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DOCTRINAL SKETCHES.—No. 24.

FINAL PERSISTENCE.

There is a most intimate connexion between the privileges of a true Christian here and his safety and blessedness hereafter. They are under the righteous displeasure of God, and are therefore "children of wrath." Being destitute of holiness, they are also unfit for the society, the service, and the enjoyments of that better country. Hence they do not desire it, and they know nothing of its purifying hope. "They mind earthly things." But far different is the case of all genuine believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are all children of God by His adopting grace; and "if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." Of the inheritance to which they are thus "begotten," we are assured that it is "incorruptible, undefiled, that it fadeth not away," and is "reserved" for them "who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." More than even this; the believer in Christ is sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of his inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. "Such persons are properly said to have their "conversation" or rather "citizenship in heaven."

It is evident that much stress is laid both by our Lord and His apostles upon this fact. They exhibit to the follower of Christ the assurance of the absolute certainty of those things which though as yet unseen, God hath prepared for them who love Him; and they declare, in the strongest terms, that it is the solemn purpose, the unchangeable determination of the Supreme Being, to give this everlasting happiness to His own people, to those who believe in His Son, who love God and keep His commandments. "That they intended believers to rejoice in hope of the glory of God cannot be doubted. "My sheep," said Christ "hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." "If any man will do the will of the Father which is in heaven, he shall abide in Him, and His Father will abide in him, and they shall be one." "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." How cheering must such announcements have been to the disciples who in the days of His flesh followed their Lord amidst so much contumely! How animating to those who, after His ascension, filled up that which was behind of the suffering of Christ for His body's sake, which was the church! Nor are they less encouraging to others in each succeeding age who are taught by experience that "through much tribulation" they "must enter the kingdom."

It is no unimportant design that the people of the Lord should be "abundant in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." The more lively and strong that their desires and expectations of heaven are, the more diligently they are expected to labour to enter into that rest. If their joy should on this account be great, so will also be their strength to accomplish their Master's will, and their fortitude to endure the manifold trials of this present life. In a word, "Every man that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." But we must meet another question here: Does the language of the New Testament assure any person of his perseverance in well doing to the end, or that, if at any time he be a child of God, he must without fail come to the inheritance of the saints in light. Deriving their conclusions from such passages as we just quoted, and looking at them in an isolated condition, there are some who would answer strongly in the affirmative. Probably they the more readily adopt this view because it agrees so well with the opinion that all who are redeemed must be saved; that in order to secure a proper reward for the Saviour's sufferings, a certain portion of the human family is unconditionally chosen to eternal life; and that as the Omnipotent One knew certainly from the beginning who should be glorified, it was because He had certainly determined that it should be so.

But we deeply feel that no theory should be allowed to predispose us in this matter. We should approach the lively oracles with unbiased judgment. They teach. It is our part to learn. Nor must we confine our attention to detached sentences, but we should view the inspired volume as really one is yet many, and that "the reality of the fact we are sure to involve ourselves in the belief of real contradictions. Scripture must not only be allowed to explain, but to guard scripture.

We find then that believers in Christ, while in the possession of unparalleled privileges, are nevertheless treated as moral agents in a state of probation. For their instruction and guidance, and not less for their warning, has the greater part of the New Testament been written. They are charged not to receive the grace of God in vain. They are urged to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, though it is gratefully acknowledged that "it is God that worketh in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Regarding them as competitors for eternal life, certainly as on the way to the prize, but not as absolutely sure of it, St. Paul says, "So run that ye may obtain it." And to add force to this exhortation he speaks of himself, believer, saint, apostle as he was, in this wise, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." On the ground that some had forfeited the blessings of divine grace which they once enjoyed, that they were blind, and could not see afar off, and had forgotten that they were purged from their old sins, St. Peter, too, urged those who still possessed the "precious faith of the gospel," the "rather" to "give diligence to make" their "calling and election sure." Elsewhere he deprecates their being "led away with the error of the wicked," and "falling" from their "own steadfastness." Nor must we forget that the mediator through the Redeemer—Himself self mediatore through the early churches

power to get wealth; I mean definitely that if you want money, want position, want influence, want success of any sort, you can only have it on the condition of absolute obedience to the counsel and commandment of the Lord. You may disobey Him in a thousand ways not connected with the matter in hand, but in that you must obey Him with prompt absolute submission; or the success is beyond your reach, you are as powerless to win it as to unspine a star. Sit idle all day waiting for business, fold your hands and cry out to heaven for prosperity, and every fool can tell you that you may sit waiting for ever. Work, work, work, and God demands of you; refuse to render it, and your dream of fortune remains a dream. The world has no blessing for its idlers, because God made the world, and laid this stern law upon man from the first. "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." "If you can make nothing successful, if you can make poor, puffy, half-hearted efforts the winners, then I grant you may well say, "Who is the Lord that we should fear Him?" But you know perfectly the conditions under which the prize which you strive for must be won—stern, close, uncompromising toil. If you are to be anything, or to win anything, which you have set your heart upon, you must work for it, you must deny yourself for it, you must suffer for it. Under these conditions alone as a rule can it be gained.

But the question still recurs—what profit shall we have if we serve him? What good will religion do us in our pursuit of success? It seems, a worldly man may say, that the godly man, if he works hard and faithfully gets on; the ungodly man if he works hard and faithfully, gets on. Where is the difference? If a man lives for this world, and makes it his home, caring chiefly about its prizes, why should he trouble himself about the Lord? why should he make an effort to remember Him? Is not the Book of Ecclesiastes right? "All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not; as is the good to the sinner; and he that sowereth as he that reapeth an oath." (Eccles. ix. 2.) What difference is there between him that sacrificeth and him that sacrificeth not?

The difference is not in the amount of success which may be won. God does not grant a full tide of worldly prosperity to his servants, and a half tide only to the industrious men of this world who pay no honor to His name. The difference lies in quite another direction. It is the difference between a serf and a freeman, between sunlight and darkness, between gladness and weariness, between a blessed man and a cursed man, between a man above whom heaven is shining and one beneath whom hell is yawning, who knows that his life is going down into the pit. Understand how it is. If your whole being is fully satisfied with the wealth which industry brings, then industry would be the one thing which God had the right to ask of you, as He asks it of the ants and the bees, and no claim could be urged upon you for anything beyond. But God has a thousand points at which His plans and purposes touch you; that is, in which He so completely situates you that only in obeying Him will you find rest and life. You may obey His law of industry admirably and prosper in wealth; but you may break the while His laws of truth, purity, righteousness, charity, and go a whither, shattered cripple through life, and remain a moaning, helpless cripple through eternity. Just as God gives you power to get wealth by earnest, persevering toil, He gives you power by the exercise of joy, and yet higher faculties to get peace and joy, and heavenly fellowship and heavenly hope. And just as a man who refuses the law of labor, who idles and dawdles through life, but half lives, knows none of life's joys, wears none of life's crowns, so the man who refuses the law of spiritual labor—that effort, that self-denial, that faith, that patience which man was made to put forth and to exercise continually—is dead while he liveth. The joys of the true man's life he cannot taste; his crowns he cannot wear; the holy fellowships of spiritual being he cannot enter; God stamps him prostrate, below a profane, worthless for all the higher work which man was made for; angels and living men cast him out from their company; "the outer darkness" is his home; "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth" is his portion eternally. Is there any life lived in the universe so drearily, so deathly, as that of the mere millionaire? There are no such human aces, such dried up mummies of men as are to be found in your great banking-houses and palaces of commerce. The poorest beggar probably has more real joy of life than many an one whom you could name, and of whom the current description is, "he is rolling in gold." There is a vast deal of godlike faculty there. "Fasting" in him unused. And power unappointed, faculty held back from its God appointed sphere, soon gets acrid and morbid, and wears and gnaws within. Thus God will have it, for it is thus that He keeps His hold on men and things, and compels some consideration of His counsels and His ways. A flower made for the sunlight and planted in the shade twists and writhes with a restless longing for its congenial atmosphere and conditions; it catches every eye, and seems to proffer a mute petition for pity and aid. So the soul stretches by nature insatiable to truth, goodness and God. But sin has perverted and corrupted its instincts; evil will hold them back from their true career; and then God grappling with this evil will that he may master and rule it, ordains that they shall become tormentors, and shall harry the soul that will not satisfy their native longings, but will rather take those courses of the sun and yoke them to the basest and profane work. "Wherefore spend ye your money for that which will not bring you profit? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."—*Misread Passages.*

A native in China who had just been converted, said to the missionary, "I want every person to know that I am converted all over. How many are thus converted—their souls, bodies, purses, all? How many can say they are converted all over?"

I do not mean only that God sustains your soul in life, and therefore gives you the

power to get wealth; I mean definitely that if you want money, want position, want influence, want success of any sort, you can only have it on the condition of absolute obedience to the counsel and commandment of the Lord.

You may disobey Him in a thousand ways not connected with the matter in hand, but in that you must obey Him with prompt absolute submission; or the success is beyond your reach, you are as powerless to win it as to unspine a star.

Sit idle all day waiting for business, fold your hands and cry out to heaven for prosperity, and every fool can tell you that you may sit waiting for ever.

Work, work, work, and God demands of you; refuse to render it, and your dream of fortune remains a dream.

The world has no blessing for its idlers, because God made the world, and laid this stern law upon man from the first.

"In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread."

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Understand how it is. If your whole being is fully satisfied with the wealth which industry brings, then industry would be the one thing which God had the right to ask of you, as He asks it of the ants and the bees, and no claim could be urged upon you for anything beyond.

But God has a thousand points at which His plans and purposes touch you; that is, in which He so completely situates you that only in obeying Him will you find rest and life.

You may obey His law of industry admirably and prosper in wealth; but you may break the while His laws of truth, purity, righteousness, charity, and go a whither, shattered cripple through life, and remain a moaning, helpless cripple through eternity.

Just as God gives you power to get wealth by earnest, persevering toil, He gives you power by the exercise of joy, and yet higher faculties to get peace and joy, and heavenly fellowship and heavenly hope.

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You may disobey Him in a thousand ways not connected with the matter in hand, but in that you must obey Him with prompt absolute submission; or the success is beyond your reach, you are as powerless to win it as to unspine a star.

Sit idle all day waiting for business, fold your hands and cry out to heaven for prosperity, and every fool can tell you that you may sit waiting for ever.

Work, work, work, and God demands of you; refuse to render it, and your dream of fortune remains a dream.

The world has no blessing for its idlers, because God made the world, and laid this stern law upon man from the first.

"In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread."

"If you can make nothing successful, if you can make poor, puffy, half-hearted efforts the winners, then I grant you may well say, "Who is the Lord that we should fear Him?"

But you know perfectly the conditions under which the prize which you strive for must be won—stern, close, uncompromising toil.

If you are to be anything, or to win anything, which you have set your heart upon, you must work for it, you must deny yourself for it, you must suffer for it.

Under these conditions alone as a rule can it be gained.

But the question still recurs—what profit shall we have if we serve him? What good will religion do us in our pursuit of success?

It seems, a worldly man may say, that the godly man, if he works hard and faithfully gets on; the ungodly man if he works hard and faithfully, gets on.

Where is the difference? If a man lives for this world, and makes it his home, caring chiefly about its prizes, why should he trouble himself about the Lord? why should he make an effort to remember Him?

Is not the Book of Ecclesiastes right? "All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not; as is the good to the sinner; and he that sowereth as he that reapeth an oath."

What difference is there between him that sacrificeth and him that sacrificeth not?

PREACHING.

No man caters on the work of preaching without first considering that it is a sacred calling. It stands out before the mind with all the distinctiveness and grandeur of the work ordained by God, inviting only such to accept its responsibilities as can, in the fullest sense, renounce the world, with all its glitter of praise and gain. To such it promises a life of toil and sacrifice, often with the frowns of men and the malice of devils, and directs them to re-approach and hardship, looking only to the glory of the Master, and the recompense of reward. It was undoubtedly the purpose of Christ, in instituting the Church, that the terms of this ministry should not be inviting to men of worldly ambition. The wisdom of such an arrangement commends itself to every spiritually minded person, and when studied in the light of the history of the Christian centuries, it shows how clear must have been the foresight which rejected the wise and great of the world, and committed the ministry of reconciliation to the poor and humble.

Nor will any presume to make preaching his life without feeling deeply impressed with the worth of souls. The lack of this will take the life out of preaching, however eloquent or learned it may be, and he finds himself more than value them and feel for them. And this should be the aim of all preaching. True, the Church must be edified; the faith must be defended; the skepticism of the times must be met with the overpowering vindications of the truth, and all men must be made to see the beauty, and to feel the power of the Gospel, set forth in the grandness of its scope, and the