

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

CAN I NOT TRUST.

I cannot see, with my small human sight,
Why God should lead this way or that for me;
I only know he saith, "Child, follow me."
But I can trust.

I know not why my path should be at times
So straitly and so strangely barred before;
I only know God could keep wide the door.
But I can trust.

I find no answer often, when beset
With questions fierce and subtle on my way;
And often have but strength to faintly pray.
But I can trust.

I cannot know why suddenly the storm
Should rage so fiercely round me in its wrath;
But this I know, God watches all my path;
And I can trust.

I may not draw aside the mystic veil
That hides the unknown future from my sight;
Nor know if for me waits the dark or light;
But I can trust.

I have no power to look across the tide,
To know, while here, the land beyond the river
But this I know, I shall be God's forever;
So I can trust.

CAUTIONS FOR THE TIMES.

I have had a deep conviction for many years that practical holiness and entire self-consecration to God are not sufficiently attended to by modern Christians in this country. Politics, or controversy or party-spirit, or worldliness, have eaten out the heart of lively piety in too many of us. The subject of personal godliness has fallen sadly into the back-ground. The standard of living has become painfully low in many quarters. The immense importance of "adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour" (Titus ii. 10), and making it lovely and beautiful by our daily habits and tempers, has been far too much overlooked. Wordly people sometimes complain with reason that "religious" persons, so-called, are not so aimable and unselfish and good natured as others who make no profession of religion. Yet sanctification, in its place and proportion, is quite as important as justification. Sound Protestant and Evangelical doctrine is useless if it is not accompanied by a holy life. It is worse than useless: it does positive harm. It is despised by keen-sighted and shrewd men of the world, as an unreal and hollow thing, and brings religion into contempt. It is my firm impression that we want a thorough revival about *Scriptural holiness*, and I am deeply thankful that attention is being directed to the point.

It is, however, of great importance that the whole subject should be placed on right foundations, and that the movement about it should not be damaged by crude, disproportioned, and one-sided statements. If such statements abound we must not be surprised. Satan knows well the power of true holiness, and the immense injury which increased attention to it will do to his kingdom. It is his interest, therefore, to promote strife and controversy about this part of God's truth. Just as in time past he has succeeded in mystifying and confusing men's minds about justification, so he is labouring in the present day to make men "darken counsel by words without knowledge" about sanctification. May the Lord rebuke him! I cannot however give up the hope that good will be brought out of evil, that discussion will elicit truth, and that variety of opinion will lead us all to search the Scriptures more, to pray more, and to become more diligent in trying to find out what is "the mind of the Spirit."

I feel it a duty to offer a few suggestive hints to those whose attention is specially directed to the subject of sanctification in the present day. I know that I do so at the risk of seeming presumptuous, and possibly of giving offence. But something must be ventured in the interests of God's truth. I shall therefore put my hints into the form of questions, and I shall request my readers to take them as Cautions for the Times.

(1) I ask, in the first place, whether it is wise to speak of *faith* as the one thing needful, and the only thing required, as many seem to do now a days in teaching the doctrine of sanctification?—Is it wise to proclaim in so bald, naked, and unqualified a way as many do, that the holiness of converted people is *by faith only*, and not at all by *personal exertion*? Is it according to the proportion of God's Word? I doubt it.

That faith in Christ is the root of all holiness,—that the first step towards a holy life is to believe on Christ,—that until we believe we have not a jot of holiness,—that union with Christ by faith is the secret of both beginning to be holy and continuing to be holy,—that the life that we live in the flesh we must live by the faith of the Son of God,—that faith purifies the heart,—that faith is the victory which overcomes the world,—that by faith the elders obtained a good report,—all these are truths which no well-instructed Christian will ever think of denying. But surely the Scriptures teach us that in following holiness the true Christian needs personal exertion and work as well as faith. This very same Apostle who says in one place, "the life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God," says in another place "I fight,—I run,—I keep under my body;" and in other places, "Let us cleanse ourselves,—let us labour,—let us lay aside every weight." (Gal. ii. 20; 1 Cor. ix. 26; 2 Cor. vii. 1; Heb. iv. 11; xii. 1.) Moreover the Scriptures nowhere teach us that faith *sanctifies* us in the same sense, and in the same manner, that faith *justifies* us! Justifying faith is a grace that "worketh not," but simply trusts, rests,

and leans on Christ. (Rom. iv. 5.) Sanctifying faith is a grace of which the very life is action; it "worketh by love," and, like a main-spring, moves the whole inward man. After all, the precise phrase "sanctified by faith" is only found once in the New Testament. The Lord said to Saul, "I send thee, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me." Yet even there I agree with Alford, that "by faith" belongs to the whole sentence, and must not be tied to the word "sanctified." The true sense is, "that by faith in Me they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified." (Compare Acts xxvi. 18 with Acts xx. 32.)

As to the phrase "holiness by faith" I find it nowhere in the New Testament! Without controversy, in the matter of our justification before God faith in Christ is the one thing needful. All that simply believe are justified. Righteousness is imputed "to him that worketh not but believeth." It is thoroughly Scriptural and right to say "faith alone justifies." But it is not equally Scriptural and right to say "faith alone sanctifies." The saying requires very large qualification. Let one fact suffice. We are frequently told that a man is "justified by faith without the deeds of the law." But not once are we told that we are "sanctified by faith without the deeds of the law." On the contrary, we are expressly told by St. James that the faith whereby we are *visibly and demonstratively* justified before man, is a faith which, "if it hath not works is dead, being alone."* (James ii. 17.) I may be told, in reply, that no one of course means to disparage "works" as an essential part of a holy life. It would be well, however, to make this more plain than many seem to make it in these days.

(2) I ask, in the second place, whether it is wise to make so little, as some appear to do, comparatively, of the many *practical exhortations to holiness in daily life* which are to be found in the Sermon on the Mount, and in the latter part of most of St. Paul's epistles? Is it according to the proportion of God's Word? I doubt it.

That a life of daily self-consecration and daily communion with God should be aimed at by every one who professes to be a believer,—that we should strive to attain the habit of going to the Lord Jesus Christ with everything we find a burden, whether great or small, and casting it upon Him,—all this, I repeat, no well-taught child of God will dream of disputing. But surely the New Testament teaches us that we want something more than *generalities* about holy living, which often prick no conscience and give no offence. The *details* and particular ingredients of which holiness is composed in daily life ought to be fully set forth and pressed on believers by all who profess to handle the subject. True holiness does not consist merely of believing and feeling, but of doing and bearing, and a practical exhibition of active and passive grace. Our tongues, our tempers, our natural passions and inclinations,—our conduct as parents and children, masters and servants, husbands and wives, rulers and subjects,—our dress, our employment of time, our behaviour in business, our demeanour in sickness and health, in riches and in poverty,—all, all these are matters which are fully handled by inspired writers. They are not content with a general statement of what we should believe and feel, and how we are to have the roots of holiness planted in our hearts. They dig down lower. They go into particulars. They specify minutely what a holy man ought to do and be in his own family, and by his own fireside, if he abides in Christ. I doubt whether this sort of teaching is sufficiently attended to in the movement of the present day. When people talk of having received "such a blessing," and having found "the higher life," after hearing some earnest advocate of holiness by faith and self-consecration, while their families and friends see no improvement and no increased sanctity in their daily tempers and behaviour, immense harm is done to the cause of Christ. True holiness, we surely ought to remember, does not consist merely of inward sensations and impressions. It is much more than tears, and sighs, and bodily excitement, and a quickened pulse, and a passionate feeling of attachment to our own favorite preachers and our own religious party, and a readiness to quarrel with every one who does not agree with us. It is something of "the image of Christ" which can be seen and observed by others in our private life, and habits, and character, and doings. (Rom. viii. 29.)

(3) I ask, in the third place, whether it is wise to use vague language about *perfection*, and to press on Christians a *standard of holiness*, as attainable in this world, for which there is no warrant to be shown either in Scripture or experience? I doubt it.

That believers are exhorted to "perfect holiness in the fear of God,"—to "go on to perfection," to "be perfect," no careful reader of the Bible will ever think of denying. But I have yet to learn that there is a single passage in Scripture which teaches us that a literal perfection, a complete and entire freedom from sin, in thought, or word, or deed, is attainable, or ever has been attained by any child of Adam in this world. A comparative perfection, and all-round consistency in every relation of life, a thorough soundness in every point of doctrine,—this may be seen occasionally in some of God's believing people. But as to an *absolute literal perfection*, the most eminent saints of God in every age have always been the very last to lay claim to it! On the contrary, they have always had the deepest sense of their own utter unworthiness and imperfection. The more spiritual light they have enjoyed the more they have seen their own countless defects and shortcomings. The more grace they have had the more they have been "clothed with humility." (1 Peter v. 5.)

What saint can be named in God's Word, of whose life many details are recorded, who was literally and absolutely perfect? Which of them all, when writing about himself,

* "There is a double justification by God; the one authoritative, the other declarative or demonstrative."—The first is St. Paul's scope, when he speaks of justification by faith without the deeds of the law. The second is in St. James' scope, when he speaks of justification by works.—T. Goodwin on Gospel Holiness. Works, vol. vii. p. 181.

ever talks of feeling free from imperfection? On the contrary, men like David, and St. Paul, and St. John, declare in the strongest language that they feel in their hearts weakness and sin. The holiest men of modern times have always been remarkable for deep humility. Have we ever seen holier men than the martyred John Bradford, or Hooker, or Usher, or Baxter, or Rutherford, or M'Cheyne? Yet no one can read the writings and letters of these men without seeing that they felt themselves "debtors to mercy and grace" every day, and the very last thing they ever laid claim to was perfection.

In the face of such facts as these I must protest against the language used in many quarters, in these last days, about *perfection*. I must think that those who use it either know very little of the nature of sin, or the attributes of God, or of their own hearts, or of the Bible, or of the meaning of words. When a professing Christian coolly tells me that he has got beyond such hymns as "Just as I am," and that they are below his present experience, though they suited him when he first took up religion, I must think that his soul is in a very unhealthy state! When a man can talk coolly of the possibility of "living without sin" while in the body, and can actually say that he has "never had an evil thought for three months," I can only say in my opinion he is a very ignorant Christian! I protest against such teaching as this. It not only does no good, but does immense harm. It disgusts and alienates from religion far-seeing men of the world, who know it is incorrect and untrue. It depresses some of the best of God's children, who feel they never can attain to a perfection of this kind. It puffs up many weak brethren, who fancy they are something when they are nothing. In short it is a dangerous delusion.—Rev. J. C. Ryle.

THE CHURCH USURPING CHRIST'S PLACE.

"The other error to which I purpose to allude is no less injurious to the Saviour's glory. Practically He is treated with dishonour, when the Church which He has established is made to usurp His seat, to receive His homage, to perform His office, to be virtually the author of salvation instead of the channel through which salvation flows. This is in truth the deposing of Him from His throne, and to invest His subjects with the authority which belongs to Himself. It is convenient, no doubt, in language to embody the multitude who believe in Christ under one comprehensive term, and our Lord Himself taught us, for example, that we might do this safely and legitimately; but language may mislead. We may personify a body for the convenience of discourse, and by degrees forget that a community is not a person. It is still worse if the body, which was first personified, comes afterwards to be deified. Yet a process of this kind has gone on in regard of the Christian Church. When Christ declared that He would build His Church upon a Rock, and that the gates of hell should not prevail against it, He simply declared that there should be ever hereafter a body of men, believing in Him as the Son of God, whom Satan might assail, but should never succeed in destroying. He did not say He would set up a power on earth which should possess His authority, act in His stead, act as His viceroy to dispense either His favour or His anger. We look in vain for a single sentence which, without the grossest perversion, could imply a purpose such as this. But advantage has been taken of the obscurity of language to maintain and encourage this view: the Church has been made first an abstraction, then a person, and then a Saviour. The Church thus invested with divinity has a ministry, and has her visible representatives who, explaining her prophetic anticipations, have assumed the place of God. We know what opportunities this has given to the exercise of the worst human passions. We find it supplied with malice, hatred, pride, covetousness, and ambition; so that one of the first and most needed works of the Reformers was to repress the evil and divest the Church of the mystery in which it was shrouded, and disclose it to the world in its true and scriptural form as a congregation of believers. The Church is that body which assembled in the upper chamber at Jerusalem, and there received the visit of their risen Lord; the Church is that party which abode together, had 'all things in common,' and continued in apostolic fellowship; the Church is that company of faithful men in all ages and countries who have maintained their fealty to the doctrines and institutions of the Gospel."

ADVERSITY exasperates fools, dejects cowards, draws out the faculties of the wise and industrious, puts the modest to the necessity of trying their skill, awes the opulent, and makes the idle industrious.

SECRET OF SUCCESS.—It is recorded of one of the Reformers, that when he had acquitted himself in a public disputation with great credit to his Master's cause, a friend begged to see the notes, which he had been observed to write, supposing that he had taken down the arguments of his opponents, and sketched the substance of his own reply. Greatly was he surprised to find that his notes consisted simply of the ejaculatory petitions—"More light, LORD—more light—more light!" And how fully was the true spirit of prayer compressed and illustrated in these short aspirations. Could they fail of success? "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of GOD, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, it shall be given him."—Bridges.

"It may be that theologians are needed who shall be fit to take the place of Moses to our generation, in teaching it again the very elements of natural theology; but let them not look upon science as a cold and godless demon, holding forth to the world a poisoned cup cunningly compounded of truth and falsehood; but rather as the natural ally and associate of the Gospel of salvation. The matter is so put in one of those visions which close the canon of revelation, when the prophet sees a mighty angel having the 'everlasting Gospel to preach'; but he begins his proclamation by calling men to 'worship Him that made heaven and earth and the sea and the fountains of waters.' Men must know God as the Creator before they seek Him as a benefactor and redeemer. This religion must go hand in hand with all true and honest science."—Principal Dawson.