

THE RELATION OF SANCTIFICATION TO JUSTIFICATION.

We received a card from a brother minister requesting us to write upon this subject, especially from the standpoint of Wesley's teaching.

In complying with this request, we wish our correspondent, and other readers, to bear in mind this fact, viz., that we are more anxious to harmonize experiences than theological opinions; the latter being in our estimation of much less value than the former. Be not startled then, dear friends, if we ask you to approach the subject by a different method than that which is usually adopted. We invite you, with us, to examine into the usual experience of Christians living in the justified state.

Take any one example, it may be yourself, and the following will be discovered. Sooner or later, however bright and joyous may be the conversion, a sense of condemnation is realized, which, on close consideration, is generally connected with some wrong course of conduct. It may have been failure to testify for Christ at a particular meeting, refusal to go and talk with some individual sinner about his soul's welfare, or it may have been some overt act of sin, as impatience, or giving way to temper, or, lastly, it may be a general sense of failure to carry out all the good resolutions made at conversion. Now this sense of condemnation contrasts sharply with the first joys of salvation, and awakens strange perplexities and soul-sorrow, a sorrow which does not fully depart until frank, full confession is made and forgiveness is received, as at the first, by simple faith in Christ.

Now, any Christian who examines his life from its beginning will find that this sense of condemnation resulting from sins of omission or commission has been a constantly recurring experience.

We have for many years been looking in vain for a Christian who could truthfully witness that for years after conversion he had lived without once coming under condemnation for sins either of omission or commission.

We once heard a brother say that for twenty-five years, that is, since the hour

of his conversion, he had never lost the evidence of his acceptance. But when we asked him if during that time he had never been conscious of having sinned in thought, word, or deed, he admitted that he did not mean that he had never come under condemnation for actual sin.

Again, if we recall our experiences at conversion we will readily admit that we did not take into our first thoughts of the happy Christian life we expected to live such alternate sinning and repenting experiences. We fondly hoped that the light that was then in us would grow brighter until it was lost in the brightness of Heaven.

And we all believed then, as we believe now, in spite of our numerous failures, that that early ideal is the true scriptural ideal, is the normal standard of a New Testament Christian experience, "rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in every thing giving thanks."

And here we remark, that no provision is made by any teacher of the doctrine of justification for the absence of this frequent sense of need of forgiveness, and the experience of it, in the life of a justified soul; it is admitted to be inevitable.

Now, we maintain that John Wesley can be best understood in his teachings when we clearly apprehend the fact that he was eminently practical. He taught the doctrine of the depravity of the human heart, not only because he found it in the Bible, but because he found it in his own heart, as also in the men and women of his day. So, too, with the doctrine of forgiveness of sins by faith in Christ, and the Spirit's witness. These were to him, not merely doctrines, they were facts in his own life and in the lives of many of his fellow-Christians. When, then, this experience of which we are writing came necessarily under his notice, as a fact almost universal, if not quite so, in the experience of believers, he investigated it thoroughly, and we have the result of his teachings in his various writings on the subject. Students of his works find it called by various names, as, inbred sin, "sin in believers," "the wilderness state," etc. Any of these terms employed by him,