Plain Words to Christians.

BY REV. THOS. L. CUYLER, D. D.

Among the thousands who read these columns weekly there must be many who have lately made a public confession of Jesus Christ. Whether young in years or not, they are all young in Christian experience. Like yonder peach tree before my window, they are in blossom; but the blossom is only the promise of fruit to come. In order to help you in securing the earliest and the utmost fruitfulness, please accept a few kindly hints from one who has been in little connection with the early stages of many new converts.

First of all I want that you are thoroughly converted—that you have thrown out the dirt and rubbish of old sinful habits, and dug down deep to the *one solid* foundation. A true Christian life begins with the first act of faith in Christ and on Christ. The first underpinning stone of your structure must be laid on him as the everlasting bed rock. Saving faith is not a mere opinion, it is a transaction; it is the act of clamping your weak and tempted soul to Jesus Christ as both your stoning Saviour and your Lord. Let your heart be firmly rivetted into him by the help of the Almighty Spirit.

But this is only a beginning, only a new birth. Conversion is not a process like buying a lot of railway bonds which have fifty years to run, and the owner can lock them up, and only is obliged to clip off the coupons for payment twice a year. You will require an everyday faith for everyday use. Each recurring necessity must send you afresh to the bread of life and the wells of salvation. As a powerful preacher of the Word has well remarked: "We cannot lay in a reserve of the water of life, as a camel can drink enough at a draught for a long desert march. We must fill our pitchers every day. Nothing but the continual exercise of faith in Christ, hour by hour, in every duty and under every temptation, will secure the strength that makes us strong, the purity which makes us pure," and the steadfastness which makes us immovable. It was to a church of recent converts that Paul sent the trumpet-message exhorting them to "*continue* in the faith, grounded and *steadfast*, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel." (Revised Version.) On five vital points you will need to be steadfast, amid the strong currents that will tend to undermine you and wash you away.

1. Be steadfast in heart-love for your Saviour. The mainspring of life is love, whether it be the love of money or fame, or sensual pleasures, or self-gratification; to keep these sinful lustings down you require the power of a new and stronger affection. The only love strong enough to do this is an overmastering love for Jesus. Look out for rivals which will try to crowd him out. One will get hold of your purse-strings, and rob Christ of his dues; another will entice you away from your closet duties and prayer meetings, on the plea that you have not time for them; another will try to bribe you to self indulgence. If you try to please everybody, you will not please your Master. Give him always the best; if you love him as you ought, you will. Too many Christians say by their conduct: "I must treat myself to a new carriage, or fine furniture, etc.; if there is anything over it shall go to the contribution box." The fat sheep is killed for the table of self-love; the poor crowbait is pelmed off for sacrifice on Christ's altar. Six days are cheerfully given to business, and one or two evenings in each week rather stingily begrudged to a devotional service of Christian work. This sort of religion, my friends, will soon reduce you to mere skin and bone. But an ardent, ever-glowing love for your precious Saviour will cheerfully submit to any pinch of self-denial to honor him. Love of Jesus is the very essence of Christianity.

2. Be steadfast in prayer. Backsliding begins at the closet door. You cannot exist if you stop eating, drinking, as I sleeping; nor can you keep alive as a Christian a single day without prayer, for it is your vital breath. Samson did not hear the clipping of the shears while he was asleep in the arms of the temptress, but when he woke up his strength had departed. Neglect of prayer shears away your strength; when the sudden temptation comes you are powerless. "Continue instant in prayer." The secret of the wonderful success of the Pentecostal Christians was that they continued steadfastly in prayer; they did not break their connection with God. Don't begrudge the time given every day to your Bible and to secret intercourse with him who is the source of very life.

3. You will need to be steadfast in watchfulness against secret sins. In the West India Islands there is an insect which stealthily eats out the substance of timber and of furniture, leaving the outside to look as firm and solid as ever. When a pressure comes on the beam it snaps; when the furniture is put to a strain down it comes! Secret sins will eat out the pith of your piety very quickly, if you are not careful. The reason why some Christians default in business is that sly frauds have devoured their honesty; a secret glass will breed drunkenness, as secret thoughts of uncleanness will destroy your chastity. Watch your hearts; out of them proceed the open transgressions. You cannot trust Christ too much; you cannot trust yourself too little.

4. Stand steadfast in *principle*, whatever it cost you. To do this you must have a sure footing on Christ as your Rock; his strength must be imparted to you like iron in the blood. Grounded on this solid foundation, you can build up a character that shall "stand four square to all the winds of heaven," and defy every hurricane. You can only preserve your purity, your inward peace, and your holiness by *resistance*. It is the staying power which holds the boat against the current. If you cannot stand pressure, if you cannot say "No!" to every companion who tempts you; if you have not got a holy stubbornness which cannot be bribed or bullied, or benumbed to do what Christ and conscience forbid, then you will be a poor, weak, wretched specimen of a Christian until you creep into your grave. During the heat of the battle, the Colonel's order is "steady, boys, steady!" If Jesus Christ nerves your soul, you will stand fire.

5. Fifth and finally, lay hold of some practical work during the early days of your first love. Open your lips for Christ at once, or you are likely to be tongue-tied for life, begin your labor, whether in the Sunday school or elsewhere, and determine to stick to it. Young Christians are too apt to start off at a jump, and then cool down and quit. Your Master will help you, if you will let him do it. At Nazareth he could do no mighty work, because the insanely foolish people would not allow him. With a steady hold on Christ as the feeding, inspiring, quickening Power, you can make your mark for time and eternity. There is a crown for you up yonder, *if you will win it.*

A Scripture Exposition.

DELIVERED IN THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE BY MR SPURGEON.

Rom. vii and viii (from verse 14).

Verse 14. "For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." If we were *spiritual* we should fully obey it. It is because men are carnal, or fleshly, that they do not obey it, and it is because, even in the regenerate, there is the carnal eye, that they only obey in part, to their deep sorrow. "We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." That is the nature of the *old* man; it never changes under any process whatever. There is an eye within us which is always carnal, "sold under sin."

Verse 15. "For that which I do I allow not." As a *Christian*, I do not love, I do not acknowledge, I do not sanction, some of the things which I do. That which one *eye* does another *eye* allows not. Many a holy thing, many a thing that my soul finds to do, I do not; "but what I hate, that do I do." What a contrariety within *one* man!

Verse 16. Deep down in the heart of every believer there is a firm belief that the law is good. Oh, that his walk were perfect! He gives his sanction to the perfect law of God; yet there is the old nature within him, which hampers and hinders him.

Verses 18-20. He says not this to excuse himself. He means his true, real, new-born, *immortal self* (*ego*), for there is another *I* for which we are altogether responsible, which is *truly* ourselves, which nevertheless drags us down towards that which is evil. Blessed be God that it is no more I, "but sin that dwelleth in me, for I know that in me dwelleth no good thing." The *old* nature still is evil, as ever it was, and cannot be any better. "For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." It is no unregenerate that ever sighed and cried like this. I would to God that all men had these inward throes, these secret conflicts, within them. We should then be *sure* that the Divine will was there. If we look back upon our past lives, how often are we compelled to make that confession? This is a man who lives near to God, and the more truly holy he is the more deeply he sighs over every remnant of sin that is still within him. Paul claims that in the new believer the best thing is the new-born *I*, which stands in conflict with the old *I*, which has to be overcome.

Verse 21. I find that when I *would* do good, evil is present most. When I am most devout, then pride will thrust itself in. When I am most eager to win souls, then some poor, paltry motive will occur to me. It has become a rule somehow, a horrible rule, from which I cannot break away, that when I *would* do good evil is present with me.

Verse 22. Down in my very soul my nature takes a deep interest in all that is God-like. I cannot rest until I obtain absolute perfection.

Verse 23. It is not the sinner hating sin; he takes *pleasure* in sin. When thou art in sin, if sin be captivity to thee, and thou art at home in thine own country, thou art under banishment when sin prevails against thee. But there is another law, which is fighting and struggling against that which is the principal, the dominant law of my mind.

Verse 24. Oh, how he longs to be delivered from this death! Is this a child of God? He that ceases to sigh because of sin may doubt whether he knows the love of God at all. I have heard of a certain painter who, every time he finished a picture, wanted to do it so much better. It was so far short of his ideal. One day, after finishing a picture, he said to his wife, "It is all over with me; I shall never produce another picture which will win public admiration." "But why?" said she. "Because I am satisfied." That same rule may apply to preachers. If a preacher is satisfied with his preaching, it is all up with him. Here, at the very gates of heaven, may a Christian cry, "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But is he, therefore, wretched? Only in one aspect. For the *moment* he is depressed with a groaning after holiness.

Chapter viii, verse 1. This very warring within proves that he is not a condemned man. There is something within him that can *never* come under condemnation—*I*, the *holy perfect self* which sinneth not, and shall not come into condemnation. The law of the spiritual life hath made me free from the law of sin and death. I struggled to drag free from that, and am still a free man by the grace of God.

Verses 3 and 4. Sin is a condemned thing to the Christian; there is no condemnation of him, but there is a condemnation of sin. He turns from it, and wins a victory over it, "that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." Though there is that inward contention on our part, yet God's people do fulfil the law, but in that divinely acceptable way which God regards as the fulfilment of the law. They love to be striving after it and pondering over it. They do not attain to *absolute perfection*; yet in their outward life they do fulfil the law of God. The Pharisee *pretended* to keep the law, and broke it from every point. The Christian does not *pretend* that he can keep it; but, striving as he does, he *does* fulfil it.

Verses 5-8. It is impossible; they are under the condemnation of a power which is unsanctified and impossible of sanctification.

Verse 9. You have broken free. Sin is in you, but you are not in *it*. It bothers and worries and troubles you; but you are not under its condemnation, "if so be that the spirit of God dwelleth in you."

Verse 10. It has not been regenerated yet; hence your aches and pains, hence your death. "But the spirit is life because of righteousness." *That* is your quickening; *that* can *never* die; your body shall be regenerated at your resurrection, so as to be suitable for that spirit which is to dwell in the body.

Verses 11-15. Don't you feel that this morning, dear brothers and sisters? I trust you do.

—Upwards of two hundred American students attend the University of Leipzig, Germany, and there are other American students at other German universities. Theologically they belong to various denominations.

God's Family.

God's family! The expression is God's own.—It is not a figure of speech. The word mean all that they can convey to God's child. They mean exalted relationship, precious privilege, and largest blessing. They also imply that solemn responsibilities and sacred obligations rest upon all who belong to the household of faith.

God's family! Then he is indeed a Father. His love is father-love, deep, strong, tender, lasting.

God's family! Then he will protect his children. No temptation shall be too heavy for them to bear; no enemy shall be able to overcome them. None shall pluck them out of his hand.

God's family! Then he will provide for their wants. His providence will watch over them. When regular supplies fail, manna shall fall in the wilderness, and they shall be fed. For them streams shall break forth in the desert. They shall not want any good thing.

God's family! Then he will rule it in wisdom and love. Each member must wear the family name and submit to the family discipline. His love is too true and earnest to allow the disobedience that would mar the family life. He governs with a rhumatic cure. She wanted me to try it right away. She thought he said it must be hot, so we put it on the stove. My friends," continued John, with a solemnity that dispelled the ludicrousness, "it was a marcy that we both left.—Belinda for flannel, and I to lock the barn; for that liniment wa'n't made to be hot, and it exploded, spiling the hull kitchen! I never heerd such a report!" Such was the magnetism of his earnestness that no one smiled, even when he added, "Belinda said she should allus hev blamed herself if anything hed happened us.

"Mebbe that's why I hed a curious experience that night. Belinda says I drempt. All at once I see Grandfather Alexander,—you all knew him; he was one o' the salt o' the earth! His hands was folded, 'n' his eyes closed; he was prayin', as I've seen him often. It used to rebuke my swearin' more'n anything, to feel that he was communin' with the Almighty! Then a veil passed over his prayin' face, like a cloud over the sun, and a dark presence stood over me. It was the Angel o' Death. I trembled, but plucked up desp'rite courage. 'I aint half done with earth!' says I. 'Your time's come!' says he, sternly. I left the body and went with him, how, and where, is not quite clear. Then we stood at the City gate—I knew it by the Revelation—and says he, 'Knock.' And a voice within answers, 'Who comes there?' And says I, 'I'm known on earth as John Alexander!' 'John Alexander?' says the voice, 'you cannot enter here!'"

John paused to control himself. Then, after a moment, huskily,—

"Friends, I never was so took back. I couldn't argue in that solemn brightness, but I cast about for the reason why my title to heaven wasn't clear.

"All of a sudden, I seemed to be in this 'ere vestry amongst you all. The meeting was solemn; I could see into each soul; many was longin' for a blessin'. But spilin' it all, a stumblin' block to sinners, a weariness to saints, was—was John Alexander! Up he gets and talks till I cried out, 'O man, man, why don't you *think* more, *pray* more, 'n' keep silence?' I could hear ye all sighin' in sperrit; the Parson was prayin' to God to deliver the meetin', but John kep' right on, boomin' away. I see my mistake then, with anguish. Souls were hungry for God's Word, but I kep' thunderin' my words into their ears.

"No wonder the gatekeeper would not let me into heaven; there'd be no rest for the weary, no peace for the saints! 'Oh, for only one more chance!' I thought, and waked to find that I was still in the body. I've talked too long to-night, brethren.—longer than I mean to in the future. I only wish you could have seen what I saw."

John resumed his seat, burying his face again.

"My friends," said Pastor Wilbur, breaking the silence that followed, "our brother's vision speaks to us all. Let us pray more and talk less. Shall we bow in silent prayer?"

With one accord, the congregation bowed. Not a rustle or movement marred the deep quiet. Into this came the spirit of prayer, opening for an instant, to John Alexander, at least, that closed gate of the heavenly inheritance; his soul was flooded with holy joy, the fruits of his first "week of silence."

God and Satan.

I have a neighbor who tries to puzzle everybody with this question, "If God is good and loves us, and wants us to be happy, as Christians assert, why did he make a devil to tempt us to sin?"

This man came to me the other day, and I promptly met his question with another, "Did God make a Devil?"

"Of course he did," was the reply, "for God made everything. To suppose that the devil made himself is absurd, and to claim that he is uncreated and existed from eternity would give us two rival gods. If there is one Godomniscent, omnipresent, and almighty, as you folks say, there is a a devil who goes about like a roaring lion God must have made him."

"Well, let us see. Here is an apple that is rotten to the core. Does God make rotten apples?"

"No, he makes ripe apples, and we ought to eat them when they are ripe. If we keep them until they rot, that is our fault. But what have rotten apples got to do with the devil?"

"Perhaps more than you think. We may call the devil a rotten angel. God made him holy and good. But being a free agent, he sinned and fell, and so made himself a devil. Let me ask you another question, Does God make whisky.

"No, I suppose not. He made grain and men turned it into whisky."

"Yes, the wheat, rye and corn that are created for food are rotted, spoiled for all useful purposes, and then distilled into poison. This man does, and then calls whisky a good creature of God. But is it so?"

"No, but God knew when he made the grain grow that it could be turned into whisky. Why did he put into it the elements for making poison?"

"We will come to that bye-and-bye. You were on the train the other day when the locomotive exploded, I believe?"

"Yes."

"Well, when you stood viewing the wreck, the boiler all torn to pieces, the fragments of the engine all thrown about, did you read the letters on that piece of brass that used to be on the side of the locomotive, 'Baldwin Works, Philadelphia?' It was lying in a conspicuous place among the broken wheels and levers.

"Yes, I remember seein it."

"Did you say when you saw it; 'Now I know who made this wreck; it was that locomotive company in Philadelphia. They had no business to send out a locomotive that could be blown up. They got up the machine and they are responsible for all the consequences?"

"Do you think that I am a fool? Baldwin & Co. make first class engines. Thousands from their shops are running on the railroads of the world. They are perfectly safe when properly used. But the Baldwins or anybody else can't make an engine that can't be abused. The engineer in this case let the water get too low in his boiler. It was his fault and not the fault of the maker. The very fact that an engine is a machine of such tremendous power makes it dangerous if it is not managed just right."

"Well, don't you see that God's relation to Satan is like that of the Baldwins to an exploded engine. The only difference is that in the case of the devil he was both locomotive and engineer. He puts on the steam of pride until he threw himself from the track. And now he dashes too and fro, an archangel ruin, a guilty, wretched being—though still so mighty that he is called 'the prince of the power of the air.' And as misery loves company he tempted other angels, and now tempts men to share in his sin and sorrow. That is the way it came to pass that there is a devil in the universe, and that he is the tempter of the human race."

"But couldn't God have made men and angels so that they would not have been able to sin?"

"Of course he could. He made the stars that way. They are kept by attraction in their orbits and cannot wander. But what is their obedience worth? It is like that of a clock that you wind up, and it has to run and mark the time for you. It is a machine and must do what it was made to do. God had machines enough, he wanted free agents; and when he made free agents, they chose evil instead of good; they could disobey instead of obeying. However innocent and upright at their creation, it was possible for them to fall. That possibility was inseparable from their freedom. Do you wonder that God wanted men and angels as well as stars? You have a child; when Kitty comes to you with her kiss and says: 'Papa, I love you,' you are happy. But why? It is because of the kiss and the words? Suppose a machine was made to look just like your child; that you could wind it up so that it would kiss you and say: 'I love you,' would that satisfy you? In some respects the machine would be better than the child. It would always kiss you when you wanted it to, while the child is sometimes wilful and perverse. But you would rather have the child with its possibilities of disobedience than the machine, though it is sure to obey. You want love that is free and not compulsory; and that is what God wants. He made Satan as he made Gabriel, but Satan used his freedom to rebel against his Maker. For this rebellion he only is responsible, as the engineer, and not the locomotive builder was responsible for the wreck last week. So the answer to your question is, God made an angel free, holy, happy, and he made himself a devil."—*Obadiah Oldschool, in Interior.*

Story of a Pump.

One day a certain pump in a certain cistern was found to be entirely useless. All efforts failed to make it work. The owner removed it from its place in the cistern, examined the valves, and stopped all possible leaks, and then tried it again; but most vigorous pumping failed to produce the desired result. The pump-maker was sent for. He took the pump to pieces and readjusted its various parts, working at it for several hours, but all his efforts were fruitless. Tired out at last he removed the covering, and looked down into the cistern and discovered that there was not a drop of water in it.

Is not the failure to secure results in churches sometimes due to causes similar to that which prevented this pump from working? It is well to have correct methods and systematic appliances. The house of worship should be as comfortable, as well arranged as possible. If possible, let the order be perfect, the singing faultless, and the preaching always eloquent. Have the sermons and prayers exactly long enough, and not a a sentence too long. Make the congregation large and orderly and attentive.

We should try and make outward conditions perfect, if perfection is possible. Do not neglect a single leak; do not leave a single hinge or joint or valve unoiled or out of order. And yet these outward things alone will not secure success. The pump will be worked in vain if there is no water in the cistern. The best methods and appliances in church and in school will be useless if not brought into vital connection with earnest Christian love and spiritual life deep down in the heart of the pastor and people, of teachers and scholars. We need above all things a fountain of the water of life springing up in every soul.—*Cumberland Presbyterian.*

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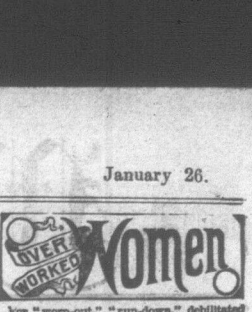

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