

pleased with it, why now confess? Is this writer harder to please than the God of holiness? Possibly, however, he may admit that God is likewise displeased with his past life in this respect, but now that it is confessed with faith in the atonement of Christ, it is cleansed away. But, we ask, is not that just like the transaction between the repentant sinner and God when sins are blotted out and transgressions covered? Oh! but this, it is replied, is only unavoidable error. Then what about the use of the expression, *return to the old paths*. Does not this imply that there was once correct knowledge and practice concerning this thing? If so, this plea cannot hold good. The fact is, whichever way the thing is looked at, provided it is done sufficiently long and impartially, it is not only difficult, it is utterly impossible to reconcile such a life with the plain precepts of Christ, or make it harmonize with His pattern life.

Imagine Christ finding it necessary to use such language of confession concerning any section of His life during which He made the profession that He always did the will of the Father. Was Paul conscious of such regrettable errors when at the final review of his life he gave forth to the world his dying testimony?

The use of the word "*inclined*" also looks suspicious when taken in connection with the profession that inbred sin had all this time been eliminated from the writer. If he was not then *inclined* to look more closely into the matter of prayer and fasting, is it not natural to suppose that it was because he was afraid that he would be under the disagreeable necessity of praying and fasting much more than was his wont? If this surmise is a legitimate one, and we contend that it is, then it looks very much like a similar tendency on the part of those who only profess justification. Certainly, if perfect love to God existed in the heart, the slightest suspicion that He would be pleased with more fasting and prayer would be sufficient to constrain him to investigate the subject at once and thoroughly, with the inclination all on the side of fasting, not as a *duty*, but as a privilege.

Finally, we hesitate not to say that all our readers, who have fought this battle of *duty* concerning fasting, will realize that we thus write, not as without experience, but as one who has evidently passed through similar experiences. Yes, we recall the time with shamefacedness when we, too, were forced by the providence of God to give the subject "*a more careful examination*" than we had been hitherto *inclined* to give it, and the result was a return to *duty*—the old paths. And yet that result to us, like as we predict it will be to the editor of the *Witness*, was decidedly beneficial for a time. But we predict also that there will come a time when the reimposed *duty* will seem but another form of the schoolmaster's lash, whose tendency will, or ought to be, to drive to Christ, that the law of the Spirit may deliver from the bondage of the law of fasting.

Since we permitted this legitimate result of legalism to do its work in our life, and gave over the matter of prayer and fasting to be regulated absolutely by the Holy Spirit, we have not only been free from any inclination not to examine the whole subject carefully at any and all times, but have been conscious that fasts appointed by the Spirit have been embraced with delight, and the absence of fasting has always been with the conscious well done of the Master: the law of the Spirit having made free from the law of sin and death.

Reader, do you find yourself somewhat reluctant towards investigating this subject of fasting, lest your conscience should condemn you for past neglect and impose upon you future *duties* from which you shrink? Then be assured that, in spite of all your professions to the contrary, inbred sin has not been cleansed away, or, if it was, it has returned again. Nay, if in the enforced practising of fasting and prayer the duty element is prominent, you illustrate one who, although he may have begun in the spirit, is seeking to be made perfect in the flesh, "you are fallen from grace."

Now, we do not ask you to give up fasting, nor, for that matter, the rigid