

February 2

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die. Romans 8:13

WHAT is it to live after the flesh? We answer, It is to live after, in conformity to,

and in gratification of, the inclinations and cravings of the fallen human nature. And it is the easiest thing possible to do this. All we have to do is just listlessly to abandon ourselves to the current of our old nature,

and cease to strive against it. As soon as we do this, we begin to float down the stream, and by and by we find the current more and more rapid and resistance more and more difficult. Z. '95-8R1748:3

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HOW WE ATTAIN DEVELOPMENT AS NEW CREATURES

"If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."--Romans 8:13.

MORTIFICATION of the deeds of the body through the Holy Spirit of God is here declared by the Apostle Paul to be essential to the attainment of everlasting life. But to some who had become His disciples, the Lord said, "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life." Again, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but *is passed* from death unto life." (John 3:36; 5:24.) The Apostle John in his first Epistle says, "We know that we *have passed* from death unto life, because we love the brethren"; and "He that hath the Son *hath* life."--1 John 3:14; 5:12.

We must not understand St. Paul to contradict our Lord and the Apostle John. Our Lord Jesus and St. John were speaking from the standpoint of *God's reckoning*-- from the *legal standpoint*. Those who have accepted Christ, and have received of His atoning merit, have come out from under the Adamic death condemnation. Their present imperfections, as well as their past sins, are covered by this merit. Through consecration and begetting of the Holy Spirit they have become New Creatures in Christ. Hence the everlasting life provided for such is already considered as theirs, while they abide under the Robe of Christ's Righteousness. They are now "saved by hope."

The Apostle Paul is here speaking of the matter from the standpoint of its full accomplishment, when the Church shall have obtained their spiritual body and are absolutely perfect, and have received the actual fullness of unending life. This will be attained only in our resurrection. No life can be everlasting, in the strict sense, unless it is to last forever; and this is not determined until we have made our calling and election sure. But it is reckoned to us so long as we are faithfully meeting God's terms and conditions. Life could not last forever under present earthly conditions, even though the penalty of death were entirely removed; for these conditions are not favorable thereto. Conditions and environments must be radically changed before life could last eternally and be enjoyed in its fullness.

The embryo of life that we have received from our begetting as New Creatures is perfect so far as it has progressed; but it must continue to grow and develop, to make progress, until we are finally born perfect, complete, New Creatures in the First Resurrection. "Blessed and holy are they that have part in the First [chief] Resurrection. On them the Second Death hath no power."

OPERATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN US

The many exhortations addressed to this class of spirit-begotten ones would not be at all applicable to the world in general. The Apostle Paul is telling us as God's spiritually begotten sons how we are to make ourselves ready for our birth in due time. He says that we are to accomplish this great preparatory work through the Spirit, through the power of God. The Spirit, or power of God, operates in various ways. For instance, God's Message of Truth is given to us, embodying the different features of God's great Plan, showing us what is the will of the Lord for us. The more we study and understand this Plan, the greater will be the operation of this holy power of God in our hearts. The deeper our consecration, the more sympathy shall we have with all the purposes of the Lord and the more fervently shall we desire to do the Divine good pleasure.

God through His Holy Spirit is not operating at present upon any but this special class. Whatever there is in the world of nature is all the result of the operation of God's Power, His Spirit, in a general way; but the Apostle in our text is referring only to the influence of the Spirit of God upon the soul. In the New Testament writings the work of the Holy Spirit refers only to those who have become God's people under the terms laid down by our Lord Jesus Christ. All such

are under the Lord's special care. God began this good work in us. It is not of men nor by men. Therefore we must look to God to complete this work which He has begun, and must give Him our full and hearty cooperation.

We are to go to God's Word, and are to study it prayerfully, using all the helps which His providence has furnished thereto, seeking thus to learn the meaning of that Word, seeking to put it into expression in our lives. Just as it is necessary to partake of natural food that we may have our bodies strengthened and sustained, so God has given us spiritual food, that we may get spiritual sustenance and strength and may understand His will. This operation of God upon us and in us through His Holy Spirit is a gradual work; that is, after we have been begotten. Many of us have been so beclouded with the errors of our former beliefs that we are unable to see the deep things of God at the first glance. Therefore we need to study, and to meet together with those of like precious faith. If this is not possible for some, because of isolation, they can at least meet with the brethren by means of the printed page.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONSECRATION

As we come to understand more clearly all that full consecration to God signifies, our thought on the subject gradually changes. When first we came to God, many of us had the thought that God's will for us was to accept Christ as our Savior, and then to live a good, decent, moral life, to enjoy ourselves in any legitimate ways, to take good care of our bodies, and to attend church on Sunday, and perhaps other meetings. We thought that all who did not do this would be lost, that there would be no future hope for them. But this is not God's Plan at all. We have learned better now. God has shown us that the only way by which the Church of Christ can ever attain to the Heavenly inheritance is by the destruction of the human nature and its interests, by the relinquishing of all earthly hopes and ambitions.

At first this is a new thought to us, and the question presents itself, "Does God wish me really to mortify, kill, my human nature? Am I not to seek to cultivate all my natural talents and make the most of them? Am I not to live a natural life, so long as I do not sin?" One not begotten of God's Holy Spirit would say, "Why, certainly; follow the cravings of your nature, so long as you keep within bounds. If you would enjoy a good theatre, or a game of baseball, go; and have a good time. If a glass of liquor does not hurt you, take it. If you have a natural talent for music or painting or whatever, it is your duty to make the most of it." This is worldly counsel.

In Jesus' Parable of the Talents, the talents given by a certain lord to his several servants represented opportunities of service for that master. The master placed an opportunity in the hands of each servant and expected him to improve it. So our Heavenly Lord and Master places before His servants certain opportunities to be improved to His glory, and to be used as each has ability. These opportunities are given in harmony with natural ability and not in violation of it; but this does not mean that every ability we may possess, whether its use would glorify God or not, must be improved and employed. As New Creatures we are to employ all our powers to God's glory. If they cannot be so used, we are to sacrifice them and spend ourselves in directions that would be in harmony with our Covenant of Sacrifice.

HOW THE HUSBANDMAN DEALS WITH HIS VINE

To each consecrated one who has entered upon this Heavenly way we would say, You have placed yourself in God's hands. You have asked the Lord to transform you, to renew your mind, to make you entirely over, that you may be fitted and prepared for the glorious position He has promised. So all your powers are to be turned in

the direction toward which you are to be trained by your Master. If the grape-vine under the husbandman could reason and speak, it would probably say, "It is natural for me to develop an abundant supply of foliage and to throw out branches and tendrils in every direction to support me." But the wise husbandman vigorously prunes off these superfluous branches and tendrils that dissipate the strength of the sap, that develop only wood and leaves, and that cause the vine to cling to improper supports. The husbandman seeks for fruit, rich, abundant fruit; and everything which would hinder this attainment must be sacrificed. The vine would tend downward. The husbandman trains it to grow upward. So does our great Heavenly Husbandman train His spiritual vine, that we may bring forth abundant fruitage to His praise.

We no longer belong to the world. Our course now is to be that which God has marked out for us in the Scriptures. If we do not mortify, kill, the deeds of the body, we shall never gain the eternal life promised to the faithful overcomers alone. In order to attain eternal life, the life now held out to us--glory, honor, immortality--we must conform ourselves to the instructions given us by our great Training Master. We are not to do this in our own unaided strength. This would be impossible. But our Heavenly Father has promised to *work in us* while we *work out* our salvation with fear and trembling.

MORTIFICATION OF THE DEEDS OF THE BODY

The real thought of the words, "Mortify the deeds of the body," is not what some have thought--to mortify our *body*. According to history, and according to some present practices, we learn that some have imagined that they must torture and punish their body. They use whips upon their flesh until they draw blood. Then they wear hair jackets. Sometimes their bodies fester from the pricking hairs that torture the raw flesh. Some mortify their bodies by actually lying down for others to walk upon them and to wipe their feet upon them. We cannot question that those who do these things have a motive in so doing; and we could not think it a bad motive. But they have entirely misapprehended what is the Scriptural mortification.

The Apostle tells us that it is the *deeds* of the body we are to mortify--the natural practices of the fleshly nature. "It is my nature to do so and so," says one. But the Bible says we are not to go in the way in which we were born; for we were all born sinners. We now have the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, to guide us in the way in which we should go. We are to mortify everything in us which is not fully endorsed by our new mind, everything that would hinder the death of the old creature--already reckoned dead--and hinder the growth of the New Creature. Certain elements of the mortal body are to be destroyed, warred against at all times. Other qualities of the human body are to be utilized in the service of righteousness. We were once sold under sin. But we have been purchased back, and now we have the mind of Christ.

We are now to treat our human body as an earthen vessel to be used to the glory of God. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit we are to know *how* to use this human vessel. We are to remember, first, that it is reckoned dead as a human body, having been sacrificed with Christ when we made our consecration to be dead with Him; second, that while reckoned dead, this body has actually been stimulated, quickened, revived, to serve the New Creature, as its property, its servant, in lieu of the spirit body which we are to have, but have not yet obtained. Every property of this body which can be used in the interests of the New Creature, is to be utilized.

We are not to say, "If I use a certain natural talent which I possess, I can bring comfort or pleasure to others, or can promote some work of reform." The question for us is, "Will the use of this natural talent or power assist me as a New Creature or assist in the work of gathering out and preparing the Bride of Christ for her future work?" This is our present mission. There are those who can do the other things. So we find that the process of developing ourselves as New Creatures and of assisting in the building up of the brethren in the most holy faith requires our *undivided* attention, and means a continual warfare of the new nature against the old. The Apostle calls it the warring of the spirit against the flesh. Our development into the likeness of Christ requires that we do good unto all men as we have opportunity--where it will not interfere with our consecration vows--but especially to the Household of Faith, as the Apostle tells us.

As our flesh is only reckonedly dead, and not actually, we are

to be continually on guard. Our tongues are liable, unless carefully and prayerfully guarded, to speak slanderously or perhaps to make cutting remarks. All of our members are to be brought into harmony with God and His will. We are to have the sentiment of the hymn we often sing:

"Let mine eyes see Jesus only."

We are to continually look to Him to be directed. We are, by thus seeing Him, to become more and more conformed to His glorious likeness. We are to endeavor to see everything from the Divine standpoint. We shall never become perfect in the flesh; but so long as we are tabernacling in this body, it is our duty and privilege to compel the body to do the will of the New Creature.

Our human body was once a slave to sin, a slave to the things of this present evil world. Now we are to say, "This body belongs to the Lord. I must control it to His glory. I am determined to increase day by day my power over this body, that I may use it more and more fully in the service of my King. I am not to do foolish things. I am not to leap from the pinnacle of a temple to see if God will not protect me while I am trying to show that I am a special favorite of Heaven. But under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I am to get the most out of this body that I can, in the service of Him whom I have accepted as my new Master.

All this is necessary to our development of the character required for our great future work, not only for the coming Age, but for all eternity. We are called to joint-heirship with Christ. We can scarcely grasp what this means. We would never be prepared for such an exaltation if we did not prove overcomers. And this means that there is something *real* to overcome. Overcoming means the development of character, growing strong in the Lord. He declares that He is calling for only such as do thus overcome.

DIVINE RECOMPENSE TO THOSE WHO SACRIFICE

The *world* will have a thousand years to bring their bodies into perfect harmony with the Lord's will, and *they* will not be required to sacrifice the legitimate desires of their flesh. But we are required, after we have accepted the present Call, to sacrifice the interests of the flesh; and we have but a very limited time in which to develop the necessary character. God is now selecting and directing those only who of their own will wish to lay down their lives with Christ. They love Him supremely; and He is pleased to call these holy ones His jewels. No good thing will He withhold from these. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard what God has in reservation for these who love Him." These are going on from grace to grace, living not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

To the world it looks as if these are having a hard time. Moreover, the Bible says, "Through much tribulation shall ye enter into the Kingdom." And again, "Yea, and *all* that will live godly in Christ Jesus *shall* suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12.) Unless a man deny himself and take up his cross and follow Jesus, he cannot be His disciple. But, on the other hand, all true Christians will agree with the Apostle that it is possible to reach that degree of development where they will rejoice in all these experiences, rejoice while the flesh is being mortified, deadened. It is not that we are naturally so different from other people that we would enjoy what they dislike, but that we see a *reason* why we should rejoice. We know that this is God's plan for us; and that by this mortification of the will of the flesh, of the things of the flesh, we are growing in God's favor.

"Great peace have they that love Thy Law, and nothing shall offend [stumble] them." So these have the peace of God ruling in their hearts. They have the knowledge that all of their affairs are under Divine supervision. The world have their troubles and fears. Some who are rich in this world's goods worry for fear they will die in the poorhouse. Many misers have been found dead with a large amount of money secreted about them, having feared all their lives that they would come to poverty and want. Some have had various other forebodings. But those who have put their trust in the Lord have a peace that the world cannot know and cannot take away. It is superior to anything the world can offer.

But we cannot explain this to the world. They would be unable to comprehend it. The world sometimes say of the Lord's consecrated people, "Is he a fool?" They cannot understand our hopes, which are so blessedly real to us. Those who have entered the School of Christ, and who have learned of Him, know. We all know that for

everything which we deny ourselves now our God gives us abundant compensations in our spiritual blessings and joys even here; and then we have all the unspeakable glories promised to His saints awaiting us just beyond the veil.

"Then let our hearts be surely fixed
Where truest joys are found;

And let our burning, loving praise
Yet more and more abound.
And gazing on 'the things unseen,'
Eternal in the skies,
From glory unto glory,
O Savior, may we rise!"

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SOWING TO THE FLESH--THE RESULT DEATH

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."--Galatians 6:7.

IN THIS text the Apostle seems to be emphasizing the fact that it is not enough that we make a consecration of ourselves to God, but we need to show by the earnestness of our conduct that we have received a transforming power into our lives. If we say that we are New Creatures and make a change merely in our *profession*, while still sowing to the flesh, the result will be not according to our profession, but according to our *doing*; and we shall reap the reward--*corruption*. Others may be deceived, and we may be *deceived ourselves*; but God will not be deceived. If we, on the contrary, to the best of our ability to understand the Lord's will, lay down our lives, sowing to the Spirit, then shall we reap everlasting life.

The Apostle is addressing the saints, the consecrated people of God, those who have presented their bodies living sacrifices, and whose sacrifices have been made acceptable through the merit of Christ. Being made New Creatures by the begetting of the Holy Spirit, these are to go on to reach perfection on the spirit plane.

If we, then, who are of this class, live after the flesh-- according to the desires of the flesh--we shall *die*. This does not mean that if any of God's people should have some earthly desire or some wrong sentiment spring up in their minds they would die instantly, or that they would instantly be cut off from any hope of future life on the spirit plane. The thought is that if we *live* after the flesh --pursue the desires of the flesh, follow that course in life --the end will be death. And every seed thus sown tends *toward* death. If we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption.

CERTAIN CARE FOR THE BODY NECESSARY

It would not be necessarily true in such sowing that we would *wish* to sow to the flesh. The Apostle intimates that the class he is addressing do *not* wish to sow to the flesh, but wish to do otherwise. But if we do sow to the flesh--to sensuality or to any earthly desires contrary to the new nature--the crop will come by and by. We might like to have better clothes and delicious food; we might desire to live on a good street and in a fine house; and these would not necessarily be sinful things. All these things are of the flesh, but they are not what the Apostle has especially in mind here. He is thinking of things of the fallen flesh, which are always contrary to the Spirit.

If we practice those things which our understanding of God's Word teaches us He would not approve, seeds are thus sown to the flesh. *Every inch that we yield--* whether in thought, word or action-- means so much *decrease* of spiritual power; and the New Creature grows weaker. This might be done as respects our food and clothing, our home, our time, etc.; and this would be sowing to the flesh in such instances. If in accordance with our judgment of the Lord's will, we follow a course with a view to keeping our body in condition for best service, and if then our body, our flesh, has a craving for certain things that would not be for our spiritual welfare, the New Creature is to say, "No, you cannot have it"; or "These things are too expensive for *you*."

There are not many who have made a sacrifice of their flesh; but it is to those who have done this that the Apostle is speaking. I, as the New Creature, say to the Old Creature--the body--"I shall give you what I think is for your *good*. I do not understand that the Lord wishes me to kill you at once, for I need your service; but the Lord wishes me to have some practice in self-denial. You shall not have your desire now, because you do not really need it. I may, however, give it to you some time again, if I think that then you *need* it and if you are good."

THE BLACKSMITH AND THE DONKEY

If the New Creature gives a free rein to the old creature about what he shall read, or eat, how long he shall sleep, at what time he

shall get up, where he shall go and how long he shall stay, etc., the New Creature will have his hands full--will he not? The Spirit of the Lord is to actuate the New Creature in thought, word and action and decide what he is to do, what he shall eat, where he shall go--is to control everything. If we sow to the Spirit, if we walk after the Spirit, we shall be overcomers, we shall reap life-everlasting. We must *not yield* to the old creature. By yielding we are sowing seed to the flesh, and by and by the old creature will say, "You have been in the habit of giving that to me, and you *must* let me have it"; and the result is likely to be disastrous to the New Creature.

The matter reminds us of one of AEsop's fables which many of us have read. On a cold, frosty morning, a donkey pushed his nose in at the door of a blacksmith shop, where it was warm from a glowing fire. The blacksmith said to the donkey, "Get out!" The donkey replied, "You are stingy! I am only getting my nose warm." Presently the blacksmith looked around and perceived that the donkey had his whole head in. The blacksmith said, "Now get out, will you?" But the donkey pleaded that he was only getting a little breath of warm air, that his head surely would not trouble the blacksmith. After awhile the blacksmith looked again and saw that the donkey was half-way into the shop. Then he shouted, "Get out! get out!" But the donkey still insisted that he was only getting a little warm. So the blacksmith yielded. By and by he looked again and saw that the donkey was altogether in the shop. Then he sprang forward shouting excitedly, "Get out!" But the donkey said triumphantly, "Which of us will get out?" And thereupon he turned around and began to kick at the blacksmith. The donkey was in full *control*.

"THE END OF THAT WAY IS DEATH"

So it will be with us if we begin a course of yielding little by little to the desires of the fleshly mind. The end of the way which the flesh craves, the Apostle teaches us, is death. St. Paul does not say that the *beginning* of that way is death; but that the beginning of that way *leads toward* death. If the old creature has gained a leeway, every step that is taken must be retraced, or the case is hopeless. The New Creature is to say to the old creature, "*You are not to be my master!*" The old creature is to be *made to know* that the *New Creature* is the Master. The New Creature develops at the expense of the old creature, the old nature, which must be put to death.

These things are not true of the world now, but will be true of them as respects their *sinful* flesh, by and by. If any during the Millennium shall yield to the fallen flesh, gradually becoming more and more alienated from the Lord, the end of that way will be death. But they will have every assistance in their efforts to resist sin and to develop righteousness. To the Church of Christ our text is applicable *now* and in the fullest sense. Let those of us now on trial for life or death eternal, watch and pray!

"Thou seest our weakness, Lord!
Our hearts are known to Thee;

O, strengthen Thou the weary hand,
Confirm the feeble knee!

Let us in life--till death--
Thy steadfast Truth declare,

And publish with our latest breath
Thy love and guardian care."

ON TRIAL FOR LIFE

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." --Rom. 8:13.—

THERE is no intimation in this scripture of a second probation for any of those addressed: the words were spoken and written for those who, in the *present* existence, are on trial for life. It does not say, If ye live after the flesh, ye shall have another trial; neither does it say, Ye shall be punished with eternal torments; but it does speak of a *present probation*, the issue of which shall be either life, or death--the extinction of life, cessation of existence.

Neither does the text say anything about faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ as a requisite to salvation: it says nothing whatever about what we believe or do not believe, but simply and only about *how we live*. Shall we, therefore, spring to the conclusion, as many do, that it teaches that it makes no difference what we believe if we only live righteously? By no means; and those who consider it to be in conflict with either the doctrine of restitution (the Millennial age of judgment or trial for the world) or the ransom, or who have failed to observe its contradiction of the theory of eternal torment, have taken but a shallow observation of the Apostle's teaching, and in fact have lost its entire force.

Not noticing that the words are addressed to the Church, and not to the world, the heedless Christian applies the admonition to the world, and allows it to lose its force upon himself. This is the very reverse of the Apostle's intention: he is talking to *the saints*, to *consecrated believers* in the redemption, who have been begotten of the holy Spirit and become new creatures in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 8:1-8.) And it is for this reason that he says nothing here about faith in the ransom, that being conceded; nor about the Millennial age of trial, because those addressed are on trial *now*, and their trial will be over and their reward obtained before the world comes into judgment. --1 Cor. 6:2.

The warning, therefore, is not at all applicable to the world, but is full of solemn import to the Church--to the consecrated believers, new creatures in Christ Jesus, who, having been begotten of the holy Spirit, have now a spiritual nature, the old human nature having been consecrated to death. Such, having solemnly covenanted with God to present their bodies--their human nature--a living sacrifice (which was acceptable through Christ, and therefore accepted of him), and to henceforth live after the spirit, are not at liberty now either to annul that covenant, or to ignore it. They cannot claim again that (redeemed human nature) to which, by their covenant, they have given up all right, claim and title. And if they endeavor to do so, either by ignoring or despising their covenant, they thereby forfeit their claim to the new, spiritual nature, which can only be attained by faithfulness to the covenant of sacrifice, even unto death.

It is therefore *logically* manifest, even if the Apostle had not said it, that if *we*, consecrated believers, turn back again to live after the flesh, *we* shall die; that for us to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. (Rom. 8:6.) Our Lord's words in Matt. 16:24,25 are to the same effect--"Whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

An important question then is, ^[1]What is it to live after the flesh? We answer, It is to live after, or in conformity to, and in gratification of, the inclinations and cravings of the fallen human nature. And it is the easiest thing possible to do this. All we have to do is just listlessly to abandon ourselves to the current of our old nature, and cease to strive against it. As soon as we do this, we begin to float down the stream, and by and by we find the current more and more rapid and resistance more and more difficult.

The death to which our text points as the inevitable end of such a course, is manifestly the "second" death. We were redeemed from the first death and then placed on trial for eternal life, and in the event of failure, the loss of that new life will be the second death,--from which there can be no redemption and no deliverance.

The Apostle defines the works of the flesh thus (Gal. 5:19-21) --"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these,--

Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings and such like." What moral filth and pollution this describes; but such is the tendency of the fallen human nature. Just cease to strive against the old nature, and presently some of these noxious weeds will be flourishing and crowding out the good that remains.

"Ah, well," says one, "I have not all those mean qualities." Well, we are glad you have not: very few people have all of them; but beware, you may not know what manner of spirit you are of. Be sure that your old nature is not without an inherited and perhaps a formerly cultivated bias in some of these directions. Watch and pray against them, that ye enter not into temptation.

On the other hand, consider the blessed fruits of the spirit (Gal. 5:22,23), which are "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Against such there is no law." To live in the cultivation of these graces is to "live in the spirit." And "if we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit"--make progress in the spiritual life. "Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; for the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other."--Gal. 5:25,16.

Thus the Christian life is of necessity a warfare, a battle, between the new and the old natures, a hand to hand conflict which we dare not relinquish; for, not only is the prize of our high calling dependent upon it, but also the issues of life and death are in it. How solemn a thing is it, therefore, to live under these circumstances; for daily and hourly we stand before the bar of judgment. The words of our text have no application to the world now, but *to us* who are now on trial: If *we* live after the flesh, *we* shall die; but if through the spirit we do mortify [put to death, refuse to gratify] the deeds of the body [the tendencies of the old nature], *we* shall live." And all who are truly the sons of God will do this: "for," says the Apostle (verse 14), "as many *as are led* by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God." If *we wilfully* refuse the leading of God's spirit, we forfeit the relationship of sons; if we listlessly disregard it, we endanger that relationship, and as surely as we are sons we shall receive chastisement for our correction and discipline.

But while we should be very grateful for the chastening, restraining hand of the Lord which thus helps to keep us in the straight and narrow way in which the spirit of God leads his own, we should be very careful to require just as little of it as possible. "If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged of the Lord" and chastened. (1 Cor. 11:31,32.) But, nevertheless, with the most careful and prayerful watching against the uprisings of the old will of the flesh, we will doubtless make some missteps and need some of the Lord's chastening; for, says the Apostle (Heb. 12:5-12), "What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons, but if ye be without chastisement whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Let us, therefore, not forget the exhortation which speaketh unto us as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him."

In the difficult course before us, and in view of all the dangers that beset it, how blessed is the promise that our Heavenly Father is ever willing to give the holy spirit to them that ask him, and the assurance also that if we be filled with the spirit we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. How necessary is it, therefore, to live near the fountain of divine grace, to pray without ceasing--especially in these last times when our great adversary is so active and so cunning in his devices to deceive and lead astray the Lord's people.

The words of the poet are most appropriate to every one at this particular time--

"Leave no unguarded place,
No weakness of the soul;
Take every virtue, every grace,
And fortify the whole."

[1] Feb. 2 Manna, Rom. 8:13