

Views of Sanctification

by Charles Fitch,
Pastor of the Free Presbyterian Church,
Newark, NJ.

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." I Peter iii. 15.

NEWARK:
AARON GUEST, PRINTER, 121 MARKET-STREET.

1839

PREFACE

The occasion of this publication is the following.

The Lord Jesus Christ, "whom having not seen, I love; in whom, though now I see Him not, yet believing, I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" has of late made good to me, vastly unworthy as I am, His own assurance, "he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." I feel it would be base in me not to acknowledge, that through the amazing condescension of my Redeemer, he has made me to enjoy rich manifestations of His love. I speak of it to His praise. He has taught me to "be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, to make my requests known unto God, and the peace of God that passeth all understanding, has kept my heart and mind through Christ Jesus." Out of the abundance of my heart, my mouth has spoken, and I have given those who attend on my ministry to understand, that it is my belief that God has "created in me a clean heart, and renewed a right spirit within me," that He has made me to know something of the blessedness of "the pure in heart." Some have

thought that I was bringing "strange things to their ears, and such a report went abroad. At a late meeting of the Presbytery, the brethren, with perfect propriety, and with the utmost kindness, desired of me that I would tell them "what this new doctrine is." I gave them a brief statement of my feelings and views, and answered as well as I was able several inquiries. The Presbytery, then, with perfect propriety, in my apprehension, appointed a Committee to confer with me further on the subject. Of all this, I fully approve. Soon after, I received a note from one of the committee, in which, in a kind and christian like manner, he proposed the following questions, and requested an answer.

1. Do you believe that the Bible teaches, men are perfect in holiness in this life? (I ask no more than yes or no.)

2. What cases or characters were without sin in Bible history, except Christ? (Merely name them.)

3. Of all among the martyrs, whose memoirs have come down to us, how many do you find perfect?

4. In modern times, have not the best of men evidently been sinful more or less, and have they not thought themselves to be so?

5. In the circle of your acquaintance, have those who claim perfection, generally turned out as well as those who feared always?

4

6. Are those around you who claim this more meek and heavenly than others?

7. Do not perfection people very frequently run into some palpable inconsistencies?

8. Do you avow the belief, that you are generally without sin, in thought, desire, word, deed, or defect?

9. And have you made up your mind, publicly to teach, and defend the position, that there are men among us who are without sin?

I have taken this way to lay myself fully open to my brethren and to the world, because I believe it to be in all respects the easiest and the best; and do greatly rejoice in the opportunity afforded me, to testify to others of "the riches of the glory of this mystery which is Christ in me, the hope of glory." I wish, by the grace of God, to

be a living "epistle known and read of all men." It is my prayer, that God will enable others, as He has me, to say, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, He also is become my salvation," and thus may they "with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation, and say praise the Lord." And may "the redeemed of the Lord return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy be upon their heads; and may they obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning flee away." Then shall "the joy of the Lord be our strength."

C. F.

5

Newark, Nov. 25, 1839.

Dear Brother:

In compliance with your request and my promise, I will now endeavor, in the fear of God, and under a sense of my accountableness to Him, to give you my views in full, respecting the points embraced in the questions which you proposed to me. I hope you will not consider it in any sense improper that I give you my views at large on the whole subject, instead of a mere categorical answer to your interrogations. I prefer the course I here take, because I wish to present you with a view of the subject somewhat at large, as it lies before my own mind. Besides, I consider the subject too great, and the interests pending too important to be disposed of in this summary way. I have no desire to conceal or evade any thing, concerning which you or the Presbytery may wish to know of my views. My design is, as far as in me lies, to be full and explicit.

But I fear that I might suffer much, through the misapprehension of others, respecting my own impressions of truth, if I were not to do something more than you propose in your communication.

Allow me, therefore, to open my whole heart to you as a christian brother should, and having done so, I will most cheerfully and gladly leave the event with Him on whom I have learned to cast all my cares , and whose glory is the only object for which I wish to live. On His guidance, who has said, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go-I will guide thee with mine eye ;" and "who of God is made unto me *wisdom* as well as righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," and who has said, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him;" I now cast myself while I write. I shall give you such views of truth, and only such, as I feel most willing to meet in the great and dreadful day of account.

I shall give them, as far as possible, in Scripture language, that it may be seen on what I rest my faith, and whether I do, or do not, pervert the Word of God.

Permit me, then, to commence by saying that I find myself in my natural state, a transgressor of God's most holy and righteous law; so guilty as to deserve to be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power ." I also find myself totally unable to make the least atonement for one of all my ten thousand sins, or to find for one of them the least excuse or palliation. In myself, I stand, and must forever stand before the universe, a hopeless reprobate, irrecoverably bound over to the damnation of hell. But I learn in the

6

gospel, that the Lord Jesus Christ, by his atoning sacrifice, has rendered full satisfaction to the justice of God for my sins, and thus opened a way whereby the punishment of my sins may be escaped, provided I have that "holiness, without which no man can see the Lord."

The all-absorbing question with me, then, so far as my own eternal interests are concerned, is this: How shall I become obedient to that high command of the most high God, "Be ye holy for I am holy!" I have, I *can* have, I *ought to have* no expectation of

dwelling where God dwells-of being an object of his love forever, and a sharer of the eternal blessedness which He only can give, unless I have a character fully assimilated to His-unless I love with a full and undivided heart, what He loves, and hate what He hates, and *all* that He hates, with a hatred, full, entire, uniform, perpetual, like His own. There must not be in me an approach to any thought or feeling which is not in perfect, full-hearted and joyous agreement, with everything that God is, and with everything that God does. This must be my character, or I *will* never see God's face in peace.

But how shall I come to possess such a character? Every feeling of my heart, in my natural state, is entire opposition to God-there is in me carnal mind, which is enmity against Him. How shall this hatred be made to give place to adoring, enraptured love? There are in me by nature all the elements of hell. Kindled by the touch of God's deserved wrath, they will burn eternally-an unquenchable fire . How shall I have a nature fit for heaven? I acknowledge my full obligation to cease hating God instantaneously, and to love Him at once and forever with a full and undivided heart. But "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

This is my case. Christ has died for my sins. The government of God is ready to set me free-but who shall save me from "an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God?" With such a heart, influenced by the temptations of the devil, and the allurements of a sinful world, I am just as sure (left to myself) to sin eternally, as Satan is, and must take up my abode with him forever.

What I need, then, what the exigencies of my fallen nature cry out after, with an exceedingly loud and bitter cry, is a Saviour from sin.

7

It avails me nothing that Christ has atoned for my sins, if I am then cast on my own resources. Holy beings fell before the wiles of that subtle tempter, who, like a roaring lion, seeks to devour me, and my evil heart will surely make me a willing prey. I am eternally damned unless I can find a Saviour from sin.

I shall never save myself from sin. My spiritual foes stand ready to devour me, and my own evil heart will thrust me into the lion's mouth-into the wide open jaws of hell. Help! Help! Oh, help! is the cry that comes up from my inmost soul. Is there, in the universe of God, any way to save a poor, lost sinner from his own love of sin? Any way to cleanse his polluted heart, and fill it with holiness-pure, perfect, perpetual holiness; without which such an one never can be received to heaven?

With this inquiry, my dear brother, I approach the Bible. Has God revealed any such thing as a way of salvation from sin? If such a salvation can anywhere be found, it must be in the Bible; and if I cannot find it in the Bible, then every ray of light goes out from the horizon of my soul, and the eternal night of despair shuts in upon me.

I am indeed told that I may be saved from sin at death; but that is the hope of the Universalist. I may be told that the Universalist has never been born again, and that he who has been born again will surely be saved from sin when he leaves the world; but I know of nothing on which I can safely rest the belief, that death is to be regarded as the means or the time of sanctification. I believe that "as the tree falleth, so it lieth," that "there is neither work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither we go:" and that if a man leaves the world in his sins, he remains a sinner forever. I believe that this is my only probation, that I must here be saved *from* sin, or never see God's face in peace. I believe, therefore, that my everlasting interests are pending on the question, whether God has made provision to save me from sin, before I leave this

world. To prevent all misconception, I will here say, that I am very far from believing that the regenerate man with the remains of sin, is in the same condition with the Universalist who has never been renewed; but that neither has any reason to believe that death will make any change in his character. *If there is no salvation from sin before death, I expect to be lost.* Here, then, to make the whole subject plain as possible, in the light in which it is apprehended by my own mind, I will make three inquiries.

IV. Has God, in the economy of his grace, made provision to save his people from their sins?

II. If such provision has been made, can christians avail themselves of it in this life?

III. In what way may the provisions of God's grace become available, to save his people from their sins?

I. Has God, in the economy of his grace, made provision to save his people from their sins?

8

I find it said to Joseph, by the angel, in relation to the promised Messiah. Mat. 1:21. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus:" (i.e., Saviour) "for he shall save his people from their sins." For this very purpose, then, he is my Saviour, to save me from my sins; and this is just the Saviour that I need.

When John the Baptist pointed out Christ, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world ." This is what I need, a Saviour to take away my sins. We read also in the Epistle to the Ephesians, that his people were "chosen in him from before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love ." That he "loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish ."

In the Epistle to Titus, we read that "the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works ." In the Epistle to the Hebrews, we find Christ

presented as the Mediator of the New Covenant, which is this-quoted from Jer. 31:33.-found Heb. 10:16. "I will put my laws into their heart, and in their minds will I write them; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." In the 3rd Chap. of the 1st Epistle of John we find it thus written: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins," i.e. to take away our transgressions of the law, and leave us in a state of obedience. "And in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him ."

Now, my dear brother, I believe that Christ came "to save his people from their sins, to make them holy and without blame before him in love, to present them to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but holy and without blemish- to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works, to write his law in our hearts- and to take away our sins , that we might abide in him and sin not ." This therefore I believe to be the salvation of the gospel- that Christ came, according to the words of the angel to Daniel- "*to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins;*" as well as to "make reconciliation *for* iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness," on the ground of which, we might have deliverance from the punishment which sin deserves. I do find then, most clearly, and satisfactorily to my own mind that God, in the economy of his grace, has made provision to "save his people from their sins ." I hail this salvation, therefore, as a salvation exactly adapted to my necessities as a fallen being, and while I utterly despair

9

of ever saving myself from sin, I hail the Lord Jesus Christ as a Saviour, manifested to take away my sins, to write His law in my heart, to redeem me from all iniquity, to make me holy and without blame before Him in love, to sanctify and cleanse me with the washing of water by the Word, that He may present me to himself,

not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish.

I have found, therefore, the Saviour and the salvation I need, plainly revealed to me in God's Word; and on the Saviour I cast my soul, my being for time and eternity; in myself a hopeless, helpless sinner, but trusting in a Saviour "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead," and who has made me "complete in Him," so that I may expect, through His salvation, to "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." This is my hope of everlasting life, that Christ Jesus my Redeemer will save me from my sins: and in comparison with this hope, the whole material universe is to me of less value than "the small dust of the balance." Take away this hope from me, and you blot out the light of my soul, and leave me in the blackness of darkness forever.

I believe, then, that full provision is made in the gospel to save God's people from their sins.

II. I am now to inquire whether Christians can avail themselves of this provision of the grace of God so as to be saved from sin in this life?

In the first chapter of Luke, I find that Zacharias, being filled with the Holy Ghost, prophesied, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David; as He spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised unto our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; *the oath which He sware unto 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.*" Now I believe, that he who serves God "without fear, *in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of his life,*" is saved from sin, *all the days of his life*. I believe that God "sware to Abraham, our father, that He would grant unto us, that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, *before Him*, all the days of our

life;" and that He hath raised up an horn of salvation for us, to perform this mercy promised to our fathers, to remember this holy covenant, this oath which He swore. I believe all this on the testimony of a man filled with the Holy Ghost. Since, therefore, I believe that God's oath can be relied on, especially since Christ came on purpose to fulfill that oath, and since that oath does pledge the grant of walking before God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life, I am bound to believe it. I dare

10

not sin against God by believing that God is not ready to be faithful to His oath; an oath, too, which Christ came on purpose to fulfill. I read that "he that believeth not God hath made Him to be a liar ." I must not make God a liar by saying He is not true to His oath.

Again. When the disciples of Christ said, "Lord teach us to pray ," He directed them to pray, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven ." If God's will is done in heaven by sinless obedience, we are taught to pray for the same thing on earth; and I cannot believe that Christ has taught us to pray for a thing which he is unwilling to grant. Again, we are taught to pray that "the very God of peace will sanctify us wholly; and preserve our whole spirit and soul and body blameless unto the coming of Christ;" and we are assured that He that hath called us is faithful, and will do it. 1 Thess. 5. 23, 24. Again, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness ." As faithful, I suppose, in the one case as in the other. I know of no reason for waiting for forgiveness or cleansing till death.

In the further proof of the position that christians may avail themselves of God's grace, so as to be saved from sin in this life, I will here speak directly in reply to your question, "who, besides Christ, mentioned in Bible history, were free from sin?" I quote the words of one, who exclaimed in view of his bondage to the law of sin and death, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" In reply to his own interrogation, he answers, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord ." He says, moreover, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,

who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." Paul, therefore, found out a way, whereby to be free from the law of sin and death, and to have the righteousness of the law fulfilled in him. This could be nothing less than loving God with all the heart and his neighbor as himself; for he who does less than this is a transgressor. The law could not do this, in consequence of the weakness of the flesh, but God did it through Christ; fulfilled in him the righteousness of the law, and thus made him free from that law of sin, under which he had before groaned in condemnation. He was now free from condemnation, but how those can be free from condemnation who are continually sinning against God, it is impossible for me to understand. He hath found, that to those *in Christ Jesus* there was no condemnation, and John tells us that those who abide in Christ sin not.

Paul also says, in another place, that "he that is dead is freed from sin ." Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe we shall also live

11

with Him. If we die unto sin after the likeness of Christ's death, we shall walk in newness of life, after the likeness of His resurrection. Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him-neither if we be dead to sin, will sin any more have dominion over us. Hence, the injunction of the Apostle-"Likewise *ye* also (i.e., as well as I) reckon yourselves to be dead *indeed* unto sin, but alive unto God through Christ ." Reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin by trusting in Christ to keep you thus alive. It may perhaps be said, that a person may reckon himself dead to sin, who has once repented, though he now continues to sin every day. But if I should find a man every day intoxicated, I should not regard him as dead to that sin, whatever he might say respecting past repentance-and the same is true of

every other sin in thought, word, or deed. No man is dead to sin who commits sin-and as Christ who died once, dies no more, so he who is dead to sin, sins no more. If he falls into sin, he is no longer dead to sin. Such were the sentiments of Paul, and as I cannot accuse him of the gross inconsistency of preaching what he did not practice-I must believe that he was dead to sin and alive unto God, and that being free from condemnation in Christ Jesus, he did so abide in Him that he sinned not.

Again, we hear this Apostle saying in another place, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Gal. 2:20, 21. I cannot conceive that a man could use such language as this, who was living day by day in sin. If a man is crucified with Christ, he must be dead to sin, and such an one the Apostle has already told us is "freed from sin ." No man can say, I am fully persuaded, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ," who knows himself to be living in sin. Nor can one who lives in sin say, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me ." Paul says, I do not frustrate the grace of God . I do not expect to work out a righteousness by my own unaided efforts to obey the law-I rely on the faithfulness of Christ who loves me, to keep me.

Peter also learned, that "the divine power of Jesus our Lord had given unto us *all things* that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." I cannot doubt that Peter had experienced in his own heart what he wrote, and I believe, therefore, that in being made partaker of the divine nature, through the exceeding great and precious promises of God, and "having escaped the

corruption that is in the world through lust; he did so abide in Christ that he sinned not. John also declared in his 1st Epistle unto those to whom he wrote, "that which he had heard-which he had seen with his eyes-which he had looked upon, and his hands had handled of the Word of Life." He wrote that, therefore, which was to him a matter of experience. He had seen and felt in himself "that in God was light, and in him was no darkness at all;" and that when any man walks in the light-in fellowship with God, "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleansed him from all sin!"- John had also seen and felt that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." John had also learned from his own experience that Christ "was manifested to take away our sins,"-he had "heard, and seen with his eyes, and handled this truth." He had also learned that "whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not" -that "whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known him," and that "whosoever doeth righteousness, is righteous, even as He is righteous"-that "he that commiteth sin is of the Devil;" and that "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin-that his seed remaineth in him; and that while this is true he cannot sin, because he is born of God." I cannot doubt that John was a man who reduced his own principles to practice, especially as he wrote only what he had heard and seen, and handled of the Word of Life, and therefore that he did so abide in Christ, that he sinned not.

Thus, Dear Brother, I have shown you conclusively, to my own mind, at least, that in the economy of God's grace there are provisions available to enable the christian to walk before God "in holiness and righteousness all the days of his life," and so "to abide in Christ that he sin not ." In so doing, I have given you my views in full, respecting the attainableness of holiness in this life, and the question whether any have actually attained it.

III. I am to consider how the provisions of the grace of God become available to the christian's sanctification?

Our Saviour's prayer was:- "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

By what truth is the christian sanctified?

1. Not by any precepts of the Bible, through his own unaided efforts to obey them. So long as any man attempts to become sanctified by this means, he will surely "find a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin ;" and will constantly find occasion to say, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?"

2. The christian *may be sanctified* through the promises of God's truth. "Having therefore these *promises*, dearly beloved, let us

13

cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God , according as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

4. Let me be fully understood, then, that no man is ever sanctified, who relies on his own efforts to obey the law. Such an one frustrates the grace of God. He would indeed be holy, if he loved God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself; but this he surely will never do, by any unaided efforts of his own. It must be done by the grace of God, and he most surely "frustrates that grace who does not live the life he now lives in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God ."

We are, therefore, to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, by the promises of God. These contain the truth, through which we may be sanctified, according to our Saviour's prayer.

Two inquiries here arise:

1. What has God promised?

2. How shall we gain the fulfillment of the promises?

I remember that it is said, Gal. 3. 16:- "Now, to Abraham and his seed were the promises made and that (29th verse,) if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." When I find a promise in the Bible adapted to the

necessities of my case; as I am one of Abraham's seed; if I am Christ's, I am one of those to whom that promise was made, and I am an heir to all the good which God in that promise has pledged himself to bestow. With this assurance I look to the promises, and inquire, with eager interest, what has God my Redeemer promised to give me? Here I may look through the whole Bible, for to Abraham and his seed were the promises made, and I am one of them, because I believe in Christ.

Deuter. 30-6. "And the Lord thy God shall circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live" It is very plain that he who did thus love God, would not sin. The reason why this and other exceeding great and precious promises have not been fulfilled to all God's professing people in every age, will appear, when I shall come to show how we may gain the fulfillment of the promises.

Ezek. 36-25. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from *all* your filthiness, and from *all* your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart

14

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. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses." If it should be said that those promises were made to the Jews, I reply, "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made," and of these I claim to be. No one among them can need to be cleansed from all his filthiness, and from all his idols, and to be saved from all his uncleannesses, more than I need it. I do, therefore, regard myself as an heir to the good here promised.

Jeremiah 32-29. "And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them and their children after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do good; but I will put my fear in their

hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Should it again be said that these promises were made to the Jews only, I utterly deny that any natural descendant of Abraham has any right, title, or inheritance, in these exceeding great and precious promises, which does not equally belong to me as a disciple of Christ. Should it be said, that these promises are connected with the literal return of the Jews to their own land, I reply, that God has said, "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly;" and that "He that spared not His Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" And since no lost sinner more needs the good here promised than myself, I urge my humble claim through Christ to all the good here brought to view, and regard it as my inheritance.

Again, it is said in Jeremiah 31. 31, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; (which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord.) But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." This is the same pledge of being brought to love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength; and of this pledge and benefit of the new covenant I cannot be deprived; for of this new covenant Christ is the mediator, as we are told by Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews; so that to fulfill this new covenant is the very thing which Christ came to do. His own blood Christ himself called the "blood of the new testament," or covenant; and Paul said of himself and his fellow apostles, "God hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter that killeth, but of the spirit that giveth life." This new covenant, therefore, which puts God's law in the hearts of His people, and by that means takes away their sins, should be regarded as the great and glorious

theme of them that preach in the name of Christ. It is the fulfillment of this covenant which Christ has in view, when He says, "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled . He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me . Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good things to your children: how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" That these promises refer to the blessings of the new covenant, I infer from the fact that there is no good which we so much need, as to have God's law put into our hearts, so that we may truly love Him "with all our heart, and with all our soul ." And since he has made this covenant, and sent Christ to be the Mediator of it, and has thus assured us of His utmost readiness to give every good thing, I see the way wide open for Christians to be "cleansed from all unrighteousness ." It is in the fulfillment of this new covenant that that will be accomplished for which our Saviour taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven:" for when God's law is put into the hearts of his people, so that they truly love him "with all the heart, and with all the soul ," then His kingdom is come within them, and then His will is done in them on earth as it is done in heaven. To the blessings of this new covenant, we may also apply other great and precious promises of our Saviour. "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive . Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." When the Christian finds his sins taken away, and the new covenant fulfilled in him, so that he does "love God with all his heart, and with all his soul," then "his joy is full," and it never can be full until then. Accordingly, John, in

writing his epistle, says, "these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full ." And what does he then write, to give Christians fulness of joy? Why, that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin ; that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness ; that H e was manifested to take away our sins, and that "whosoever abideth in him sinneth not." These are the very things to give the Christian fulness of joy, and nothing short of these can do it.

One more passage I will now quote, and then on this point I shall have done. It is that passage, in relation to which Paul says to the Corinthians, "Having therefore these promises, dearly Beloved-Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting

16

holiness in the fear of God ." The passage is this- "For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty ."

Here, in my view, the Apostle means to teach, that in the promises, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people;" there is the promise of being cleansed "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," and of "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." If, then, we can find a way to secure to us the fulfillment of these exceeding great and precious promises, we shall, as it seems to me, attain to the highest possible good. I shall therefore now inquire,

2. How shall we gain the fulfillment of God's promises? On this point I remark, that there is a passage which has served me as a key to unlock the rich treasures of God's Word; and which, for some years, has been opening to me more and more "the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints;" and which has done very much to bring me where I am, "by the grace of God" today. It is found in 2nd. Cor. 1,23. "For all the promises of God in Him

(Christ) are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." By this I understand that while no promise of God is ever fulfilled to us, except for Christ's sake, we may have the fulfillment of every promise, for the fulfillment of which we trust in Christ; and that when we trust in Christ, and receive for His sake the fulfillment of God's promises, God is glorified by us. Take, then, the promise, "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins ." To whom is that promise fulfilled? To him, and to him only, who trusts in Christ, to have it fulfilled to him for Christ's sake. Such an one always receives pardon, and none else.

Take now the promises, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and make you clean from all your filthiness; and from all your idols will I cleanse you, and I will save you from all your uncleannesses. The very God of peace who hath called you in faith to sanctify you wholly; and to preserve your whole spirit and soul and body blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," and to whom are these promises fulfilled? Like the promises pledging forgiveness of sins, they are "all yea and Amen in Christ, to the glory of God by us," so that when we come to Christ, and trust in Him, to have these promises fulfilled to us for His sake, God will glorify himself, by "sprinkling clean water upon us, by cleansing us from all our filthiness and from all our idols, and by sanctifying us wholly, and preserving our whole spirit, and soul, and body, blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Through the *promises* of God, then, we cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God,

17

when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that these promises will be fulfilled to us for His sake. Is it now asked, why all God's professing people have not, in time past, been "sanctified wholly." I reply, for the self same reason, that all impenitent men have not received the forgiveness of sin, viz. they have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, that these promises would be fulfilled to them for His sake. Herein, it seems to me, there is, in these last days, a great departure from the faith-and that when the church of Christ will

learn to cleanse herself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God, by trusting in Christ for the fulfillment of those exceeding great and precious promises which pledge to her salvation from all her uncleanness, "she will put on her beautiful garments, and arise and shine, her light having come, and the glory of the Lord having arisen upon her."

And now Dear Brother, I will look directly to your questions-You have already had abundant reply, as to the question, whether men are, or may be holy in this life. While I believe that there is little holiness in the world, I believe there is abundant provision made in God's grace, by which christians may "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God;" and I believe that in the days of Paul, Peter and John, this grace was fully available, through faith in Christ, for the fulfillment of God's promise -and no less so now, to all who will in the same way avail themselves of it.

As it respects the martyrs, I believe that no man ever became a martyr for Christ, who was not actually cleansed from all sin; because, the giving up of the whole world, and life itself, for Christ's sake, fully evince that such an one must have loved Christ with his whole and undivided heart, and must, therefore, have been free from sin. Men may have become martyrs to other things, with no regard to Christ, as millions have done to the mad passions of men; but no man, in my apprehension, ever could become a martyr for Christ's sake, whose heart was not purified, and filled with love to Christ. I believe, therefore, that every real gospel martyr was cleansed from sin, before he left the world.

In modern times, many godly men have seemed not fully to apprehend all the riches of the grace of God, and have maintained, that no christian ever did on earth "cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God ." But if a man can be cleansed from sin, by faith in Christ for the fulfillment of God's promises, a moment before death, why not a day, a year, or twenty or fifty years? You asked my views, respecting the general character of those who have embraced the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life. I answer, I have no doubt that some, professing a belief in this doctrine, have

been licentious-so have some who profess to believe in the doctrine of the new birth, but I do not see that in either case, their licentiousness is in any sense chargeable, upon the doctrine which they profess

18

to believe. I can no more conceive, that a man should become licentious as a direct consequence of trusting in Christ to be kept by the grace of God from all sin, than that a man should sink to hell, in consequence of trusting in Christ to save him from hell. In either case, in my apprehension, the evil must result from want of faith in Christ, and not from the exercise of it.

And now, as to the greater safety of those that fear always-I answer, that he who trusts in Christ to be kept from all sin, is the man, and the only man, that does fear always. He not only fears, but *knows* that he never shall, in any instance, keep himself, and therefore always flies to Christ; while he who does not fear always, does not trust in Christ, and therefore falls into sin. I do therefore most fully believe, that he who fears always, is most safe, provided his fears are sufficiently great to drive him to the Lord, in whom alone he has righteousness and strength. This fear hath no torment: it is a sweet reliance on Christ.

I do not, therefore, think that any man's absurdities, irregularities, inconsistencies, or crimes, are in any sense chargeable upon the doctrine which I advocate. The more precious the coin, the more desirable the counterfeit, to a wicked man. That the blessed doctrine of being kept from all sin by faith in Christ, will be counterfeited by unholy men, for licentious purposes, I have not a doubt; but shall I, therefore, cast away the coin-the most precious that ever fell down to lost man, from the exhaustless mint of heaven! No, my brother. The Word of God assures me that my Redeemer was "called Jesus because He should save His people from their sins;" "that He was manifested to take away our sins, and that whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not;" and to that Saviour I must cleave as with the grasp of death; for I see a moment's safety no where but under the shadow of His wing. "I will therefore say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my

God; in him will I trust. Surely He shall deliver me from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover me with His feathers, and under His wing will I trust. His truth, in the fulfilment of His own exceeding great and precious promises, shall be my shield and buckler."

And now, brother, I believe there are those who do embrace this great salvation fully, so that their characters are formed by it, and who can say, "The life that I live here in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me ;" and I do believe that they are not only decidedly, but eminently, more meek and heavenly than any other class of men. I ought here to say, however that nothing, in my apprehension, is holiness, which falls short of the fulfillment of that promise, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with *all thy heart* , and with all thy soul ." The child of God is not, in my apprehension, a "whited sepulchre ." Holiness is "the righteousness of the law fulfilled

19

in us ." With any view of sanctification which does not make it consist in loving God with all the heart, and our neighbor as ourselves , I have no fellowship. If a man expresses to me his belief that, through the operations of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, received by faith in Christ for the fulfillment of God's promises, he is enabled "to love God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself," inasmuch as I know that God has promised to "circumcise his heart, to love the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul," I have no right to doubt that the promises of God are thus fulfilled in Him, unless I see that in his life he does depart from the "the right way of the Lord," as it is revealed in His holy Word. But "to the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

I am fully aware, however, that there are those who claim to be "perfect in Christ Jesus ," who do fall into gross mistakes on this very point; and in this way do, in a very grievous manner, cause "the way of truth to be evil spoken of ." By laying aside the plain written Word of God, as the rule, and the only rule by which they

are to govern their faith, and try their feelings, and form their opinions, and shape all their conduct, and taking up the belief that the Holy Spirit so dwells in them that they need not resort to the Bible as their only guide, but may follow whatever impulse arises within them, they step at once on the broad ground of fanaticism, and become what Christ would have been, if He had, at the suggestion of Satan, thrown himself from the pinnacle of the temple-tempters of God. While God has promised me, in His Word, everything requisite to meet all the real necessities of my being, even to the full accomplishment of my highest good, both on earth and in heaven, He has nowhere given me license to transgress either His physical or moral laws, with the expectation that he will meet a necessity that I thus presumptuously create. If I were to leap from an eminence, with the expectation that God would save me from death by counteracting the law of gravitation, or by giving me wings; or, if I were voluntarily to abstain from food, with the expectation that God would preserve my life without eating; or venture to sea in a leaky ship, with the confidence that God would save me from a watery grave, I should be tempting God, by a willful transgression of physical law. I have no right to expect any miraculous assurance before hand, as He did to Moses, that He will be with me in a miraculous manner. No more am I to transgress moral precepts, by casting myself into the way of temptation unnecessarily, thinking that God will there keep me from being overcome; or by doing an act which God's Word plainly forbids, through the presumption that the Holy Spirit guides me to it, and that it, therefore, is not sin. I know there are those who have ventured on this ground, and by so doing, have brought amazing reproach on Christ and His cause. I am not to "believe *every* spirit, but try the spirits,

20

whether they are of God." But by what rule am I to try every spirit? Plainly by the revealed Word, I have no other rule, and I need no other. If I feel an impulse, then to do a thing contrary to the plain Word of God, I need not mistake the source from whence such an impulse comes. I know the devil is the originator of such

an impulse, just as infallibly as though I were to see his snaky head, or his forked tongue, or his glaring eyes, or hear the hissings of his hellish throat. I know there are those who are accustomed to say, "Whatever the Lord should tell me, I would do." But I know the Lord will never tell them to do a thing contrary to the Bible; and when led to anything of this sort, they are surely led by Satan. Besides, I do not expect to influence the conduct of my fellow men, unless I can show them good and sufficient reasons for the course I wish them to pursue. Much more may I expect, that where the Holy Ghost would lead me, He will show me the best reasons for following Him; and for these reasons, I am to look into that Word which He has inspired.

From this very error of following impulses instead of the Word of God, have grown up all the inconsistencies, absurdities, irregularities, and in some cases, as I do not doubt, licentious practices of some, called Perfectionists. Instead of cleaving closely to the Word of God, making it their only rule of life, writing it on their hearts, and setting it always, "as a frontlet between their eyes," they have imbibed the idea that the Holy Spirit so dwells in them, as to be an infallible guide, without any reference to God's plainly revealed will. And when a man steps on that ground, he may well expect, like him who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, to find himself wounded, stripped of his raiment, and left, at least, half dead. He throws himself defenseless among mortal foes; for the Word of God should be to him sword and shield. He might as well cast away rudder, and compass, and chart, and quadrant, and chronometer in mid-ocean, and expect God to guide him to his desired haven. Or as well, wandering among pit-falls in black midnight, cast away his only lamp, and think to walk safely by faith. The Holy Spirit has indeed been given to guide us into all truth, but all the truth we need to know is in the Bible; and all the guidance we need, is to a right understanding and practice of what the Bible contains.

But when God has plainly revealed to me that He is ready "to sprinkle clean water upon me, and make me clean from all my filthiness, and from all my idols, to cleanse me, and to save me from

all my uncleanness when I inquire of Him to do it for me ;" and when He has sworn that He will grant unto me, that "I being delivered out of the hand of my enemies, may serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of my life, and has raised up Christ, an horn of salvation for me, to perform that covenant and oath , and has assured me that all the promises of God in Christ are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by me ;" do I follow impulses

21

and not the Bible, when I fully trust in Christ, that these promises and this oath of God will be fulfilled to me for Christ's sake? Can I be in danger of going astray by thus cleaving to my own horn of salvation, whom God has raised up for me, and by just trusting in Him, that He will perform for me the very thing that He came to do?

On this point My Brother, my heart is oppressed, and labors for words to express its gushing emotions. I seem, to myself, to be standing in a position whence two ways diverge. In the one, I see a class of persons walking, who cry out, "Away with the Sabbath days, ordinances and the written Word of God-away with all laws and rules of conduct, both human and divine. We need no law, no rule of faith or practice, no means of grace, no private devotion and communion with our Father in secret, no domestic altars, no earnest, wrestling prayer, and faithful, persevering effort, to convert a lost world to God. We dwell in Christ and He in us, and therefore we cannot sin; and whatever impulse we feel, we know to be the influence of the Holy Ghost, who cannot err, and we may therefore safely follow wherever such an influence leads." In the ears of such I should cry out at the top of my voice, Danger, danger, danger! Beware, beware! Go not in such a path! Avoid it-pass not by it-turn from it and pass away! Here are the class of men called Perfectionists. Can I walk with them upon such ground? Not a hair's breadth. So far from forsaking the commandments and ordinances of the *Lord* , my Bible tells me to "submit myself to every ordinance of *man* even for the Lord's sake," that "the powers that be are ordained of God," and that "whosoever, therefore,

resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God."- With such men, on such subjects, I have, I can have, no sympathy. I believe there are some truly converted souls who fall into these errors, and are dreadfully led astray. I believe that others take up these notions, in whose hearts no fear of God ever for a moment had a place, and follow them out into all manner of licentious and criminal excess. Such become the most perfect and accomplished servants of Satan that he ever raises up to do his work. I cannot conceive that the arch-deceiver can ever originate a worse set of principles than these. I could as soon sympathize with any form of infidelity that ever cursed the earth.

But on the other hand, and in the other path, I see a multitude of professed believers walking, who through fear of going astray, dare not believe God when he tells them, "I will cleanse you from all your filthiness, and from all your idols," and when He swears to them that He "will grant unto 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 life." Can I sympathize with the unbelief of such? I believe that it is their privilege, and my privilege, so to "abide in Christ, that we sin not," -that "the work of such righteousness is peace; the effect of such righteousness, quietness and assurance

22

for ever; and that all who will thus believe in Christ, may find in Him a peaceful habitation, a sure dwelling, a quiet resting place." I long to have God's people know and enjoy their high privilege of thus abiding in Christ, for I fully believe that it will redound to the highest degree to God's honor and their good. This view of sanctification, I claim, has nothing to do with the essential element of what is termed Perfectionism. Their name and their principles I utterly disavow, and declare to the world that no man has a right to charge them upon me.

But when I look around upon the professed followers of my Saviour, and see how little they know, apparently, and how little they seem to enjoy, of this great salvation of our God, I feel like lifting the prayer,-

"Every weary, wandering spirit,
Guide into Thy perfect peace."

And when I see how many, bearing the name of Christ, seem wandering among doubts and fears, and groping in thick darkness at noon day, falling before spiritual enemies whom they know not how to vanquish, and weeping over the repeated commission of sins which they know not how to overcome, I long to say to such:

"Watchman! let thy wandering cease,
Hie thee to thy quiet home;
Travellers! Lo! the Prince of Peace-
Lo! the Son of God *is come!*"

Look no longer, like scattered, unbelieving Israel, for a Saviour yet to come. Say, with believing Zacharias, "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 His promised mercy, His covenant, His oath; to deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and to grant unto us that we may serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life."

You ask me finally concerning myself. Here, Dear Brother, I speak with unfeigned diffidence. I love to look at my Saviour, and to hold Him forth in all His fulness to my needy, perishing fellow men. But in myself, aside from what the grace of God has done, and shall do for me, I find nothing but the dark and perfect lineaments of Beelzebub, the prince of devils. I speak sincerely, my Brother. I know that if God should withdraw his grace from me, and leave me to myself, there is not a sin within the reach of my powers, which I would not instantly commit and practice forever.

And now, having told you what I think of myself, to my own shame, permit me to tell you what I think of the grace of God, to his praise. "God has promised to dwell in me, and walk in me; and be my God;" and this I consider a pledge of every possible good which He can give me. "Having therefore such promises," I expect, by trusting in Christ, that they will be fulfilled to me for His sake, "to be cleansed from

all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God."

My God has sworn that He will grant me, that I, being delivered out of the hand of my enemies, may serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of my life; and He has raised up Jesus Christ to be my horn of salvation, to perform to me this mercy promised to our fathers, to remember this holy covenant, this oath which he sware. I do therefore expect, through the strength and faithfulness of my Lord Jesus Christ, in performing to me this holy covenant and oath of God, to be delivered out of the hand of my enemies, and to serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of my life. I expect that He, according to His own promise, will be faithful to sanctify me wholly, and to preserve my whole spirit, and soul, and body, blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. In myself, I am nothing but a miserable, lost sinner; but in my Saviour, "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" and He has made me "complete in Him." I therefore expect "to abide in Him, and whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not."

And now, my brother, as to what I expect to preach, I have only to say, that I expect to uncover to my fellow men, just so far and just so long as my God shall enable me, "this fountain which has been opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness ." I expect to do all in my power to make my fellow men acquainted with the "holy covenant of our God, and the oath which He sware, that He will grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, may serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our lives; and that Christ is our horn of salvation to perform this covenant; this oath of a covenant-keeping God ;" that this and every other "promise of God is yea and Amen in Christ, unto the glory of God by us ." That He who hath called them is faithful, to sanctify them wholly; to preserve their whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ . That Christ gave himself for us, that he might sanctify and cleanse us with the washing of water by the Word, that

he might present us to Himself, a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that we "should be holy and without blemish ;" and that they have only, like Paul to "believe God, that it shall be even as it was told them ;" and, like Abraham, to "stagger not at the promise of God through unbelief; but to be strong in faith, giving glory to God, being fully persuaded, that what God had promised He was able also to perform ; and like Sarah to judge him faithful who had promised;" and by placing this confidence in their Savior, they shall so receive the fulfillment of God's exceeding great and precious promises, as to become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust;" that having these promises

24

and this faith in Christ for their fulfillment, "they shall cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." This, my Brother, I regard as the glory, the crowning excellency of the gospel, the brightest star in the whole firmament of revealed truth; and with my Saviour's permission, I expect to point my fellow men to this day star of hope, until the hand that points them is given to the worms. It is, to my soul, a fountain of living waters, a wellspring of life, and I expect to say to my fellow men, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price;" and to cease not, until the lips that are allowed the high privilege of uttering such an invitation, can speak no more.

And now, my Dear Brother; you have my whole heart laid open without reserve; and to God I commit myself, and his truth, and the cause of the Saviour, dearer to me than life. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen."

Your Servant in the Gospel,

CHARLES FITCH.

