

CIRCULAR LETTER.

To the Churches composing the Eastern New Brunswick Baptist Association.

DEAR BRETHREN—In this, our annual epistle, permit us to call your attention to the importance of personal holiness on the part of those who belong to Christ's visible kingdom in the world. Our Redeemer, in speaking to his church, says: "Ye are the salt of the earth," indicating, of course, that His redeemed embody those great principles of purity and truth, adapted and designed to preserve the world from moral putrefaction and ruin. To this end God has chosen his people. "According as He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Ephes. i. 4. For this purpose Christ laid down his life on Calvary; "loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." Ephes. v. 25, 26. The faith imaged in regeneration "works by love and purifies the heart," and all the agencies employed in the preservation of the christian unto eternal life tend to the same general result. Hence the whole arrangement of the remedial plan proclaims as in trumpet tones, the impressive fact, "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever!"

The precepts of the Divine will are all in perfect harmony with the Divine purpose as thus unfolded. Jesus says to his disciples. "Be ye therefore perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The Apostle enquires: "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" And in another epistle he tells us, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil world." In his letter to the Philippians he sums up the whole duty of the christian in the following comprehensive and beautiful utterance: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." To all this may be added the startling declaration: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Thus, we have the original purpose of grace, the sacrificial death of Christ, the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, the distinct precepts of the Divine will, and the eternal destiny of the *unholy*; all conspiring to teach us the absolute necessity and importance of holiness of heart and life.

Do any ask what we mean by this holiness of which we speak? We answer it indicates the free exercise of the graces of the eternal spirit of which love may be regarded as the central power. "Now there abideth faith, hope and charity; but the greatest of these is charity," or love. There must be faith in the person, work and authority of Jesus Christ as the sinner's Saviour and law-giver; there must be hope like an anchor to the tempest-tossed soul; and then there must be love—supreme love to God, and all-pervading love to man. Let these graces be possessed, and they will produce the exercise of all the subordinate graces, such as temperance, chastity, patience and humility. And then the result of the whole will be—a life devoted to the service of Christ, and to the progress of His kingdom in the world.

But it is important not only that this holiness should dwell in the heart, and be manifest in the life, but it should be on the increase until consummated in the fruition of heavenly glory. How is this progress to be attained? By constant watchfulness associated with earnest prayer. "What I say unto one, I say unto all, watch." "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Nobody ever advances in the Divine life who lives in habitual neglect of these precepts of our Lord.

There must be, too, crucifixion to the world and to all the varied forms of sin. We cannot grow in grace if we indulge in passion, in pride, in levity, in intemperance, in lasciviousness, in the giddy dance, or in those habits of social gaming and mirth so common in society, and yet so diametrically opposed to a consistent christian life.