

"If Any Man Sin, We Have an Advocate"

(I John 2:1)

H. C. Mullen*

God has made provision for emergencies. Our Heavenly Father is not a hard, arbitrary, tyrannical being, but is love in very essence, infinite in patience, and His mercy endureth forever.

Perhaps, in our zeal for a holy and victorious life we have erred on the other side, and have advocated a life of victory to the neglect of the teaching of God's pity and forgiveness. No doubt many have backslidden just because some little inadvertency has caused them grief and wounded their spirit, so instead of repenting at once and finding God's forgiveness they have thrown away their confidence completely and given up the fight. There is not enough teaching along this line among our holiness folk. They may fear that they may cater too much toward a sinning and repenting religion, and that some may take advantage and thus be less careful in their deportment, and consequently lower the standard of holy living. There is always a safe middle ground, and it is not safe to stress one side of a truth to the detriment of the other side.

Perhaps, not many have ever lived very long without in some way or degree grieving the Spirit of God, which calls for readjustment and pardon. This does not mean what we call wilful sin and backsliding, but some folly or misstep, or some over-indulgence in some selfish pleasure to the detriment of our best spiritual interests, which makes necessary a gentle reproof from the Holy Spirit, and needs the pardoning grace of God. This unintentional break may not have disturbed the deep undercurrent of loyalty and obedience, and if confessed and blotted out immediately will not break the steady onward flow of the stream of salvation, deep down in the heart. As when a stone is cast into the current, there is a temporary ripple, but soon vanishes and the current resumes its normal flow with not even the slightest trace of a rift on the surface. A loyal heart of obedience is that which underlies all the constituent elements of our Christian experience, so far as the human side is concerned. Unintentional, temporary breaks may occur which do not disturb this fixed motivating principle in the life. This text has been called "God's emergency text." If any man sin, he can fall back upon this text.

It needs no argument to prove that God's standard of our living is expressed in the first part of the verse which says, "these things I write unto you that ye sin not." This is God's standard, and is also the aim and desire and intention of every true believer. But God has considered our possibility, and our liability, of sinning and has made this gracious and loving provision to cover such an emergency. Like the spare tire on the motor car, it is to be used only in case of an emergency. No one in his right mind would purposely run on nails for the sake of taking advantage of the emergency provision. No sensible driver would be any the less careful because he carried a spare. No true Christian will be any less careful because there is a precious provision to take care of spiritual accidents that may happen on the uneven journey of life.

There is surely a middle ground and a danger line in this question under consideration. We may strongly condemn the advocates

of a sinning and repenting religion, but we can err on the other side by putting up a too rigid standard and by giving the impression that God is harsh and unforgiving. While one teaching over-stressed may foster looseness and license, the other may induce discouragement, inspire fear, and hinder sincere but stable souls from seeking and finding the gracious pardon that is theirs for the asking. A fear of confessing slips which fall beneath the standard of perfect love may also lead to a legalistic holiness which is one of the dangers of this blessed life and teaching of full salvation. There is a great deal less danger of injury to the cause of God, by humbly confessing breaks and trespasses, than there is in stiffening the neck and making self defence and failure to humble one's self. Unwillingness to confess even a small failure leads on to legalism and to that horrible thing hypocrisy. Once I heard a dear humble brother in the Lord say of a brother in the flesh, as well as in the church, "Oh, he never comes back," meaning that he never made apologies. We may well suspicion people who never apologise to his fellowmen or God.

Some poet uttered a great truth when he said, "To err is human, to forgive divine," so what a debt of gratitude we owe to God for His wise and gracious provision whereby one who trespasses may find forgiveness by coming to Jesus our Advocate and Intercessor, Who ever liveth to make intercession for us at the throne of God.

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POWER

A. T. Pierson testified: "For 16 years I preached the Gospel with all the logic and eloquence I could muster. The results were disappointing. An evangelist came to our city. Hundreds were swept into the Kingdom. I saw that the secret of his power lay in his possession of the Holy Spirit. After praying that I might receive this power, it came to me on November the 15th. In the following 16 months I made more converts to Christ than I had gained in the previous 16 years."—Selected.

THE ALL-SUFFICIENT GRACE

By Annie Johnson Flint

2 Corinthians 12:9

Sufficient for days of doing

When duties crowd and press

For hours of strenuous toiling

In the thick of life's storm and stress.

Then it is strength for the labor

When tasks are hard and long

When head and hand are merry

Grace to be strong.

Sufficient for days of walking

Mid old and commonplace things

When the spirit longs to be lifted

Soaring on mighty wings;

Then it is strength to plod onward

Lacking the vision we crave

Treading the dusty byways

Grace to be brave.

Sufficient for days of waiting

When hope is long delayed

When the heart grows faint with watching

And the eager feet are stayed;

Then it is strength to be patient

To rest till we know His will

Just to be quiet and trusting

Grace to be still.

The Test of True Discipleship

A. J. West

In John's Gospel the twelfth chapter and the twenty-sixth verse we have a very simple and yet profound statement from the lips of the Master: "If any man serve me, let him follow me. Where I am there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my father honor." You would have to search a long ways to find a more compact bit of truth, and a truth that has more of challenge and promise in it to the disciple, than does this one.

It seems that today a lot of our religion is mere sentimentality with very little of the rugged devotion contained in it which it should contain. It is one thing to get up in testimony meeting and say with fervency and spirit that we we are determined to follow Christ wherever He may lead. It is quite another thing to follow the example of the Master in our everyday living, and put into action the words of our testimony. Following Christ is a very practical everyday thing. It is not something of a philosophical myth. Christ was a very practical individual. He did things that needed to be done; He carried on the work of the kingdom that was at hand; He utilized every opportunity to advance the cause that He had come to represent and to champion.

The Christianity of the day needs to be of the same kind that the Master came to illustrate. It needs to be a very practical thing. For instance, a couple of men were laying a pipe line. One man was a Christian, the other was not. The man who was a Christian was constantly telling his friend about the advantages of Christianity, but he was a little weak when it came to the honest toil of getting the work done, of laying that pipe line. Finally, when there was a joint of pipe to be lifted into place, and the man who was not a Christian was putting forth all the effort that he could, he looked to his companion and said, "Sir, did you tell me you were a Christian?" The man replied, "Yes, sir, I certainly did. I'm glad to say that I am." His friend said, "Well, then, mister, if you're a Christian, why don't you lift like one?"

It is a trial to me to see a strong man get up in testimony meeting and testify of how he is enjoying the grace of God and following the Master, and at the same time let a little stoop-shouldered woman carry a child in each arm, while he walks free. I feel like tapping him on the shoulder and saying, "Sir, if you're a Christian, then follow the example of the Master. Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ."

A lot of our promises to God are merely watered-down sentimentalism. We tell God we will follow Him whithersoever He wills us to go. We sing that old hymn, "Where He leads I'll follow," without ever realizing the tremendous import of meaning that it can carry to the human heart. We tell God that we'll do the work He wants us to do, then we lose our eyes to the needy fields all around us. We'll work for God if it promises us the same amount of salary, the same sense of security, that we can get while we're working for the world.

If the true test of discipleship is following Christ wherever He leads, then I have no right to call myself a disciple and refuse to follow

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