

from those consequences. All sin results in more or less injury to those who commit it. This injury comes first as a natural consequence, just as bodily injury would naturally come to a man if he shot himself, or was shot by another. He might be fatally injured; nothing but a miracle could save him from dying, or restore him to life afterward, and such a miracle God would not now deem it wise to work.

So sin may be committed to such an extent that not only spiritual disease but spiritual death also shall be the natural and certain consequence—such a death that those who are the subjects of it become “past feeling,” so expressed by the Apostle in Eph. IV. : 18.

And then it would seem that God cannot wisely interpose to restore them to spiritual life, any more than He can interpose to restore a dead man to bodily life; and if He did He would have to put forth greater power on behalf of the dead soul than he would on behalf of the dead body. And yet God does work miracles of grace to save sinners from falling into this spiritual death; like as if He had miraculously interposed to save Garfield from dying, as the natural consequence of being shot by the assassin Guiteau.

Poor Garfield, however, had no such revelation from the Lord. He was not told to look to Jesus to save him from bodily death as the result of being shot, even by an enemy. Nor in these days do we expect the Lord to interpose in that way in any case. For special reasons He sometimes did work miracles on behalf of the bodies of men in the days of Judaism and in the early days of Christianity, but there is not the same need for such miracles now.

In the Gospel, however, are not poor sinners, great sinners—men far gone in spiritual disease—told to repent and look to Jesus as the physician of the soul, able and willing to heal and save all who are willing to be healed and saved by Him? And that, even though they are in such a condition of spiritual disease that that itself is sometimes called “death” (because, apart from divine influence, sinners will have no more desires towards God and spiritual things than if they were dead); and so they are described as dead, even before they become “past feeling,” in spite of such divine influence. But they are not so dead as not to be

responsible before God for their indifference. Indeed they *never* become so dead as that, for even when they become “past feeling” still they are described as “giving themselves over unto licentiousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”

But before they go so far, it is possible that under the gracious quickening of the Holy Spirit they may be brought to have, at least, *some* desire for spiritual life and health; and perhaps be led—as many are—to accept God’s salvation, and so experience Christ’s saving power. At the same time there are many who are only “almost persuaded;” or, like Felix, say, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee.”

Until by the gracious *convicting* power of the Holy Spirit sinners are brought to realize their true condition and earnestly desire spiritual life, they are in a worse condition, spiritually, than the Israelites were in bodily, when they were bitten by the fiery serpents in the wilderness. That was sure death, certain and sudden, so far as anything they could themselves do. Still they were not indifferent about it. They were all most anxious to *live* and all did live who (while yet in a sick and dying condition) accepted the way of life, made known to them by the Lord through Moses. God wrought a miracle of bodily healing in their case, so that they were saved from the natural consequences of the bite of the fiery serpents; and, no doubt, he did it in connection with the act of faith on their part, as something which might be used as an illustration of the way we are to receive the miraculous regenerating power of the Holy Ghost in connection with looking unto Jesus. Hence, the words of Jesus to Nicodemus, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

But observe that in thus being saved through faith in Jesus, we are saved not only from further spiritual disease, and consequent death, or the callous hardening of our souls in sin, but also from that which is spoken of (in Revelation) as the “Second Death;” which death may be called the *judicial consequence* of sin, and that because it is to come upon the finally impenitent and unbelieving.

A man’s becoming a drunkard is the *natural*