

Words of Encouragement.

"As He is." 1 John iv. 17 is a wonderful argument against despair, but only those walking with God are entitled to enjoy it. It almost seems too good to be true that we, by nature dead in sin, should be completely covered with the righteousness of God, worked out by His beloved Son. Thus, to the praise of the glory of His grace, though we are still "in this world" we are viewed in Christ, and therefore as Christ. Is He accepted? So are we! Is He declared righteous? So are we! Is He free from wrath (that He took for us) and never to be forsaken? We too are absolutely free from judgment that we deserved! "As He is," says the child of God, and the light afflictions seem so light. And not only do we remember that we are "As He is" in Divine reckoning; it is also written "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John iii. 2). Yes, in that day there will be further corresponding. (Phil. iii. 20). If in 1 John iv. there is the reference to His righteousness, here we have the allusion to His glory. But that is future for us, though He is glorious now, whereas the righteousness is present even for us. The contrast of tenses is helpful, and thus we learn more the value of our present possessions, and more the certainty and the fulness of the revealed future of all who make manifest their election of God, (1 Thess. i. 4), by godly obedience (Heb. v. 9).

"As He walked." 1 John ii. 6, brings before us our responsibilities, even as other verses our privileges. And are not these very responsibilities privileges? To be represented by the Lord Jesus, our Advocate, is wondrous grace; and to represent Him, till He come, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, is a high and exalted honour. To us is such a position given. But do we realize it? Do we walk as Christ walked? He was a Man of sorrows, One separate from sinners, ever doing those things that pleased the Father. Are we like Him? The world cannot know Him as Example, for they know Him not as Saviour: but if we are "in Christ," we ought to be able to say by our life, to the redeemed, "He ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ." If not, we are wandering. And we should remember that the Scripture does not here say we are to walk as He walks, but as He walked *i.e.* in rejectedness and pain. Why do we seek to smooth the path of tribulation into the kingdom of God, (Acts xiv. 22)? Likeness to Christ means rejection by the world. If we are well received, it is because men see so few reminders of Christ in our actions. The disguise of worldliness will make us popular with the world. But let us now thrust it aside, and walk as our Saviour walked—along the road of simple devotedness with all its accompaniments, till God

is pleased to end our trials when we fall asleep, or at the Coming of our Lord Jesus, for which we look and long.



A Letter to an Assembly of Saved Ones, and others who would please God.

ON CRUCIFIXION AND MORTIFICATION.

DEAR FELLOW BELIEVERS,

Having been brought out of death into life, through the operation of God, and now possessing that eternal life which we shall, by grace, possess more manifestly, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness. For it is of the Lord's rich mercy that we are quickened together with Christ, and it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, and we are looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 21). Hence mercy surrounds our path, and shall follow us all the days of our life, that we may live correspondingly to the praise of the glory of the grace of God.

How often we forget that the "new creation" suggests the thought—and the fact—"old things have passed away." There is not only an addition but a subtraction; not only have our sins been sent away, as the word "forgive" indicates, but they have been washed away, that henceforth we should view sin as both a crime and an uncleanness, and manifest a death to sin as well as a life of righteousness, even while physically, though no longer spiritually, "in the flesh."

This view of the life of a child of God causes a deep hatred of sin, which must be coupled with intelligent acquaintance with His revealed will, that it may act aright. Our attitude toward iniquity is clearly explained in the Scripture, and from it we learn how intense should be our feelings, and how painful is the continuous conflict. When by grace we were led to Christ, we crucified the flesh with its passions and its desires (Gal. v. 24), thus appropriating the wondrous fact that we were reckoned and have been crucified with Christ (Gal. ii. 19). This crucifying was a definite act—it is not repeated—we are not exhorted to crucify again—it is assumed that the crucifixion necessarily leads up to death (and the brevity of human life, as a few hours, is indicated). Hence we are to view ourselves as hanging on a tree, publicly testifying that we deserve a curse, going through a time of pain, and making manifest a righteous retribution on the flesh that crucified our Lord. No Romans crucified us. The deed was personal: we must hate our own selves in this sense. 'Tis not enough to suffer troubles, to be crucified. How solemn an event is being born from above, and how far-

reaching its consequences. Having a new life, how deliberately we have set the old one aside.

Baptism typically represents a similar condemnation of self, but it contains the figure of voluntary burial, followed by death and *resurrection*, which is *not* suggested by *crucifixion*. That is not death. But it is, as we have seen, a *pledge* of death. Its immediate result is *inability* to use the flesh as before, mingled with pain and rejection. The child of God is elsewhere regarded as bearing the cross the world lays on him, i.e. on the pathway to physical martyrdom, dying daily, and being ready to lose his life for Christ. That the majority of His redeemed should comfortably go through their days, and die a natural death, was never suggested by the Lord Jesus, but rather the contrary. But this figure of bearing the cross, though equally forgotten, is quite distinct from *being crucified by one's own hands*. Many are the divine utterances and figures that show us our appointed position: we must consider each. *Crucifixion* is at once a denial of *eradication*, and of *allowing sin*. It thus witnesses against two errors. There is no *fleshly freedom* after crucifixion. The piercing of *hands* and *feet* is most emphatic in this connexion. And Gal. vi. 14 has a further meaning—no attraction toward the world is allowed, and the world is condemned (cf. Heb. xi. 7) and its influence refused.

And now that we are going on in the believing life is there nothing beyond *crucifixion*? Yes, much. There is the buffeting of 1 Cor. ix. 27, the *mortification*, which is *not past but present*. Two words emphasize it, and they both have a similar thought:—nothing short of speedy death, of *all sin* can be well pleasing. The command of Col. iii. 5 is thus another blow against *fleshly perfectionism* and *eradication*. But if any twist the Scripture to excuse their evil propensities because of such a verse, they little know the *pain* of mortification, nor the spirituality which regards the tiniest speck of dust almost as a beam, because of *grace* received. Rom. viii. 13 explains that this mortification can only be done *spiritually*, and that it should go on *constantly*, and that, as it continues, we may have the *assurance* of salvation. Much *used* to be written concerning the mortification of sin. An unbecoming lightness is now prevalent. And sentimental expressions, and poetical surrender seem more acceptable than this path of holiness. And yet the stern words before us are in Rom. viii., which is often *wrongly* separated from Rom. vii. And in both verses there is an allusion to the body, indicating that as the temptations in Eden and the wilderness alike were linked with that which is *physical*, Satan still works havoc *in this way*. We need to check our *natural* feelings, for godliness may be hindered by a good appetite; and physical indulgence may, as in the case of Sodom's inhabitants (Ezek. xvi. 49), of David, and the rich man of Luke xvi.,

be a stepping stone to *further* iniquity. The inspired words about Sodom need repetition—"This was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." There is much similar transgression to-day, and the child of God by *mortification* is to live "*self-denial*." "*Self*" has so many abuses and disguises, that great grace is needed, but if, by grace, we seek to detect the *beginnings* of sin, we shall find that our gracious God will enable us to have the victory. In accord with this, one sees the value of persecution, and can enter into the words of Deut. viii. 10, and Prov. xxx. 8, 9:—but we should not need persecution to make us godly.

But, dear friends, let us not merely talk about these things. Are we, in the Lord's might, *now* mortifying the crucified flesh—to hurry, as it were, its death? The crucifixion of the flesh necessarily hampers us, and the mortification wearies, so that we fail to do the complete work that we would. Like artists we see the error of our work, and are not satisfied. This is a key to Rom. vii. The time spent on fighting the flesh seems to stop other service unto the Lord. Therefore, if we are rightly in communion with the Lord, these meditations will make us, though *willing* to remain His appointed time on this earth, look yet more earnestly for the Coming of our Lord Jesus. Then we shall be like Him, and free from all sin and temptation, presented unto Himself. *What* a prospect is thus put before us as a stimulus. Surely in its turn this thought urges us to mortify the flesh yet more. We have received a new life, and have the gracious working of the Holy Spirit to this end, and the glory of our Triune God thereby. Let us not be slothful, for the days pass by, and the glorious Coming of the Lord, with His solemn Judgment Seat, draweth near. May we continually prepare, as befits those saved by *blood*, and made for ever the *children* of God, that they may act as such.

Yours earnestly in Christ, all by grace,

PERCY W. HEWARD.



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