

but within you. It is not meat, nor drink, nor dress, nor any outward act or acts, but is righteousness in the Holy Ghost.

SELF-DENIAL.

(An Extract, with Comments.)

"When Christians wish to accomplish anything, they must act on the principle of self-denial. Is money wanted? Deny self, and give it. Do without some luxury, and honor the Lord with thy substance."—*An Exchange.*

Now this paragraph will be readily subscribed to by nearly all Christians as fairly representing Bible teaching, and all healthy Christian experience. And yet, if it be closely scanned, it will be seen to belong to what Paul calls the law of sin and death.

"Is money wanted?" When was money seemingly more wanted? Pick up any religious paper and see. What urgent calls from missionary societies, from church building societies, from moral reform societies, from benevolent societies, whose name as to variety is legion! Then turn the attention nearer home, and the very church in which you worship, brings pressing claims concerning present indebtedness, concerning its Sabbath-school needs, and its various charitable enterprises. Then ever and anon there are ringing appeals from its pulpit for financial help for all kinds of Christian and moral enterprises. Verily the whole Christian world travaileth in pain to be delivered of its multitudinous cries for financial help.

The reply of this representative writer to this omnipresent call for money is, "Deny self, and give it. Do without some luxury," etc. But this is a very general direction, and so the question must arise as to how to fit it for practical use. Here is a man who is enjoying a thousand luxuries; now will he fill the bill, according to Scripture measure, if he deny himself one luxury, or must he deny himself all if he would have a clean conscience? One denies himself the luxury of sugar in his evening beverage. But is not tea itself a luxury? And so, to become consistent, he comes to simple water. Again, he cuts off the luxury of

cakes and other table delicacies, and contents himself with bread and butter. But is not butter a luxury? And so he gets down to the simplicity of dry bread and water, Graham bread at that. Now he turns his pruning hook against luxurious house-furnishings, and finds out to his amazement that carpets, curtains, in short, nearly all within his house has the element of luxury clinging to them, for he finds out that he could exchange them for a cheaper pattern, securing in the exchange a margin of money to give to the world's charities. But when he has gotten to this low rung of the self-denying ladder, he suddenly discovers that his neighbor, who owns a much poorer house, is ready to exchange with him and allow him a snug sum to boot for benevolence. So he is forced to admit that his very home is a luxurious one in comparison with others, and, on principle, must be given up, if he would reach the bottom of this self-denying process. But even after this sacrifice of his home has been made, what guarantee has he that a still poorer abode may not make its claim for further exchange? Then when he turns his attention to dress, he finds that it also is a bottomless abyss on the line of self-sacrifice.

And so it is readily seen that this self-denying rule is really of the essence of Paul's law of sin and death; for, in the first place, it gives the death-blow to all hope of reaching a satisfactory law of life in its ever-descending scale of giving up luxuries. Its end is death.

In the second place, it proves to be a law of sin. For, if careful observation is made, it will be found that as men deny themselves luxuries on this line, so they find it impossible to refrain from censorious thought or word concerning the luxuries indulged in by others. We speak that which we have known, and testify that which we have seen. Nay, the very spirit with which this statement is met by apostles and practisers of this teaching, if observed, will read its lesson to thoughtful minds. Our conviction is, not hastily formed, that nothing feeds spiritual pride more than acts of self-denial practised according to this teaching. How else account for the fact that those who deny themselves *some* luxuries