

QUESTIONS CONCERNING PERFECT LOVE.

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QUESTION I.—*Is a separate or distinct witness of the Spirit to the possession of perfect love to be expected?*



O give a satisfactory answer to this question, it is needful that we look at the doctrine of the Spirit's witness in Bible light. The passage that is mainly relied on for proof of the doctrine is found in Rom. viii. 14, 15, 16: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." This is the most full, precise, and unequivocal passage bearing on the subject that can be quoted. Many passages imply it, some state it partially, but this one presents it with a fulness and directness that leaves little to be desired. Within its limits we have the following: 1. The Holy Ghost speaks himself in the soul; 2. When he speaks, he testifies that the person to whom he speaks is a "child of God." This being or becoming a child of God is called "adoption." So the witness of the Spirit is not to our pardon or regeneration, if we speak with precision, but to our *adoption*. It is blessedly true that adoption includes justification and regeneration; and it is blessedly appropriate, therefore, that the witness should be borne to the fact which contains and implies those priceless and invaluable gifts.

This kind of assurance is indispensable to the believer's satisfaction,—first, Because adoption is an act in the mind of GOD, and man could not know it with certainty unless God himself will tell him. Again, Because if the question, Am I a child of God? was left to inference, or mere reasoning of any kind, conscientious souls would not be able to assure themselves in an affirmative answer; for during the mental exercises connected with conversion, conscience is mighty, and the sense of unworthiness intense, and under such a pressure the soul—which is already disqualified to judge in moral matters by natural depravity—cannot be trusted to judge aright. So that with some, doubt would for ever hide the blessing; and perhaps in the case of others, presumption would deceive and mislead. Thus we find that from the nature of the blessing itself, as well as from the nature of man, arises a necessity for such a Divine testimony as that which, in the passage commented on, is so distinctly taught.

This state of adoption is the decisive, underlying, and all-comprehensive fact of spiritual life and relationship. It includes the primary conditions of entire sanctification, because it involves justification and regeneration, which blessings combined are partial sanctification, or more properly, sanctification