

HOW WE ATTAIN DEVELOPMENT AS NEW CREATURES

"If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." – Romans 8:13.

MORTIFICATION of the deeds of the body through the Holy Spirit of God is here declared by the Apostle Paul to be essential to the attainment of everlasting life. But to some who had become His disciples, the Lord said, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Again, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." (John 3:36; 5:24.) The Apostle John in his first Epistle says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren"; and "He that hath the Son hath life." – 1 John 3:14; 5:12.

We must not understand St. Paul to contradict our Lord and the Apostle John. Our Lord Jesus and St. John were speaking from the standpoint of *God's reckoning* – from the *legal standpoint*. Those who have accepted Christ, and have received of His atoning merit, have come out from under the Adamic death condemnation. Their present imperfections, as well as their past sins, are covered by this merit. Through consecration and begetting of the Holy Spirit they have become New Creatures in Christ. Hence the everlasting life provided for such is already considered as theirs, while they abide under the Robe of Christ's Righteousness. They are now "saved by *hope*."

The Apostle Paul is here speaking of the matter from the standpoint of its full accomplishment, when the Church shall have obtained their spiritual body and are absolutely perfect, and have received the actual fulness of unending life. This will be attained

only in our resurrection. No life can be everlasting, in the strict sense, unless it is to last forever; and this is not determined until we have made our calling and election sure. But it is reckoned to us so long as we are faithfully meeting God's terms and conditions. Life could not last forever under present earthly conditions, even though the penalty of death were entirely removed; for these conditions are not favorable thereto. Conditions and environments must be radically changed before life could last eternally and be enjoyed in its fulness.

The embryo of life that we have received from our begetting as New Creatures is perfect so far as it has progressed; but it must continue to grow and develop, to make progress, until we are finally born perfect, complete, New Creatures in the First Resurrection. "Blessed and holy are they that have part in the First [chief] Resurrection. On them the Second Death hath no power."

OPERATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN US

The many exhortations addressed to this class of spirit-begotten ones would not be at all applicable to the world in general. The Apostle Paul is telling us as God's spiritually begotten sons how we are to make ourselves ready for our birth in due time. He says that we are to accomplish this great preparatory work through the Spirit, through the power of God. The Spirit, or power of God, operates in various ways. For instance, God's Message of Truth is given to us, embodying the different features of God's great Plan, showing us what is the will of the Lord for us. The more we study and understand this Plan, the greater will be the operation of this holy power of God in our hearts. The deeper our consecration, the more sympathy shall we have with all the purposes of the Lord and the more fervently shall we desire to do the Divine good pleasure.

God through His Holy Spirit is not operating at present upon any but this special class. Whatever there is in the world of nature is all the result of the operation of God's Power, His Spirit, in a general

way; but the Apostle in our text is referring only to the influence of the Spirit of God upon the soul. In the New Testament writings the work of the Holy Spirit refers only to those who have become God's people under the terms laid down by our Lord Jesus Christ. All such are under the Lord's special care. God began this good work in us. It is not of men nor by men. Therefore we must look to God to complete this work which He has begun, and must give Him our full and hearty cooperation.

We are to go to God's Word, and are to study it prayerfully, using all the helps which His providence has furnished thereto, seeking thus to learn the meaning of that Word, seeking to put it into expression in our lives. Just as it is necessary to partake of natural food that we may have our bodies strengthened and sustained, so God has given us spiritual food, that we may get spiritual sustenance and strength and may understand His will. This operation of God upon us and in us through His Holy Spirit is a gradual work; that is, after we have been begotten. Many of us have been so beclouded with the errors of our former beliefs that we are unable to see the deep things of God at the first glance. Therefore we need to study, and to meet together with those of like precious faith. If this is not possible for some, because **[R5931 : page 228]** of isolation, they can at least meet with the brethren by means of the printed page.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONSECRATION

As we come to understand more clearly all that full consecration to God signifies, our thought on the subject gradually changes. When first we came to God, many of us had the thought that God's will for us was to accept Christ as our Savior, and then to live a good, decent, moral life, to enjoy ourselves in any legitimate ways, to take good care of our bodies, and to attend church on Sunday, and perhaps other meetings. We thought that all who did not do this would be lost, that there would be no future hope for them. But this is not God's Plan at all. We have learned better now.

God has shown us that the only way by which the Church of Christ can ever attain to the Heavenly inheritance is by the destruction of the human nature and its interests, by the relinquishing of all earthly hopes and ambitions.

At first this is a new thought to us, and the question presents itself, "Does God wish me really to mortify, kill, my human nature? Am I not to seek to cultivate all my natural talents and make the most of them? Am I not to [R5932 : page 228] live a natural life, so long as I do not sin?" One not begotten of God's Holy Spirit would say, "Why, certainly; follow the cravings of your nature, so long as you keep within bounds. If you would enjoy a good theatre, or a game of base-ball, go; and have a good time. If a glass of liquor does not hurt you, take it. If you have a natural talent for music or painting or whatever, it is your duty to make the most of it." This is worldly counsel.

In Jesus' Parable of the Talents, the talents given by a certain lord to his several servants represented opportunities of service for that master. The master placed an opportunity in the hands of each servant and expected him to improve it. So our Heavenly Lord and Master places before His servants certain opportunities to be improved to His glory, and to be used as each has ability. These opportunities are given in harmony with natural ability and not in violation of it; but this does not mean that every ability we may possess, whether its use would glorify God or not, must be improved and employed. As New Creatures we are to employ all our powers to God's glory. If they cannot be so used, we are to sacrifice them and spend ourselves in directions that would be in harmony with our Covenant of Sacrifice.

HOW THE HUSBANDMAN DEALS WITH HIS VINE

To each consecrated one who has entered upon this Heavenly way we would say, You have placed yourself in God's hands. You have asked the Lord to transform you, to renew your mind, to make

you entirely over, that you may be fitted and prepared for the glorious position He has promised. So all your powers are to be turned in the direction toward which you are to be trained by your Master. If the grape-vine under the husbandman could reason and speak, it would probably say, "It is natural for me to develop an abundant supply of foliage and to throw out branches and tendrils in every direction to support me." But the wise husbandman vigorously prunes off these superfluous branches and tendrils that dissipate the strength of the sap, that develop only wood and leaves, and that cause the vine to cling to improper supports. The husbandman seeks for fruit, rich, abundant fruit; and everything which would hinder this attainment must be sacrificed. The vine would tend downward. The husbandman trains it to grow upward. So does our great Heavenly Husbandman train His spiritual vine, that we may bring forth abundant fruitage to His praise.

We no longer belong to the world. Our course now is to be that which God has marked out for us in the Scriptures. If we do not mortify, kill, the deeds of the body, we shall never gain the eternal life promised to the faithful overcomers alone. In order to attain eternal life, the life now held out to us – glory, honor, immortality – we must conform ourselves to the instructions given us by our great Training Master. We are not to do this in our own unaided strength. This would be impossible. But our Heavenly Father has promised to *work in* us while we *work out* our salvation with fear and trembling.

MORTIFICATION OF THE DEEDS OF THE BODY

The real thought of the words, "Mortify the deeds of the body," is not what some have thought – to mortify our *body*. According to history, and according to some present practices, we learn that some have imagined that they must torture and punish their body. They use whips upon their flesh until they draw blood. Then they wear hair jackets. Sometimes their bodies fester from the pricking hairs

that torture the raw flesh. Some mortify their bodies by actually lying down for others to walk upon them and to wipe their feet upon them. We cannot question that those who do these things have a motive in so doing; and we could not think it a bad motive. But they have entirely misapprehended what is the Scriptural mortification.

The Apostle tells us that it is the *deeds* of the body we are to mortify – the natural practices of the fleshly nature. "It is my nature to do so and so," says one. But the Bible says we are not to go in the way in which we were born; for we were all born sinners. We now have the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, to guide us in the way in which we should go. We are to mortify everything in us which is not fully endorsed by our new mind, everything that would hinder the death of the old creature – already reckoned dead – and hinder the growth of the New Creature. Certain elements of the mortal body are to be destroyed, warred against at all times. Other qualities of the human body are to be utilized in the service of righteousness. We were once sold under sin. But we have been purchased back, and now we have the mind of Christ.

We are now to treat our human body as an earthen vessel to be used to the glory of God. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit we are to know *how* to use this human vessel. We are to remember, first, that it is reckoned dead as a human body, having been sacrificed with Christ when we made our consecration to be dead with Him; second, that while reckoned dead, this body has actually been stimulated, quickened, revived, to serve the New Creature, as its property, its servant, in lieu of the spirit body which we are to have, but have not yet obtained. Every property of this body which can be used in the interests of the New Creature, is to be utilized.

We are not to say, "If I use a certain natural talent which I possess, I can bring comfort or pleasure to others, or can promote some work of reform." The question for us is, "Will the use of this natural talent or power assist me as a New Creature or assist in the

work of gathering out and preparing the Bride of Christ for her future work?" This is our present mission. There are those who can do the other things. So we find that the process of developing ourselves as New Creatures and of assisting in the building up of the brethren in the most holy faith requires our *undivided* attention, and means a continual warfare of the new nature against the old. The Apostle calls it the warring of the spirit against the flesh. Our development into the likeness of Christ requires that we do good unto all men as we have opportunity – where it will not interfere with our consecration vows – but especially [R5932 : page 229] to the Household of Faith, as the Apostle tells us.

As our flesh is only reckonedly dead, and not actually, we are to be continually on guard. Our tongues are liable, unless carefully and prayerfully guarded, to speak slanderously or perhaps to make cutting remarks. All of our members are to be brought into harmony with God and His will. We are to have the sentiment of the hymn we often sing:

"Let mine eyes see Jesus only." We are to continually look to Him to be directed. We are, by thus seeing Him, to become more and more conformed to His glorious likeness. We are to endeavor to see everything from the Divine standpoint. We shall never become perfect in the flesh; but so long as we are tabernacling in this body, it is our duty and privilege to compel the body to do the will of the New Creature.

Our human body was once a slave to sin, a slave to the things of this present evil world. Now we are to say, "This body belongs to the Lord. I must control it to His glory. I am determined to increase day by day my power over this body, that I may use it more and more fully in the service of my King. I am not to do foolish things. I am not to leap from the pinnacle of a temple to see if God will not protect me while I am trying to show that I am a special favorite of Heaven. But under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I am to get the

most out of this body that I can, in the service of Him whom I have accepted as my new Master.

All this is necessary to our development of the character required for our great future work, not only for the coming Age, but for all eternity. We are called to joint-heirship with Christ. We can scarcely grasp what this means. We would never be prepared for such an exaltation if we did not prove overcomers. And this means that there is something *real* to overcome. Overcoming means the development of character, growing strong in the Lord. He declares that He is calling for only such as do thus overcome.

DIVINE RECOMPENSE TO THOSE WHO SACRIFICE

The *world* will have a thousand years to bring their bodies into perfect harmony with the Lord's will, and *they* will not be required to sacrifice the legitimate desires of their flesh. But we are required, after we have accepted the present Call, to sacrifice the interests of the flesh; and we have but a very limited time in which to develop the necessary character. God is now selecting and directing those only who of their own will wish to lay down their lives with Christ. They love Him supremely; and He is pleased to call these holy ones His jewels. No good thing will He withhold from these. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard what God has in reservation for these who love Him." These are going on from grace to grace, living not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

To the world it looks as if these are having a hard time. Moreover, the Bible says, "Through much tribulation shall ye enter into the Kingdom." And again, "Yea, and *all* that will live godly in Christ Jesus *shall* suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12.) Unless a man deny himself and take up his cross and follow Jesus, he cannot be His disciple. But, on the other hand, all true Christians will agree with the Apostle that it is possible to reach that degree of development where they will rejoice in all these experiences, rejoice

while the flesh is being mortified, deadened. It is not that we are naturally so different from other people that we would enjoy what they dislike, but that we see a *reason* why we should rejoice. We know that this is God's plan for us; and that [R5933 : page 229] by this mortification of the will of the flesh, of the things of the flesh, we are growing in God's favor.

"Great peace have they that love Thy Law, and nothing shall offend [stumble] them." So these have the peace of God ruling in their hearts. They have the knowledge that all of their affairs are under Divine supervision. The world have their troubles and fears. Some who are rich in this world's goods worry for fear they will die in the poorhouse. Many misers have been found dead with a large amount of money secreted about them, having feared all their lives that they would come to poverty and want. Some have had various other forebodings. But those who have put their trust in the Lord have a peace that the world cannot know and cannot take away. It is superior to anything the world can offer.

But we cannot explain this to the world. They would be unable to comprehend it. The world sometimes say of the Lord's consecrated people, "Is he a fool?" They cannot understand our hopes, which are so blessedly real to us. Those who have entered the School of Christ, and who have learned of Him, know. We all know that for everything which we deny ourselves now our God gives us abundant compensations in our spiritual blessings and joys even here; and then we have all the unspeakable glories promised to His saints awaiting us just beyond the veil.

"Then let our hearts be surely fixed
Where truest joys are found;
And let our burning, loving praise
Yet more and more abound.
And gazing on 'the things unseen,'
Eternal in the skies,

From glory unto glory,
O Savior, may we rise!"

