate and anger cease,
And everywhere brought joy and peace.

"And yet the harsh word left a trace
The kind word could not quite efface;
And though the heart its love regained,
It bore a scar that long remained.
Friends could forgive, but not forget,
Or lose the sense of keen regret.

"Oh! if we could but learn to know
How swift and sure our words can go,
How would we weigh with utmost care
Each thought before it sought the air,
And only speak the words that move

Like white-winged messengers of love!"

PSALM 19:14.

