

# Fletcher on Christian Perfection

From A Tract

By John Fletcher

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## Chapter 1

### CHRISTIAN PERFECTION DEFINED

We call Christian perfection the maturity of grace and holiness, which established, adult believers attain to under the Christian dispensation; and by this means we distinguish that maturity of grace, both from the ripeness of grace which belongs to the dispensation of the Jews below us and from the ripeness of glory which belongs to departed saint above us. Hence it appears that, by Christian perfection, we mean nothing but the cluster and maturity of the graces which compose the Christian character in the church militant. In other words, Christian perfection is a spiritual constellation made up of these gracious stars, -- perfect repentance, perfect faith, perfect humility, perfect meekness, perfect self-denial, perfect resignation, perfect hope, perfect charity for our visible enemies, as well as for our earthly relations; and, above all, perfect love for our invisible God, through the explicit knowledge of our Mediator Jesus Christ. And as this last star is always accompanied by all the others, as Jupiter is by his satellites, we frequently use, as St. John, the phrase "perfect love," instead of the word "perfection;" and understanding by it the pure love of God, shed abroad in the heart of established believers by the Holy Ghost, which is abundantly given them under the fullness of the Christian dispensation.

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## Chapter 2

### AN ADDRESS TO IMPERFECT BELIEVERS WHO CORDIALLY EMBRACE THE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

Your regard for Scripture and reason, and your desire to answer the end of God's predestination by being conformed to the image of His Son, have happily kept, or reclaimed, you from Antinomianism.

Ye see the absolute necessity of personally fulfilling the law of Christ: your bosom glows with desire to "perfect holiness in the fear of God:" and, far from blushing to be called Perfections, ye openly assert that a perfect faith, productive of perfect love to God and man, is the pearl of great price, for which you are determined to sell all, and which, next to Christ, you will seek early and late, as the one thing needful for your spiritual and eternal welfare. Some directions, therefore, about the manner of seeking this pearl cannot but be acceptable to you, if they are Scriptural and rational; and such, I humbly trust, are those which follow:-

I. If ye would attain an evangelically sinless perfection, let your full assent to the truth of that deep doctrine firmly stand upon the evangelical foundation of a precept and a promise. A precept without a promise would not sufficiently animate you; nor would a promise without a precept properly bind you; but a Divine precept and a divine promise form an unshaken foundation. Let, then your faith deliberately rest her right foot upon these precepts:-

"Hear, O Israel: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy might." Deut. 6:5. "Thou shalt not hate thy neighbor in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord: ye shall keep my statutes." Lev. 19:17-19. "And now, Israel, what does the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? etc. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked." Deut. 10:12, etc. "Serve God with a perfect heart and a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth the imaginations of the thoughts." 1 Chron. 28:9.

Should unbelief suggest that these are only Old Testament injunctions, trample upon the false suggestion, and rest the same foot of you faith upon the following New Testament precepts:- "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, etc.;" that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, etc. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matt. 5:17-44, etc. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Matt. 19:17. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Gal. 6:2. "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." John 15:12. "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law: for this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, etc.; Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill. etc.; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Rom. 13:8-10. "This commandment we have from him, That he who loves God love his brother also." 1 John 4:21. "If ye fulfil the royal law, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye

do well. But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors." James 2:8,9. "Circumcision is nothing, uncircumcision is nothing," (comparatively speaking,) "but" (under Christ) "the keeping of the commandments of God" is the one thing needful. 1 Cor. 7:19. "For the end of the commandment is charity; out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." 1 Tim. 1:5. "Though I have all faith, etc. and have not charity, I am nothing." 1 Cor. 13:2. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law," (of liberty,) "and yet offend in one point," (in uncharitable respect of persons,) "he is guilty of all, etc. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty," which requires perfect love, and therefore makes no allowance for the least degree of uncharitableness. James 2:10-12.

When the right foot of your faith stands on these evangelical precepts and proclamations, lest she should stagger for want of a promise every way adequate to such weighty commandments, let her place her left foot upon the following promises, which are extracted from the Old Testament:-- "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." Deut. 30:6. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isa. 1:18. That this promise chiefly refers to sanctification, is evident, 1. From the verses which immediately follow it: "if ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel," (or disobey,) "ye shall be devoured with the sword." Again: "I will give them a heart to know me that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God" in a new and peculiar manner: "for they shall return unto me with their whole heart. This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, says 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." Jer. 24:7; 31:33. "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 put away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and I will give you a 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." Ezek. 36:25-27.

And let nobody suppose that the promises of the circumcision, the cleansing, the clean water, and the Spirit, which are mentioned in these Scriptures, and by which the hearts of believers are to be made new, and God's law is to be so written therein, that they shall "keep his judgments and do them;" -- let none, I say, suppose that these glorious promises belong only to the Jews; for their full accomplishment peculiarly refers to the Christian dispensation. Besides, if sprinklings of the Spirit were sufficient, under the Jewish dispensation, to raise the plant of Jewish perfection in Jewish believers, how much more will the revelation of the horn of our salvation, and the outpourings of the Spirit, raise the plant of Christian perfection in faithful Christian believers! And that this revelation of Christ in the Spirit, as well as in the flesh, these effusions of the water of life, these baptisms of fire, which burn up the chaff of sin, thoroughly purge God's spiritual floor, save us from all our uncleanness, and deliver us from all our enemies; that these blessings, I say, are peculiarly promised to Christians, is demonstrable by the following cloud of New Testament declarations and promises:-

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath raised up a horn of salvation for us, as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, that we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without" unbelieving "fear," (that is, with perfect love,) "in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life." Luke 1:68-75. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, which thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.;" Matt. 5:3-6. "If thou knewest the gift of God," etc., "thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water: and the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life." John 4:10-14. "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believeth on me," (when I shall have ascended up on high, to receive gifts for men,) "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," to cleanse his soul, and to keep it clean. "But this he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given," (in such a manner as to raise the plant of Christian perfection,) "because Jesus was not yet glorified," John 7:37, etc.; and his spiritual dispensation was not yet fully opened. Mr. Wesley, in his "Plain Account of Christian Perfection," has published some excellent queries, and proposed them to those who deny perfection to be attainable in this life. They are close to the point, and, therefore, the first two attack the imperfectionists from the very ground on which I want you to stand. They run thus: 1. "Has there not been a larger measure of the Holy Spirit given before Christ was glorified? John 7:39. 2. Was that glory which followed the sufferings of Christ (1 Pet. 1:11) an external glory or an internal, viz., the glory of holiness?" Always rest the doctrine

of Christian perfection on this Scriptural foundation, and it will stand as firm as revelation itself.

It is allowed, on all sides, that the dispensation of John the Baptist exceeded that of the other prophets, because it immediately introduced the gospel of Christ, and because John was not only appointed to "preach the baptism of repentance," but also clearly to point out the very person of Christ, and to "give knowledge of salvation to God's people by the remission of sins," Luke 1:77: and, nevertheless, John only promised the blessing of the Spirit, which Christ bestowed when he had received gifts for men. "I indeed," said John, "baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Matt. 3:11. Such is the importance of His promise, that it is particularly recorded, not only by the other three evangelists, (see Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, and John 1:26,) but also by our Lord Himself, who said, just before his ascension, "John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Acts 1:5.

So capital is this promise of the Spirit's stronger influences to raise the rare plant of Christian perfection, that when our Lord speaks of this promise, He emphatically calls it "the promise of the Father;" because it shines among the other promises of the Father, which ye have heard of me." Acts 1:4. And again "Behold, I send the promise of my Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he has shed forth this:" He has begun abundantly to fulfil "that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, that I will pour out" (bestow a more abundant measure) "of my Spirit upon all flesh. Therefore repent and be baptized" (that is, make an open profession of your faith) "in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins: and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to as many as the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins: and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call," to enjoy the full blessings of the Christian dispensation. Acts 2:17, 33, 38. This promise, when it is received in its fullness, is undoubtedly the greatest of all the "exceedingly great and precious promises which are given to us, that by them you might be partakers of the Divine nature," that is, of pure love and unmixed holiness. 2 Pet. 1:4. Have, therefore, a peculiar eye to it, and to these deep words of our Lord: "I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth," (and power,) "whom the world knows not, etc.; but ye know him, for he remaineth in you, and shall be in you. At the day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." For "if any man" (that is, any believer) "love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him." John 14:16, etc. "Which," says Mr. Wesley, in his note on the place, "implies such a large manifestation of the Divine presence and love, that the former in justification is as nothing in comparison of it." Agreeably to this, the same judicious divine expresses himself thus in another of his publications: "These virtues" (meekness, humility, and true resignation to God) "are the only wedding-garment; they are the lamps and vessels well furnished with oil. There is nothing that will do instead of them; they must have their full and perfect work in you, or the soul can never be delivered from its fallen, wrathful state. There is no possibility of salvation but in this. And when the Lamb of God has brought forth His own meekness, etc., in our souls, then are our lamps trimmed, and our virgin hearts made ready for the marriage-feast. This marriage-feast signifies the entrance into the highest state of union that can be between God and the soul in this life. This birthday of the Spirit of love in our souls, whenever we attain, will feast our souls with such peace and joy in God, as will blot out the remembrance of everything that we called peace or joy before."

To make you believe this important promise with more ardor, consider that our Lord spent some of His last moments in sealing it with His powerful intercession. After having prayed the Father to sanctify His disciples through the truth firmly embraced by their faith, and powerfully applied by His Spirit, he adds, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them who will believe on me through their word." And what is it that our Lord asks for these believers? Truly what St. Paul asked for the imperfect believers at Corinth, "even their perfection;" 2 Cor. 13:9; a state of soul this which Christ describes thus: "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be made one in us, etc., that they may be one as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected in one, and that the world may know that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." John 17:21-23. Our Lord could not pray in vain: it is not to be supposed that the Scriptures are silent with respect to the effect of this solemn prayer, an answer to which was to give the world an idea of the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven: a specimen of the power which introduces believers into the state of Christian perfection: and therefore we read, that on the day of Pentecost, the kingdom of Satan was powerfully shaken:



and the kingdom of God, "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," began to come with a new power. Then were thousands wonderfully converted and clearly justified; then was the kingdom of heaven taken by force: and the love of Christ and of the brethren began to burn the chaff of selfishness and sin with a force which the world had never seen before. See Acts 2:41, etc. Some time after, another glorious baptism, or capital outpouring of the Spirit, carried believers farther into the kingdom of the grace which perfects them in one. And therefore we find that the account which St. Luke gives of them, after this second capital manifestation of the Holy Spirit, in a great degree answers to our Lord's prayer for their perfection. He had asked that they all might be one; that they might be one as the Father and he are one; and that they might be perfected in one. John 17:21, etc. And now a fuller answer is given to his deep request. Take it in the words of the inspired historian: "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were" once more "filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word with" still greater "boldness: and the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul; neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common, etc.; and great grace was upon them all." Acts 4:31-33. Who does not see in this account a specimen of that great grace which our Lord had asked for believers, when He had prayed that His disciples, and those who would believe on Him through their word, might be perfected in one?

It may be asked here, whether "the multitude of them that believed" in those happy days were all perfect in love? I answer, that if pure love had cast out all selfishness and sinful fear from their hearts, they were undoubtedly made perfect in love: but as God does not usually remove the plague of indwelling sin till it has been discovered and lamented; and as we find in the two next chapters and account of the guile of Ananias and his wife, and of the partiality or selfish murmuring of some believers, it seems that those chiefly who before were strong in the grace of their dispensation arose then into sinless fathers; and that the first love of believers, through the peculiar blessing of Christ upon His infant church, was so bright and powerful, for a time, that little children had, or seemed to have, the strength of young men, and young men the grace of fathers. And, in this case, the account which St. Luke gives of the primitive believers ought to be taken with some restriction. Thus, while many of them were perfect in love, many might have imperfection of their love only covered over by a land -- flood of peace and joy in believing. And, in this case, what is said of their being all of one heart, and mind, and of their having all things common, etc., may only mean, that the harmony of love had not yet been broken, and that none had yet betrayed any of the uncharitableness for which Christians in after ages became so conspicuous. With respect to the "great grace" which "was upon them all," this does not necessarily mean that they were all equally strong in grace; for great unity and happiness may rest upon a whole family, where the difference between a father, a young man, and a child, continues to subsist. However, it is not improbable that God, to open the dispensation of the Spirit in a manner which might fix the attention of all ages upon its importance and glory, permitted the whole body of believers to take an extraordinary turn together into the Canaan of perfect love, and to show the world the admirable fruit which grows there; as the spies sent by Joshua took a turn into the good land of promise before they were settled in it, and brought from hence the bunch of grapes which astonished and spirited up the Israelites, who had not yet crossed the Jordan.

Upon the whole, it is, I think, undeniable, from the first four chapters of the Acts, that a peculiar power of the Spirit is bestowed upon believers under the gospel of Christ; that this power, through faith on our part, can operate the most sudden and surprising change in our souls; and that, when our faith shall fully embrace the promise of full sanctification, or of a complete circumcision of the heart in the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, who kindled so much love on the day of Pentecost that all the primitive believers loved, or seemed to love, each other perfectly, will not fail to help us to "love one another" without sinful self-seeking; and as soon as we do so, "God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." 1 John 4:12; John 14:23.

Should you ask how many baptisms, or effusions of the sanctifying Spirit, are necessary to cleanse a believer from all sin, and to kindle his soul into perfect love; I reply that the effect of a sanctifying truth depending upon the ardor of the faith with which that truth is embraced, and upon the power of the Spirit with which it is applied, I should betray a want of modesty if I brought the operations of the Holy Ghost, and the energy of faith, under a rule which is not expressly laid down in Scripture. If one powerful baptism of the Spirit seals you unto the day redemption, and cleanses you from all moral filthiness, so much the better. If two or more are necessary, the Lord can repeat them. "His arm is not shortened that it cannot save;" nor is His promise of the Spirit stunted. He says in general, "Whosoever will, let him come, and take

of the water of life freely. If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father" (who is goodness itself) "give his holy," sanctifying "Spirit to them that ask him!" I may, however, venture to say, in general, that, before we can rank among perfect Christians, we must receive so much of the truth and Spirit of Christ by faith as to have the pure love of God and man shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us, and to be filled with the meek and lowly mind which was in Christ. And if one outpouring of the Spirit, one bright manifestation of the sanctifying truth, so empties us of self as to fill us with the mind of Christ, and with pure love, we are undoubtedly Christians in the full sense of the word. From the ground of my soul, I therefore subscribe to the answer which a great divine makes to the following objection:-

"But some who are newly justified do come up to this," (Christian perfection.) "What then will you say to these?" Mr. Wesley replies with great propriety, "If they really do, I will say they are sanctified, saved from sin, in that moment; and that they never need lose what God has given, or feel sin any more. But certainly this is an exempt case. It is otherwise with the generality of those that are justified. They feel in themselves, more or less, pride, anger, self-will, and a heart bent to backsliding. And till they have gradually mortified these, they are not fully renewed in love. God usually gives a considerable time for men to receive light, to grow in grace, to do and suffer His will, before they are either justified or sanctified. But He does not invariably adhere to this. Sometimes He cuts short His work. He does the work of many years in a few weeks; perhaps in a day, an hour. He justifies, or sanctifies, both those who have done or suffered nothing, and who have not had time for a gradual growth either in light or grace. And may He not do what He will with His own? 'Is thine eye evil, because He is good?' It need not therefore be proved, by forth texts of Scripture, either that most men are perfected in love at last, or that there is a gradual work of God in the soul; and that, generally speaking, it is a long time, even many years, before sin is destroyed. All this we know. But we know likewise that God may, with man's good leave, cut short his work in whatever degree he pleases, and of the usual work of many years in a moment. He does so in many instances. And yet there is a gradual work both before and after that moment. So that one may affirm the work is gradual; another, it is instantaneous, without any manner of contradiction." (Plain Account, page 115). At page 155, the same eminent divine explains himself more fully, thus: "It" (Christian perfection) "is constantly preceded and followed by a gradual work; but is it in itself instantaneous or not? In examining this, let us go on step by step. An instantaneous change has been wrought in some believers: none can deny this. Since that change they enjoy perfect love: they feel this, and this alone: They 'rejoice evermore pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks.' Now this is all that I mean by perfection. Therefore these are witnesses of the perfection which I preach. 'But in some this change was not instantaneous.' They did not perceive the instant when it was wrought. It is often difficult to perceive the instant when a man dies, yet there is an instant in which life ceases. And if ever sin ceases, there must be a last moment of its existence, and a first moment of our deliverance from it. 'But if they have this love now, they will lose it.' They may; but they need not. And whether they do or no, they have it now. They now experience what we teach. They now rejoice, pray, and praise without ceasing. 'However, sin is only suspended in them; it is not destroyed.' Call it which you pleas. They are all love today; and they take not thought for the morrow." To return:

II. When you firmly assent to the truth of the precepts and promises on which the doctrine of Christian perfection is founded; when you understand the meaning of these Scriptures, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth. I will send the Comforter" (the Spirit of truth and holiness) "unto you. God has chosen you to" (eternal) "salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth:" -- when you see that the way to Christian perfection is by the word of the gospel of Christ, by faith, and by the Spirit of God; in the next place get tolerably clear ideas of this perfection. This is absolutely necessary. If you will hit a mark, you must know where it is. Some people aim at Christian perfection; but, mistaking it for angelical perfection, they shoot above the mark, miss it, and then peevishly give up their hopes. Others place the mark as much too low. Hence it is that you hear them profess to have attained Christian perfection, when they have not so much as attained the mental serenity of a philosopher, or the candor of a good-natured, conscientious heathen. In the preceding pages, if I am not mistaken, the mark is fixed according to the rules of Scriptural moderation. It is not placed so high as to make you despair of hitting it, if you do your best in an evangelical manner; nor yet so low as to allow you to presume that you can reach it, without exerting all your abilities to the uttermost, in due subordination to the efficacy of Jesus' blood, and the Spirit's sanctifying influences.

III. Should ye ask, "Which is the way to Christian perfection? Shall we go to it by internal stillness, agreeably to this



direction of Moses and David, "The Lord will fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. Stand still, and see the salvation of God. Be still, and know that I am God.

Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart, upon your bed, and be still?' Or shall we press after it by an internal wrestling, according to these commands of Christ, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent taketh it by force,' etc.?"

According to the evangelical balance of the doctrines of free grace and free will, I answer, that the way to perfection is by the due combination of prevenient, assisting free grace; and of submissive, assisted free will. Antinomian stillness, therefore, which says that free grace must do all, is not the way. Pharisaic activity, which will do most, if not all, is not the way. Join these two partial systems, allowing free grace the lead and high pre-eminence which it so justly claims, and you have the balance of the two gospel axioms. You do justice to the doctrines of mercy and justice; of free grace and free will; of divine faithfulness in keeping the covenant of grace, and of human faithfulness in laying hold on that covenant, and keeping within its bounds. In short, you have the Scripture method of waiting upon God, which Mr. Wesley describes thus:-

"Restless, resign'd, for God I wait:  
For God my vehement soul stands still."

To understand these lines, consider that faith is alternately a receiver and a bestower. First, it passively receives divine grace, saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: let it be done to me according to thy word;" and then it actively brings forth its heavenly fruit with earnest labor. "God worketh in you to will and to do," says St. Paul. Here he describes the passive office of faith, which submits to and acquiesces in every divine dispensation and operation. "Therefore work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" and, of consequence, with haste, diligence, ardor, and faithfulness. Here the apostle describes the active office of that mother-grace which carefully lays out the talent she has already received. Would ye then wait aright for Christian perfection? Impartially admit the two gospel axioms, and faithfully reduce them to practice. In order to this, let them meet in your hearts as the two legs of a pair of compasses meet in the rivet, which makes them one compounded free grace and Christ's righteousness fix your mind upon God, as you fix one of the legs of your compasses immovably in the center of the circle which you are about to draw: so shall you stand still, according to the first texts produced in the question. And then let your faith in the doctrine of free will and evangelical obedience make you steadily run the circle of duty around that firm center; so shall you imitate the other leg of the compasses, which evenly moves around the center, and traces the circumference of a perfect circle. By this activity subordinate to grace, you will take the kingdom of heaven by force. When your heart quietly rests in God by faith, as steadily acts the part of a passive receiver, it resembles the leg of the compasses which rests in the center of the circle; and then the poet's expressions, "restless, resigned," describe its fixedness in God. But when your heart swiftly moves towards God by faith as it acts the part of a diligent worker; when your ardent soul follows after God, as thirsty deer does after the waterbrooks; it may be compared to the leg of the compasses which traces the circumference of the circle; and then these words of the poet, "restless" and "vehement," properly belong to it. To go on steadily to perfection, you must therefore endeavor steadily to believe, according to the doctrine of the first gospel axiom; and (as there is opportunity) diligently to work, according to the doctrine of the second; and the moment your faith is steadily fixed in God as in you center, and your obedience swiftly moves in the circle of duty from the rest and power which you find in that center, you are made perfect in the faith which works by love. Your humble faith saves you from Pharisaism your obedient love from Antinomianism, and both (in due subordination to Christ) constitute you a just man made perfect according to your dispensation.

IV. Another question has also puzzled many sincere perfectionists; and the solution of it may remove a considerable hindrance out of your way. "Is Christian perfection," say they, "to be instantaneously brought down to us, or are we gradually to grow up to it? Shall we be made perfect in love by a habit of holiness suddenly infused into us, or by acts of feeble faith, or feeble love, so frequently repeated as to become strong, habitual, and evangelically natural to us, according to the well-known maxim, 'A strong habit is a second nature?'"

Both ways are good: and instances of some believers gradually perfected, and of others, comparatively speaking, instantaneously fixed in perfect love, might probably be produced, if we were acquainted with the experiences of all those who have died in a state of evangelical perfection. It may be with the root of sin, as it is with its fruit. Some souls parley many years before they can be persuaded to give up all their outward sins, and others part with them as it were instantaneously. You may compare the former to those besieged towns which make a long resistance: the latter resemble those fortresses which are surprised and carried by storm. Travelers inform us, that vegetation is so quick and powerful in some warm climates, that the seeds of some vegetables yield a salad in less than twenty-four hours. Should a northern philosopher say, "Impossible!" and should an English gardener exclaim against such mushroom salad, they would only expose their prejudices, as do those who decry instantaneous justification, or mock at the possibility of the instantaneous destruction of indwelling sin.

For where is the absurdity of this doctrine? If the light of a candle brought into a dark room can instantly expel the darkness; and if upon opening your shutters at noon, your gloomy apartment can instantaneously be filled with meridian light: why might not the instantaneous rending of the veil of unbelief, or the sudden and full opening of the eye of your faith, instantly fill your soul with the light of truth, and the fire of love; supposing the Sun of righteousness arise upon you with powerful healing in his wings? May not the Sanctifier descend upon your waiting soul, as quickly as the Spirit descended upon our Lord, at His baptism? Did it not descend as a dove, that is, with the soft motion of a dove, which swiftly shoots down, and instantly lights? A good man said once, with truth, "A mote is little when it is compared to the sun; but I am far less before God." Alluding to this comparison, I ask, if the sun could instantly kindle a mote; nay; if a burning-glass can in a moment calcine a bone, and turn a stone to lime: and if the dim flame of a candle can in the twinkling of an eye destroy the flying insect which comes within its sphere; how unscriptural and irrational is it to suppose, that, when God fully baptizes a soul with His sanctifying Spirit, and with the celestial fire of His love, He cannot in an instant destroy the man of sin, burn up the chaff of corruption, melt the heart of stone into a heart of flesh, and kindle the believing soul into pure seraphic love!

An appeal to parallel cases may throw some light upon the question which I answer. If you were sick, and asked of God the perfect recovery of your health, how would you look for it? Would you expect to have your strength restored to you at once, without any external means, as the lepers who were instantly cleansed; and as the paralytic, who, at our Lord's word, took up the bed on which he lay, and carried it away upon his shoulders? Or by using some external means of a slower operation, as the ten lepers did, who were more gradually "cleansed as they went to show themselves to the priests;" or as King Hezekiah, whose gradual but equally sure recovery was owing to God's blessing upon the poultice of figs prescribed by Isaiah? Again: If you were blind, and besought the Lord to give you perfect human sight, how should you wait for it? As Bartimeus, whose eyes were opened in an instant? or as the man who received his sight by degrees? At first he saw nothing: by-and-by he confusedly discovered the objects before him; but at last he saw all things clear. Would you not earnestly wait for an answer to your prayers now; leaving to Divine wisdom the particular manner of your recovery? And why should ye not go and do likewise, with respect to the dreadful disorder which we call indwelling sin?

If our hearts are purified by faith, as the Scripture expressly testifies; if the faith which peculiarly purifies the heart of Christians is faith in "the promise of the Father," which promise was made by the Son, and directly points at a peculiar effusion of the Holy Ghost, the Purifier of Spirits; if we may believe in a moment; and if God may in a moment seal our sanctifying faith by sending us a fullness of His sanctifying Spirit; if this, I say, is the case, does it not follow, that to deny the possibility of the instantaneous destruction of sin, is to deny, contrary to Scripture and matter of fact, that we can make an instantaneous act of faith in the sanctifying promise of the Father, and in the all-cleansing blood of the Son, and that God can seal that act by the instantaneous operation of His Spirit: which St. Paul calls "the circumcision of the heart in" or by "the Spirit" according to the Lord's ancient promise, "I will circumcise thy heart, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Where is the absurdity of believing that the God of all grace can now give an answer to the poet's rational and evangelical request?

"Open my faith's interior eye;  
Display thy glory from above;  
And sinful self shall sink and die,

Lost in astonishment and love."

If a momentary display of Christ's bodily glory could, in an instant, turn Saul, the blaspheming, bloody persecutor, into Paul, the praying, gentle apostle; if a sudden sight of Christ's hands could, in a moment, root up from Thomas' heart that detestable resolution, "I will not believe;" and produce that deep confession of faith, "My Lord and my God!" what cannot the display of Christ's spiritual glory operate in a believing soul, to which He manifests Himself, "According to that power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself?" Again: if Christ's body could, in an instant, become so glorious on the mount, that His very garments partook of the sudden irradiation, became not only free from every spot, but also "white as the light, shining exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them;" and if our bodies shall be changed; if "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump;" why may not our believing souls, when they fully submit to God's terms, be fully changed, fully turned "from the power of Satan unto God?" When the Holy Ghost says, "Now is the day of salvation," does He exclude salvation from heart-iniquity? If Christ now deserves fully the name of Jesus, because He fully saves His believing people from their sins; and if now the gospel trumpet sounds, and sinners arise from the dead, why should we not, upon the performance of the condition, be changed in a moment from indwelling sin to indwelling holiness; why should we not pass in the twinkling of an eye, or in a short time, from indwelling death to indwelling life?

This is not all. If you deny the possibility of a quick destruction of indwelling sin, you send to hell, or to some unscriptural purgatory, not only the dying thief but also all those martyrs who suddenly embraced the Christian faith, and were instantly put to death by bloody persecutors for confessing the faith which they had just embraced. And if you allow that God may cut His work short in righteousness in such a case, why not in other cases? Why not, especially, when a believer confesses his indwelling sin, ardently prays that Christ would, and sincerely believes that Christ can, now cleanse him from all unrighteousness?

Nobody is so apt to laugh at the instantaneous destruction of sin as the Calvinists, and yet (such is the inconsistency which characterizes some men!) their doctrine of purgatory is built upon it. For, if you credit them, all dying believers have a heart which is yet "desperately wicked." These believers, still full of indwelling sin, instantaneously breathe out their last, and without any peculiar act of faith, without any peculiar outpouring of the sanctifying Spirit, corruption is instantaneously gone. The indwelling man of sin has passed through the Geneva purgatory, he is entirely consumed; and, behold, the souls which would not hear of the instantaneous act of sanctifying faith, which receives the indwelling Spirit of holiness, the souls which pleaded hard for the continuance of indwelling sin, are now completely sinless; and, in the twinkling of an eye, they appear in the third heaven among the spirits of just Christians made perfect in love! Such is the doctrine of our opponents; and yet they think it incredible that God should do for us, while we pray in faith, what they suppose death will do for them, when they lie in his cold arms, perhaps delirious or senseless!

On the other hand, to deny that imperfect believers may and do gradually grow in grace, and of course that the remains of their sins may and do gradually decay, is as absurd as to deny that God waters the earth by daily dews, as well as by thunder-showers; it is as ridiculous, as to assert that nobody is carried off by lingering disorders, but that all men die suddenly, or a few hours after they are taken ill.

I use these comparisons about death to throw some light upon the question which I solve, and not to insinuate that the decay and destruction of sin run parallel to the decay and dissolution of the body, and then of course, sin must end with our bodily life. Were I to admit this unscriptural tenet, I should build again what I have all along endeavored to destroy, and (as I love consistency) I should promise eternal salvation to all unbelievers; for unbelievers, I presume, will die, that is, will go into the Geneva purgatory, as well as believers. Nor did I see why death should not be able to destroy the van and the main body of sins' forces, if it can so readily cut the rear (the remains of sin) in pieces.

From the preceding observations it appears that believers generally go to Christian perfection, as the disciples went to the other side of the sea of Galilee. They toiled sometime very hard, and with little success. But after they had "rowed about twenty-five or thirty furlongs, they saw Jesus walking on the sea. He said to them, It is I, be not afraid. Then they

willingly received him into the ship; and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." Just so we toil till our faith discovers Christ in the promise, and welcomes Him into our hearts; and such is the effect of His presence, that immediately we arrive at the land of perfection. Or, (to use another illustration,) God says to believers, "Go to the Canaan of perfect love. Arise; why do ye tarry? Wash away the remains of sin, calling, that is, believing on the name of the Lord." And if they submit to the obedience of faith, He deals with them as He did with the Evangelist Philip, to whom He said, "Arise, and go towards the south." For when they arise and run, as Philip did, the Spirit of the Lord takes them, as He did the evangelist; and they are found in the New Jerusalem, as Philip was found at Azotus. They "dwell in God" (or in perfect love,) "and God" (or perfect love) "dwells in them." Hence it follows, that the most evangelical method of following after the perfection to which we are immediately called, is that of seeking it now, by endeavoring fully to lay hold on the promise of that perfection through faith, just as if our repeated acts of obedience could never help us forward. But in the meantime we should do the work of faith, and repeat our internal and external acts of obedience, with as much earnestness and faithfulness, according to our present power, as if we were sure to enter into rest merely by a diligent use of our talents, and a faithful exertion of the powers which Divine grace has bestowed upon us. If we do not attend to the first of these directions, we shall seek to be sanctified by works like the Pharisees; and if we disregard the second, we shall slide into solifidian sloth with the Antinomians.

V. Beware therefore of unscriptural refinements. Set out for the Canaan of perfect love, with a firm resolution to labor for the rest which remains on earth for the people of God. Some good, mistaken men, wise above what is written, and fond of striking out paths which were unknown to the apostles, -- new paths marked out by voluntary humility, and leading to Antinomianism; -- some people of that stamp, I say, have made it their business, from the days of heated Augustine, to decry making resolutions. They represent this practice as a branch of what they are pleased to call legality. They insinuate that it is utterly inconsistent with the knowledge of our inconstancy and weakness: in a word, they frighten us from the first step to Christian perfection; from an humble, evangelical determination to run till we reach the prize, or, if you please, to go down till we come to the lowest place.

You will never steadily go on to perfection, unless you get over this mistake. Let the imperfectionists laugh at you for making humble resolutions; but go on steadfastly purposing to lead a new life, as says our Church; and in order to this, steadfastly purpose to get a new heart, in the full sense of the word; for so long as your heart will continue partly unrenewed, your life will be partly unholy. And therefore St. James justly observes, that, "if any man offend not in word, he is a perfect man," he loves God with all his heart, his heart is fully renewed; it being impossible that a heart still tainted in part with vanity and guile, should always dictate the words of sincerity and love. Your good resolutions need not fail; nor will they fail, if, under a due sense of the fickleness and helplessness of your unassisted free will, you properly depend upon God's faithfulness and assistance. However, should they fail, as they probably will do more than once, be not discouraged, but repent, search out the cause, and in the strength of free grace, let your assisted free will renew your evangelical purpose, till the Lord seals it with His mighty fiat, and says, "Let it be done to thee according to thy" resolving "faith." It is much better to be laughed, as "poor creatures who know nothing of themselves," than to be deluded as foolish virgins, who fondly imagine that their vessels are full of imputed oil. Take therefore the sword of the Spirit, and boldly cut this dangerous snare in pieces. Conscious of your impotence, and yet laying out your talent of free will, say, with the prodigal son, "I will arise, and go to my Father." Say, with David, "I will love thee, O Lord my God: I will behold thy face in righteousness: I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress: I will keep it as it were with a bridle: I have said that I would keep thy word. The proud" (and they who are humble in an unscriptural way) "have had me exceedingly in derision; but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." Say, with St. Paul, "I am determined not to know anything save Jesus, and him crucified;" and with Jacob, "I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me." And, to sum up all good resolutions in one, if you are a member of the Church of England, say, "I have engaged to renounce all the vanities of this wicked world, all the sinful lusts of the flesh, and all the works of the devil; to believe all the articles of the Christian faith; and to keep God's commandments all the days of my life." That is, I have most solemnly resolved to be a perfect Christian. And this resolution I have publicly sealed by receiving the two sacraments upon it: baptism, after my parents and sponsors had laid me under this blessed vow; and the Lord's Supper, after I had personally ratified, in the bishop's presence, what they had done. Nor do I only think that I am bound to keep this vow, but "by God's grace, so I will; and I heartily thank our heavenly Father, that he has called me to this state of salvation" and Christian perfection; "and I pray unto him to give me



his grace, that I may" not only attain it, but also "continue in the same, unto my life's end." (Church Catechism.)

"Much diligence," says aKempis, "is necessary to him that will profit much. If he who firmly purposeth, often faileth, what shall he do who seldom or feebly purposeth anything?" But I say it again and again, do not lean upon your free will, and good purposes, so as to encroach upon the glorious pre-eminence of free grace. Let the first gospel axiom stand invariably in its honorable place. Lay your principal stress upon Divine mercy, and say, with the good man whom I have just quoted, "Help me, O Lord God, in thy holy service, and grant that I may now this day begin perfectly."

In following this method, ye will do the two gospel axioms justice ye will so depend upon God's free grace, as not to fall into Pharisaic running; and ye will so exert your own free will, as not to slide into Antinomian sloth. Your course lies exactly between these rocks. To pass the perilous straits, your resolving heart must acquire a heavenly touch of Christ, the cornerstone, your soul must learn to point towards faith and works, (or, if you please, towards a due submission to free grace, and a due exertion of free will,) as the opposite ends of the needle of a compass point towards the north and the south.

VI. From this direction flows the following advice. Resolve to be perfect in yourselves, but not of yourselves. The Antinomians boast that they are perfect only in their heavenly Representative. Christ was filled with perfect humility and love: they are perfect in His person: they need not a perfection of humble love in themselves. To avoid their error, be perfect in yourselves, and not in another. Let your perfection of humility and love be inherent; let it dwell in you. Let it fill your own heart, and influence your own life: so shall you avoid the delusion of the virgins, who give you to understand, that the oil of their perfection is all contained in the sacred vessel which formerly hung on the cross, and therefore their salvation is finished; they have oil enough in that rich vessel; manna enough and to spare in that golden pot. Christ's heart was perfect and therefore theirs may safely remain imperfect; yea, full of indwelling sin, till death, the messenger of the bridegroom, come to cleanse them, and fill them with perfect love at the midnight cry! Delusive hope? Can anything be more absurd, than for a sapless, dry branch to fancy that it has sap and moisture enough in the vine which it cumpers? Or for an impenitent adulterer to boast, that in the Lord he has chastity and righteousness? Where did Christ ever say, Have salt in another? Does He not say, "Take heed that ye be not deceived: have salt in yourselves?" Mark 9:50. Does He not impute the destruction of stony-ground hearers to their "not having root in themselves?" Matt. 13:21. If it was the patient man's comfort, that the root of the matter was found in him, is it not deplorable to hear modern believers say, without any explanatory cause, that they have nothing but sin in themselves? But is it enough to have the root in ourselves? Must we not also have the fruit, yea, "be filled with the fruits of righteousness?" Phil 1:11. Is it not St. Peter's doctrine, where he says, "If these things be in you, and abound, ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ?" 2 Pet. 1:8. And is it not that David, where he prays, "Create in me a clean heart," etc.? Away then with all Antinomian refinements; and if, with St. Paul, you will have salvation and rejoicing in yourselves, and not in another, make sure of holiness and perfection in yourselves, and not in another.

But, while you endeavor to avoid the snare of Antinomians, do not run into that of the Pharisees, who will have their perfection of themselves; and therefore, by their own unevangelical efforts, self-concerted willings, and self-prescribed runnings, endeavor to "raise sparks of their own kindling," and to warm themselves by their own painted fires and fruitless agitations. Feel your impotence. Own that "no man has quickened" and perfected "his own soul." Be contented to invite, receive, and welcome the light of life; but never attempt to form or to engross it. It is your duty to wait for the morning light, and to rejoice when it visits you; but if you grew so self-conceited as to say, "I will create a sun, Let there be light;" or if, when the light visits your eyes you said, "I will bear a stock of light; I will so fill my eyes with light today, that tomorrow I shall almost be able to do my work without the sun, or at least without a constant dependence upon its beams;" would ye not betray a species of self-denying idolatry and Satanical pride? If our Lord Himself, as Son of man, would not have one grain of human goodness of Himself; if He said, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good" (self-good, or good of himself) "but God;" who can wonder enough at those proud Christians, who claim some self-originated goodness; boasting of what they have received as if they had not received it; or using what they have received without and humble sense of their constant dependence upon their heavenly Benefactor? To avoid this horrid delusion of the Pharisees, learn to see, to feel and to acknowledge that of the Father, through the Son, and by the Holy Ghost, are all your Urim and Thummim, your lights and perfections. And, while the Lord says, "From me is thy fruit found," (Hos.

14:8,) bow at His footstool, and gratefully reply, "Of thy fulness have all we received, and grace for grace:" (John 1:16) for thou art "the Father of lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift." James 1:17. "Of thee, and through thee, and to thee are all things: to thee," therefore, "be the glory for ever. Amen." Rom. 11:36.

VII. You will have this humble and thankful disposition, if you let your repentance cast deeper roots. For, if Christian perfection implies a forsaking all inward as well as outward sin; and if true repentance is a grace "whereby we forsake sin;" it follows, that, to attain Christian perfection, we must so follow our Lord's evangelical precept, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," as to leave no sin, no bosom-sin, no heart-sin, no indwelling sin, unrepented of, and, of consequence, unforsaken. He whose heart is still full of indwelling sin has no more truly repented of indwelling sin, than the man whose mouth is still defiled with filthy talking and jesting has truly repented of his ribaldry. The deeper our sorrow for and detestation of indwelling sin are, the more penitently do we confess "the plague of our heart;" and, when we properly confess it, we inherit the blessing promised in these words: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

To promote this deep repentance, consider how many spiritual evils still haunt your breast. Look into the inward "chamber of imagery," where assuming self-love, surrounded by a multitude of vain thoughts, foolish desires, and wild imaginations, keeps her court. Grieve that your heart, which should be all flesh, is yet partly stone; that your soul, which should be only a temple for the Holy Ghost, is yet so frequently turned into a den of thieves, a hole for the cockatrice, a nest for a brood of spiritual vipers, for the remains of envy, jealousy, fretfulness, anger, pride, impatience, peevishness, formality, sloth, prejudice, bigotry, carnal confidence, evil shame, self-righteousness, tormenting fears, uncharitable suspicions, idolatrous love, and I know not how many of the evils which form the retinue of hypocrisy and unbelief. Through grace detect these evils, by a close attention to what passes in your won heart at all times, but especially in an hour of temptation. By frequent and deep confession drag out all these abominations. These sins, which would not have Christ to reign alone over you, bring before Him: place them in the light of His countenance; and, if you do it in faith, that light and the warmth of His love will kill them, as the light and heat of the sun kill the worms which the plow turns up to the open air in a dry summer's day.

Nor plead that you can do nothing: for, by the help of Christ, who is always ready to assist the helpless, ye can solemnly say upon your knees what ye have probably said in an airy manner to your professing friends. If ye ever acknowledge to them that your heart is deceitful, prone to leave undone what ye ought to do, and ready to do what ye ought to leave undone, ye can undoubtedly make the same confession to God. Complain to Him who can help you, as ye have done to those who cannot. Lament, as you are able, the darkness of your mind, the stiffness of your will, the dullness or exorbitancy of your affections; and importunately entreat the God of all grace to "renew a right spirit within" you. If ye "sorrow after this godly sort, what carefulness" will be "wrought in you! What indignation! What fear! What vehement desire! What zeal! Yea, what revenge!" Ye will then sing in faith what the imperfectionists sing in unbelief:-

"O how I hate those lusts of mine,  
That crucified my God;  
Those sins that pierced and nail'd His flesh  
Fast to the fatal wood!

"Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die,  
My heart hath so decreed;  
Nor will I spare those guilty things

That made my Saviour bleed.  
"While, with a melting, broken heart,  
My murder'd Lord I view,  
I'll raise revenge against my sins,  
And slay the murderers, too."



VII. Closely connected with this deep repentance is the practice of a judicious, universal self-denial. "If thou wilt be perfect," says our Lord, "deny thyself: take up thy cross daily, and follow me. He that loveth father or mother" (much more he that loveth praise, pleasure, or money) "more than me, is not worthy of me:" nay, "whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose it for my sake shall find it." Many desire to live and reign with Christ, but few choose to suffer and die with Him. However, as the way of the cross leads to heaven, it undoubtedly leads to Christian perfection. To avoid the cross, therefore, or to decline drinking the cup of vinegar and gall which God permits your friends or foes to mix for you, is to throw away the aloes which divine wisdom puts to the breasts of the mother of harlots to wean you from her and her witchcrafts; it is to refuse a medicine which is kindly prepared to restore your health and appetite; in a word, it is to renounce the Physician who heals all our infirmities when we take His bitter draughts, submit to have our imposthumes opened by His sharp lancet, and yield to have our proud flesh wasted away by His painful caustics. Our Lord was made a perfect Saviour through sufferings; and we may be made perfect Christians in the same manner. We may be called to suffer till all that which we have brought out of spiritual Egypt is consumed in a howling wilderness, in a dismal Gethsemane, or on a shameful Calvary. Should this lot be reserved for us, let us not imitate our Lord's imperfect disciples, who "forsook him and fled;" but let us stand the fiery trial till all our fetters are melted, and all our dross is purged away. Fire is of a purgative nature: it separates the dross from the gold; and the fiercer it is, the more quick and powerful is its operation. "He that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, etc., when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning." Isa. 4:3,4. "I will bring the third part through the fire, saith the Lord, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my God. Zech. 13.9 Therefore, if the Lord should suffer the best men in His camp, or the strongest men in Satan's army, to cast you into a furnace of fiery temptations, come not out of it till you are called. "Let patience have its perfect work." Meekly keep your trying station till your heart is disengaged from all that is earthly, and till the sense of God's preserving power kindles in you such a faith in His omnipotent love as few experimentally know, but they who have seen themselves, like the mysterious bush in Horeb, burning, and yet unconsumed; or they who can say with St. Paul, "We are killed all the day long; and behold, we live!"

"Temptations," says a Kempis, "are often very profitable to men, though they be troublesome and grievous; for in them a man is humbled, purified, and instructed. All the saints have passed through, and profited by, many tribulations; and they that could not bear temptations became reprobates, and fell away." "My son," adds the author of Ecclesiastics, (chap. 2:1-5,) "if thou come to serve the Lord" in the perfect beauty of holiness, "prepare thy soul for temptation. Set thy heart aright; constantly endure; and make not haste in the time of trouble. Whatever is brought upon thee, take cheerfully; and be patient when thou art changed to a low estate. For gold is "tried and purified" in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity. And therefore says St. James, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried," (if he stands the fiery trial,) "he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love him" with the love which endureth temptation and all things; that is, with perfect love. (James 1:12). Patiently endure, then, when God, "for a season, if need be," will suffer you to be "in heaviness through manifold temptations." By this means, "the trial of your faith, being much more precious than that of gold which perisheth, though it be tried in the fire, will be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. 1:6,7.

IX. Deep repentance is good, gospel self-denial is excellent, and a degree of patient resignation in trials is of unspeakable use to attain the perfection of love; but, as faith immediately works by love, it is of far more immediate use to purify the soul. Hence it is, that Christ, the prophets, and the apostles so strongly insist upon faith; assuring us, that if we will not believe, we shall not be established; that if we will believe, we shall see the glory of God, we shall be saved, and rivers of living water shall flow from our inmost souls; that our hearts are purified by faith; and that we are saved by grace through faith. They tell us that Christ gave Himself for the church, that He might sanctify and cleanse it 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. Now, if believers are to be cleansed and made without blemish by the word, which testifies of the all-atoning blood and the love of the Spirit, it is evident that they are to be sanctified by faith; for faith, or believing, has as necessary a reference to the word, as eating has to food. For the same reason the apostle observes, that "they who believe enter into rest;" that "a promise being given us to enter in," we should "take care not to fall short of it through unbelief;" that we ought to take warning by the Israelites, who "could not enter" into the land of promise, "through unbelief;" that

we are "filled with all joy and peace in believing;" and that Christ "is able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God through him." Now coming, in the Scripture language, is another expression for believing: "He that cometh to God," says the apostle, "must believe." Hence it appears, that faith is peculiarly necessary to those who will be saved to the uttermost, -- especially a firm faith in the capital promise of the gospel of Christ, the promise of the "Spirit of holiness," from the Father, through the Son. For "how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Or how can they earnestly plead the truth, and steadily wait for the performance of a promise in which they have no faith? This doctrine of faith is supported by Peter's words: "God, who knoweth the hearts," (of penitent believers,) "bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, and purifying their hearts by faith." Acts 15:8, 9. For the same "Spirit of faith," which initially purifies our hearts when we cordially believe the pardoning love of God, completely cleanses them when we fully believe His sanctifying love.

X. This direction about faith being of the utmost importance, I shall confirm and explain it by an extract from Mr. Wesley's forty-third sermon, which points out "the Scripture way of salvation:" -- "Though it be allowed," says this judicious divine, "that both this repentance and its fruits are necessary to full salvation, yet they are not necessary either in the same sense with faith, or in the same degree. Not in the same degree; for these fruits are only necessary conditionally, -if there be time and opportunity for them, otherwise a man may be sanctified without them. Likewise, let a man have ever so much of this repentance, or ever so many good works, yet all this does not at all avail; he is not sanctified till he believes. But the moment he believes with or without those fruits, yea, with more or less of this repentance, he is sanctified. Not in the same sense; for this repentance and these fruits are only remotely necessary, -- necessary in order to the continuance of his faith, as well as the increase of it; whereas faith is immediately and directly necessary to sanctification. It remains, that faith is the only condition which is immediately and proximately necessary to sanctification.

"But what is that faith whereby we are sanctified, saved from sin, and perfected in love? It is a divine evidence and conviction, -- 1. That God hath promised it in the Holy Scriptures. Till we are thoroughly satisfied of this, there is no moving one step farther. And one would imagine, there needed not one word more to satisfy a reasonable man of this than the ancient promise: 'Then will I circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul.' How clearly does this express the being perfected in love! how strongly imply the being saved from all sin! For as long as love takes up the whole heart, what room is there for sin therein? 2. It is a divine evidence and conviction, that what God has promised He is able to perform. Admitting, therefore, that with men it is impossible to bring a clean thing out of an unclean; to purify the heart from all sin, and to fill it with all holiness; yet this creates no difficulty in the case, seeing with God all things are possible. 3. It is an evidence and conviction that He is able and willing to do it now. And why not? Is not a moment to Him the same as a thousand years? He cannot want more time to accomplish whatever is His will. We may therefore boldly say at any point of time, 'Now is the day of salvation. Behold, all things are now ready' come to the marriage.' 4. To this confidence, that God is both able and willing to sanctify us now, there needs to be added one thing more, -- a divine evidence and conviction that He doeth it. In that hour it is done. God says to the inmost soul, 'According to thy faith be it unto thee.' Then the soul is pure from every spot of sin; it is clean from all unrighteousness."

Those who have low ideas of faith will probably be surprised to see how much Mr. Wesley ascribes to that Christian grace; and inquire why he so nearly connects our believing that God cleanses us from all sin with God's actual cleansing of us from all sin. But their wonder will cease, if they consider the definition which this divine gives of faith in the sermon: "Faith, in general," says he, "is defined by the apostle and 'evidence,' a divine evidence and conviction (the word used by the apostle means both) 'of things not seen;' not visible, nor perceivable either by sight, or by any other of the external senses. It implies both a supernatural evidence of God and of the things of God, a kind of spiritual light exhibited to the soul, and a supernatural sight or perfection thereof: accordingly the Scripture speaks of God's giving sometimes light, sometimes a power of discerning it. So St. Paul: 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' And elsewhere the same apostle speaks of "the eyes of our understanding being opened.' By this twofold operation of the Holy Spirit, having the eyes of our souls both opened and enlightened, we see the things which the natural eye hath not seen, neither the ear heard. We have a prospect of the invisible things of God; we see the spiritual world, which is all around about us,

and yet no more discerned by our natural faculties than if it had no being; and we see the eternal world piercing through the veil which hangs between time and eternity. Clouds and darkness then rest upon it no more, but we already see the glory which shall be revealed."

From this striking definition of faith, it is evident that the doctrine of this address exactly coincides with Mr. Wesley's sermon; with this verbal difference only, that what he calls faith, implying a "twofold operation of the Spirit," productive of spiritual light, and supernatural sight, I have called faith apprehending a sanctifying baptism or outpouring of the Spirit. I make this remark for the sake of those who fancy that, when a doctrine is clothed with expressions which are not quite familiar to them, it is a new doctrine although these expressions should be as Scriptural as those of a "baptism" or "outpouring of the Spirit," which are used by some of the prophets, by John the Baptist, by the four Evangelists, and by Christ Himself.

I have already pointed out the close connection there is between an act of faith which fully apprehends the sanctifying promise of the Father, and the power of the Spirit of Christ, which makes an end of moral corruption by forcing the lingering man of sin instantaneously to breathe out his last. Mr. Wesley, in the above quoted sermon, touches upon this delicate subject in so clear and concise a manner, that, while his discourse is before me, for the sake of those who have it not at hand, I shall transcribe the whole passage, and by this means put the seal of the eminent divine to what I have advanced in the preceding pages about sanctifying faith, and the quick destruction of sin.

"Does God work this great work in the soul gradually or instantaneously? Perhaps it may be gradually wrought in some. I mean in this sense: they do not advert to the particular moment wherein sin ceases to be. But it is infinitely desirable, were it the will of God, that it should be done instantaneously; that the Lord should destroy sin 'by the breath of his mouth,' in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. And so He generally does; a plain fact, of which there is evidence enough to satisfy and unprejudiced person. Thou, therefore, look for it every moment. Look for it in the way above described, -- in all those good works whereunto thou art created anew in Christ Jesus. There is then no danger; you can be no worse, if you are no better, for that expectation. For, were you to be disappointed of your hope, still you lose nothing. But you shall not be disappointed of our hope; it will come, and will not tarry. Look for it, then, every day, every hour, every moment, Why not this hour, this moment? Certainly you may look for it now, if you believe it is by faith. And by this token you may surely know whether you seek it by faith or works. If by works, you want something to be done first, before you are sanctified. You think, 'I must first be or do thus or thus.' Then you are seeking it by works unto this day. If you seek it by faith, you may expect it as you are; and if as you are, then expect it now. It is of importance to observe that there is an inseparable connection between these three points, -- Expect it by faith; expect it as your are; and expect it now. To deny one of them, is to deny them all; to allow one, is to allow them all. Do you believe we are sanctified by faith? Be true, then, to you principle; and look for this blessing just as you are, neither better nor worse; as a poor sinner that has still nothing to pay, nothing to plead, but 'Christ died.' And if you look for it as you are, then expect it now. Stay for nothing. Why should you? Christ is ready; and He is all you want. He is waiting for you; He is at the door. Let your inmost soul cry out,

'Come in, thou heavenly Guest,  
Nor hence again remove;  
But sup with me, and let the feast  
Be everlasting love.'"

XI. Social prayer is closely connected with faith in the capital promise of the sanctifying Spirit; and therefore I earnestly recommend that means of grace, where it can be had, as being eminently conducive to the attaining of Christian perfection. When many believing hearts are lifted up, and wrestle with God in prayer together, you may compare them to many diligent hands which work a large pump. At such times, particularly, the fountains of the great deep are broken up, the windows of heaven are opened, and "rivers of living water" flow from the heart of obedient believers.

"In Christ when brethren join,

And follow after peace,  
 The fellowship divine  
 He promises to bless:  
 His chiefest graces to bestow,  
 Where two or three are met below.

"When unity takes place,  
 The joys of heaven we prove;  
 This is the gospel grace,  
 The unction from above:  
 The Spirit on all believers shed,  
 Descending swift from Christ their head."

Accordingly we read, that when God powerfully opened the kingdom of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, the disciples "were all with one accord in one place." And, when He confirmed that kingdom, they were lifting up "their voice to God with one accord." See Acts 2:1, and 4:24. Thus also the believers at Samaria were filled with the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier, while Peter and John prayed with them, and laid hands upon them.

XII. But perhaps thou art alone. As a solitary bird which sitteth upon the house-top, thou lookest for a companion who may go with thee through the deepest travail of the regeneration. But alas! thou lookest in vain: all the professors about thee seem satisfied with their former experiences, and with self-imputed or self-conceited perfection. When thou givest them a hint of thy want of power from on high, and of thy hunger and thirst after a fulness of righteousness, they do not sympathize with thee. And, indeed, how can they? "They are full" already; "they reign without thee; they have need of nothing." They do not sensibly want that "God would grant them, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith; that they, being rooted and grounded in love, may comprehend with all saints" (perfected in love,) "what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God," Eph. 3:16, etc. They look upon thee as a whimsical person, full of singular notions, and they rather damp than enliven thy hopes. The circumstances are sad: but do not give place to despair; no, not for a moment. In the name of Christ, who could not get eve Peter, James, and John to watch with Him one hour, and who was obliged to go through His agony alone; in His name, I say, "cast not away thy confidence, which has great recompense of reward." Under all thy discouragements, remember that, after all, divine grace is not confined to numbers, any more than to a few. When all outward helps fail thee, make the more of Christ, on whom sufficient help is laid for thee, -- Christ, who says, "I will go with thee through fire and water: the former shall not burn thee, nor the latter drown thee." Jacob was alone when he wrestled with the angel, yet he prevailed: and, if "the servant is not above his Master," wonder not that it should be said of thee, as of thy Lord, when He went through His greatest temptations, "Of the people there was none with him."

Should thy conflicts be "without confused noise, with burning, and fuel of fire;" should thy "Jerusalem be built in troublous times;" should the Lord "shake not the earth only, but also heaven;" should "deep call unto deep at the noise of his water-spouts;" should "all his waves and billows go over thee;" should thy patience be "tried to the uttermost;" remember how in years past thou hast tried the patience of God, nor be discouraged. An extremity, and a storm, are often God's opportunity. A blast of temptation, and a shaking of all thy foundations, may introduce the fullness of God to thy soul, and answer the end of the rushing wind, and of the shaking, which formerly accompanied the first great manifestations of the Spirit. The Jews still expect the coming of the Messiah in the flesh; and they particularly expect it in a storm. When lightnings flash, when thunders roar, when a strong wind shakes their houses, and the tempestuous sky seems to rush down in thunder showers, then some of them particularly open their doors and windows to entertain their wished-for Deliverer. Do spiritually what they do carnally. Constantly wait for full "power from on high;" but especially when a storm of affliction, temptation, or distress overtakes thee; or when thy convictions and desires raise thee above thyself, as the waters of the flood raise Noah's ark above the earth; then be particularly careful to throw the door of faith, and the window of hope, as wide open as thou canst; and, spreading the arms of the imperfect love, say with all the ardor and resignation thou art master of, -



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

But if the Lord is pleased to come softly to thy help; if He makes an end of thy corruptions by helping thee gently to sink to unknown depths of meekness: if He drowns the indwelling man of sin by baptizing, by plunging him into an abyss of humility; do not find fault with the simplicity of His method, the plainness of His appearing, and the commonness of His prescription. Nature, like Naaman, is full of prejudices. She expects that Christ will come and make her clean with as much ado, pomp, and bustle, as the Syrian general looked for when "he was wroth, and said, Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on his God and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper." Christ frequently goes a much plainer way to work; and by this means He disconcerts all our preconceived notions and schemes of deliverance "Learn of me to be meek and lowly in heart, and thou shalt find rest to thy soul, -- the sweet rest of Christian perfection, of perfect humility, resignation and meekness. Lie at my feet, as she did who loved much, and meekly taken up with the good part and the one thing needful." But thou frettest; thou despisest this robe of perfection; it is too plain for thee; thou slightest "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which, in the sight of God, is of great price;" nothing will serve thy turn but a tawdry coat of many colors, which may please thy proud self-will, and draw the attention of others, by its glorious and flaming appearance; and it must be brought to thee with lightnings, thunderings, and voices. If this is thy disposition, wonder not at the divine wisdom, which thinks fit to disappoint thy loft prejudices; and let me address thee as Naaman's servants addressed him: "My brother, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he says to thee, 'I am the meek and lowly Lamb of God; wash in the stream of my blood, plunge in the Jordan of my humility, and be clean?'" Instead, therefore, of going away from a plain Jesus in a rage, welcome Him in his lowest appearance, and be persuaded that He can as easily make an end of thy sin by gently coming in a still small voice as by rushing in upon thee in a storm, a fire, or an earthquake. The Jews rejected their Savior, not so much because they did not earnestly desire His coming, as because He did not come in the manner in which they expected Him. It is probable that some of the Judaism cleaves to thee. If thou wilt absolutely come to Mount Zion in a triumphal chariot, or make thine entrance into the New Jerusalem upon a prancing horse, thou art likely never to come there. Leave, then, all thy lordly misconceptions behind; and humbly follow thy King, who makes His entry into the typical Jerusalem, "meek and lowly, riding upon an ass," yea, "upon a colt the foal of an ass." I say it again, therefore, while thy faith and hope strongly insist on the blessing, let thy resignation and patience leave to God's infinite goodness and wisdom the peculiar manner of bestowing it. When He says, Surely I come quickly to make my abode with thee," let thy faith embrace His promise: it will instantly beget power; and with that power thou mayest instantly bring forth prayer, and possibly the prayer which opens heaven, humbly wrestles with God, inherits the blessing, and turns the well-known petition, "Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus" into the well-known praises, "He is come! He is come! Praise the Lord, O my soul!" etc. Thus repent, believe, and obey; and "He that cometh will come" with a fullness of pure, meek, humble love: "he will not tarry;" or if He tarries, it will be to give to thy faith and desires more time to open, that thou mayest, at His appearing, be able to take in more of His perfecting grace and sanctifying power: besides, thy expectation of His coming is of a purifying nature, and gradually sanctifies thee. "He that has this hope in him," by this very hope "purifies himself, even as God is pure:" for "we are saved" into perfect love "by hope," as well as by faith. The stalk bears the "full corn in the ear," as well as "the root."

Up, then, thou sincere expectant of God's kingdom! Let thy humble, ardent free-will meet prevenient, sanctifying free-grace in its weakest and darkest appearance, as the father of the faithful met the Lord when "he appeared to him in the plain of Mamre" as mere mortal: "Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and lo, three men stood by him!" So does free grace, if I may venture upon the allusion, invite itself to thy tent: nay, it is now with thee, in its creating, redeeming, and sanctifying influences. "And when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door and bowed himself towards the ground." Go and do likewise: if thou seest any beauty in the humbling "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," in the sanctifying "Love of God," and in the comfortable "fellowship of the Holy Ghost," let thy free will run to meet them, and bow itself towards the ground. O for a speedy going out of thy tent, thy sinful self! O for a race of desire in the way of faith! O for incessant prostrations! O for a meek and deep bowing of thyself before thy divine Deliverer! "And Abraham said, My

Lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant." O for the humble pressing of a loving faith! O for the faith which stopped the sun when God avenged His people in the days of Joshua! O for the importunate faith of the two disciples who detained Christ when "he made as though he would have gone farther! They constrained him, saying, Abide with us; for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them." He soon, indeed, vanished out of their bodily sight, because they were not called always to enjoy His bodily presence. Far from promising them that blessing, He had said, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you, that he may abide with you for ever. He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." This promise is still "yea and amen" in Christ: only plead it according to the preceding directions, and, as sure as our Lord is "the true and faithful witness," so sure will "the God of hope: and love soon "fill you with all joy and peace, that ye may abound in" pure love, as well as in confirmed "hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

Lift up your hands which hang down: our Aaron, our heavenly High Priest, is near to hold them up. The spiritual Amalekites will not always prevail: our Samuel, our heavenly prophet, is ready to cut them and their king in pieces before the Lord. "The promise is unto you." You are surely called to attain the perfection of your dispensation, although you seem still afar off. Christ, in whom that perfection centers, -- Christ from whom it flows, is very near, even at the door. "Behold," said He, (and this He spake to Laodicean loiterers,) "I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open, I will come in, and sup with him," upon the fruits of my glory, in their angelical and heavenly maturity.

Hear His encouraging gospel: "Ask, and you shall have; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened: if any of you" (believers) "lack wisdom," (indwelling wisdom, -- Christ, the wisdom and the power of God, dwelling in his heart by faith,) "let him ask of God, who giveth to all men, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask" as a believer, "in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed; for let not that man think that he shall receive the things which he" thus "asketh." But "whatsoever things ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them:" for "all things" commanded and promised "are possible to him that believeth." He who has commanded us to be perfect in love "as our heavenly Father is perfect;" and He who has promised speedily to "avenge his elect, who cry to him night and day; He will speedily avenge" you of your grand adversary, indwelling sin. He will say to you, "According to thy faith be it done unto thee;" for He "is able to do far exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think;" and of His fullness we may all receive grace for grace. We may all witness the gracious fulfillment of all the promises which He has graciously made, "that by them we might be partakers of the divine nature," so far as it can be communicated to mortals in the world. You see that, "with men," what you look for "is impossible:" but show yourselves believers; take God into the account; and you will soon experience that "with God all things are possible." Nor forget the omnipotent Advocate, whom you have with Him. Behold, He lifts His once pierced hands, and says, "Father, sanctify them through thy" loving "truth, that they may be perfected in one:" and showing to you the fountain of atoning blood and purifying water, whence flow the streams which cleanse and gladden the hearts of believers, He says, "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you: ask, then, that your joy may be full.' If I try your faith by a little delay, if I hide my face for a moment, it is only to 'gather you with everlasting kindness. A woman, when she is in travail, hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more anguish for joy. Now ye have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. In that day ye shall ask me no question;' for you shall not have my bodily presence But my Urim and Thummim will be with you, and the 'Spirit of truth' will himself 'lead you into all' Christian 'truth.'"

"O for a firm and lasting faith, To credit all th' Almighty saith; T' embrace the promise His son And feel the Comforter our own!"

In the meantime, be not afraid to give glory to God by believing in hope against hope. "Stagger not at the promise: of the Father and the Son "through unbelief;" but trust the power and faithfulness of your Creator and Redeemer till your Sanctifier has fixed His abode in your heart. Wait at mercy's door, as the lame beggar did at the "beautiful gate of the



temple." "Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us: and he gave heed to them, expecting to receive something of them." Do so too: give heed to the Father in the Son, who says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Expect to receive the one thing now needful for you, a fullness of the sanctifying Spirit. And, though your patience may be tried, it shall not be disappointed. The faith and power which, at St. Peter's word, gave the poor cripple a "perfect soundness in the presence of all" the wandering Jews will give you, at Christ's word, a perfect soundness of heart in the presence of all your adversaries.

"Faith, might faith, the promise sees,  
And looks to that alone;  
Laughs at impossibilities,  
And cries, It shall be done,"--

"Faith asks impossibilities;  
Impossibilities are given;  
And I, e'en I, from sin shall cease,  
Shall live on earth the life of heaven."

"Faith always works by love, -- by love of desire, at least; making us ardently pray for what we believe to be eminently desirable. And if Christian perfection appears so to you, you might, perhaps, express your earnest desire of it in some such words as these:

#### Prayer For Obtainment Of Sanctification

'How long, Lord, shall my soul, thy spiritual temple, be a den of thieves, or a house of merchandise? How long shall vain thoughts profane it, as the buyers and sellers profaned thy temple made with human hands? How long shall evil tempers lodge within me? How long shall unbelief, formality, hypocrisy, envy, hankering after sensual pleasure, indifference to spiritual delights, and backwardness to painful or ignominious duty, harbor there? How long shall these sheep and doves, yea these goats and serpents, defile my breast, which should be pure as the Holy of holies? How long shall they hinder me from being one of the worshippers whom thou seekest; one of those who worship thee in spirit and in truth? O help me to take away these cages of unclean birds! Suddenly come to thy temple! Turn out all that offends the eye of thy purity, and destroy all that keeps me out of the rest which remains for thy Christian people: so shall I keep a spiritual Sabbath, a Christian jubilee to the God of my life: so shall I witness my share in "the oil of joy," with which thou anointest perfect Christians above their fellow-believers. I stand in need of that oil, Lord. My lamp burns dim: sometimes it seems to be even gone out, as that of the foolish virgins: it is more like a smoking flax than a burning and shining light. O quench it not! Raise it to a flame! Thou knowest that I do believe in thee. The trembling hand of my faith holds thee; and though I have ten thousand times grieved thy pardoning love, thine everlasting arm is still under me to redeem my life from destruction; while thy right hand is over me, to crown me with mercies and lovingkindness. But alas! I am neither sufficiently thankful for thy present mercies, nor sufficiently athirst for thy favors. Hence I feel an aching void in my soul, being conscious that I have not attained the heights of grace described in thy word, and enjoyed by thy holiest servants. Their deep experiences, the diligence and ardor with which they did thy will, the patience and fortitude with which they endured the cross, reproach me, and convince me of my manifold wants. I want "power from on high;" I want the penetrating, lasting unction of the Holy One; I want to have my vessel, my capacious heart, full of the oil which makes the countenance of wise virgins cheerful; I want a lamp of heavenly illumination, and a fire of divine love, burning day and night in my breast, as the typical lamps did in the temple, and the sacred fire on the altar; I want a full application of the blood which cleanses from all sin, and a strong faith in thy sanctifying word, -- a faith by which thou mayest dwell in my heart, as the unwavering hope of glory, and the fixed object of my love; I want the internal oracle, -- thy still, small voice, together with Urim and Thummin,\* the new name "which none knoweth but he that receiveth it;" in a word, Lord, I want a plenitude of thy spirit, the full promise of the Father, and the rivers which flow from the inmost soul of the believers who have gone on to the perfection of thy dispensation. I do believe that thou can and will thus "baptize me with the Holy Ghost and with fire:" help my unbelief: confirm and increase my faith, with regard to this important

baptism. Lord, I have need to be thus baptized of thee, and I am straitened till this baptism is accomplished. By Thy baptism of tears in the manger, of water in the Jordan, of sweat in Gethsemane, of blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke, and flaming wrath on Calvary, baptize, O baptize my soul, and make as full an end of the original sin which I have from Adam's thy last baptism made of "the likeness of sinful flesh" which thou had from a daughter of Eve. Some of thy people look at death for full salvation from sin; but, at thy command, Lord, I look unto thee. "Say to my soul, I am thy salvation:" and let me feel in my heart, as well as see with my understanding, that thou can save from sin to the uttermost all that come to God through thee. I am tired of forms, professions, and orthodox notions, so far as they are not pipes or channels to convey life, light, and love to my dead, dark, and stony heart. Neither the plain letter of thy gospel, nor the sweet foretastes and transient illuminations of thy Spirit, can satisfy the large desires of my faith. Give me thine abiding Spirit, that He may continually shed abroad thy love in my soul. Come, O Lord, with that blessed Spirit! come, thou and thy Father, in that holy Comforter! come to make your abode with me; or I shall go meekly mourning to my grave! Blessed mourning Lord, increase it! I had rather wait in tears for thy fullness than wantonly waste the fragments of Thy spiritual bounties, or feed with Laodicean contentment upon the tainted manna of my former experiences. Righteous Father, I hunger and thirst after thy righteousness! Send thy Holy Spirit of promise to fill me therewith, to sanctify me throughout, and to seal me centrally to the day of eternal redemption and finished salvation. Not for works of righteousness which I have done, but of thy mercy, for Christ's sake, save thou me by the complete washing of regeneration, and the full renewing of the Holy Ghost. And, in order to this, pour out of thy Spirit; shed it abundantly on me, till the fountain of living water abundantly spring up in my soul, and I can say, in the full sense of the words, that thou lives in me, that my life is turned to Him that gave it, -- to thee, the First and the Last, my Author and my End, my God and my all."

\*\_Two Hebrew words, which mean, "Lights and Perfections."

# Fletcher on Christian Perfection

## From A Tract

By John Fletcher

### Chapter 3

#### AN ADDRESS TO PERFECT CHRISTIANS

Ye have not asked in vain, O ye men of God, who have mixed faith with your evangelical requests. The God who says, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it;" the gracious God who declares, "Blessed are they that hunger after righteousness, for they shall be filled;" that faithful, covenant-keeping God has now filled you with all righteousness, peace, and joy in believing. The brightness of Christ's appearing has destroyed the indwelling man of sin. He who had slain the lion and the bear, -- He who had already done so great things for you, -- has now crowned all His blessings by slaying the Goliath within. Aspiring, unbelieving self is fallen before the victorious son of David. The quick and powerful word of God, which is sharper than any two-edged sword, has pierced even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. The carnal mind is cut off; the circumcision of the heart through the Spirit has fully taken place in your breasts; and now that mind is in you which was also in Christ Jesus; ye are spiritually minded; loving God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourselves; ye are full of goodness; ye keep the commandments; ye observe the law of liberty; ye fulfill the law of Christ Of Him ye have learned to be meek and lowly in heart. Ye have fully taken His yoke upon you: in so doing ye have found a sweet, abiding rest unto your souls; and from blessed experience ye can say, "Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden is light; his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace: all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies." The beatitudes are sensibly yours; and the charity described by St. Paul has the same place in your breasts which the tables of the law had in the ark of the covenant. Ye are the living temples of the Trinity; the Father is your life, the Son your light, the Spirit your love; ye are truly baptized into the mystery of God; ye continue to drink into one Spirit, and thus ye enjoy the grace of both sacraments. There is an end of your "Lo here, and, Lo there!" The kingdom of God is now established within you. Christ's righteousness, peace, and joy are rooted in your breasts by the Holy Ghost given unto you, as an abiding Guide and indwelling Comforter. Your introverted eye of faith looks at God, who gently guides you with His eye into all the truth necessary to make you do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God. Simplicity of intention keeps darkness out of your mind; and purity of affection keeps wrong fires out of your breast. By the former ye are without guile; by the latter ye are without envy. Your passive will instantly melts into the will of God; and on all occasions you meekly say, "Not my will, O Father, but thine be done." Thus are ye always ready to suffer what you are called to suffer. Your active will ever more says, "Speak, Lord; thy servant heareth. What wouldst thou have me to do? It is my meat and drink to do the will of my heavenly Father." Thus are ye always ready to do whatsoever ye are convinced that God calls you to do; and whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat, or drink, or do anything else, ye do all to the glory of God, and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, in everything giving thanks; solemnly looking for, and hastening unto the hour of your dissolution, and the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and your soul, being clothed with a celestial body, shall be able to do celestial service to the God of your life.

In this blessed state of Christian perfection, the holy anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you, unless it be as the same anointing teacheth. Agreeably therefore to that anointing, which teaches by a variety of means, which formerly taught a prophet by an ass, and daily instructs God's children by the ant, I shall venture to set before you some important directions, which the Holy Ghost has already suggested to your pure minds; for I would not be negligent to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance, and giving you some hints, which it is safe for you frequently to meditate upon.

I. Adam, ye know, lost his human perfection in paradise; Satan lost his angelic perfection in heaven; the devil thrust sore at Christ in the wilderness, to throw Him down from His mediatorial perfection; and St. Paul, in the same epistles where he professes not only Christian, but apostolic perfection also, (Phil. 3:15; 1 Cor. 2:6; 2 Cor. 12:11,) informs us that he continued to run for the crown of heavenly perfection like a man who might not only lose his crown of Christian perfection, but become a reprobate, and be cast away. 1 Cor 9:25-27. And therefore, so run ye also, that no man take your crown of Christian perfection in this world, and that ye may obtain your crown of angelic perfection in the world to come. Still keep your body under; still guard your senses; still watch your own heart; and steadfast in the faith still resist the devil, that he may flee from you.

"We do not find," says Mr. Wesley, in his "Plain Account of Christian Perfection," "any general state described in Scripture, from which a man cannot draw back to sin. If there were any state wherein this is impossible, it would be that of those who are sanctified, who are fathers in Christ, who 'rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks.' But it is not impossible for these to draw back. They who are sanctified may yet fall and perish. Heb. 10:29. Even fathers in Christ need that warning, 'Love not the world.' 1 John 2:15. They who rejoice, pray, and give thanks without ceasing, may nevertheless 'quench the Spirit.' 1 Thess. 5:16, etc. Nay, even they who are 'sealed unto the day of redemption,' may yet 'grieve the Holy Spirit of God.' Eph. 5:30."

The doctrine of the absolute perseverance of the saints is the first card which the devil played against man: "Ye shall not surely die, if ye break the law of perfection." This fatal card won the game. Mankind and paradise were lost. The artful serpent had too well succeeded at his first game to forget that lucky card at his second. See him transforming himself into an angel of light on the pinnacle of the temple. There he plays over again his old game against the Son of God. Out of the Bible he pulls the very card which won our first parents, and swept the stake, paradise; yea, swept it with the bosom of destruction. "Cast thyself down," says he; "for it is written" that all things shall work together for thy good, thy very falls not excepted: "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." The tempter, thanks be to Christ, lost his game at that time; but he did not lose his card; and it is probable that he will play it around against you all, only with some variation. Let me mention one among a thousand. He promised our Lord that God's angels should bear Him up in their hands, if He threw Himself down: and it is not unlikely that He will promise you greater things still. Nor should I wonder if he was bold enough to hint, that when you cast yourselves down, God Himself will bear you up in His hands, yea, in His arms of everlasting love. O ye men of God, learn wisdom by the fall of Adam! O ye anointed sons of the Most High, learn watchfulness by the conduct of Christ! If He was afraid to tempt the Lord His God, will ye dare do it? If He rejected, as poison, the hook of absolute perseverance of the saints, though it was baited with Scripture, will ye swallow it down, as if it were honey out of the Rock of Ages? No; through faith in Christ, the Scriptures have made you wise unto salvation. You will not only fly with all speed from evil, but from the very appearance of evil; and, when you stand on the brink of a temptation, far from entering into it, under any pretense whatever, ye will leap back into the bosom of Him who says, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation; for," though "the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak." I grant, that evangelically speaking, the weakness of the flesh is not sin; but yet "the deceitfulness of sin" creeps in at this door; and, by his means, not a few of God's children, after they had escaped the pollutions of the world, through the sanctifying knowledge of Christ, under plausible pretenses, have been again entangled therein, and overcome. Let their falls make you cautious. Ye have put on the whole armor of God: O keep it one, and use it with all prayer, that ye may, to the last, stand complete in Christ, and be more than conquerors through Him that has loved you.

II. Remember that "everyone who is perfect shall be as his Master." Now, if your Master was tempted and assaulted to the last; if to the last He watched and prayed, using all the means of grace Himself, and enforcing the use of them upon others; if to the last he fought against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and did not "put off the harness" till He had put off the body; think not yourselves above Him, but go and do likewise. If He did not regain paradise without going through the most complete renunciation of all the good things of this world, and without meekly submitting to the severe stroke of His last enemy, death; be content to be perfect as He was, nor fancy that your flesh and blood can inherit the celestial kingdom of God, when the flesh and blood which Emmanuel Himself assumed from a pure virgin could not inherit it without passing under the cherub's flaming sword; I mean, without going through the gates of death.

III. Ye are not complete in wisdom. Perfect love does not imply perfect knowledge, but perfect humility, and perfect readiness to receive instruction. Remember, therefore, that if ever ye show that ye are above being instructed, even by a fisherman who teaches according to the divine anointing, ye will show that ye are fallen from a perfection of humility into a perfection of pride.

IV. Do not confound angelical with Christian perfection. Uninterrupted transports of praise, and ceaseless raptures of joy, do not belong to Christian, but to angelical perfection. Our feeble frame can bear but a few drops of that glorious cup. In general, that new wine is too strong for our old bottles; that power is too excellent for our earthen, cracked vessels; but, weak as they are, they can bear a fullness of meekness, of resignation, of humility, and of that love which is willing to obey unto death. If God indulges you with ecstasies, and extraordinary revelations, be thankful for them; but be not exalted above measure by them: take care lest enthusiastic delusions mix themselves with them; and remember, that your Christian perfection does not so much consist in building a tabernacle upon Mount Tabor, to rest and enjoy rare sights there, as in resolutely taking up the cross, and following Christ to the palace of a proud Caiphas, to the judgment hall of an unjust Pilate, and to the top of an ignominious Calvary. Ye never read in your Bibles, "Let that glory be upon you, which was also upon St. Stephen, when he looked up steadfastly into heaven, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." But ye have frequently read there, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

See Him on that ignominious gibbet! He hangs abandoned by His friends, surrounded by His foes, condemned by the rich, insulted by the poor: He hangs, "a worm, and no man," a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people. All that see Him laugh Him to scorn. They shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying, "He trusted in God that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, if he will have him." There is none to help Him. One of His disciples denies, another sells Him, and the rest run away. Many oxen are come about Him; fat bulls of Bashan close Him on every side; they gape upon Him with their mouths, as it were a rampaging lion; He is poured out like water; His heart in the midst of His body is like melting wax; His strength is dried up like a potsherd; His tongue cleaveth to His gums; He is going into the dust of death; many dogs are come about Him, and the counsel of the wicked layeth siege against Him; His hands and feet are pierced; you may tell all His bones; they stand staring and looking upon Him; they part His garments among them, and cast lots for the only remain of His property, His plain, seamless vesture. Both suns, the visible and the invisible, seem eclipsed. No cheering beam of created light glides His gloomy prospect; no smile of His heavenly Father supports His agonizing soul; no cordial, unless it be vinegar and gall, revives His sinking spirits. He has nothing left except His God. But His God is enough for Him; in His God he has all things; and, though His soul is seized with sorrow, even unto death, yet it hangs more firmly upon His God by a naked faith, than His lacerated body does on the cross by the clinched nails. The perfection of His love shines in all its Christian glory. He not only forgives His insulting foes and bloody persecutors, but, in the highest point of His passion, He forgets His own wants, and thirsts after their eternal happiness. Together with His blood, He pours out His soul for them; and, excusing them all, He says, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." O ye adult sons of God, in this glass behold all with open face the glory of your Redeemer's forgiving, praying love; and, as ye behold it, be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the loving Spirit of the Lord.

V. This lesson is deep; but He may teach you one deeper still. By a strong sympathy with Him, in all his sufferings, He may call you to know Him every way crucified. Stern justice thunders from heaven, "Awake, O sword, against the man who is my fellow!" The sword awakes; the sword goes through His soul; the flaming sword is quenched in His blood. But is one sinew of His perfect faith cut, one fiber of His perfect resignation injured, by the astonishing blow? No: His God slays Him, and yet He trusts in His God. By the noblest of all ventures, in the most dreadful of all storms, He meekly bows His head, and shelters His departing soul in the bosom of His God. "My God! my God!" says He, "though all thy comforts have forsaken me, and all thy storms and waves go over me, yet into thy hands I commend my spirit. 'For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand,' where I shall soon sit, 'there are pleasures for ever more.'" What a pattern of perfect confidence! O ye perfect Christians, be ambitious to ascend to those amazing heights of Christ's perfection! "for even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should



follow his steps; who knew no sin; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." If this is your high calling on earth, rest not, O ye fathers in Christ, till your patient hope and perfect confidence in God have got their last victory over your last enemy, the king of terrors.

"The ground of a thousand mistakes," said Mr. Wesley, "is, the not considering deeply, that love is the highest gift of God, -- humble, gentle, patient love: that all visions, revelations, manifestations whatever, are little things compared to love. It were well you should be thoroughly sensible of this. The heaven of heavens is love. There is nothing higher in religion; there is, in effect, nothing else. If you look for anything but more love, you are looking wide of the mark, you are getting out of the royal way. And when you are asking others, Have you received this or that blessing?' if you mean anything but more love, you mean wrong; you are leading them out of the way, and putting them upon a false scent. Settle it then in putting them upon a false scent. Settle it then in you heart, that, from the moment God has saved you from all sin, you are to aim at anything but more of that love described in the thirteenth of the Corinthians. You can go no higher than this, till you are carried into Abraham's bosom."

VI. Love is humble. "Be, therefore, clothed with humility," says Mr. Wesley. "Let it not only fill, but cover you all over. Let modesty and self-diffidence appear in all your actions. Let all you speak and do show that you are little, and base, and mean, and vile, in your own eyes. As one instance of this, be always ready to own any fault you have been in. If you have at any time thought, spoke, or acted wrong, be not backward to acknowledge it. Never dream that this will hurt the cause of God: no, it will further it. Be therefore open and frank when you are taxed with anything. Let it appear just as it is; and you will thereby not hinder, but adorn, the gospel." Why should ye be more backward in acknowledging your failings than in confessing that ye do not pretend to infallibility? St. Paul was perfect in the love which casts out fear, and therefore he boldly reprov'd the high priest; but, when he had reprov'd him more sharply than the fifth commandment allows, he directly confessed his mistake, and set his seal to the importance of the duty in which he had been inadvertently wanting. "Then Paul said, I knew not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." St. John was perfect in the courteous, humble love which brings us down at the feet of all. His courtesy, his humility, and the dazzling glory which beamed forth from a divine messenger, whom he apprehended to be more than a creature, betrayed him into a fault contrary to that of St. Paul; but, far from concealing it, he openly confessed it, and published his confession for the edification of all the churches. "When I had heard and seen," says he, "I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then said he unto me, See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant." Christian perfection shines as much in the childlike simplicity with which the perfect readily acknowledge their faults, as it does in the manly steadiness with which they "resist unto blood, striving against sin."

VII. If humble love makes us frankly confess our faults, much more does it incline us to own ourselves sinners, miserable sinners, before that God whom we have so frequently offended. I need not remind you, that your bodies are "dead because of sin." You see, you feel it: and therefore, so long as you dwell in a prison of flesh and blood, which death, the revenger of sin, is to pull down; so long as your final justification, as pardoned and sanctified sinners, has not taken place; yea, so long as you break the law of paradisiacal perfection, under which you were originally placed, it is meet, right, and your bounden duty, to consider yourselves as sinners, who as transgressors of the law of innocence and the law of liberty, are guilty of death, -- of eternal death. St. Paul did so after he was "come to Mount Zion, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." He still looked upon himself as the chief of sinners, because he had been a daring blasphemer of Christ, and a fierce persecutor of his people. "Christ," said he, "came to save sinners, of whom I am chief." The reason is plain. Matter of fact is and will be matter of fact to all eternity. According to the doctrines of grace and justice, and before the throne of God's mercy and holiness, a sinner, pardoned and sanctified, must, in the very nature of things, be considered as a sinner; for, if you consider him as a saint, absolutely abstracted from the character of a sinner, how can he be a pardoned and sanctified sinner. To all eternity, therefore, but much more while death, "the wages of sin," is at your heels, and while ye are going to "appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," to receive your final sentence of absolution or condemnation, it will become you to say with St. Paul, "We have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely" (as sinners) "by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ:" although we are justified judicially as believers, through faith, -as obedient believers, through the obedience of faith, -and as perfect Christians, through Christian perfection.



VII. Humble love becomes "all things" (but sin) "to all men," although it delights most in those who are most holy. Ye may and ought to set your love of peculiar complacency upon God's dearest children, -- upon those who, like yourselves, "excel by virtue; "because they more strongly reflect the image of the God of love, the Holy One of Israel. But, if ye despise the weak, and are above lending them a helping hand, ye are fallen from Christian perfection, which teaches us to bear one another's burdens, especially the burdens of the weak. Imitate, then, the tenderness and wisdom of the good Shepherd, who carries the lambs in His bosom, gently leads the sheep which are big with young, feeds with milk those who cannot bear strong meat, and says to his imperfect disciples, "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now."

IX. "Where the" loving "Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Keep, therefore, at the utmost distance from the shackles of a narrow, prejudiced, bigoted spirit. The moment ye confine your love to the people who think just as you do, and your regard to the preachers who exactly suit your taste, you fall from perfection and turn bigots. "I entreat you," said Mr. Wesley, in his "Plain Account," "beware of bigotry. Let not your love or beneficence be confined to Methodist, so-called, only; much less to that very small part of them who seem to be renewed in love, or to those who believe yours and their report. O make not this your shibboleth!" On the contrary, as ye have time and ability, "do good to all men." Let your benevolence shine upon all; let your charity send its cherishing beams towards all, in proper degrees. So shall ye be perfect as your heavenly Father, who makes His sun to shine upon all, although He sends the brightest and warmest beams of His favor upon "the household of faith," and reserves His richest bounties for those who lay out their five talents to the best advantage.

X. Love, pure love, is satisfied with Supreme Good, -- with God. "Beware then of desiring anything but him. Now you desire nothing else. Every other desire is driven out. See that none enter in again. Keep thyself pure: let your eye' remain 'single, and your whole body shall be full of light.' Admit no desire of pleasing food, or any other pleasure of sense; no desire of pleasing the eye or the imagination; no desire of money, or praise, or esteem; of happiness in any creature. You may bring these desires back; but you need not; you may feel them no more. O 'stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free.' Be patterns to all of denying yourselves, and taking up your cross daily. Let them see that you make no account of any pleasure which does not bring you nearer to God, nor regard any pain which does; that you simply aim at pleasing Him, whether by doing or suffering; that the constant language of your heart, with regard to pleasure or pain, honor or dishonor, riches or poverty, is, -

'All's alike to me, so I In my Lord may live and die.'"

XI. The best soldiers are sent upon the most difficult an dangerous expeditions; and, as you are the best soldiers of Jesus Christ, ye will probably be called to drink deepest of His cup, and to carry the heaviest burdens. "Expect contradiction and opposition," says the judicious divine whom I have just quoted, "together with crosses of various kinds. Consider the words of St. Paul, 'To you it is given in the behalf of Christ,' (for His sake, as a fruit of His death and intercession for you,) 'not only to believe, but also to suffer for his sake,' Phil. 1:29. 'It is given.' God gives you this opposition or reproach; it is a fresh token of His love. And will you disown the Giver, or spurn His gift, and count it a misfortune? Will you not rather say, 'Father, the hour is come that thou shouldest be glorified: now thou givest thy child to suffer something for thee: do with me according to thy will?' Know that these things, far from being hindrances to the work of God, or to your soul, unless by your own fault, are not only unavoidable in the course of Providence, but profitable, yea, necessary for you. Therefore, receive them from God (not from chance) with willingness, with thankfulness. Receive them from men with humility, meekness, yieldings, gentleness, sweetness."

Love can never do or suffer too much for its Divine Object. Be then ambitious, like St. Paul, to be made perfect in sufferings. I have already observed that the apostle, not satisfied to be a perfect Christian, would also be a perfect martyr, earnestly desiring to know the fellowship of Christ's utmost sufferings. Follow him, as he followed his suffering, crucified Lord. Your feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: run after them both in the race of obedience, for the crown of martyrdom, if that crown is reserved for you. And if ye miss the crown of those who are

martyrs indeed, ye shall, however, receive the reward of those who are martyrs in intention, -the crown of righteousness and angelical perfection.

XII. But do not so desire to follow Christ to the garden of Gethsemane, as to refuse following Him now to the carpenter's shop, if Providence now calls you to it. Do not lose the present day by idly looking back at yesterday, or foolishly antedating the cares of tomorrow: but wisely use every hour; spending them as one who stands on the verge of time, on the border of eternity, and who has his word cut out by a wise Providence from moment to moment. Never, therefore, neglect using the two talents you have now, and doing the duty which is now incumbent upon you. Should ye be tempted to it, under the plausible pretense of waiting for a greater number of talents, remember that God doubles our talents in the way of duty, and that it is a maxim advanced by Elisha Coles himself, "Use grace, and have" more "grace." Therefore, "to continual watchfulness and prayer, add continual employment," say Mr. Wesley; "for grace fills a vacuum, as well as nature: the devil fills whatever God does not fill." -- "As by works faith is made perfect, so the completing or destroying the work of faith and enjoying the favor or suffering the displeasure of God, greatly depends on every single act of obedience." If you forget this, you will hardly do now whatsoever your hand findeth to do. Much less will you do it with all your might, for God, for eternity.

XII. Love is modest: it rather inclines to bashfulness and silence than to talkative forwardness. "In a multitude of words there wanteth not sin: be" therefore "slow to speak, nor cast your pearls before" those who cannot distinguish them from pebbles. Nevertheless, when you are solemnly called upon to bear testimony to the truth, and to say what great things God has done for you, it would be cowardice or false prudence not to do it with humility. "Be then always ready to give an answer to every man who" properly "asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness" (without fluttering anxiety) "and with fear," with a reverential awe of God upon your minds. 1 Pet. 3:15. The perfect are burning and shining lights, and our Lord intimates, that, as "a candle is not lighted to be put under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may give light to all the house," so God does not light the candle of perfect love to hide it in a corner, but to give light to all those who are within the reach of its brightness. If diamonds glitter, if stars shine, if flowers display their colors, and perfumes diffuse their fragrance, to the honor of the Father of lights and Author of every good gift, -- if, without self-seeking, they disclose His glory to the utmost of their power, why should ye not go and do likewise? God answers its most valuable end when it is brought to light, and made to circulate, for charitable and pious uses, and not when it lies concealed in a miser's strong box, or in the dark bosom of a mine. But when you lay out your spiritual gold for proper uses, beware of imitating the vanity of those coxcombs, who, as often as they are about to pay for a trifle, pull out a handful of gold, merely to make a show of their wealth.

XIV. Love, or "charity, rejoiceth in the" display of an edifying "truth." Fact is fact all the world over. If you can say, to the glory of God, that you are alive, and feel very well, when you do so, why could you not also testify, to His honor, that you live not, but that Christ liveth in you, if you really find that this is your experience? Did not St. John say, "Our love is made perfect, because as he is so are we in this world?" Did not St. Paul write, "The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk after the Spirit?" Did he not with the same simplicity declare, that, although he had nothing, and was sorrowful, yet he possessed all things, and was always rejoicing?

Hence it appears, that with respect to the declaring or concealing what God has done for your soul, the line of your duty runs exactly between the proud forwardness of some stiff Pharisees, and voluntary humility of some stiff mystics. The former vainly boasts of more than they experience, and by that means they set up the cursed idol, self; the latter ungratefully hide "the wonderful works of God," which the primitive Christians spoke publicly in a variety of languages, and by means they refuse to exalt their gracious benefactor, Christ. The first error is undoubtedly more odious than the second; but what need is there in leaning to either? Would ye avoid them both? Let your tempers and lives always declare that perfect love is attainable in this life. And when you have a proper call to declare it with your lips and pens, do it without forwardness to the glory of God; do it with simplicity, for the edification of your neighbor; do it with godly jealousy, lest ye should show the treasures of divine grace in your hearts with the some self- complacence with which King Hezekiah showed his treasures, and the golden vessels of the temple, to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, remembering what a dreadful curse this piece of vanity pulled down upon him: "And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord: Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house shall be carried to Babylon, nothing shall be left,

saith the Lord." If God so severely punished Hezekiah's pride, how properly does St. Peter charge believers to give with fear an account of the grace which is in them and how careful should ye be to observe his important charge!

XV. If you will keep at the utmost distance from the vanity which proved so fatal to good

King Hezekiah, follow an excellent direction of Mr. Wesley. When you have done anything for God, or "received any favor from Him, retire, if not into your closet, into your heart, and say, 'I come, Lord, to restore to thee what thou hast given and I freely relinquish it, to enter again into my own nothingness. For what is the most perfect creature in heaven or earth in thy presence, but a void, capable of being filled with thee and by thee, as the air which is void and dark, is capable of being filled with the light of the sun? Grant, therefore, O Lord, that I may never appropriate thy grace to myself, and more than the air appropriates to itself the light of the sun, who withdraws it every day to restore it the next; there being nothing in the air that either appropriates to itself the light of the sun, who withdraws it every day to restore it the next; there being nothing in the air that either appropriates his light or resists it. O give me the same facility of receiving and restoring thy grace and good works! I say, thine; for I acknowledge that the root from which they spring is in thee, and not in me.' The true means to be filled anew with the riches of grace is thus to strip ourselves of it; without this it is extremely difficult not to faint in the practice of good works." - "And therefore, that your good works may receive their last perfection let them lose themselves in God This is a kind of death to them, resembling that of our bodies, which will not attain their highest life, their immortality, till they lose themselves in the glory of our souls, or rather of God, wherewith they shall be filled. And it is only what they had of earthly and mortal which good works lose by this spiritual death."

XVI. Would ye see this deep precept put in practice? Consider St. Paul. Already possessed of Christian perfection, he does good works from morning till night. He warns "everyone night and day with tears." He carries the gospel from east to west. Wherever he stops, he plants a church at the hazard of his life. But instead of resting in his present perfection, and in the good works which spring from it, he grows "in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," unweariedly following after, if that he may apprehend that perfection for which also he is apprehended of Christ Jesus, - that celestial perfection of which he got lively ideas, when he was "caught up to the third heaven, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." With what amazing ardor does he run his race of Christian perfection, for the prize of that higher perfection! How does he forget the works of yesterday, when he lays himself out for God today! "Though dead, he yet speaketh;" nor can an address to perfect Christians be closed by a more proper speech than his: "Brethren," says he, "be followers of me: I count not myself to have apprehended" my angelical perfection: "but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind," (settling in none of my former experiences, resting in none of my good works,) "and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the" celestial "prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus. Let us, therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded; and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. In the meantime you may sing the following hymn of the Rev. Mr. Charles Wesley, which is descriptive of the destruction of corrupt self-will, and expressive of the absolute resignation which characterizes a perfect believer:

"To do, or not to do; to have, Or not to have, I leave to thee: To be, or not to be, I leave; Thy only will be done in me. All my requests are lost in one: Father, thy only will be done.

Suffice that, for the season past, Myself in things divine I sought,

For comforts cried with eager haste,  
And murmur'd that I found them not:  
I leave it now to thee alone;  
Father, thy only will be done.

Thy gifts I clamor for no more,  
Or selfishly thy grace require,

An evil heart to varnish o'er;  
Jesus the Giver I desire;  
After the flesh no longer known;  
Father, thy only will be done.

Welcome alike the crown or cross;  
Trouble I cannot ask, nor peace,  
Nor toil, nor rest, nor gain, nor loss,  
Nor joy, nor grief nor pain nor ease,  
Nor life, nor death; but ever groan,  
Father, thy only will be done."

This hymn suits all the believers who are at the bottom of Mount Sion, and begin to join the spirits of just men made perfect. But, when the triumphal chariot of perfect love gloriously carries you to the top of perfection's hill; when you are raised far above the common heights of the perfect; when you are almost translated into glory, like Elijah; then you may sing another hymn of the same Christian poet:

"Who in Jesus confide,  
They are bold to outride  
The storms of affliction beneath;  
With the prophet they soar  
To that heavenly shore,  
And outfly all the arrows of death.

By faith we are come  
To our permanent home;  
By hope we the rapture improve:  
By love we still rise,  
And look down on the skies;  
For the heaven of heavens is love!

Who on earth can conceive  
How happy we live  
In the city of God the great King?  
What a concert of praise,  
When our Jesus' grace  
The whole heavenly company sing.

What rapturous son,  
When the glorified Throng  
In the spirit of harmony join!  
Join all the glad choirs,  
Hearts, voices, and lyres,  
And the burden is mercy divine!"

But when you cannot rise to those rapturous heights of perfection, you need not give up your shield. You may still rank among the perfect, if you can heartily join in this version of Psalm cxxxi:-

"Lord, thou does the grace impart!  
Poor in spirit, meek in heart,

I will as my Master be,  
Rooted in humility.

Now, dear Lord, that I thee know  
Nothing will I seek below,  
Aim at nothing great or high Lowly  
both in heart and eye;

Simple, teachable, and mild,  
Awed into a little child,  
Quiet now without my food,  
Wean'd from every creature-good.

Hangs my new-born soul on thee,  
Kept from all idolatry;  
Nothing wants beneath, above,  
Resting in thy perfect love."

That your earthen vessels may be filled with this love till they break, and you enjoy the Divine Object of your faith, without an interposing veil of gross flesh and blood, is the wish of one who sincerely praises God on your account, and ardently prays,-

"Make up thy jewels, Lord, and show  
The glorious, spotless church below:  
The fellowship of saints make known;  
And O, my God, might I be one!

O might my lot be cast with these,  
The least of Jesus' witnesses!  
O that my Lord would count me meet  
To wash his dear disciples' feet!

To wait upon his saints below;  
On gospel errands for them go:  
Enjoy the grace to angels given,  
And serve the royal heirs of heaven!"

Rev. John Fletcher