

# CAN ONE LOSE THE EXPERIENCE OF SANCTIFICATION AND RETAIN THE EXPERIENCE OF JUS- TIFICATION.

By Evangelist C. W. Ruth.

Here is a question concerning which the Scripture seems to be silent. Why this silence? Presumably because the Lord does not intend that any one should experiment in these regions. While the Bible is very explicit as to how a person may be made free from sin, and advance in the divine life, it makes no provision for lapsing into sin.

And yet this question presents itself again and again, hence I am requested to write on this subject. I can only give my personal opinion, and have very little hope of answering the question to the satisfaction of even those who ask it. Remember that I have never tried the matter out, so as to learn by experience, therefore I can only give my opinion, and "speak this by permission, and not of commandment," as Paul said of another matter.

Some of the teachers in the holiness movement may be found on both sides of this question—affirming and denying. And personally, I think they may be both right and both wrong. It would seem to depend largely on the viewpoint.

I think there must be perfect agreement in saying that any wilful sin—committed intelligently and intentionally—would at once forfeit the favor of God, and occasion the loss of all grace out of the heart. That no man can purposely, and intentionally sin against God and retain His favor and grace, is clearly taught in such passage as: "He that committeth sin is of the devil" (1 John 3:8), and "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4, 20). Hence it would be impossible for any one to thus become guilty before the Lord and lose the experience of sanctification and yet retain the experience of justification; he who would thus dare to sin against God would undoubtedly lose any measure of grace he had ever received, and would be in great danger of eternal damnation.

But we can conceive how a person who had been entirely sanctified, through manifold temptation might let go the hold of faith for the grace of sanctification and yet cleave to the Lord, and trust Him for His pardoning mercy and justifying grace. That while there was no consciousness of guilt, nor wilful disobedience, nor departure from the Lord, there was nevertheless an involuntary defeat, and a leaking out of the fulness of blessing and grace that the experience of sanctification carries. "Unto every one of us is given grace accordingly to the measure of the gift of Christ." (Eph. 4:7), and the measure of the gift of His grace is bestowed and determined "according to the proportion of faith" (Rom. 12:6).

As a matter of fact, we are constantly meeting those who have had brighter experiences and more victorious lives in the past than at the present; who, at one time unhesitatingly lay claim to the experience of sanctification, while now they have ceased to testify definitely; and yet they would die for their Lord rather than deny and forsake Him. While the Enemy has apparently driven them from the first line

of trenches, they have had no thought of surrendering, or joining hands with the Enemy. Now we should very much dislike to take the judgment seat and condemn all such as miserable backsliders and insist that they had no grace at all; for while they could not freely confess the grace of sanctification as they once did, they are still conscientiously and sincerely striving to hold fast to their integrity, and in their hearts purpose to be true to Jesus.

We may illustrate our thought by a familiar scene in the home life; we will suppose the babe in the home is just learning to walk, and taking its first steps; standing in the corner it ventures to walk toward the parent, who bids it come, extending both arms; the little toddler does its best, but after a few steps it loses its balance and would certainly fall to the floor, but is upheld by the extended arms of the parent; and while the child is thus obediently trying to do its best at the bidding of the parent, it is both upheld and approved by the parent. Even so, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. . . . Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand" (Psa. 37:23, 24). Of course, if the child were to cast himself upon the floor purposely, and stubbornly refuse to try to rise, or to walk, as requested, a different course of procedure by the parent would become a necessity.

Every evangelist knows that the "repair shop" is a necessity; that in almost every community there are those who have "lost out" or "lost the keen edge of their experience," who are nevertheless living true Christian lives; and because of their earnestness and conscientiousness, are the first at the altar seeking to regain the experiences they once enjoyed; that according to their own testimony they had lost the experience of sanctification, while they yet retained the experience of justification. And who would dare gainsay such testimony?

It is easier by times to contend for a theory than to face facts, but if we face the facts, as sustained by scores, and even hundreds of witnesses relative to this question, we are compelled to believe that there have been those who have lost the experience of sanctification, who nevertheless retained some measure of the grace of God in their hearts; at any rate, this is the opinion of the writer after more than thirty years of observation as a holiness evangelist.

However, we would advise any and all such persons to make haste in confessing their failure, and renewing their consecration, and walk in the light, and trust the blood to cleanse them from all sin and sanctify them wholly, and then declare their faith to all whom it may concern, and then to remember that "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4), and that "by faith we stand" (2 Cor. 1:24).

While we would not dare to encourage any one to cling to a past experience while in the presence of defeat, and thus cause them to rest in a false hope, we would be just as careful not to persuade them to "cast away their confidence" and let go entirely, lest they give up in despair; rather, we would imitate the Master when it

was said of him, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench," and fan the lingering spark of faith and encourage them to hold on and renew their consecration vows, and trust the all-cleansing blood, feeling assured that if anything they be otherwise minded God shall reveal even this unto them; and thus leave it to the faithful Holy Ghost to shed light upon the pathway, and correctly locate them.

It may be well to remember that Israel suffered occasional defeat even after they had made the two crossings and reached Canaan; but this did not necessitate their return to Egypt and starting all over again. No, they simply must discover and uncover the cause of their defeat, and utterly put it away, and then remain in the land and go on to victory. So the sanctified soul should instantly and humbly acknowledge and confess and forsake ought that may have occasioned defeat, make sure that all is on the altar, walk in the light they have, and trust the blood of Jesus to cleanse them from "all sin NOW. Amen.—Herald of Holiness.

## NOT INTERESTED IN MISSIONS.

"I am not interested in missions," was the reply of a bright, gracious lady, a member of the church, when she was solicited to do some missionary work.

"Not interested in missions"—and yet the Saviour was so much interested that He came to earth to seek and save a lost world.

"Not interested in missions!" If that had been the attitude of the early Church, what would now be the condition of the uninterested one?

"Not interested in missions," even though the Lord Jesus' last injunction was "Go teach all nations"—a command accompanied by the promise, "Lo, I am with you."

"Not interested in missions," and it was a woman the risen Lord honored by being the first messenger sent to proclaim a resurrected Christ.—Exchange.

## "NEVER SAFE TO TAKE THE LAST CHANCE."

The ticket agent preached a sermon in a sentence.

Two trains were scheduled for the city where the connection with another line was to be made. The first train allowed several hours to make the connection; the second train allowed but ten minutes.

"Is it safe to take the second train?"

"It is never safe to take the last chance," was the ticket agent's reply.

In the worth-while things in life it is never safe to deliberately take the last chance. In the salvation of the soul it is a desperate hazard to wait for the last chance.—Sel.

My brother, my sister, whenever you have a great sorrow, then have a high anticipation of blessing. That big wave is washing up some jewel that lay deep down at the bottom of the sea; it would never have come to thy feet if it had not been for the storm that washed it where thou canst now find it.—Spurgeon.