

CHAPTER V.

THE SPIRIT'S POWER OVER THE FLESH.

WITH freedom did Christ set us free; stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage.

"Behold, I Paul say unto you, that, if ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing. Yea, I testify again to every man that receiveth circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace. For we through the Spirit by faith wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love. Ye were running well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion came not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump have confidence to you-ward in the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded; but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be. But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? then hath the stumbling-block of the cross been done away. I would that they which unsettle you would even cut themselves off.

"For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another. For the {196} whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

"But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would. But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, revelings, and such like; of the which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they which practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof.

"If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk. Let us not be vainglorious, provoking one another, envying one another." Galatians 5, R.V.

The connection between the fourth and fifth chapters of Galatians is closer than between any other two, so much so that it is difficult to see how anybody could ever have hit upon the idea of making a chapter division. One can not possibly close his reading of the fourth chapter with the thirty-first {197} verse, but must take in the first verse of the fifth chapter, as

we have done. But we have not by any means learned all from that verse that we may, and we therefore dwell upon it longer.

The Freedom That Christ Gives.

When Christ was manifest in the flesh, His work was to proclaim "deliverance to the captives," and "to set at liberty them that are bruised." The miracles that He performed were practical illustrations of this work, and one of the most striking may well be considered at this stage of our study.

"And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in nowise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God." Luke 13:10-13.

Then when the hypocritical ruler of the synagogue complained because Jesus did this miracle on the Sabbath, He referred to how each one would loose his ox or ass from the stall, and lead him to water, and then said:—

"And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"

Two features in this case are worthy of special note: The woman was bound by Satan, and she had a spirit of infirmity, or absence of strength. {198}

Now note how accurately this describes our condition before we meet Christ.

1. We are bound by Satan, "taken captive by him at his will." "Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin" (John 8:34), and "he that committeth sin is of the devil" (1 John 3:8). "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins." Prov. 5:22. Sin is the cord with which Satan binds us.

2. We have a spirit of infirmity, and can in nowise lift ourselves up, or free ourselves from the chains that bind us. It was when we were "without strength" that Christ died for us. Rom. 5:6. Now these two words, "without strength," are translated from the very same word that is rendered "infirmity" in the account of the woman whom Jesus healed. She was "without strength." To be without strength means to have no strength at all. That is our condition.

What Jesus Does for Us.

What now does Jesus do for us?—He takes the weakness, and gives us in return His strength. "We have not an High Priest which can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Heb. 4:15. "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Matt. 8:17. He becomes all that we are, in order that we may become all that He is. He was "born under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." He hath delivered us from the curse, being made a curse for us, that the blessing might come to us. Although He knew no sin, He {199} was made to be sin for us, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Cor. 5:21.

Why He Does It.

Why did Jesus make that woman free from her infirmity?—In order that she might walk at liberty. Certainly it was not in order that she might continue of her own free will to do that which before she was obliged to do. And why does He make us free from sin?—In order that we may live free from sin. On account of the weakness of our flesh, we are unable to do the righteousness of the law; therefore Christ, who is come in the flesh, and who has power over all flesh, strengthens us with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. We can not tell how He does it; He alone knows how it is done, because He alone has the power; but we may know the reality of it.

Present Freedom.

Pay special attention to the words of Jesus to the woman, uttered while she was yet bound down, and unable to lift herself up: "Thou art loosed from thine infirmity." "Thou art loosed," present tense. That is just what He says to us. To every captive He has proclaimed deliverance. The woman "could in nowise lift up herself;" yet at the word of Christ she at once stood erect. She could not do it, yet she did. The things that are impossible for men are possible for God. "The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down." Ps. 145:14. Faith does not make facts; it only lays hold {200} of them. There is not a single soul that is bowed down with the weight of sin which Satan hath bound on him, whom Christ does not lift up. Freedom is his; he has only to make use of it. Let the message be sounded far and wide. Let every soul hear it, that Christ has given deliverance to every captive. Thousands will rejoice at the news.

Christ came to restore that which was lost; He redeems us from the curse; He hath redeemed us; therefore the liberty wherewith He makes us free is the liberty that existed before the curse came. Man was made a king. It was not merely the one individual first created who was made king, but all mankind. "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him; male and female created He them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam," that is, man. Gen. 5:1, 2. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion," etc. The dominion, we see, was given to every human being, male and female.

This dominion was universal. When God made man, He "put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He {201} left nothing that is not put under him." Heb. 2:8. The dominion was not confined to this planet; for when God crowned man with glory and honor, He set him over the works of His hands (Heb. 2:7), and we read, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the

heavens are the works of Thine hands" (Heb. 1:10). This shows how free man was before the curse came; for it is self-evident that a ruler must have absolute freedom, at least as far as his dominion extends, else he is not ruler.

It is true that now we do not see all things put under man; "but we behold Him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9, R.V.), and thus redeem every man from the curse of the lost dominion. "Crowned with glory and honor." A crown implies kingship, and Christ's crown is that which man had when he was set over the works of God's hands. Accordingly, Christ (as man, mind you, in the flesh), just as He was about to ascend to heaven after the resurrection, said: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore." Matt. 28:18, 19. This indicates that the same power is given to us in Him; and this is made certain by the inspired prayer that we might know the exceeding greatness of God's power in us who believe, "according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above {202} all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet;" and this prayer is followed by the statement that God has made us alive in Christ, and "raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Eph. 1:18-22; 2:1-6.

Christ has tasted death for us as man, and through the cross has redeemed us from the curse. If we are crucified with Him, we are also risen with Him, and made to sit together with Him in the heavenly places, with all things under our feet. If we do not know this, it is only because we have not allowed the Spirit to reveal it to us. The eyes of our heart need to be enlightened by the Spirit, that we may know what is "the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." The exhortation to those who are dead and risen with Christ is, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Rom. 6:12. That shows that we are masters. We have authority over sin, that it shall have no dominion over us.

We have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sin (Eph. 1:7); and when He "washed us from our sins in His own blood," He "made us kings and priests unto God and His Father." Rev. 1:5, 6. Glorious dominion! Glorious freedom! Freedom from the power of the curse, even while surrounded by it; freedom from "this present evil world,"—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the {203} eyes, and the pride of life! The freedom of the universe (power in heaven and on earth), so that neither "the prince of the power of the air" nor the "rulers of the darkness of this world" can have any dominion over us! It is the freedom and authority that Christ had when He said, "Get thee hence, Satan." And the devil immediately left Him. It is authority "over all the power of the enemy." Luke 10:19. It is such freedom that nothing in heaven or earth can coerce us, to make us do anything against our will. God will not attempt it, for we hold our freedom from Him; and no one else can do

it. It is power over the elements, so that they will serve us, instead of controlling us. We shall learn to recognize Christ and His cross in everything, so that the curse will be powerless over us, and our minds and bodies will not be subject to every change in the weather. Our health will spring forth speedily; for the life of Jesus will be manifest in our mortal flesh. Such glorious liberty no tongue or pen can describe. Believe in it as the Holy Spirit makes it known, accept it, and stand fast in it; yea, stand fast!

"Stand Fast."

"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." Ps. 33:6, 9. The same word that created the starry host, speaks to us, "Stand fast!" It is not a command that leaves us as helpless as before, but one which carries the performance of the act with it. Recall the cases of the lame men who {204} were healed. John 5:5-9; Acts 3:2-8; 14:8-10. The command does the thing commanded. The heavens did not create themselves, but were brought into existence by the word of the Lord. Then let them be your teachers. "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number; He calleth them all by name; by the greatness of His might, and for that He is strong in power, not one is lacking." Isa. 40:26, R.V. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." Isa. 40:29. Listen to the words, "Stand fast!"

A Question of Profit.

"If ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing." It should be understood that much more is involved than the mere rite of circumcision. The proof of this is found in the fact that this Epistle, which has so much to say about circumcision, has been preserved by the Lord for us, and contains the Gospel message for all time; yet circumcision as a rite is not a burning, living question now. Nobody is seeking to have Christians submit to the rite of circumcision in the flesh.

The question under consideration is how to obtain righteousness—salvation from sin—and the inheritance of righteousness. The fact is that it can be obtained only by faith—by receiving Christ into the heart, and allowing Him to live His life in us. Abraham had this righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ, and God gave Him circumcision as a sign of that fact. It had a peculiar significance to {205} Abraham, serving continually to remind him of his failure, when he tried, by means of the flesh, to fulfil God's promise. The record of it serves the same purpose for us. It signifies that "the flesh profiteth nothing," and is not, therefore, to be depended on. The mere fact of being circumcised did not make Christ of no avail, for Paul was himself circumcised, and as a matter of expediency he had Timothy circumcised. Acts 16:1-3. But Paul did not count his circumcision nor any other external thing of any value (Phil. 3:4-7), and when it was proposed to circumcise Titus, as a thing necessary to salvation, he would not allow it (Gal. 2:3-5).

That which was to be only the sign of an already-existing fact, was taken by subsequent generations as the means of establishing the fact. Circumcision, therefore, stands in this

Epistle as the representative of all kinds of work done by men with a view of obtaining righteousness. Outward circumcision, in the flesh, which was what Judaizing teachers were seeking to impose on believers from among the Gentiles as the great means of salvation (see Acts 15:1), stands for the works of the flesh, as opposed to the Spirit.

Now the truth is stated that if a person does anything with the expectation of being saved by it, that is, of getting salvation by his own work, Christ profits him nothing. If Christ be not accepted as a complete Redeemer, He is not accepted at all. That is to say, if Christ be not accepted for what He is, He is rejected. He can not be other than what He is. Christ is not divided; and He does not share {206} with any other person or thing the honor of being Saviour. Therefore it is easy to see that if any one were circumcised with a view to receiving salvation thereby, that would show absence of faith in Christ as the all-sufficient and only Saviour of mankind.

God gave circumcision as a sign of faith in Christ; the Jews perverted it into a substitute for faith. So when a Jew boasted in his circumcision, he was boasting of his own righteousness. This is shown by verse 4: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." This is no disparagement of the law, but of man's ability to keep the law. It is the glory of the law that it is so holy, and its requirements are so great, that no man is able to attain to the perfection of it. Only in Christ is the righteousness of the law ours; and true circumcision is to worship God in Spirit, to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to put no confidence in the flesh. Phil. 3:3.

In Debt to the Law.

"I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law."

"There!" exclaims some one, "that shows that the law is a thing to be avoided; for Paul says that those who are circumcised have got to do the whole law; and he warns them not to be circumcised."

Not quite so hasty, my friend. Stick a little more closely to the text. Read it again, and you will see that the bad thing is not the law, nor the doing of the law, but that the thing to be avoided is being a debtor to the law. Is there not a vast difference? It is a {207} good thing to have food to eat and clothes to wear, but it is a sorrowful thing to be in debt for these necessary things. Sadder yet is it to be in debt for them, and yet to lack them.

A debtor is one who owes something. He who is in debt to the law, owes what the law demands, namely, righteousness. Therefore, whoever is in debt to the law is under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." So to attempt to get righteousness by any other means than by faith in Christ is to incur the curse of eternal debt. He is eternally in debt, for he has nothing wherewith to pay; yet the fact that he is in debt to the law,—debtor to do the whole law,—shows that he ought to do it all. How shall he do it?—"This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." John 6:29. Let him cease trusting in himself, and

receive and confess Christ in his flesh, and then the righteousness of the law will be fulfilled in him, because he will not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

"The Hope of Righteousness by Faith."

"For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." Don't pass this verse by without reading it more than once, or you will think that it says something that it does not say. And as you read it, think of what you have already learned about the promise of the Spirit.

Don't imagine that this verse teaches that, having the Spirit, we must wait for righteousness. Not by {208} any means; the Spirit brings righteousness. "The Spirit is life because of righteousness." Rom. 8:10. When He is come, He will convince the world of sin and of righteousness. John 16:8. Whoever, therefore, receives the Spirit, has the conviction of sin, and has also the righteousness which the Spirit shows him that he lacks, and which the Spirit alone can bring.

What is the righteousness which the Spirit brings?—It is the righteousness of the law; this we know, "for we know that the law is spiritual." Rom. 7:14.

What, then, about the "hope of righteousness," for which we wait through the Spirit? Notice that it does not say that we through the Spirit hope for righteousness, but that we wait for the hope of righteousness by faith, that is, the hope which the possession of righteousness brings. Let us briefly go over this matter in detail. It will not take long, for we have already studied it, and all that we have to do is to refresh our minds.

1. The Spirit of God is "the Holy Spirit of promise." Not the Spirit promised, but the Spirit the possession of whom insures to us the promise of God.

2. That which God has promised to us, as children of Abraham, is an inheritance. The Holy Spirit is the earnest or pledge of this inheritance, until the purchased possession is redeemed and bestowed upon us. Eph. 1:13, 14.

3. This inheritance that is promised is the new heavens and the new earth, "wherein dwelleth righteousness." 2 Peter 3:13.

4. The Spirit brings righteousness; for the Spirit {209} is Christ's representative, the means by which Christ Himself, who is our righteousness, comes to dwell in our hearts. John 14:16-18.

5. Therefore the hope which the Spirit brings is the hope which the possession of righteousness brings, namely, the hope of an inheritance in the kingdom of God, the earth made new.

6. The righteousness which the Spirit brings to us is the righteousness of the law of God, which by the Spirit is written in our hearts, instead of on tables of stone. Rom. 2:29; 2 Cor. 3:3.

7. The sum of the whole matter, therefore, is this, that if we will wholly distrust ourselves, and will acknowledge that in us there dwelleth no good thing, and that consequently no good thing can come from us; and so, instead of thinking ourselves so

powerful that we can do the law, will allow the Holy Spirit to fill us, that thus we may be filled with the righteousness of the law, we shall have living hope dwelling in us. The hope of the Spirit—the hope of righteousness by faith—has no element of uncertainty in it; it is positive assurance. But in nothing else is there any hope. He who has not "the righteousness which is of God by faith," has no hope whatever. Only Christ in us is "the hope of glory."

No Power Except in Faith.

"For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." The word here rendered "availeth" is the same word that is rendered "able" in Luke 13:24; Acts 15:10; 6:10. In Phil. 4:13 it is {210} rendered "can do." The statement, therefore, amounts to this: Circumcision is not able to do anything, neither is uncircumcision; but faith alone, which works by love, can do anything. This faith which works by love is found only in Christ Jesus.

But what is it that there is talk about doing?—Nothing else than the law of God. No man can do it, whatever his state or condition. The uncircumcised man has no power to keep the law, and circumcision has no power to enable him to do it. One may boast of his circumcision, and another may boast of his uncircumcision, but both are alike vain. By the law of faith boasting is excluded (Rom. 3:27); for since the faith of Christ alone can keep the righteousness of the law, there is no chance for us to tell what we have done.

"All to Christ I owe."

Hindered.

The Galatian brethren had started well, for they had "begun in the Spirit;" but somebody had hindered them in the way. The question is, "Who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" God's law is the truth (Ps. 119:142), and the Galatian brethren had started out to obey it; they had succeeded in the beginning, but later on had been hindered in their progress. Why?—"Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone." Christ is the way, and the truth, and the life, and there is no stumbling in Him. He is made unto us righteousness; the perfection of the law is in Him, for His life is the law. {211}

"The Offense of the Cross."

The cross is and always has been a symbol of disgrace. To be crucified was to be subjected to the most ignominious death known. The apostle said that if he preached circumcision, that is, righteousness by works, the offense of the cross would cease. The offense of the cross is that it is a confession of human frailty and sin, and of inability to do any good thing. To take the cross of Christ means to depend solely on Him for everything, and this is the abasement of all human pride. Men love to fancy themselves independent. They have no objection to any goodness that they themselves can do. One might preach "morality" to a band of robbers, or to any heathen, and it would be well received, so long as

they were exhorted to get it by their own efforts. Indeed, they would feel flattered, rather than otherwise, for such preaching would imply that they were already righteous in themselves. But let the cross be preached; let it be made known that in man dwelleth no good thing, and that all must be received as a gift, and straightway somebody is offended.

Liberty to Serve, Not to Sin.

"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh; but by love serve one another." The two preceding chapters tell about bondage, imprisonment. Before faith comes, we are shut up under sin, debtors to the law. The faith of Christ sets us free, but as we are set at liberty, the admonition is given us, "Go, and sin no more." We have been set at {212} liberty from sin, not at liberty to sin. How many make a mistake here! Many sincere people imagine that in Christ we are at liberty to ignore the law, and to set it at defiance, forgetting that the transgression of the law is sin. 1 John 3:4. To serve the flesh is to commit sin, "because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. 8:7. So when the apostle exhorts us not to use our liberty for an occasion of the flesh, he simply warns us not to misuse the liberty which Christ gives us, and to bring ourselves into bondage again by transgressing the law. Instead of this, we should by love serve one another; for love is the fulfilling of the law.

Recall what has been said in this chapter concerning the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free. He gives us the liberty of the first dominion. But remember that God gave the dominion to mankind, and that in Christ all are made kings. This shows that the only human being over whom any Christian has the right to rule is himself. The great man in Christ's kingdom is he who rules his own spirit. As kings, our subjects are found in the lower orders of created beings, in the elements, and in our own flesh, but not in our fellow-men. We are to serve them. We are to have in us the mind that was in Christ while He was still in the royal court in heaven, "in the form of God," which led Him to take "the form of a servant." Phil. 2:5-7. He did not change His nature in coming to this earth, but only His form; therefore, as Anointed King in Zion, He was a servant. This is further seen by the fact that {213} He washed the feet of the disciples, with full consciousness of the fact that He was their Master and Lord, and that He came from God and went to God. John 13:3-13. Moreover, when all the redeemed saints appear in glory, Christ Himself "shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." Luke 12:37. The greatest freedom is found in service—in service rendered to our fellows in the name of Jesus. He who does the greatest service—not greatest as men reckon, but what they would call lowest—is the greatest. This we learn from Christ, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, because He is servant of all, performing service that nobody else would or could do. God's servants are all kings.

Love Fulfills the Law.

Love is not a substitute for the keeping of the law, but is the perfection of it. Just here it would be well to read 1 Cor. 13. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the

fulfilling of the law." Rom. 13:10. "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" 1 John 4:20. If, therefore, a man loves his neighbor it must be that he loves God. "Love is of God," for "God is love." Therefore love is the life of God. If that life be in us, and be given free course, the law will necessarily be in us, for God's life is the law for all creation. That life of love was manifested in the gift of Himself for the world. "Hereby perceive we the love of {214} God, because He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Love Is Unselfishness.

This follows from the foregoing; for since love means service, and service means the doing of something for others, it is evident that love takes no thought of itself, and that he who loves has no thought but of how he may bless others. So we read, "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil." 1 Cor. 13:4, 5, R.V.

It is just on this vital point that everybody in the world is making or has made a mistake. Happy are they who have found out their mistake, and have come to the understanding and practice of true love. "Love seeketh not her own." Therefore self-love is not love at all, in the right sense of the word. It is only a base counterfeit. Yet the most of that which in the world is called love, is not really love for another, but is love of self. Even that which should be the highest form of love known on earth, the love which is used by the Lord as a representation of His love for His people,—the love of husband and wife,—is more often selfishness than real love. Leaving out of the question, as unworthy of notice, marriages that are formed for the purpose of gaining wealth or position in society, it is a fact, which all will recognize when their attention is called to it, that in nearly every case the parties to a marriage are thinking more of their own individual happiness than of the {215} happiness of the other. Of course this condition of things exists in varying degrees, and in proportion as real, unselfish love exists, is there real happiness; for it is a lesson that the world is slow to learn, that true happiness is found only when one ceases to seek for it, and sets about making it for others.

"Love Never Faileth."

Here again is a test which shows that much that is called love is not love. Love never ceases. The statement is absolute, never. There is no exception, and no allowance made for circumstances. Love is not affected by circumstances. We often hear about one's love growing cold, but that is something that can never happen. Love is always warm, always flowing; nothing can freeze the fountain of love. Love is absolutely endless and unchangeable, simply because it is the life of God. There is no other love than the love of God, therefore the only possibility for true love to be manifested among mankind is for the love of God to be shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

Why Love?

Sometimes when a declaration of love is made, the loved one asks, "Why do you love me?" Just as if anybody could give a reason for love! Love is its own reason. If the lover can tell just why he loves another, then that very answer shows that he does not really love. Whatever object he names as a reason for love, may sometime cease to exist, and then his supposed love ceases to exist; but "love never faileth." Therefore love can not depend upon circumstances. So the {216} only answer that can be given to the question as to why one loves, is "because," because of love. Love loves, simply because it is love. Love is the quality of the individual who loves, and he loves because he has love, irrespective of the character of the object. The truth of this is seen when we go back to God, the Fountain of love. He is love; love is His life; but no explanation of His existence can be given. The highest human conception of love is to love because we are loved, or because the object of our love is lovable. But God loves the unlovely, and those who hate Him. "We also were aforetime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and His love toward man, appeared, not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us." Titus 3:3, 4, R.V. "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. 5:46, 48.

Working no Ill.

"Love worketh no ill to his neighbor." The word "neighbor" means whoever dwells near. Love, therefore, extends to everything with which it comes in contact. He who loves must necessarily love everybody. It may be objected that love does make distinctions, and the case of husband and wife, or of any of the members of a family, may be cited. But the objection does not hold, for the family relation, rightly understood, was instituted in order that by a union {217} love might the more effectually be manifested to others. On the principle that strength is not merely doubled, but increased tenfold, by union, as shown by the statement that "one shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight," union multiplies the working value of love. If two persons, each of whom has this unselfish love to all mankind, unite in love, then their union makes them ten times better able to serve others. If any one thinks this is too high a standard, let him remember that we are considering a very high thing—the highest thing in the universe. We are talking of love, absolute and unqualified, as it comes from heaven, and not that which has been dragged through the mire of earth. Poor, frail human beings certainly need the very best.

Since love worketh no ill to his neighbor, it obviously follows that Christian love,—and there is really no other love, as we have seen,—does not admit of wars and fightings. No philosophy can ever make it appear that it does a man any good to kill him. When the soldiers asked John the Baptist what they should do, as followers of the Lamb of God, to whom he pointed, he replied, "Do violence to no man." Luke 3:14. Those who asked were

"soldiers on service," as we see from the margin of the Revised Version. And the margin also gives as the alternative rendering of John's answer, "Put no man in fear." It would be a very mild war in which this command was followed. If an army were composed of Christians,—true followers of Christ,—when they came in contact with the enemy, instead of shooting them, they would find out what {218} they needed, and supply their wants. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Rom. 12:20, 21.

"Take Heed."

"But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." See into what danger the Galatians had run by following evil counsel. By departing from the simplicity of the faith, they were bringing themselves under the curse, and in danger of hell fire. For "the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." James 3:6. The tongue has devoured more than the sword, for the sword would never be drawn if it were not for the unruly tongue. No man can tame it, but God can. He had done it in the case of the Galatians, when their mouths were filled with blessing and praise; but what a change had again taken place! As the result of their later instruction, they had descended from blessing to bickering, and instead of talking to edification, were about to devour one another.

"The Leaven of Malice and Wickedness."

Verses 8 and 9, following the question, "Who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" manifestly apply here as well as there, since biting and devouring are very strong evidences of not obeying the truth. "This persuasion cometh not of Him that calleth you." God is the {219} God of peace. Of Christ, the Prince of peace, it was said, "He shall not strive" (Matt. 12:19); therefore "the servant of the Lord must not strive" (2 Tim. 2:24). The Gospel of Jesus Christ is "the Gospel of peace." Eph. 6:15. When there is bickering and strife in the church, be sure that the Gospel has been sadly perverted. Let no one flatter himself on his orthodoxy, or his soundness in the faith, while he has a quarrelsome disposition, or can be provoked to quarrel. Dissension and strife are the marks of departure from the faith, if one was ever in it; for, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5:1. We are not merely at peace with God, but we have peace with Him—His peace. So this new persuasion, which led to strife and the devouring of one another with the tongue of unholy fire, did not come from God, who had called them into the Gospel. Only a step aside often leads to a wide divergence. Two lines of railway may seem to lie parallel, yet insensibly they diverge until they lead in opposite directions. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." A seemingly "little error," no matter what it be, has in it the germ of all wickedness. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." James 2:10. A single false principle adhered to, will wreck the whole life and character. The little foxes spoil the vines.

The Works of the Flesh.

What are the works of the flesh?—Here is a sample list of them: "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, {220} variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings." Not a pleasant-sounding list, is it? But it is not all of them, for the apostle adds, "and such like." There is a good deal to think about in this list, taken in connection with the statement that "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Compare this list with that given by the Lord in Mark 7:21-23, as the things that come from within, from the heart of man. They are the very life of the natural man. They belong to man by nature. Compare both these lists with the list given in Rom. 1:28-32, as the things done by the heathen, who did not like to retain God in their knowledge. They are the things that are done by all who do not know the Lord.

Then compare these lists of sins with the list given by the apostle Paul in 2 Tim. 3:1-5, of things that will be done in the last days by those who even have a form of godliness. It will be noticed that all these lists are essentially the same. When men turn from "the truth of the Gospel," which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, they inevitably fall under the power of these sins.

"There Is No Difference."

There is only one flesh of man (1 Cor. 15:39), since all the inhabitants of the earth are descendants of the one pair—Adam and Eve. "By one man sin entered into the world" (Rom. 5:12), so that whatever sin there is in the world is common to all flesh. Therefore it is that in the plan of salvation "there is no difference between the Jew and the {221} Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." Rom. 10:12. See also Rom. 3:21-24. No person on earth can boast over another, or has any right to despise another because of his sinful, degraded condition. The sight or knowledge of low vices in any people, instead of making us feel complacent over our superior morality, ought, on the contrary, to fill us with sorrow and shame; for it is but a reminder to us of what our human nature is. The works that manifest themselves in that murderer, that drunkard, or that libertine, are simply the works of our flesh. The flesh of mankind has nothing else in its power but just such works as are described in this chapter.

"And Such Like."

Read again that list of the works of the flesh. Some of them are generally recognized as very bad, or, at any rate, as not respectable; but others are commonly regarded as venial sins, if not absolute virtues. Notice, however, the words "and such like," which indicate that all the things here named are identical in character. The Scripture tells us that hatred is murder. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." 1 John 3:15. Moreover, anger is also murder, as shown by the Saviour in Matt. 5:21, 22. Envy, which is so common, also contains murder in it. But who regards emulation as sinful? Isn't emulation encouraged everywhere? Are not children from their infancy taught to strive to surpass somebody else? Is not emulation

fostered, not only in schools of all kinds, but also in the home and in the church? In the Sabbath-school, emulation is {222} fostered by the records that are often read out. So far from being regarded as sinful in the extreme, it is cultivated. And yet the Word of God assures us that it is of the same kind as adultery, fornication, murder, and drunkenness, and that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Is it not a fearful thing?

The love of self, the desire for the supremacy, is the source of all the other sins that are mentioned. Out of that have grown innumerable murders; and yet many mothers are unconsciously training their children in that very evil, even while striving to bring them up properly, by saying: "Now see if you can behave better than so and so." "See if you can not learn to read or play better than such an one." "See if you can not keep your clothes looking as nice as that one." All such expressions, which are everyday words in thousands of households, are teaching emulation, setting a false standard. The child is not taught to distinguish between the right and the wrong, and to love the right, but is simply trained to appear better than somebody else. That leads to self-deception and Pharisaism, for all that is thought necessary is to present a better appearance than others, while the heart is corrupt. Those others may not be of very high character, and so the emulator is satisfied, even in this faulty exertion, with simply appearing better than some one who is himself very bad. Go through the entire list, and study each word carefully. Ah, the abominable works of the flesh are lurking where many least suspect them! They are wherever human flesh is, and are manifest {223} in some form or other wherever the flesh is not crucified. Sin coucheth at the door.

The Flesh and the Spirit in Conflict.

The flesh and the Spirit of God have nothing in common. They are "contrary the one to the other," that is, they lie over against each other, like two active foes, each eagerly watching the opportunity to crush the other. The flesh is corruption; it can not inherit the kingdom of God, because corruption doth not inherit incorruption. 1 Cor. 15:50. The flesh can not be converted; it must be destroyed. The carnal (fleshly) mind "is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh can not please God." Rom. 8:7, 8. Here is the secret of the backsliding of the Galatians, and of the trouble which so many find in living the Christian life. The Galatians began in the Spirit, but thought to attain to perfection by the flesh (chapter 3:3), a thing as impossible as to reach the stars by delving in the earth. So many people desire to do right, but, not having definitely and fully yielded to the Spirit, they can not do the things that they would. The Spirit strives with them, and has partial control, or is at times quite fully yielded to, and they have a rich experience; then the Spirit is grieved, the flesh asserts itself, and they seem like other persons. They are swayed at times by the mind of the Spirit, and at times by the mind of the flesh (Rom. 8:6), and so, being double-minded, they are unstable in all their ways (James 1:8). It is a most unsatisfactory position in which to be. {224}

The Spirit and the Law.

"If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." "For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." Rom. 7:14. The flesh and the Spirit are in opposition; but against the fruits of the Spirit there is no law. Gal. 5:22, 23. Therefore the law is against the works of the flesh. The carnal mind is "not subject to the law of God." So those who are in the flesh can not please God, but are "under the law." This is another clear proof of the fact that to be "under the law" is to be a transgressor of it. "The law is spiritual;" therefore all who are led by the Spirit are in full harmony with the law, and so they are not under it.

Here again we see that the controversy was not whether or not the law should be kept; that never at that time came into the mind of anybody professing godliness. But the question was concerning how it could be fulfilled. The Galatians were being led astray by the flattering teaching that they themselves had power to do it, while the heaven-sent apostle strenuously maintained that only through the Spirit could it be kept. This he showed from the Scriptures, from the history of Abraham, and from the experience of the Galatians themselves. They began in the Spirit, and as long as they continued in the Spirit, they ran well; but when they substituted themselves for the Spirit, immediately the works began to manifest themselves, which were wholly contrary to the law. The Holy Spirit is the life of God; God is love; love is the fulfilling of the law; the law is spiritual. Therefore whoever would be spiritual {225} must submit to the righteousness of God, which is witnessed to by the law, but is gained only through the faith of Jesus Christ. Whoever is led by the Spirit must keep the law, not as a condition of receiving the Spirit, but as the necessary result.

We often find people who profess to be so spiritual, so wholly led by the Spirit, that they do not need to keep the law. They admit that they do not keep the law, but say that it is the Spirit that leads them to do as they do, and that, therefore, it can not be sin, even though opposed to the law. Such persons make the terrible mistake of substituting their own carnal mind for the mind of the Spirit. They have confounded the flesh with the Spirit, and have thus put themselves in the place of God. That is the very worst kind of popery. To speak against the law of God, is to speak against the Spirit. They are terribly blinded, and should pray, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law."

The Fruit of the Spirit.

The first-fruit of the Spirit is love, and "love is the fulfilling of the law." Joy and peace come next, for, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5:1, 11. Christ was anointed with the Holy Ghost (Acts 10:38), or, as stated in another place, "with the oil of gladness" (Heb. 1:9). The service of God is a joyful service. The kingdom of God is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. 14:17. He who is not glad, {226} not occasionally merely, but all the time,—glad in adversity as well as in

prosperity,—does not yet know the Lord as he should. The words of Christ lead to fullness of joy. John 15:11.

Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, must come forth spontaneously from the heart of the true follower of Christ. They can not be forced. But they do not dwell naturally in us. It is natural for us to be angry and exasperated, instead of gentle and long-suffering, when opposed. Note the contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit. The first come naturally; therefore, in order for the good fruit to be borne, we must be made completely over into new creatures. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good." Luke 6:45. Goodness comes not from any man, but from the Spirit of Christ continually dwelling in him.

Christ's by Crucifixion.

"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts." It is by death that we become joined to Christ. As many as are baptized into Christ, have put on Christ (Gal. 5:27), and as many as have been baptized into Christ, have been baptized into His death (Rom. 6:3). "Our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin." Rom. 6:6, 7. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, {227} who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Gal. 2:20. This is the experience of every true child of God. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." 2 Cor. 5:17. He still lives in the flesh, to all outward appearance the same as other men, yet he is in the Spirit, and not in the flesh. Rom. 8:9. He lives in the flesh a life that is not of the flesh, and the flesh has no power over him, but, so far as its works are concerned, is dead. "The body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

Walking in the Spirit.

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Is there any doubt as to whether or not we live in the Spirit?—Not the slightest, nor is there any implied. Because we live in the Spirit, we are in duty bound to submit to the Spirit. Only by the Spirit's power—the same Spirit that in the beginning hovered over the face of the deep and brought order out of chaos—can any person live. "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." Job 33:4. By the same breath were the heavens made. Ps. 33:6. The Spirit of God is the life of the universe. The Spirit of God in our nostrils (Job 27:3) keeps us in life. The Spirit is the universal presence of God, in whom "we live, and move, and have our being." We are dependent on the Spirit for life, and therefore should walk according to, or be guided by, the Spirit. This is our "reasonable service."

What a wondrous possibility is here set forth! To live in the flesh as though the flesh were spirit. "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual {228} body." "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterwards that which is spiritual." 1 Cor. 15:44, 46. The natural body we now have; the spiritual body all the true followers of

Christ will receive at the resurrection. See 1 Cor. 15:42-44, 50-53. Yet in this life, in the natural body, men are to be spiritual,—to live just as they will in the future spiritual body. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." Rom. 8:9. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things." 1 Cor. 2:14, 15.

"Except a man be born again [from above], he can not see the kingdom of God." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." John 3:3, 6. By our natural birth we inherit all the evils enumerated in this fifth chapter of Galatians, "and such like." We are fleshly; corruption rules in us. By the new birth we inherit the fullness of God, being made "partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1:4. "The old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Eph. 4:22), is crucified, and "put off," "that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:6). Abiding in the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, the flesh with its lusts has no more power over us than if we were actually dead and in our graves. It is then the Spirit of God alone that animates the body. The Spirit uses the {229} flesh as an instrument of righteousness. The flesh is still corruptible, still full of lusts, still ready to rebel against the Spirit, but as long as we yield our wills to God, the Spirit holds the flesh in check. If we waver, if we in our hearts turn back to Egypt, or if we become self-confident, and so relax our dependence on the Spirit, then we build again the things that we destroyed, and again make ourselves transgressors. But this need not be. Christ has "power over all flesh," and He has demonstrated His ability to live a spiritual life in human flesh.

This is the Word made flesh, God manifest in the flesh. It is the revelation of "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fullness of God." With this Spirit of love and meekness ruling us, we shall not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another. All things will be of God, and this will be acknowledged, so that none will have any disposition to boast over another.

This Spirit of life in Christ—the life of Christ—is given freely to all. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "For the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." {230}