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LIKE CHRIST : IN HIS SELF-DENIAL.

'We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell upon me. Wherefore receive one another, *even as* Christ also received us to the glory of God.'—Rom. xv. 1-3, 7.

'If any man will come *after me*, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.'—Matt xvi. 24.

Even Christ pleased not Himself: He bore the reproaches, with which men reproached and dishonoured God, so patiently, that He might glorify God and save man. Christ pleased not Himself: with reference both to God and man, this word is the key of His life. In this, too, His life is our rule and example; we who are strong ought not to please ourselves.

To deny self—this is the opposite of pleasing self. When Peter denied Christ, he said; I know not the man; with Him and His interests I have nothing to do; I do not wish to be counted His friend. In the same way the true Christian denies himself, the old man: I do not know this old man; I will have nothing to do with him and his interests. And when shame and dishonour come upon him, or anything be exacted that is not pleasant to the old nature, he simply says: Do as you like with the old Adam, I will take no notice of it. Through the cross of Christ I am crucified to the world, and the flesh, and self; to the friendship and interest of this old man I am a stranger; I deny him to be my friend; I deny his every claim and wish; I know him not.

The Christian who only thinks of his salvation from curse and condemnation cannot understand this: he finds it impossible to deny self. Although he may sometimes try to do so, his life mainly consists in pleasing himself. The Christian who has taken Christ as his pattern cannot be content with this. He has surrendered himself to seek the most complete fellowship with the cross of Christ. The Holy Spirit has taught him to say, I have been crucified with Christ, and so am dead to sin and self. In fellowship with Christ he sees the old man crucified, a condemned malefactor; he is ashamed to own him as a friend: it is his fixed purpose, and he has received the power for it too, no longer to please his old nature, but to deny it. *Because the crucified Christ is his life, self-denial is the law of his life.*

This self-denial extends itself over the whole domain of life. It was so with the Lord Jesus, and is so with every one who longs to follow Him perfectly. This self-denial has not so much to do with what is sinful, and unlawful, and contrary to the laws of God, as with what is lawful, or apparently indifferent. To the self-denying spirit the will and glory of God and the salvation of man are always more than our own interests or pleasure.

Before we can know how to please our neighbour, self-denial must first exercise itself in our own personal life. It must rule the body. The holy fasting of Him who said, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God: and who would not eat until His Father gave him food, and His Father's work was done, teaches the believer a holy temperance in eating and drinking. The Holy poverty of Him who had not where to lay His head, teaches him so to regulate the pos-

session, and use, and enjoyment of earthly things, that he may always possess as not possessing. After the example of the holy suffering of Him who bore all our sins in His own body on the tree, he learns to bear all suffering patiently: even in the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, he desires to bear about the dying of the Lord Jesus; with Paul he keeps under the body and brings it into subjection; all its desires and appetites he would have ruled by the self-denial of Jesus. He does not please himself.

This self-denial keeps watch over the spirit too. His own wisdom and judgment the believer brings into subjection to God's word; he gives up his own thoughts to the teaching of the Word and the Spirit. Towards man he manifests the same self-denial of his own wisdom in a readiness to hear and learn, in the meekness and humility with which, even when he knows he is in the right, he gives his opinion, in the desire ever to find and to acknowledge what is good in others.

And then self-denial has special reference to the heart. All the affections and desires are placed under it. The will, the kingly power of the soul, is specially under its control. As little as self-pleasing could be a part of Christ's life, may Christ's follower allow it ever to influence his conduct. Self-denial is the law of his life.

Nor does he find it hard when once he has truly surrendered himself to it. To one who with a divided heart, seeks to force himself to a life of self-denial, it is hard indeed; but to one who has yielded himself to it unreservedly, because he has with his whole heart accepted the cross to destroy the power of sin and self, the blessing it brings more than compensates for apparent sacrifice or loss. He hardly dare any longer speak of self-denial, there is such blessedness in becoming conformed to the image of Jesus.

Self-denial has not its value with God, as some think, from the measure of pain it causes. No, for this pain is very much caused by the remaining reluctance to practise it. But it has its highest worth in that meek or even joyful acquiescence which counts nothing a sacrifice for Jesus' sake, and feels surprised when others speak of self-denial.

There have been ages when men thought they must fly to the wilderness or cloister to deny themselves. The Lord Jesus has shown us that the best place to practise self-denial is in our ordinary intercourse with men. So Paul also says here, 'We ought not to please ourselves, that we may please our neighbour unto edification. *Because Christ pleased not Himself.* Therefore receive ye each other, *even as Christ has received you.* Nothing less than the self-denial of our Lord, who pleased not Himself, is our law. What He was we must be. What He did we must do.

What a glorious life will it be in the Church of Christ when this law prevails! Each one considers it the object of existence to make others happy. Each one denies himself, seeks not his own, esteems other better than himself. All thought of taking offence, of wounded pride, of being slighted or passed by, would pass away. As a follower of Christ, each would seek to bear the weak and to please his neighbor. The true self-denial would be seen in this, that no one would think of himself, but live in and for others.

'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.' This

O'ER THE DISTANT MOUNTAINS BREAKING.

O'er the distant mountains breaking,
Comes the redd'ning dawn of day;
Rise, my soul, from sleep awaking,
Rise and sing, and watch and pray:
'Tis thy Saviour
On his bright returning way.

O Thou long-expected! weary
Waits mine anxious soul for Thee;
Life is dark, and earth is dreary
Where Thy light I do not see;
O my Saviour!
When wilt Thou return to me?

Long, too long, in sin and sadness,
Far away from Thee, I pine,
When, oh, when, shall I the gladness
Of Thy Spirit feel in mine?
O my Saviour!
When shall I be wholly Thine?

Nearer is my soul's salvation,
Spent the night, the day at hand:
Deep me in my lowly station,
Watching for Thee, till I stand,
O my Saviour!
In Thy bright and promised land.

With my lamp well trimmed and burning,
Swift to hear, and slow to roam,
Watching for Thy glad returning
To restore me to my home.
Come, my Saviour!
O my Saviour! quickly come!

—Monsell.

GRACE AND SIN.—Not a grace of the Spirit but has a weed growing under it. Each grace is but a victory over its opposite.—J. H. Evans.

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