

## **LIVING AFTER THE FLESH**

**"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die."  
– Romans 8:13.**

THESE words, addressed by the Apostle to the consecrated Christians living at Rome, are equally applicable to Christian people living all down through this Age. The terms all during the Gospel Dispensation are the same. They have not changed, and will not change. The call is to become soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ, under the banner of the cross, and to have the trials and the difficulties in the present life and the reward that will follow. The agreement of our consecration is that we will make a full surrender of ourselves as human beings, that we will give up our earthly rights and privileges, as we have control of these. It includes still more than this. It includes the giving up of our hopes as members of the world of mankind.

God's provision for the world is that they shall be recovered from sin, and brought back to the full human perfection lost by Adam's disobedience. We who accept the offer of this Gospel Dispensation surrender all those Restitution privileges which Jesus' death would have given us. We surrender these for the hope which the Church is granted, not the hope of human perfection, but the hope of being accounted worthy to attain, with the Master, to glory, honor and immortality – the Divine nature.

These are merely hopes, merely prospects. We do not see the glorious things themselves. We merely have the Lord's Word respecting them. We give up the earthly hope for the Heavenly hope. These begotten of the Holy Spirit are called New Creatures. And these New Creatures are to live, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. That is to say, they are not to obey the dictates of the flesh, but those of the Holy Spirit of God.

## MEANS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

This Holy Spirit that they are to obey they receive in several ways. Primarily, they receive it in begetting, and it is an influence directly from God. This spiritual creature, thus begun, is to grow in grace, knowledge and love – to grow up into Christ and into full development in the Body of Christ. And this New Creature is to feed on the Word of God. It is not only to use the Word of God, but also to go to the Father in prayer and note His providences. It may even learn some things by its failures and by the disciplines incidental to those failures.

These New Creatures are thus to demonstrate their loyalty of heart, their confidence in God, in all these matters. And if they do this to the end of the journey, eventually they will reign in the glorious Kingdom of Messiah. And those who will receive the reward of joint-heirship with the Lord, will be those who have proven their loyalty even unto death.

The great Captain of our Salvation was the first One who was given this opportunity. He was found faithful. He laid down His life in obedience to the Father's will. His experiences were the cup which the Father poured for Him. At all times the language of his inmost being was, "I delight to do Thy will, O Lord! Thy Law is written in My heart." This is the course that must be followed by all who would reach the same goal as Christ, and be a joint-heir with Him in His Kingdom.

A joint-heir is a co-inheritor, one who shares an inheritance with another. The Father purposed from the very beginning that He would have, not only the Head – Christ – but also the Church, His Body. "He who foreknew Jesus foreknew us also by Jesus." The Apostle says that, in bringing many sons to glory, it behooved God **[R5270 : page 201]** to make the Captain of our Salvation perfect through sufferings – through the things that He suffered. And those sons who would be associated with Him in that glorious

Kingdom must suffer also in the things through which they pass.  
– Heb. 2:10; 2 Tim. 2:11,12.

Amongst the trials and difficulties through which the followers of our Lord must pass, are the besetments of Sin and Satan, the allurements of the world, and the weaknesses of the human nature. Some of these the Master underwent – but He was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. We are not able to overcome completely, and so we have the imputation of the merit of Christ to cover our unintentional blemishes. Jesus had no such allowance made for Him. We who are imperfect and blemished have this arrangement made for us in order that we may have an opportunity of reaching this goal. Every imperfection that we have is **[R5270 : page 202]** covered by the merit of Christ. Thus we are well started on this race-course.

We are not only to resist sin, but we are to lay down our rights. We are to count the spoiling of our goods all joy, knowing that our trials, rightly received, are working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. If any would be intimidated by the loss of name or fame or what-not, he would not be of the right spirit, and would not be classed as an overcomer.

## **TWO CLASSES OF THE UNFAITHFUL**

We have been describing the faithful ones – those who walk in the Redeemer's footsteps to the end. But there are two other classes. The one class returns to sin again – as St. Peter says, "like a sow to her wallowing in the mire." (2 Peter 2:22.) Such have no provision made for them. They have gone clear back on their Covenant, and the Apostle points out that there is nothing left for these but "the blackness of darkness."

Then there is another class, who would not think of going back to live in this manner, like the hog, to wallow in sin. But they are held back by the fear of death, and are all their lifetime subject to

bondage. (Hebrews 2:15.) They fear that *sacrificial* death. They will not exercise sufficient faith and courage. They will not be of the favored class, because they have not a sufficiency of the Master's character. And yet they are not bad. They have a loyalty of heart. If this were not so, *they* would go back to the wallowing in the mire, like the other class described.

The Lord sees that these love Him, and that under favorable conditions they would be very glad to live for Him. But they are living in an adverse time. And the Lord in great compassion does not suffer them to lose all, but provides for them a way of escape. So He allows trials to come upon them – it is *God's providence* that does this. As the Apostle says, He delivers such unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus. If such profit by their experiences, they might get into the Great Company class and be of the spiritual nature. But they will not be counted worthy to be sharers in the highest blessing, the Divine nature.

A place in either of these two classes is not, as a rule, reached instantly. Any one begotten of the Holy Spirit at one moment could not the next moment die the Second Death. There is too much of a difference between spirit-begetting and the condition of wilful sin for us to imagine that they could follow closely the one upon the other. They are opposites. It would be impossible to pass from the one condition to the other instantly. So this class prospers for a time, but as the trials, difficulties and persecutions incident to the Christian life come in they gradually fall away.

## **CAUSES OF FAILURE**

In these classes there is a failure to live up to the standard. In both cases there is a tendency to take a medium course – neither to *live close* to the Lord and His requirements nor to *drift away* from Him. As the Apostle says, if we continue to live after the flesh, if we take that course of life which would be pleasing to our old natures,

we may know that it is the broad road that leads to destruction. And so if we live after the flesh and continue so to live, the end will be death.

We learn from the Scriptures that the Lord would not allow any who really love Him, who are loyal of heart and have merely made a misstep, to go into the Second Death. The Apostle John says, "If any man [in Christ] sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." (I John 2:1.) Let him come to the Throne of Grace, that he may obtain mercy and help in time of need. But any misstep would have a tendency to lead us farther and farther away from the goal. We are always to press on. The death of those who live after the flesh will be the Second Death; for these New Creatures have already passed from the first death. The Apostle says that we have passed from death unto life.

We, this class referred to in the text, have received our share of the Sacrifice of Christ, and having received our portion there would be nothing more left for us, if we should lose it. And if any of these misuse their share, any death that they die would be the Second Death. There is but one death to the *New Creature*; for it can never be redeemed. Every provision is made for helping it, but no provision if it takes the position of a wilful sinner.

The Apostle says, "I beseech you, brethren, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." And this is what the faithful are doing – laying down their lives. And this is the condition on which they will obtain the great reward of the Divine nature!

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