

[FOR OUR MISSION.]

The Power of the Believer's Position.

BY REV. J. A. R. DICKSON, B. D.

I.—FOR SELF-DENIAL.

WHEN we come into the clear consciousness of our position before God as forgiven, accepted, adopted, there is a mighty power issuing from this consciousness for such a life as God enjoins upon us. It is only as this consciousness is ours that a holy, happy, gracious life is possible to us. It is only as we realize our position that the promises, the warnings, the exhortations, the revelations of God's Word can come home to us, and stir us to hope and fear, and activity and rejoicing. Let a man remain in the dark as to what faith in Christ gets for him, and what effect can it have on him? None. No advantage, no profit comes to him. But let him take in the truth touching his position in God's favour, and his whole being is gladdened, and his life is glorified. And out of this consciousness of blessing there comes a beneficent power that clothes him as with a garment and affects all his activities. Being saved by faith in Jesus there is a saved life to be lived. It is written of the Lord: "Thou shalt call His name *Jesus*, for he shall save His people from their sins." This He does on a plan, a plan plainly revealed to every simple-hearted reader of the Bible. A plan from which He never swerves in all His treatment of men. As a physician seeks the cure of his patient by his prescriptions, so Christ seeks the salvation of those who believe in Him by the enforcement of his commandments. It is in reference to this that Paul is speaking when he says of the Romans, "For your obedience is come abroad unto all men," Our Lord refers to the same matter when He says: "*If a man love me he will keep my words*". Foremost among the words of Christ is this, "Whosoever will come after me, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF, and take up his cross and follow me." Self-denial is the first Christian act. It opens the door to all the beautiful graces of the Christly character. It makes them all easy of performance. It breaks down the strong barrier of self-will, self-conceit, self-seeking, selfishness. It crucifies self—Nails it to Christ's cross and says: "You must die there; I must be delivered from you; you stand in my way; you hinder me in my duty to the Master; you prejudice me in matters in which I should be free; you pervert my judgment; die therefore on the cross that bore my sins." The crucifixion of self is true self-denial, and this setting aside of self leaves room for Christ to come in and be all in all. Paul says "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Self-denial puts us in our true place. It strips us of all honor or glory. It gives the Lord the honor

due unto His name. It balances accounts for the believer. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." Walking in the Spirit we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. The Spirit leads us right up to the door of self-denial at the very beginning of our Christian course. If we deny the Spirit's teaching and impulse, and try to get along without self-denial, then our life is full of failure and misery. Self-indulgence never yet brought any real good to men, any heavenly blessing, only evil and that continually. A pampered self is proud, and pride always goeth before a fall.

He in whom self reigns cares little for Christ. He permits a rival to hold the place of power. But one may say is it not exceedingly hard to do this? Not if we are holding fast to our standing in the grace of God. In that, we lay deep and solid foundation for this act, for we regard ourselves as His. We yield ourselves unreservedly to Him in return for the "*Mercies*" to which we are indebted. Self-denial sends its roots into the ground. "I am not my own, therefore I must obey another. Having begun a good work in me He must perfect it, and in carrying it out I must do all that He wills; and if the setting aside of self is the first and preparatory act, then self shall be denied and held fast under the sentence pronounced upon it.

Out of this come all the graces of the Christian character. This is the door through which they come in troops, joining hands as Peter describes them, 2 Pet. 1:5-7. This is the great secret of a successful Christian career. This is the particular meaning of that beautiful hymn we often sing:

"Oh to be nothing, nothing! Only to be His feet,
A broken and emptied vessel, for the Master's use made meet.
Emptied that He might fill me, as forth to His service I go;
Broken that so unhindered His life through me might flow."

As we look to Jesus what incitement we have to self-denial, for He pleased not Himself, Rom. 15:3. For our sakes He became poor, 2 Cor. 8:9. He made Himself of no reputation, Phil. 2:7. He endured the cruelty of the cross and despised the shame that He might redeem us, Heb. 12:3. And all that was easy because the underlying principle of His earthly life was, as He Himself tells us "I SEEK NOT MINE OWN WILL." John 5:30. If we as believers in Him follow His steps, we shall not seek our own will. What do we pray in the model prayer, is it not "Thy will be done." That prayer which secures for us and all men the highest possible blessing, just brings us in the realm where the air is sweet, the sunshine gladdening, the voices of men musical and helpful, the *realm* of self-denial.

The Gospel.—John 3:16.

God so loved the world that He gave His
Only begotten
Son that WHOSOEVER believeth on Him should not
Perish but have
Everlasting
Life.