

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

By W. Edmund Smith

We want to talk a little on the nature of Saving Faith.

Faith in the atoning blood of Jesus is the only condition of salvation both from outward and inward sin. "Not by works of righteousness that we have done but according to his mercy He has saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

But one says: "That is too easy and too cheap. I want to earn my salvation. I think that I can get into the favor of God by my good works." Well, a Mohammedan believes that; with him it is all a matter of good works, which consist in outward devotion without any regard for even the principles of ordinary morality.

The Roman Catholic believes that his good works will save him, and that he can pile up so many that he can have a good many to spare. He calls those works of super-regeneration, or works beyond the requirements.

But I want to show that salvation by faith only has been much abused and often has made void the works of the moral law instead of establishing them.

Remember, there are two kinds of faith: that of the head and that of the heart. The first involves an intellectual assent to certain doctrinal truths, and is a necessary attitude in order to come to that heart-faith which enables one to believe unto righteousness and to make a heart confession unto salvation.

There are many so-called fundamental preachers who have degraded the matter of faith to merely a mental process which when accepted deceives the soul and rocks it to spiritual slumber in the cradle of carnal security which pleases Satan so well.

This is the way it works: "Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the one and only Saviour of men?" "Yes, I believe that." "Do you believe that He died for your sins?" "Yes, I do." "Well, then, you are saved for the word says: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.'" "But I don't feel any different." "Oh, it is not a matter of feeling—it is all of faith. You are not promised any feeling just believe."

So the person is taken into the church on the basis of such a faith and such a confession, and yet he may have only the faith the devil has. He has no real heart confidence, has experienced none of the pangs of a genuine repentance and so is a stranger to a real salvation which comes through another kind of faith.

Of course one seeking the Lord "must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." This is a necessary prerequisite. But genuine faith has back of it a genuine repentance which, no matter how deep and pungent can never earn one's salvation, but it is a condition of heart that must exist before God can bestow upon the seeker a real salvation by which he knows all the guilty past has been blotted out and that he has become reconciled to God.

So real saving faith is a very expensive thing. Repentance is the price one must pay in order to come to the place where he can really trust Jesus to save him. And when he is saved he does not praise his repentance as the meritorious ground of his acceptance with God; he praises Jesus: It is all of Free Grace. And so he sings:

"No good that I have done; His promise I

embrace;

Accepted in the Son He saves me by His grace."

But remember this is a matter of initial experience, and lest one should be deceived by a superficial emotions, James safeguards the nature of TRUE Faith by declaring that one after he has been justified by faith must prove the true character of his faith by his works.

The new convert is conscious of his changed relation to God and the change which has been wrought in his own heart. "Old things have passed away and behold all things have become new." He no longer sings the old songs, nor goes with the old crowd even though it be quite respectable; no longer does he love the same old novels or the same old indulgences. He is a new creation in Christ Jesus.

True regenerating grace is a wonderful, a radical experience. Many, and this is the rule in the cold formal church, are only feebly awakened or convicted. They feel they ought to do something religious, so, on the appeal of the preacher, they join the church and perhaps have a sort of a good feeling which they think is regeneration. But they have no life separated from the world and are strangers to real heart victory. Some of these hear holiness and say "that is what I need." They go to the altar and really repent of sin and are blessedly converted. But they think they are sanctified wholly, for they have such a fellowship with God. And they stand on the test that they are sanctified; but soon they find that sanctification doesn't do for them what some said it would. They find the OLD MAN is much alive. But they still think they were sanctified wholly. The fact is they were converted and had need to go on and get wholly sanctified by faith.

Is it true that we are sanctified wholly only on the condition of faith. Yes, that is true, but this faith can only be exercised when the truly justified soul is willing to consecrate himself as one alive from the dead, and all his ransomed powers fully unto God. Full and complete consecration which takes in all that we know and more which we don't know, is prerequisite to receiving the faith which wholly sanctifies.

But let us remember that coming to the place where one can believe for pardon or sanctification is not a matter of time. It all can be done suddenly. That jailer had the true spirit of penitence when he cried: "What must I do to be saved!" Paul cried: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved!" Paul saw that he had the right heart-attitude and was ready for salvation. He did not tell him that he had to make restitution for all the beatings he had given Paul, or that he must make all wrongs right as far as possible. Paul knew that would come and he brought forth fruit meet for repentance when he took Paul and washed his stripes and comforted him, and he and all his household were baptised in the dead hour of the night. Yes, many have to do the practical works of repentance after they are saved. God sees the penitence of their soul and gives the faith to trust him, and so with joy can they do their restitution. But with many who have had much light, the battle is to be willing to make wrongs right. So they may groan and cry but they cannot trust God till they say YES to what He demands.

So too with consecration for sanctification. This is not a sinner seeking pardon but a fully justified believer seeking holiness of

heart. He is not living in known sin. Nor is he fighting the will of God. He had to give up his bad things and the world to get justifying faith, now he must yield up his good things, all his ransomed powers to get complete sanctifying faith. That takes in family relations, business and church relations, all he can see and more which he cannot see.

A brother told me that he worked with his father running a big farm in Maine. "My father was a Christian and had prayed for my salvation and was glad when I was saved. We got along well together, but when Holiness was preached in our community, I was immediately convicted of my need. My father did not believe in it. When I sought the blessing my father stood as the great obstacle in my way. Was I willing to go beyond him and profess something he did not believe in and thus be condemned by him, and our fellowship thus be broken?" But he pressed through, father or no father, got the blessing and stood all that was coming to him.

Yes, this may make those of your own household your chief enemies.

Jesus said it would. While salvation and especially Holiness has changed homes wherein there was once friction and misunderstanding into places of heart union and love, on the other hand it has broken up homes which once were united on a worldly and carnal basis. Let a wife and mother in such a home get the first work of grace, become really converted, while her husband still holds on to the old ways of sin and the world. I have known men who have left their wives simply because they got real salvation. And I have known women who have left husbands who gave them everything they could . . . Praised God in the home more than they did outside. But it galled them so they left when they had opportunity, to find a congenial place in a home where the dance, and cards and all the worldly things which enslave had full place.

But some one says: "You don't touch me there. I do none of these things." That may be, but do you have this faith which works by love and purifies the heart? Have you ever been truly converted and are you converted now? Have you ever been truly sanctified and are you sanctified now? It is all by faith. The Just shall live by faith, and the evidence of our real faith is attested by our good works and our inner heart victory.

You may not swear, play cards, lie, steal or do any of those gross things. You may give your tithe and say that Jesus is coming soon, go to a holiness church, but still have lost the heart grip on God which makes justification and sanctification real. You may be rocked to sleep in carnal security, saying peace, peace, where there is no peace. You may be in that place where Jesus says, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." How much do you pray? And does God melt your soul to make you feel your own utter unworthiness after you have done all you have done, and are living in victory every day? Do you feel that sweet spirit of utter reliance upon the blood of Jesus as the ground of your salvation? Or are you in the cradle of carnal security, rocked to sleep while all the time you remember days when you prayed for loved ones and neighbors and went to the house of God with praise and expectation. Now you go with a dull dead spirit, trying to keep up a mere profession when in your soul there are only ashes.

Yes, this real living faith puts a well in our

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