

GRACE.

“*And if by grace, then is it no more works ;
otherwise grace is no more grace.*”—Rom. xi. 6.

He tells me WORDS whereby I'm saved,
He points to something *done*,
Accomplished on Mount Calvary,
By His beloved Son ;
In which no works of mine have place ;
Otherwise grace were no more grace,

Believing this, how can I wait,
And ask what shall I *do*
To make His gift more sure to me,
His loving words more true ?
Since works of mine have here no place,
Otherwise grace is no more grace.

Ah, no, it is His *finished* work
On which my soul relies ;
And if my unbelieving heart
Its preciousness denies,
That works of mine might have a place,
Then grace *with works* were no more grace.

But in that *He* is raised on high,
Who came our sins to bear ;
I know that I am seen of God,
In oneness with Him there ;
Where not a spot His eye can trace,
Or aught that mars His work of grace.

Oh, wondrous WORDS ! Oh, precious work,
By which the soul is saved !

And Thou who didst it, blessèd Lord,
 Hast in my heart engraved
 A Name which must all names displace,
 With me a lost one, saved by grace.



“ RIGHTEOUSNESS WITHOUT WORKS.”

I believe, it will be found that the first and simplest truths of the Gospel become of growing value to our souls as we advance onward along the narrow road which leadeth unto life. Truths which are at first received authoritatively, because of the evidence of Scripture for them, become commended to us by their own beauty. And what we received at first, as it were by force of our own necessity, becomes in our progress that which manifests the glory of Christ ; so that we are able in a measure to contemplate it apart from selfishness, and to see it in the light in which God Himself sees it. I think I discern this feature in apostolical teachings ; while they unfold mysteries, or develop practical truth, they also designedly connect all with the primary truths of the Gospel—thus bringing them into constant prominence. And this marks the teaching of the Holy Ghost. It is human to handle a particular truth as a subject ; but the object of the Holy Ghost is to hold up prominently to view the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The soul becomes unsettled from its steadfastness when the *mind* takes the

lead in learning even the truth of God. The Spirit who leads into all truth, connects everything in His teaching with those great primary truths, the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The mind may get hold of something new, and be interested in it, as if it were more wonderful than the truth already received. I do not wonder at the apostle saying, "so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God"—there he saw the deepest truth; or, in after-times, saying to Timothy, "Do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry; for I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." It is an unhealthy symptom, when the simple gospel is not relished. It shews that the mind is rather at work than the conscience exercised before God, or the affections engaged with Christ. There are indeed wonderful discoveries made to us of the grace and purpose of God, and this too as that in which we are specially interested; yet when all is manifested and enjoyed without hindrance, then the primary truths of the gospel will be seen in all their brilliancy, even the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, the Object of adoration, admiration and praise throughout eternity. It is with these thoughts I now turn to the great fundamental truth of the gospel—"righteousness without works"—a doctrine we know which has not only been controverted by Christians, and sneered

at by the wise and the moralist—but which many who hold it, have only become settled in, after much bitter experience of themselves. It is indeed needful for all to learn it in this school of experience. But we may also learn its beauty by looking forward to that day, when the righteousness of the one Man, as the Fountain of all blessedness to the redeemed, shall be as illustriously displayed in heaven and in earth, as the sin of the one man as the source of all misery has been sorrowfully displayed in the history of this world. But there is another light in which the doctrine of “righteousness without works” may be regarded, namely, as leading us into present intercourse with God, and enabling us to walk in His presence. It is the bearing of this great truth as a present influential principle, which the Spirit of God Himself has carried out in the Thirty-second Psalm. And the blessedness predicated of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works is a blessedness, not confined to the wondrous truths of “transgression forgiven, sin covered, and iniquity not imputed;” but this blessedness is carried on into the exercises of soul, which result from being freely and fully justified. I would now turn to the Psalm itself.

First, the great oracular declaration—“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.” On this statement the Holy Ghost Himself, by the

apostle Paul, has thus commented: "Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works" (Rom. iv. 6). "The blessedness"—we almost need to have this English word translated to us; so slow of heart are we to believe His goodness, when God Himself proclaims it to us. Happiness, "our being's end and aim," is proclaimed by this oracle; and yet men are deaf to it. "Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven!" This is happiness—the alone happiness of which man as a sinner is capable; because nothing but this can bring a sinner to God, in whose presence there is fulness of joy. There is indeed a happiness proclaimed in the first Psalm, "Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful." But where is such a man to be found? This blessedness only attached to the righteous One, the Holy One of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. It was what He did; because He is what He is. But as for us, it is not anything that we can do which can make us happy, but that which God does for us. It is man's impossibility to make himself happy; it is God's possibility to make a sinner happy. And this oracle is the declaration of a sinner's happiness by means of the work of God Himself.

The distinction between transgression and sin is made sufficiently clear by the statements of the apostle in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the

Romans : " Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not *sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.*" Adam sinned by transgressing a positive commandment of God ; and thereby incurred the penalty of death. Others were liable to the same penalty who had never sinned by transgressing a positive commandment of God ; therefore, there may be sin where there is not such transgression. And the Holy Ghost announces this oracle, according to the usual order of the awakening of conscience. In most cases, it is awakened to a sense of positive acts of sin against the known commandments of God. And so the apostle, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, adduces proof of the practical ungodliness and immorality of both Gentile and Jew, before he opens the source from whence it all proceeds : original and indwelling sin. Man may draw out a theory of christian doctrine ; but the divine way is, not to teach a theory, but to grapple with the conscience, and to make man sensible of his wretched condition as in the presence of God, and that nothing short of God's own provision of Christ can meet his necessity. " Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh to Me," says Christ. The oracle before us regards man as he is, " an enemy to God in his mind by wicked works." Repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in the name of Christ among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. " Beginning at Jerusalem " shews

the character of transgression which the Divine remedy can reach. There was acted out "the great transgression." The testimony against them was, that they had denied the Holy and the Just One, and had killed the Prince of Life. Yet, in the name of Jesus, whom they had crucified, whom God had raised up, there was forgiveness even for this great transgression. Who need despair of finding forgiveness in the same name, in which alone there is salvation? If we turn to a different and more frequent character of transgression, we find it written, "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And *such were* some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." It is to man, therefore, as a proved and convicted transgressor before God, as already condemned by the righteous judgment of God, and when awakened by the quickening power of God condemned in his own conscience, that forgiveness of transgression in the name of Jesus is proclaimed by God Himself. And blessed, by God's own testimony, is the man who has an ear to hear it.

I much question if the bare idea of forgiveness of transgression, apart from the solid groundwork on which it rests, viz., the infinite atonement of Christ—"forgiveness in His name"—would ever satisfy the conscience. The grovelling thought of

escape is, indeed, the careless thought of the unbelieving mass ; without one just thought, either of the character of God, or of the evil of sin. But if such a manner of forgiveness were possible, it would leave the recipient of it in that state of uneasiness which a man feels who finds himself in the presence of one whom he had injured, yet who had forgiven him. He would be under the conscious sense of degradation. Such a condition would be the very opposite of being "blessed." It is the mode of the forgiveness, bringing the person forgiven to stand at ease in the presence of God, declared to be just, while He is the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, which constitutes the blessedness. The atonement of Christ is indeed the remedy, the only remedy, the divine remedy for the forgiveness of transgression ; but it is more, it is the great medium of the display of the moral glory of God. "Angels look into these things," and learn the glory of their God by means of His dealings with sinners. And it is a wondrous thought, that man's necessity as a sinner and the manifestation of the divine glory, find their one and only meeting point in the cross of Christ. Yea, blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven ; and so forgiven as that God is glorified. Oh, what riddance of anxiety to the soul, when its salvation is thus taken from off its own responsibility, and it is no longer the question, Shall I be saved ? but, Shall God be glorified ? Blessed peace, indeed, surpassing all understanding.

when God and the conscience are all alike satisfied?

“Blessed is the man whose sin is covered.” It is not the manner of the Holy Ghost to use redundant expressions. *We* often use many words where few would suffice. But “the words of *the Lord* are pure words : as silver tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times.” And man “liveth by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

Now, I believe as the conscience becomes alive to God, and exercised before God, it necessarily draws the distinction between transgression and sin. Outward reformation is seen by others, but the soul itself cannot rest on this. There is a very wide difference between reformation of character and conversion to God. Reformation of character will necessarily follow conversion to God ; but for a soul “to believe and turn to the Lord” is something far more deep than outward reformation of character : it brings us to Him with whom we have to do, before whom all is open and naked. And there it is that we learn the difference between transgression and sin. In human thought sin is an act ; in divine judgment it is a principal. And this discovery is so appalling that transgressions appear thrown into the shade by the discovery of what sin really is—viz., a settled principle of insubjection to God ; a desire to do what God has forbidden, because He has forbidden it, even when there is no positive act of disobedience ; a reluct-

ance to do what God has commanded, because He has commanded it. Yes—we have a will contrary to the good, perfect and acceptable will of God; and this is very experimentally known after we are made willing, by the grace of God, to come to Christ; so that to do the will of God is more or less connected with denying self. “Whose sin is covered.” Who would not faint under the struggle, if it were not so? God Himself has covered sin up, out of His own sight. This is what we need. How man tries to cover the evil of his heart from his fellow-man; yet, even human sagacity can often pierce through the hollow covering. And man himself is ill satisfied with it; witness his round of religious duties to try to cover it, and his natural proneness to superstition. But it is the atonement of Christ which covers sin before God. It is God Himself who has set forth Christ as a propitiation through faith in His blood. Here, when we discover sin, we can yet meet God, not in anger, but in mercy; for the sin which we have discovered is covered up before Him. I do not believe that there can be settled peace on the soul, till, taught of the Spirit, it finds the emphatic meaning of such texts as these: “Our old man has been crucified with Him”—“God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh”—God “hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” The mighty moral necessity of the Son of God be-

coming the substitute for a sinner alone meets the case of the conscience alive to what sin is. And I have admired the wisdom of divine teaching, as well as the infinite grace, that it is after shewing sin in the shape of transgression, sin in connection with death, sin as dwelling in us, the announcement follows—"There is therefore *now no* condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Let the conscience be ever so alive to what sin is in its various phases, the moment Christ is regarded as the object held out by God Himself to faith—"No condemnation," is the answer.

This distinction between transgression and sin helps to solve a phenomenon not unfrequently brought under the notice of those who are watching for souls. The deepest sense of sin is by no means always found where there has been the greatest amount of transgression. The transition from a state almost of remorse on account of transgression, to peace with God through faith in Christ, may well lead the soul to put its Amen to the apostolic declaration—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Now, when such are led on in exercise of conscience before God, to know sin as a principle, they find that the outward conduct has but too faithfully represented the inward principle. They find, too, the need of not trusting in the outward reformation; and that the heart, from whence all evil proceeds, has to be diligently watched. But

when persons who have been happily kept free from gross vice, gentle, kind and amiable, are awakened by the Spirit of God to a sense of sin, the judgment they form of sin is not so much by its injuriousness to themselves and others—which may, even apart from the quickening power of the Spirit of God, affect the conscience—but they measure sin by its contrariety to God; and instead of being able to rest complacently in the blamelessness of their lives, or in the praise bestowed on them by others, their very lives appear to them as one act of hypocrisy; the motives of action and conduct being now judged in the light of God's presence. And the result often is such self-loathing as betokens deep and steadfast conviction of sin, and needs the fullest application of all that Christ is to the conscience. There may be a measure of loathing oneself on account of transgressions committed, even from a generous impulse of nature; but to loath self because we have discovered what it is before God, marks the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, and will be found a deepening work as we go on.

“Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.” How needed is this clause for the peace of an awakened soul. There is the consciousness of iniquity; and the announcement is, that although the Lord knows iniquity to be there, He does not impute it. And wherefore? Surely, because God hath imputed it to Jesus: “He hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” He hath seen

it there, and judged it there. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him (Jesus), and by His stripes we are healed." It is the greater wonder that God should have imputed iniquity where He only saw righteousness, than that He should not impute iniquity where He sees it to be. And I repeat again, that nothing short of the truth of the actual substitution of Christ for the sinner, gives full relief to an awakened conscience. The cross of Christ is to us the marked expression of the love of God towards sinners. "God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 8-10).

The Cross, further, is the declaration to us of the righteousness of God. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness" (Rom. iii. 25).

Again, it shows the infinite hatefulfulness of sin in the judgment of God. The cup could not pass away from Jesus. He bowed His head and drank it. And God hid His face from Him, and made Him to know on the cross, in bitterest experience, what sin was—"God made Him to be sin for us" (2 Cor. v. 21).

The Cross is both the way for God to come nigh to man as a sinner without destroying him by His presence,—“And having made peace by the

blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself" (Col. i. 20)—and the Cross is also the way for man as a sinner to come near to God—"Ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. ii. 13).

All these several aspects of the Cross, deeply important and interesting as they are, would fail of giving settled peace to the soul ; if the truth of the actual substitution of Christ for the sinner were kept out of sight. "He loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). Here we find such solid ground on which to rest our souls—the wonder of the Holy One of God being made sin on the Cross, is far greater, than the wonder that any measure of guilt should be answered by it to God.

(To be continued, D. V.)



LIBERTY.

"Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

"Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty ; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."—Gal. v. 1, 13.

The Christian was called to liberty, the holy liberty of the new nature, but yet liberty. It is no longer a law which constrains, or rather vainly seeks to constrain, a nature whose will is contrary to it, to satisfy the obligations which accompany the relationships, in which, by the will of God, we find

ourselves—a law imposed, forbidding evil to a nature that loves evil, and commanding the love for God and for one's neighbour, to a nature whose spring is selfishness.

Had it been possible to take away Christ's moral liberty—which was not possible—it would have been by preventing Him from obeying the will of the Father. It was His food to do so (John iv). As a perfect Man, He lived by every word which came forth out of the mouth of God. He chose to die, to drink the bitter cup which the Father had given Him, rather than not obey Him, and glorify Him in drinking it. Christianity is the liberty of a new nature that loves to obey and to do the will of God. It is true that the flesh, if not kept in subjection, can use this liberty to satisfy its own desires, just as it used the law, which had been given to convict of sin, to try and work out righteousness. But the true liberty of the new man—Christ our life—is the liberty of a holy will, acquired through the deliverance of the heart from the power of sin—liberty to serve others in love. All the law is fulfilled in one word, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self." The Christian can do still more—he can give himself for others; or, at the least, following the direction of the Spirit, he fulfils the law in love. But if they devoured one another in selfishness, contending about circumcision and the law, "take heed," says the apostle, "that ye be not consumed one of another."

The apostle here establishes the principles of

holiness, of the christian walk, and brings in the Holy Ghost in place of the law. In the preceding part of the epistle he had set forth christian justification by faith, in contrast with works of law. He here shows that God produces holiness, instead of exacting it, as did the law with regard to human righteousness, from the nature which loves sin; He produces it in the human heart, as wrought by the Spirit. When Christ had ascended up on high, and was set down on the right hand of God, having accomplished a perfect redemption for those who should believe on Him, He sent down the Holy Spirit to dwell in all such. They were already children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and, because they were such, God gave them the Spirit of His Son. Born of God, cleansed by the blood of Christ, God seals them as His own by the gift of the Spirit until the day of redemption, that is, of glory. Having the new life, Christ as their life, they are to walk as Christ walked, and to manifest the life of Jesus down here in their mortal flesh.

This life, produced in us by the operation of the Holy Ghost through the word, is led by the Spirit which is given to believers; its rule is also in the word. Its fruits are the fruits of the Spirit. The christian walk is the manifestation of this new life, of Christ our life, in the midst of the world. If we follow this path—Christ Himself—if we walk in His steps, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. It is thus sin

is avoided, not by taking the law to compel man to do what he does not like ; the law has no power to compel the flesh to obey, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (Rom. viii.). The new life loves to obey, loves holiness, and Christ is its strength and wisdom by the Holy Ghost. The flesh is indeed there ; it lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit lusts against the flesh, to prevent the man walking as he would. But if we be led of the Spirit, we are not under the law ; we are not as the man in Rom. vii., where, impelled by the new nature, the will desires to do good, but, a captive to sin, not yet knowing deliverance, he finds no way of doing what he desires ; for the law gives neither strength nor life. Under law, even if life is there, there is no strength : man is the captive of sin (ver. 14).

But sealed by the Holy Spirit, the believer is free, he can perform the good he loves. If Christ is thus in him, the body is dead, the old man is crucified with Christ. The Spirit is life, and that Spirit, as a divine and mighty Person, works in him to bring forth good fruits. The flesh and the Spirit are in their nature opposed the one to the other ; but if we are faithful in seeking grace, the power of the Spirit, Christ, by His Spirit in us, enables us to hold the flesh for dead, and to walk in the footsteps of Christ, bringing forth the fruits that suit Him.

There is not really any difficulty in distinguishing the fruits of the Spirit from the works of the flesh :

the apostle names them, those at least which are characteristic of their respective actions. Of the sad works of the flesh, he positively declares that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God ; but the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, etc. Against such there is no law ; God cannot condemn the fruit of His own Spirit. Remark, that the first of these fruits are love, joy, peace. The Spirit will surely produce those practical fruits which manifest the life of Christ in the sight of men, but the inward fruits, the fruits Godward, come first, the condition of the soul needful for producing the others. Many converted persons seek for the practical fruits in order to assure themselves that they are born of the Spirit and accepted of God. But peace, love, joy are the first fruits of the presence of the Spirit ; the others follow. In order to know what is in the heart of God, we need to see the fruit of His heart, the gift of Jesus.

If I believe in Him, and through Him in the love of God, sealed of God by the Spirit, I have the sense of His love—love shewn in the death of Jesus is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit, which is given to those who are washed from their sins through faith in His blood. By that Spirit we have the consciousness of our position before God, and love, joy, peace are in the soul. The fruits which follow are, moreover, the proof to others that my certainty and assurance are not false, that I am not deceived. But for myself

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it is what God has done which is the proof of what is in the heart of God, and through faith I set to my seal that God is true. Then, sealed by the gift of the Spirit, I rejoice in His goodness, and the fruits of the new life manifest to others that this life is there.

Moreover, "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." They have not got to die: Christ died for us, and He who died being our life, we hold ourselves for dead, crucified with Him, as though we ourselves had died upon the cross, since it was for us He suffered. Possessing another life, I do not own the flesh as "I," but as sin which dwelleth in me, which I hold to be crucified. The faithful Christian realizes this continually. God declares us to be dead with Christ: He looks upon us thus (Col. iii. 3). Faith, accepting God's declaration with thankfulness, holds the flesh, the old man, to be dead (Rom. vi.), and through the Spirit, if he is faithful, he applies the cross in a practical way to the flesh, so that it may not act (2 Cor. iv.); besides this, God in His government sends that which is needful to test the Christian, and to effect this.

The apostle adds the exhortation, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another." The law nourishes rather than destroys vain glory, for the law makes us think of self. When rightly applied, it is most

useful for convincing of sin, not for producing righteousness.

Thus the operation of the law with regard to justification and holiness has been fully examined and set in a clear light. It does not produce righteousness, but exacts it. It cannot be linked with Christ as a means of justification: "If righteousness is by the law, Christ is dead in vain." Man ought surely to have kept the commandments of God, but that is not the real question. Man has not kept them, therefore upon that ground he is lost: Christ, on the other hand, brings salvation because we are guilty.

Then, as to holiness: it is not God's way to seek to produce holiness in the flesh through the law, for the flesh is not subject to the law, neither indeed can be. God gives a new life in Christ, and the Holy Spirit, to produce fruits which are acceptable to Him; and against these fruits there is certainly no divine law. God cannot condemn the fruits of His own Spirit. It is the new creature, the new life, with its fruits by the Spirit, which are acceptable to God; it is this new creature which seeks to please Him.

Strengthened by the Spirit, and instructed by Him according to the wisdom of God set forth in the word, let us seek to walk in the footsteps of Christ, that perfect example of the life of God in a Man which has been given to us.