

men without exception strive to keep the law of God. No man out of perdition is absolutely bad. Who ever met a drunken sot so far gone in sin that he did not now and then put forth some feeble efforts to stem the torrent of sin in him. Even the most profligate and unholy are restrained somewhat by conscience against the bent of natural desire. So we contend that sin, whether committed by professed saint or open sinner, is aptly described, or at all events is included, in an allusion to the efforts of men to keep the law of God without obeying the law of the Spirit.

How all disputes concerning the application of Paul's reasonings in the seventh chapter of Romans are ended when this key is used to unlock its mysteries.

St. Paul is describing all efforts to keep the law of God without adopting Heaven's provision for keeping it in its entirety. In so doing it is not necessary for him to make nice points concerning inbred sin and open transgressions; concerning infirmities and mistakes, whether regrettable or otherwise; concerning sins of omission or commission, as to whether they are voluntary or involuntary, as is necessary with modern writers in upholding their theories.

No, nor yet was it necessary for Paul to mention the fact as to whether he was describing his own experience before or after conversion. If we regard him as simply describing all efforts to keep the law of God when not *walking after the Spirit*, that is, when not obeying the law of the Spirit as the only law of life, then we can understand why it was unnecessary for him to guard against the theological discussions which have so thickened about this chapter. He was simply giving a vivid description of every son and daughter of Adam when not walking in the Spirit, or when not living the life portrayed in the following chapter.

In the seventh chapter you have man at his very best, when not led of the Spirit. You see a man putting forth all possible effort to keep the laws of God, and finally giving up in absolute despair of ever succeeding.

Now, it is of importance that we should know what it was that this

representative man despaired of. We maintain that his despair was not concerning his inability to secure forgiveness so much as his inability to keep the law of God. This the whole trend of the argument shows, and is brought out with clearness in individual passages. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit," speaks of freedom from condemnation, not because of forgiveness and cleansing, but because sin is not committed, which fact is more fully asserted further on, "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk after the Spirit."

These, we repeat, are the facts brought out in the apostle's grand description or argument concerning the two states, viz., that all efforts to fulfil the righteousness of the law without following the law or guidance of the Spirit as the one and only law of life end in failure, and man in so acting is *carnal*, the *old man* not being dead or crucified. But so soon as he begins to walk in the Spirit, then sin ceases in him, and so long as he so walks, even as Christ walked, he has no condemnation for sin, seeing he does not commit sin.

If some insist on it that when a man begins to walk thus in the Spirit, immediately inbred or inborn sin is taken out of the man, we shall have no quarrel with them if they evidently mean by these expressions failure to keep the whole will of God. Indeed, to us, it is of very small moment what terms are used, if the facts indicated by them are kept clearly before the mind.

But is it wise to coin expressions not found in the Bible to express or describe these facts? Well, we will not dogmatize concerning this matter, for we find no advice or command in Scripture against the practice. Nevertheless, an amount of caution is needful, lest our pet phrases should insensibly take too prominent a place in our conversation or writings.

Again, this explanation of this great practical subject is the best antidote to mysticism. For the outcome of walking in the Spirit must be downright, common-sensed holy living—one iota of the law