

Letter to the Presbytery of Newark

by Charles Fitch,
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Dear Brethren:

After being made acquainted with my views and feelings on the subject of sanctification, you have passed a resolution declaring them to be important and dangerous error, and admonishing me to preach them no more. I must therefore say, brethren, and I hope to do it with all meekness, and humility, and lowliness of heart, that I cannot regard your admonition; and for the following reasons.

REASON ONE

1. It is now several years, since, after a season of spiritual gloom and sadness, I came fully to the conclusion, that there was something in the religion of Jesus Christ, to which I had been a stranger. I had seen myself to be a sinner before God, richly deserving His everlasting indignation. I had seen that God would be holy, just and good, and worthy of universal and eternal adoration, while punishing me with everlasting destruction from His presence and from the glory of His power. I had also seen in Christ a Saviour, who, after atoning for all mankind on the cross, was able, on the merits of that atonement, to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him; and on that Saviour I had cast myself as my only hope, and trusted in Him, and Him only, as my Deliverer from the wrath of God.

Trusting thus in Him-my crucified Saviour-for my salvation, I was for a time filled with great joy and peace in believing, and went on my way rejoicing. But years passed away, and to these lively emotions of joy in the Lord, I had been almost an entire stranger, except for a short season immediately succeeding my first conversion to Christ-when I did taste in a good degree, the peace

which those are sure to find, who come with a heart penitent for sin, and trust in the merits of a crucified Saviour for pardon and everlasting life. But I had come now to the full conviction, that my religious state was very far from what it ought to be. This arose partly from what I had learned in the Bible respecting "the riches of the glory of this mystery which is Christ in us, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27); "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeping the heart and mind of the Christian through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7), and "the joy unspeakable and full of glory to be found in Him, Whom not having seen, we love; in Whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice" (1 Peter 1:8); and partly from what I learned about that time of the experience of some Christians, to which experience I knew myself to be a stranger.

I came then to a settled determination to know, with the help of God, more of spiritual things. Since that time, which is now some years, I have, as never before, "cried after knowledge, and lifted up my voice for understanding, seeking her as silver, and searching for her as for hid treasures that I might understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:3-5).

I have sought for spiritual bread and for the water of life, with an earnestness which I know I have never felt for any of the possessions of this world. I have sought these in the Bible, in the experience of eminent Christians who have gone to their reward, and in the writings of living Christians who seem to know most of spiritual things. I have sought them in personal conversation with those who seemed to know most of the deep things of God, and I have sought them on my knees, with many tears, and with earnest wrestlings in the name of Christ for the teachings of the Holy Ghost. For a long time there was no definite blessing that I had in my mind as the object of pursuit, except that I might have more of the Holy Ghost, and be far better prepared than I had ever been to live to the glory of God.

But I was made acquainted, in the providence of God, with some of those Christians who believe that it is the privilege of all disciples of Christ to be, through the "great God and our Saviour

Jesus Christ who hath loved us and gave Himself for us, redeemed from all iniquity, and purified unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:13-14); and we "through the blood of the everlasting covenant to be made perfect in every good work to do His will, by His working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ" (Hebrews 13:20-21)-to be "sanctified wholly, and to have their whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ through the faithfulness of Him who hath called them" (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)-to be "cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1); "through the promises of God which are all yea and Amen in Christ, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Corinthians 1:20), and thus through the "exceeding great and precious promises to be made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4).

When I first knew this class of Christians, and first read their writings, I was greatly opposed to their views of truth, and from what I had learned of the mistakes and excesses of some who had professed to hold this truth, and to enjoy the experience of it, I was led to regard the whole subject with very great aversion. But I have learned that truth is not to be held accountable for excesses into which these mistakes may lead them, nor for the sins of those who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

While I was thus crying after knowledge, and lifting up my voice for understanding, the Lord began to teach me more and more of the love of Christ, so that I was not only restored to my first love, but made to know, in my own experience, that "the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18), and that whoso "followeth Christ shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeping the heart and the mind through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7), and the "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8), of which the Bible speaks, became realities to my mind; and I had learned the blessed truth, that "all the promises of God in Christ are yea, and in Him

Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Corinthians 1:20); that it is the Christian's privilege, by trusting in Christ for the fulfillment of the promises, to enjoy the fulfillment of every one of them, just as the awakened sinner has fulfilled to him the promise of pardon, when, and only when he believes for this on Christ.

I had then inquired what has God promised, and what is He willing to do for me, if I believe for it in Christ. I examined the Bible with this principle in view, and found that God has said, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye" (Psalms 32:8). This promise I knew to be yea and amen in Christ unto the glory of God by me, and I therefore prayed and trusted in Christ that God would instruct me, and teach me in the way that I should go, and guide me with His eye, "into all truth" (John 16:13), respecting the doctrine of "sanctification" (1 Peter 1:2).

When I read the promises on this subject, I found them full and explicit. "I *will* circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart , and with all thy soul" (Deuteronomy 30:6). "I *will* sprinkle clean water upon you, and *make* you clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. I *will* take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I *will* give you an heart of flesh, and I *will* put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them, and I will also save you from all your uncleannesses" (Ezekiel 36:25-27, 29). And "I *will* make an everlasting covenant with you, that I will not turn away from you, to do you good; but I will put My fear in your hearts, that ye shall not depart from Me" (Jeremiah 32:40). And "this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 10:16,17).

I also found that Christ, our Redeemer, was called Jesus because "He would save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21); that "He was manifested to take away our sins; and that whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not" (1 John 3:5, 6).

I also found many other Scriptures equally full and explicit. But after all this, unbelief triumphed in my mind, and I could not see how it should ever be to me reality in this life, that "the blood of Jesus Christ should cleanse me from all sin" (1 John 1:7). But as I prayed more and more for the teachings of God's Spirit, and searched after the truth, I found that "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). He is as faithful to cleanse us as He is to forgive.

I found also that Christ was "raised up an horn of salvation," "to perform the mercy promised to the fathers, and to remember God's holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life" Luke 1:69, 72-75.

When I inquired why are not these promises, so rich and full, made good to God's people, I saw that as they were yea and amen only in Christ, they were to be fulfilled, like the promises pledging the pardon of sin, to those, and only those, who believed in Christ for their fulfillment. This led me to see that if I would be cleansed from all unrighteousness, as well as have my sins forgiven, I must believe for that cleansing, in Him of whom it is said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

On Him, therefore, I now endeavored oftentimes to cast myself, by trusting simply in His faithfulness, that He would cleanse me from all unrighteousness. But I had yet no evidence on which I could rest a belief that I was thus cleansed. I went on thus, continuing to pray, and endeavoring to trust in Christ, for this cleansing gift of the Holy Spirit, desiring above all things to be cleansed from all unrighteousness. In this state of mind, I had one day taken my Testament, and a little work on "Christian Perfection" by Fletcher, and given myself up to reading, meditation, and prayer on this subject. I opened Fletcher at the following passage:

*"My heart strings groan with
deep complaint-
My flesh lies panting,
Lord, for Thee,
And every limb, and every joint,
Stretches for perfect purity.*

"But if the Lord be pleased to come softly to thy help; if He make an end of thy corruptions by helping thee gently to sink to unknown depths of meekness; if He drown the indwelling man of sin by baptizing, by plunging him into an abyss of humility; do not find fault with the simplicity of His method, the plainness of His appearing and the commonness of His prescription. Nature, like Naaman, is full of prejudices. She expects that Christ will come to make her clean, with as much ado and pomp and bustle, as the Syrian general looked for, when 'he was wroth, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper' (2 Kings 5:11). Christ frequently goes a much plainer way to work: and by this means disconcerts all our preconceived notions and schemes of deliverance. 'Learn of Me to be meek and lowly in heart: and thou shall find rest unto thy soul' (Matthew 11:29), the sweet rest of Christian perfection, of perfect humility, resignation and meekness. If thou wilt absolutely come to mount Zion in a triumphal chariot, or make thine entrance into the new Jerusalem upon a prancing horse, thou art likely never to come there. Leave, then, all thy worldly misconceptions behind, and humbly follow thy King, who makes His entry into the typical Jerusalem, 'meek and lowly, riding upon an ass, yea, upon a colt, the foal of an ass' (Matthew 21:5)."

These remarks were particularly blessed to me. It seemed to me, indeed, a most delightful thing to sink into the meek and lowly spirit of the blessed Saviour. I had before been laboring to rise above my sins, and thus leave them; now I felt willing to sink below them, into a depth of humility, where the proud, unhumbled spirit of sin would not be willing to follow, and it seemed a delightful thing to sink in the arms of my Saviour, below the reach of all my

spiritual foes, when I had long been seeking in vain to escape them, by soaring above.

I felt then in my spirit a most sweet and heavenly sinking into the arms of my Redeemer, such as I had not before experienced, and it was followed by a calm, unruffled, blissful peace in Christ—such as I need not attempt to describe to those who have tasted it, and such as I cannot describe to the comprehension of those whose hearts have never felt it.

It was attended with such a full and delightful submission in all things to the will of God; such a joy of heart, in the thought of being for life, and for death, and for ever, altogether at God's disposal; such a gladness in giving up earth in all its possessions and pleasures for Christ's sake; such an overflowing of humble, penitential, grateful love to my Redeemer; such a satisfaction in the thought of having Him as my only everlasting portion; such praise to His name that I might possess Him as the portion of my soul for ever; such full-hearted and unshrinking confidence in all His promises, and such a readiness to do and suffer all things, even to the laying down of life for His name's sake, that I felt constrained to say, this is purity of heart.

I knew that nothing but the Holy Spirit could ever fill such a heart as mine had been, with such feelings as these, and I therefore believed it to be the work of the Holy Spirit, cleansing my heart from the defilement of sin. I know that some persons are ready to say, all this may be the delusion of Satan, leading you to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. But I do not think that the devil ever yet attempted to fill the heart of any man with the love of God.

Christ said to His disciples, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: *but ye know Him*; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John 14:16-17).

The true disciple, therefore, will know the Comforter. I know that the feelings I have now described were a blessed reality; that there was nothing left in my will or affections in opposition to

them, and I do therefore believe that the Saviour gave me to know, at that moment, something of the blessedness of being redeemed from all iniquity, and purified unto Himself. For some length of time I continued in that blessed state of mind. The glory of my Redeemer shone upon the vision of my soul without a cloud. He had before seemed to shine upon me with a brightness like the noon-day sun, but now, instead of shining from a particular part of the heavens, He seemed to fill the whole firmament, and to shed His mild and sweet and heavenly and life-giving, joy-inspiring radiance upon me from every point. Above and around me all was light and gladness, and praise to the name of my Redeemer seemed the language of every breath. I cannot but feel that in that state of mind sin had no dominion over me. I feel that God, at that time, gave me the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But I had yet one lesson to learn, and there was probably but one way by which I could learn it; and that by drinking, like Peter, of the cup of sorrow, that I might in future beware. I had been accustomed to say, that if persons believed that they had reason to regard themselves as fully sanctified, there was no necessity for making it known, and the enemy of my soul doubtless knew enough of me, to commence his attack where I was most likely to be overcome.

I was, therefore, led to say within myself, this need not be mentioned, it never shall be said of me that I go about boasting of my own goodness. To boast of my own goodness I certainly felt no disposition, for I clearly saw that all which had been wrought within me was the work of the Holy Spirit, and that of my own I had nothing of which to boast.

But I came to the conclusion not to say, even to my dearest friends, that I had ever thought myself to be cleansed from sin, even for a moment; I would enjoy it alone with God, and let my life bear witness. The consequence was, that when brought where I feared another might suspect me of thinking this of myself, I was led, for the purpose of giving him a better opinion of my humility, to say that I entertained no such opinion.

Herein I fell into sin, by denying what I had believed to have been wrought in me by the Spirit of God. I was now made to feel what I had lost. I had been told that I could not remain in the delightful state in which I had found myself, without confessing to the honor of Christ what I believed He had done for me by His Spirit, but I believed it not. I accordingly made the attempt, and fell into the snare of the wicked one.

I now found the same sins besetting me as before, and bringing me into bondage, and my state precisely what it was, previous to what I believed the Lord had shown me of the blessedness of a pure heart. I knew that by denying that blessed work which the Lord did in me, and by denying it that I might have a reputation for humility with man, I brought leanness and darkness into my own soul.

In this state, however, I was led to desire most earnestly, and to pray most fervently that I might be made like Christ. The burden of my petition was, that I might be made as much like Christ, as it was possible for a soul to become while in the body, and I felt that I could be satisfied with nothing short of this.

After praying thus for a time, I saw most clearly that there was nothing which God was more willing to do, than to make me thus like Christ, and I felt a sweetness of assurance in Him, that it should be granted me.

Now it was that the Lord showed me what must be the consequence of being like Christ, and that I could not possibly have the likeness of Christ without meeting these consequences. I saw that if I would live godly in Christ Jesus, I must suffer persecution, and that I could not be like Christ without being willing to share in His reproach.

The Holy Spirit now showed me the sin which I had committed, in denying what God had done for my soul, and I now saw that while with "my heart I believeth unto righteousness, with my mouth I must make confession unto salvation" (Romans 10:10), from being again led into sin. This I had not done. With my heart I had believed unto righteousness, but instead of making confession with my mouth, of the grace which God had shown me, and

thereby being saved from the sin of denying it, I had refused to make the confession, and by so doing fell again into the hands of my spiritual foes.

I now saw that, to continue in the enjoyment of that blessing, I must confess the whole and take the consequences. These I knew would not be small. I knew that almost every friend I had on earth would regard me as almost utterly fallen the moment I should make such a confession, and that my brethren in the ministry, whose confidence I had valued above all earthly good, would withdraw their confidence at once, and, in all probability, cast me out from among them.

I had now come truly to the plucking out of the right eye and the cutting off of the right hand-to the point where I must "forsake father and mother, and brethren and sisters, and wife and children for Christ's sake and the gospel's" (Matthew 19:29).

Could I make the sacrifice? Could I become an outcast from my brethren, and an alien from my mother's children? Could I become as lost, to the friends I had loved most dearly, and have my name cast out as evil, by those whose kind regard I most wished to retain, in order to please my Saviour and enjoy His love, as for a little while He had permitted me to do?

The struggle was severe. It cost me as much to make these sacrifices as it would cost any one of my brethren; but I could not long hesitate. I had prayed that I might continually enjoy the Saviour's love, and He had now shown me what it would cost me-and, blessed be His name, He gave me strength to make the choice of His love, at the sacrifice, if necessary, of every thing that I held dear on earth.

I was enabled to pray, Lord, restore me again to that blessed state of conscious purity and peace, and love to Thee, and blessedness in Thee, which I once enjoyed, and I will confess Thy faithfulness to the world, and let my worthless name be reproached as it may. Save me, Lord, from my sins-redeem me from all iniquity, and give me evidence of it on which I can rely, so that I can go before the world with no hypocritical pretensions to something which I do not possess-let me in deed and in truth be cleansed from

all unrighteousness, and have full and satisfactory evidence that Thou hast done this for me, and I will declare Thy faithfulness, and in Thy strength meet all that shall follow.

In this state of mind, I took up the Word of God and came to the following passage, in the words of Paul to the Romans, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be *dead indeed* unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11).

I had before thought of this passage, and it has seemed to me that there was a meaning in it which I did not understand. I had said in my thoughts, What if I do think myself dead to sin, how will just thinking myself dead to sin, make me thus dead? How will any change be wrought in the state of my heart before God, by my laboring to think so?

Again, I had thought of the injunction, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin," and I had said in my heart I will endeavor so to do; but found myself wholly unable to do so in any way that even began to satisfy myself, that I was in truth "dead to sin." It was not the comfort of a sincere mistake respecting my own character, that I desired. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks," (Psalms 42:1) so panteth my soul after a full conformity to the will of God. I felt that nothing would satisfy me for a moment, but "to be *dead indeed* unto sin, but alive unto God" (Romans 6:11).

Nor was it an ambition to have others think me free from sin, that I was seeking to gratify, for if I could have made the whole universe believe me free from sin, while it was not a fact, it would not have begun, in the least degree, to satisfy the longings of my soul. Could I have possessed all the wealth, and received all the honor, and enjoyed all the pleasure, which the whole universe could have lavished upon me, and have been thought by every creature of God in earth and heaven to have been as pure as the Spirits that wait continually before the eternal throne, all this would have done nothing to fill the desires which burned in my heart, to be "cleansed from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Still, however, with my eye on the injunction, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11), I was not able to see

how I should do this, so that it should be *indeed and in truth a reality in the sight of God* ; and nothing short of that would satisfy me for a moment.

I now remembered that blessed promise of our divine and glorious and loving Saviour, "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all truth" (John 16:13); "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

I now cast myself down before the Lord, and prayed in the name of Christ, that the Holy Spirit might guide me into all truth respecting the passage before me, and teach me how to reckon myself dead to sin and alive to God, so that it would be a reality, and not a thing of imagination. Having made known my request, I trusted in Christ that the teachings of the Spirit would be given me, for I knew He had told me, "Verily, verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He *will* give it you" (John 15:16).

I therefore placed my confidence in the Saviour, and believed that, for His sake the Holy Spirit would show me how to "reckon myself *dead indeed* unto sin; but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11). Instantly, while I was even on my knees, with the blessed Bible open before me on those words, there seemed shed upon them a flood of heavenly light, and my very soul filled with unutterable gladness, with "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8), with the thought that seemed clear as the brightness of a thousand suns, that I was to reckon myself dead unto sin by trusting my Lord Jesus Christ to keep me dead to sin, and alive unto God by trusting my Lord Jesus Christ to keep me alive to God.

This I saw would be reckoning myself to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ my Lord. *It was to cease forever from placing my confidence in my own strength, and to rely altogether upon the strength and faithfulness of my blessed Lord Jesus Christ,*
to

"Make and keep me pure within," to make and keep me "dead indeed unto sin," to make and keep me "alive unto God" (Romans 6:11).

And now, if I had found myself that moment monarch of the world, with its crown on my head, its sceptre in my hand, its accumulated treasures at my feet, and every individual among all its multitudes ready to do my bidding, it would not have begun to afford me the joy which I felt, when I saw, as I then did, the privilege which a God of infinite love had granted me, to reckon myself dead indeed unto sin, by trusting my Lord Jesus Christ to make and keep me thus alive.

How glorious and lovely did my Saviour then appear! "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib" (Song of Songs 6:12), and if the crown and the sceptre and the riches and the homage of the world had been mine, I should have leaped for joy and run to give Christ the sceptre and the crown, the riches and the homage; and to lay myself in the dust at His feet, to be His humblest, lowliest servant forevermore.

Oh, since I have known my high privilege to reckon myself dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ my Lord, "His name has been indeed to me as ointment poured forth" (Song of Songs 1:3). "He has kissed me with the kisses of His love, and His love has been better than wine. He has drawn me, and I have run after Him, and the King has brought me into His chambers, and made me to be glad and rejoice in Him; therefore will I remember His love more than wine, and (by His strength) I will uprightly love Him" (Song of Songs 1:2, 4).

When the Holy Spirit thus enlightened me respecting the privilege of reckoning myself dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ my Lord, He that moment enabled me to avail myself of the privilege, and I instantly found myself more than restored to that blessed state of conscious purity of heart before God, from which I had fallen, by refusing to confess before men what my Saviour had done for me.

The love of the world was gone, no sinful indulgence had any charm for me. My whole heart was won by Christ, and filled with overflowing love to Him, and I feel that a thousand hearts, had they been mine, would have been most joyfully consecrated to His service. I had no will but His, and no desire of life or death or eternity, but to be disposed of in that way which would secure the highest possible praise to my Redeemer.

I was now delivered from the fear of man, and as I had covenanted with the Lord to confess His faithfulness to the world when He should give me evidence on which I could rely, that I was redeemed from all iniquity, and as I had now found myself, and in a way so glorious and delightful beyond everything I had ever before conceived, made "*dead* indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord," and had been so abundantly enlightened respecting the privilege of every Christian to be kept in that state by the faithfulness of the dear Redeemer, I could not for a moment hesitate, that it was my duty to declare to the world, that by the power of the Holy Spirit given me by my own blessed Saviour, I was made "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11).

Besides, I had once known the bitterness of denying my Saviour here, and the blessed work which He had wrought in me, for the purposes of retaining the good opinion of man; the Holy Spirit had set that sin before me, and I had opened my mouth to the Lord, that if He would restore me, I would bear His reproach. And now He had enabled me once more in His infinite and abounding mercy, "with the heart to believe unto righteousness," and it remained that "with the mouth I make confession unto salvation" (Romans 10:10), from falling again into the snare of the devil.

I have been enabled to make this confession to the world- that "the great God and my Saviour Jesus Christ, who loved me and gave Himself for me, has redeemed me from all iniquity, and purified me unto Himself" (Titus 2:13-14), that I am "dead unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ my Lord" (Romans 6:11), that "the God of peace is faithful to sanctify me wholly; and

to preserve my whole spirit and soul and body blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23), that "the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep" does "through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make me perfect in every good work to do His will, working in me that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to Whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20-21).

I felt that in making this confession, I was laying myself and my all, a sacrifice on the altar of my God and Saviour; but that Saviour had led me by His own amazing love, and given me a heart that could deny Him no more, and that was ready and glad at all hazards, to confess His faithfulness and power and love to the world.

I knew that the world would reproach me. I knew that God's professed people would cast out my name as evil. I knew that the friends whom I loved most dearly would many of them, perhaps, weep over me as lost. I knew that the confidence of the churches with which I stood connected, would be withdrawn from me, and perhaps all my past prospects of a maintenance for myself and my household be entirely cut off; but I knew that my Redeemer lived- and that all power was given unto Him in heaven and on earth and that I had only to "seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33), nothing doubting that "He who feeds the fowls of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field, as Solomon was never arrayed in all his glory" (Matthew 6:26,28-29), would surely feed and clothe me and mine.

In this state of mind I did, at the altar of my God, make confession of what God had taught me of His truth, and of what I had been made to feel of His purifying, sanctifying grace in Jesus Christ; and thus I discharged a duty, to which I am sure I never could have been led by anything, but a once-crucified and now glorified Saviour's love, manifested to me by the Holy Ghost. I have no more doubt that I was constrained to this step by the love of Christ, than I have that Christ or my own soul has a being. I know I was not led to it by a love of the world, for I never could have

done it, until the last vestige of the love of the world had taken from me. I know that until I had made of the whole world an entire sacrifice to Christ, I never could have thus held myself up to scorn.

On the morning of the day which immediately followed the Sabbath when I first "witnessed this confession" before men, I had a season of communion with God, of which I will speak, because I think it may do good. I was alone in my chamber, and meditating upon some passages of Scripture, which made mention of the faithfulness of God. Such as the following: "God is *faithful*, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:9). "*Faithful* is He that hath called you, to sanctify you wholly; and to preserve your whole spirit and soul and body blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:24, 23). "God is *faithful*, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make way for your escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called *Faithful* and *True*" (Revelation 19:11). "His name is also called the Word of God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19:13,16).

While reflecting thus upon the faithfulness of my God and Saviour, my whole soul seemed heaved with inexpressible emotions, and poured out in floods of gushing love at my Redeemer's feet. I felt that I had forsaken all for Him, and could now only leave myself in His hands, and commit all my interests to His disposal. And now in view of the safety of trusting my all with Him, my soul exulted with amazing gladness, and I could only walk my room weeping aloud for joy, and pouring out my tears of overflowing delight, as I uttered again and again the single expression, "my faithful God, my faithful God!"

Since that time, I have had various conflicts with Satan, but I have never for a moment doubted the faithfulness of my Redeemer in saving all His people from their sins, who will believe on His

name for that blessing; and I see most clearly, that the only reason why any Christian is not saved from sin, is "because of unbelief" (Romans 11:20).

I have by no means been all that I hope, or expect to be; for I see that it is the privilege of the Christian that has been redeemed from all iniquity, still to "forget the things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before" (Philippians 3:13), and "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, to be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

I believe that to be cleansed from all unrighteousness is by no means the height of the Christian's privilege on earth; that beyond that he may go on to "to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," and to be filled more and more "with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:18, 19). And that even then, we may still say to Him with the apostle- "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

You have now seen, brethren, in what I have related to you of the leadings and teachings of God's Spirit with my own soul, why I cannot regard your admonition, and desist from preaching the doctrine of entire sanctification by faith in Christ. I could not do it, without regarding myself as a traitor to my blessed Lord and Master, Who has made to me-a miserable, unworthy, hell-deserving worm of the dust-manifestations of His presence and love, bright and glorious, far beyond anything which I once could have conceived. I believe

"He is faithful to sanctify His people wholly, and to preserve their whole spirit and soul and body blameless unto His coming" (1 Thessalonians 5:24, 23). I feel that "necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not this gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:16). Like Jonah fleeing to Tarshish, I once attempted to escape the discharge of the duty. Like Jeremiah, "I said, I will not make

mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name. But His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jeremiah 20:9).

Once I denied the faithfulness of my Redeemer; but He forgave me, and has restored me to the enjoyment of His love, and has, as I firmly believe, in faithfulness to His own promise, "circumcised my heart to love Him with all my heart, and with all my soul" (Deuteronomy 30:6). I must speak it to the world. Let Him have the glory, and let me bear the reproach which I must bear for His sake.

I must confess it to the world, for the purpose of making known, as far as I am able, with His blessing, to all God's people, their high privileges in Christ Jesus. For "I certify you, brethren, that this gospel which is preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11-12). And now "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For I cannot but speak the things which I have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20).

REASON TWO

2. I cannot desist from preaching the doctrine of sanctification, and from testifying to my own experience of it, for the very same reasons that you cannot desist from preaching the doctrine of regeneration, and testifying to your own experience of that. Suppose that you were to insist that "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3), but when asked whether you or any one else had enjoyed that blessing, should say, "By no means. It is an important and dangerous error for any man to think so; it never takes place until death." How much influence would such preaching exert? How many would be born again through such instrumentality?

You feel yourselves under necessity, therefore, on that subject, to maintain that regeneration is a matter of experience, and that you and many others do enjoy it. But while you tell your people that

they ought to be free from sin, and are wholly inexcusable for not being so, and while you pray that they may be redeemed from all iniquity, they know perfectly well that you have no expectation that it will take place while they live, and hence all your exhortations and prayers are wholly lost. Your people know that you expect that they will live along in sin until death, and that while you exhort them to be free from sin, you show them no way by which they may become so, and maintain that it would be an important and dangerous error for them to expect to be so until they die. Hence, all your efforts for the sanctification of God's professing people, are rendered perfectly nugatory.

For myself, therefore, I feel bound to tell professing Christians that there is a way whereby they may "cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1), that it may be done through the promises of God, which "are all yea, and Amen in Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

When, therefore, with the apostle, "I labour, striving according to God's Spirit, which worketh in me mightily, by warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:29, 28), I feel that I am not urging them to chase a phantom, which, however earnestly and laboriously sought, will elude their grasp till death; but that I am leading them to the enjoyment of a blessed and glorious reality, which is treasured up for them in Christ, and which they may every one of them secure and most richly enjoy.

And when I am permitted, through the exceeding riches of God's love in Christ Jesus, to say that I have experienced of the grace which I present to their acceptance, I have left them stripped of all excuses and palliations for their sins, and may therefore hope that God's Spirit will attend His truth, and lead them in the way of knowledge and understanding. I can say to Christians, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thessalonians 4:3). "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (1 Thessalonians 4:7), while you by your own principles are obliged to tell them, that they are shut up, in some measure at least, to a life of

sin. Brethren, I cannot stand on such ground, and therefore I must disregard your admonition.

There seems to me to be a wonderful and strange inconsistency, in urging Christians to holiness of heart and life, and at the same time telling them that they never can be without sin while they live, and that if they think that Christ, who was manifested to take away their sins, will ever do it till He takes away their breath, they have embraced important and dangerous error. I feel constrained to say, in faithfulness to Christ and His dear people, though some may think it unkind, that those who attempt to maintain such ground, seem to me to be, and in a very important sense "shutting up of the kingdom of heaven against men: neither entering themselves, nor suffering those who would enter to go in" (Matthew 23:13).

When the watchmen of Israel cry out in the ears of the people, that no man ever did or will abide in Christ and sin not, on earth, that God who has sworn to do it, and raised up Christ our horn of salvation to perform the oath, never will "grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74-75), what can we expect, but that many who desire deliverance from sin, will despair of attaining it, and submit in despondency to the will of their spiritual foes, and groan away their lives in grievous bondage, when they might be enjoying the liberty wherewith Christ would make them free; and that others, glad to have such an excuse for their sins, will comfort themselves in their worldliness, and their unhallowed indulgences by the feeling that they are not expected, while they live, to be free from sin.

I will not attempt to conceal it, that this looks to me like a subtle and dangerous snare of the great enemy of Christ and His church. Herein it seems to me lies the "important and dangerous error," and not in telling Christians that their Redeemer "is faithful to sanctify them wholly, and to preserve their whole spirit and soul and body blameless to H is coming " (1 Thessalonians 5:23), when they will believe in Him for that blessing.

REASON THREE

3. I cannot regard your admonition because those Scriptures on which you rely as testimony that no Christian ever does so "abide in Christ as to sin not," seem to me to have no bearing that way.

Take, for example, the single passage quoted in the report of your committee, and adopted by you as ample proof of the correctness of your views.

"There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Ecclesiastes 7:20). Let us apply this to the experience of Paul. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). What arrogant, presumptuous language has Paul here used! He must have been puffed up with spiritual pride! Did he not know that the Bible expressly declares "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not?" How dare he say, "I have fought a good fight?"

But suppose Paul were allowed to step forth in his own defense, and taking the ground ascribed to him by those who regard the doctrine of entire sanctification by a faith in Christ as "an important and dangerous error," should begin to say, "I acknowledge that there is much sin in my heart, and that my best actions are defiled with it, but still I think I have had some love of God, some desire to glorify Him by doing His will, some readiness to spend and be spent in His service, and that I have in some things sincerely labored for the advancement of His cause." We may come forward still and say, Paul, you are certainly mistaken; you think of yourself more highly than you ought to think; for it is a positive undeniable declaration of God's own Word that "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not," and, therefore, Paul, your assumption that there is any good thing in you is forever silenced.

Your text, therefore, brethren, stands just as entirely and fully opposed to your views of truth as to mine; and in my apprehension has nothing to do either with the one or the other. The truth is this. There is a large class of Scripture texts which are designed to set forth the truth, that by nature and by practice until regeneration,

all mankind are "evil, only evil, and that continually" (Genesis 6:5). But "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, and *all things* have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The character of such a one is precisely what it was not before; and those passages of Scripture which described his character before, cannot describe it now.

Consequently we find that the Scriptures used to describe the two characters, stand in direct opposition to each other. Accordingly, while it is said that "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Ecclesiastes 7:20), it is also said, that those who "were sometime alienated and enemies in their minds by wicked works" (Colossians 1:21)-shall be presented "holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in His sight, if they continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Colossians 1:22-23), that in fulfillment of the oath of God through Christ, their horn of salvation, it shall be "granted them, that they being delivered out of the hand of their enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of their lives" (Luke 1:74-75); that those who "abide in Christ sin not" (1 John 3:6), and that "He who hath called them is faithful to sanctify them wholly, and to preserve them wholly, and to preserve their whole spirit, and soul and body, blameless, un to the coming of Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

"All the promises of God pledging their sanctification, are yea, and Amen in Christ, unto the glory of God by them" (2 Corinthians 1:20), and when they believe in Christ for the fulfillment of these promises they cannot fail. Most clearly therefore, to my mind, these passages of Scripture which are relied on to prove that God's people never will be "presented perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28), while they live, are designed to set forth the characters of the unrenewed, and not the characters of such as are "in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:1), and who are therefore "NEW CREATURES, OLD THINGS HAVING PASSED AWAY, AND ALL THINGS BECOME NEW" (2 Corinthians 5:17). In the nature of the case, what is true of the one class, cannot be true

of the other, for they are designedly set forth in the Bible as perfect opposites.

But again. Suppose we admit, that among the saints of the Old Testament not a man lived without sin; although it was said of Isaiah, after he had made confession of his uncleanness, and his lips had been touched with a live coal from the altar of God, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged" (Isaiah 6:7). But admit that the Old Testament saints were at all times defiled with the guilt of actual transgressions, is there no privilege granted to God's people now, that was not afforded to the early saints?

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: *receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.* Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, *who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.* Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, *and the glory that should follow.* Unto whom it was revealed, *that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into"* (1 Peter 1:8-12).

What is this end of faith, even the salvation of the soul? Of which salvation the prophets inquired and searched diligently? What is this grace of which they prophesied, coming unto the saints scattered abroad, to whom Peter wrote? What was the glory that was to follow the sufferings of Christ? What were the things which the prophets ministered, not unto themselves, but to those to whom the gospel was afterwards preached by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven? What did Christ mean when He said, "This is My blood of *the New Testament*" (Matthew 26:28)? What did Paul mean by that new and better covenant of which Christ was the mediator and surety? And what did Christ mean when He said, "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist, than whom there had never been, up to his day, a greater

prophet" (Luke 7:28)? And what did Zacharias mean, when he said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for *He hath visited and redeemed His people*, and hath raised up an horn of salvation, to perform the mercy promised unto the fathers, the covenant, the oath which He sware" (Luke 1:68, 69, 72, 73)? What is all this but the blessing of the new covenant spoken of by Jeremiah, and repeatedly spoken of by Paul to the Hebrews:

"I *will*, (since they brake My old covenant), make a new covenant," "I *will* put My laws into their hearts and in their minds will I write them" (Hebrews 10:16), "I will (and with an oath the mighty God hath said it) grant unto you that ye being delivered out of the hand of your enemies may serve Me without fear, in holiness and righteousness before me all the days of your life" (Luke 1:73-75). This, then, is the peculiar covenant privilege of New Testament saints-SALVATION FROM THEIR SINS.

This explains all the Scriptures which I have quoted, and therefore whatever might have been true of Old Testament saints, it is now the peculiar privilege of God's people to be redeemed from all iniquity, and for this they have only to believe in the Mediator of this new covenant, for this is God's covenant with them, when He shall take away their sins. It is, therefore, the privilege of the new covenant that I am to hold up before the people of God, and urge to the full enjoyment of it; and thus seek, like the apostles, to obtain "sufficiency of God to be an *able minister of the New Testament*, not of the letter that killeth, but the spirit that giveth life" (2 Corinthians 3:6).

Your application of Old Testament declarations of the universal sinfulness of men, therefore, to show the privileges of New Testament believers, is, in my view, a great mistake, and shows you to be still ministers of the Old Testament, instead of being, as you should be, "able ministers of the New Testament." For this reason, then, I cannot heed your admonition. I wish to be a minister of the New Testament, not of the Old.

REASON FOUR

4. I will now state one more reason, why I cannot give heed to your admonition, and then I shall have done.

There is a dying bed a little before me, and a judgment seat where I expect to stand and give account for all the actions of my life.

Can I tell the people of God that they have no Saviour from sin during their whole lives; that live long as they may, and labor as hard as they may to find out the path of life, and pray as fervently as they may, and trust in their Saviour for the fulfillment of the promises as fully as they may, they are doomed hopelessly to sin against the Redeemer they love, more or less, even to their dying hour; that all their cries and struggles for help are vain, and that they must be, to some extent, rebels against the heart of infinite love, until the grim monster death appears for their deliverance? To me it looks like casting dust in the eyes of such as wish to see a way whereby they may be enabled to love their God and Saviour with a perfect heart; and "sewing pillows to the armholes" (Ezekiel 13:18) of those who wish to pass comfortably through life in their remaining corruptions, hoping to find a Saviour from sin, only when all opportunity for sinful enjoyment has passed away.

I feel, brethren, that I could not go in peace to my dying pillow, or appear at the great tribunal, expecting the approbation of My Judge, if I did not tell God's people that He has promised to "circumcise their heart, and the heart of their seed, to love the LORD their God with all their heart, and with all their soul" (Deuteronomy 30:6); to "sprinkle clean water upon them, and make them clean: from all their filthiness, and from all their idols, to cleanse them" (Ezekiel 36:25), and that these, with many other exceeding great and precious promises, were given for the express purpose, that through them, they might "cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfect holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1)-that by these promises, they might become "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4).

I feel it to be a matter of unspeakable importance to the honor of Christ and the good of His cause, and the holiness and peace of

His suffering heritage, that they be made to know that there has "come out of Sion a Deliverer to turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Romans 11:26), and that God has said, respecting this Deliverer, "This is My covenant with them when I shall take away their sins" (Romans 11:27). It seems to me that God's professing people do not know their Deliverer, and there are vast multitudes who seem altogether unwilling to know Him. Hence the reproach cast upon such as declare that there is a "Deliverer to turn away ungodliness from them and take away their sins" Romans 11:26-27. But I see not how I can lie down in peace on my dying pillow, or meet the Saviour in judgment before the universe, unless I do what in me lies to make Him known. I feel constrained to cry in the ears of the church, Behold your Deliverer; He has come to turn away ungodliness from you, and to take away your sins. Look to Him; believe on His name, and let "your iniquity be taken away, and your sins be purged" (Isaiah 6:7).

And now, brethren, I have done. I cannot, for the reasons I have named, and in view of my final account; I dare not listen to your admonition for a moment. With my name you must do what you think right before God, and in view of an approaching judgment. I have no further defense to make. If you cannot own me as one of your number while I tell the church of Christ that He was manifested to take away their sins, and that they may and ought so to abide in Him that they sin not—that it is my privilege and theirs so to abide in Christ, that it is my belief that through the grace of God I do so abide in Him; if such a confidence in my Redeemer for the fulfillment of God's exceeding great and precious promises, must still make me, in your estimation, an advocate of important and dangerous error, then just blot me out of your book, and let the transaction be recorded, as it will be, in the book of God, to be reviewed before the universe in the final day. That I hold the doctrine which you call important and dangerous error, and believe it to be the brightest glory of my bleeding Saviour's gospel, is true; and I know that, if you knew the blessedness of trusting fully in Christ as your Redeemer from all iniquity, there is not a man of you, who would not choose that his tongue should perish, rather

than be used to pronounce such a doctrine importantly and dangerously erroneous. But if you still adhere to that opinion, I must consider myself as no longer of your number, and you must do to me and with me as you think our Lord and Master requires. "Now may the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20-21).

Yours in the gospel, CHARLES FITCH