

FOLLOW THE LAMB; OR, COUNSELS TO CONVERTS

by Horatius Bonar

Bonar's pastoral guide for new converts, offering practical counsel on how to begin and continue the Christian life, including advice on prayer, Bible reading, church fellowship, and following Christ faithfully.

4 Chapters

Table of Contents

0. Follow the Lamb; or, Counsels to Converts
1. Part 2
2. Part 3
3. Part 4

Follow the Lamb; or, Counsels to Converts

Part 2

Do not shrink from being alone. Much of a true man's true life must be so spent. David Brainerd thus writes, My state of solitude does not make the hours hang heavy upon my hands.

Oh, what reason of thankfulness have I on account of this retirement? I find that I do not, and it seems I cannot, lead a Christian life when I am abroad, and cannot spend time in devotion, in conversation, and serious meditation as I should do. These weeks that I am obliged now to be from home in order to learn the Indian tongue are mostly spent in perplexity and barrenness, without much relish of divine things, and I feel myself a stranger at the throne of grace for want of a more frequent and continued retirement. Do not suppose that such retirement for divine converse will hinder work.

It will greatly help it. Much private fellowship with God will give you sevenfold success. Pray much if you would work much, and if you want to work more, pray more.

Luther used to say, when an unusual press of business came upon him, I must pray more today. Be like him in the day of work or trial. Do not think that mere working will keep you right or set you right.

The watch won't go till the spring is mended. Work will do nothing for you till you have gone to God for a working heart. Trying to work yourself into a better frame of feeling is not only hopeless, but injurious.

You say, I want to feel more and to love more. It is well, but you can't work yourself into these. I do not say to anyone who feels his coldness, go and work.

Work, if done heartlessly, will only make you colder. You must go straight to Jesus with that cold heart and warm it at his cross. Then work will be at once a necessity, a delight, and a success.

Do not skim it or read it, but study it, every word of it. Study the whole Bible, Old Testament and New. Not your favorite chapters merely, but the complete Word of God from beginning to end.

Do not trouble yourself with commentators. They may be of use if kept in their place, but they are not your guides. Your guide is THE interpreter.

The one among a thousand, Job 33.23, who will lead you into all truth and keep you from all error. Not that you are to read no book but the Bible. All that is true and good is worth the reading, if you have time for it.

And all, if properly used, will help you in the study of the Scriptures. A Christian does not shut his eyes to the natural scenes of beauty spread around him. He does not cease to admire the hills or plains or rivers or forests of earth, because he has learned to love the God that made them.

Nor does he turn away from books of science or true poetry, because he has discovered one book truer, more precious and more poetical than all the rest together. Besides, the soul can no more

continue in one posture than the body. The eye must be relieved by variety of objects and the limbs by motion.

So must the soul by change of subject and position. All truth is precious, though not all divine. In so far then as time allows or opportunity presents, let us seek and search out by word concerning all things that are done under heaven.

But let the Bible be to us the book of books, the one book in all the world, whose every wisdom is truth and whose every verse is wisdom. In studying it, be sure to take it for what it really is, the revelation of the thoughts of God given us in the words of God. Were it only the book of divine thoughts and human words, it would profit little, for we never could be sure whether the words really represented the thoughts.

Nay, we might be quite sure that man would fail in his words when attempting to embody divine thoughts, and that therefore if we have only man's words, that is, man's translation of the divine thoughts, we shall have one of the poorest and most incorrect of all books, just as we should have in the case of Homer or Plato done into English by a first-year's schoolboy. But knowing that we have divine thoughts embodied in divine words, through the inspiration of an unerring translator, we sit down to the study of the heavenly volume, assured that we shall find in all its teachings the perfection of wisdom, and in its language the most accurate expression of that wisdom that the finite speech of man can utter. Every word of God is as perfect as it is pure.

Psalm 197, Psalm 12, 6. Let us read and reread the scriptures, meditating on them day and night. They never grow old, they never lose their sap, they never run dry. Though it is right and profitable, as I have said, to read other books, if they are true and good, yet beware of reading too many.

Do not let man's book thrust God's book into a corner. Do not let commentaries smother the text, nor let the true and the good shut out the truer and the better. Specially beware of light reading.

Shun novels. They are the literary curse of the age. They are to the soul what ardent spirits are to the body.

If you be a parent, keep novels out of the way of your children. But whether you be a parent or not, neither read them yourself, nor set an example of novel reading to others. Don't let novels lie on your table or be seen in your hand, even in a railway carriage.

The light reading for the rail has done deep injury to many a young man and woman. The light literature of the day is working a world of harm, vitiating the taste of the young, innervating their minds, unfitting them for life's plain work, eating out their love of the Bible, teaching them a false morality, and creating in the soul an unreal standard of truth and beauty and love. Don't be too fond of the newspaper, yet read it that you may know both what man is doing and what God is doing, and extract out of all you read matter for thought and prayer.

Avoid works which jest with what is right or wrong, lest you unconsciously adopt a false test of truth and beauty, namely ridicule, and so become afraid to do right for right's sake alone, dreading the world's sneer and undervaluing a good conscience and the approving smile of God. Let your reading be always select, and whatever you read, begin with seeking God's blessing on it. But see that you relish for the Bible.

Be above every other enjoyment, and the moment you begin to feel greater relish for any other book, lay it down till you have sought deliverance from such a snare, and obtained from the Holy Spirit an intenser relish, a keener appetite for the Word of God. Jeremiah 15, 16, Psalm 19, 7-10 7. Take heed to your steps. Beware not merely of falling, but of stumbling.

Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, like men in an enemy's country, or like travelers climbing a hill, slippery with ice and terrible with precipices, where every step may be a fall, and every fall a plunge into a chasm. Beware of little slips, slight inconsistencies, as they are called. They are the beginning of all backsliding, and they are in themselves evil, as well as hateful to God.

8. Keep your garments undefiled. Revelation 3, 4 Beware of small spots, as well as larger stains or rifts, and the moment you discover any speck, however small, go wash in the fountain, that your garments may be always white, and so pleasing in the eyes of Him whose you are and whom you serve. 9. Crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts.

Galatians 5, 24 Mortify your members which are upon the earth. Colossians 3, 5 Remember the Lord's words to His church. Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

Stand aloof from the world's gaiety, and be jealous of what are called harmless amusements. I do not condemn all amusements, but I ask that they should be useful and profitable, not merely harmless. Dancing and card playing are the world's devices for killing time.

They are bits of the world and the world's ways which will ensnare your feet and lead you away from the cross. Let them alone. Keep away from the ballroom, the opera, the oratorio, the theater.

Dress, finery, and display are deadly snares. Put away levity and frivolity, all silly conversation or gossip. Remembering the apostles' words, neither filthiness nor foolish talking nor jesting, which are not convenient.

And let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Flee youthful lusts, if you be young men or women.

Flee all lusts, whether you be young or old. Shun light company, and take no pleasure in the conversation of vain persons. Abstain from all appearance of evil.

Be thou a Christian in little things as well as great. Dread little sins, little errors, little omissions of beauty. Beware of false steps, and if betrayed into one, retrace it soon as discovered.

If persevered in, the consequences may be months of sorrow. That cherished sin twill cost thee dear. Remember, as a French writer remarks that, sooner or later, every crown of flowers becomes a crown of thorns.

Redeem the time. Much of your progress depends on this. Be men of method and punctuality.

Waste no moments. Have always something to do, and do it. Use up the little spaces of life, the little intervals between engagements.

I knew a friend who, one winter, read through some five or six octavo volumes by making use of the brief interval between family worship and breakfast. Pack up your life well. Your trunk will contain twice as much if well packed.

Attend, then, to the packing of each day and hour. You may save years by this. How many have slipped and fallen through idleness? How many begin a score of things and end nothing, dawdle away their morning or their evening hours, sleep longer than is needful, trifle through their duties, hurrying about from work to work, or from book to book, or from meeting to meeting, instead of being calm, methodical, energetic? Thus life is loitered away, and each son sets upon twelve wasted hours and an uneasy, dissatisfied conscience.

Be punctual and regular in all duties and engagements. Keep no man waiting. Be honest as to time, both with yourselves and others, lest you get into a state of chronic flurry and excitement, so destructive of peace and progress, so grieving to the spirit, whose very nature is calmness and rest.

These may seem small things, but they are the roots of great. Resist beginnings. Seize time by the forelock.

Live while you live. Watch your steps. Count your minutes.

Live as men who are pressing on to a kingdom and who fear not only open apostasy, but the smallest measure of coming short, the slightest stain upon the garment of a saint, the faintest slur upon the name of a disciple. Watch against special sins or things that have the appearance of evil or things that lead into evil and discredit that worthy name by which you are called. 1 Thessalonians 5.22 James 2.7 If you have a bad temper, watch against that.

If you have a rude way of speech, a cold, distant, repulsive manner, or are ill to please, look well to these and be courteous. 1 Peter 3.8 If you are covetous in disposition or shabby in your dwellings or niggardly in your givings, take care. The love of money is the root of all evil.

If you are slovenly in your dress or untidy in your person or unpolite in your demeanor, set yourself to rectify these blemishes. If you are lazy, luxurious, given to the good things of this life or selfish, disobliging, unneighborly, rude, blunt, unbrotherly, look to your pattern and see if these things were in him. If you are fickle and frivolous and flippant, greedy of jokes, carried away with immoderate laughter, be upon your guard.

If you are romantic and sentimental, take care lest the indulgence of such a temperament should land you in peevishness, self-pity and a cowardly avoidance of the common duties of life. If you are censorious, captious, fault-finding, proud, domineering, supercilious and sulky, get the unclean spirit cast out forthwith. If you be a gossip or a gadabout or a busybody in other men's matters, take care, for at such crevices Satan creeps in.

If you be secretive and cunning with a certain littleness or slyness in your nature, which never lets you forget your own interests, beware. Christ was not such. Paul was not such.

Be frank, open, manly. Remember the summing up of David's picture of the blessed man in whose spirit there is no guile. Psalms 32.2 Be not Jacob a man of guile, but Israel a noble prince, an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile.

John 1.48 Walk straight up along the path of life, like a forgiven man, with God at your side. Genesis 5.24 Genesis 6.9 And with the joy of the Lord for your strength. Nehemiah 8.9 Ecclesiastes 9.7 Doing heartily your daily work, whether sacred or common, with an unshaded brow and an earnest but cheerful face.

In short, watch against your old self at every point. Do not evade these remarks by saying that some of the things spoken of are trifles and beneath notice. Nothing should be too small for a Christian to notice, either of right or wrong.

Remember the Master's words about denying self, every part of self. Be not a servant of self, or a worshipper of self, or a lover of self. 2 Timothy 3.1-2 In any form.

Take up your cross and follow your Lord. Matthew 16.24 As it is written, Even Christ pleased not himself. Romans 15.3 8. Put away boastfulness and love of praise.

God's aim in all His doings of grace is to hide pride from man, to hinder boasting, to keep the sinner humble. All that the old Christian can say is, By the grace of God I am what I am. And the youngest has no other confidence or boast.

All confidence in the flesh, Philippians 3.1-3, all trust in self, all reliance on the creature, are set aside by that great work of the divine substitute who did all for us and left us nothing to do out of which it would be possible to extract a boast. 2 Corinthians 12.9 Galatians 6.14 Isaiah 41.16 Isaiah 45.25 The sinner's first act of believing is his consenting to be treated as a sinner and simply as such, indebted for nothing to himself in any shape or in any sense, but wholly to God and to His free love in Christ Jesus our Lord. This was the laying down of all pride and boastfulness.

Then he knew the meaning of the words Glory ye in His holy name. 1 Chronicles 16.10 For the name in which he then began to glory was the name revealed in Exodus. Exodus 34.6 The name that assured him of the love of that God with whom he had to do.

Self was set aside and Christ came in to do and to be all that self had hitherto been supposed to be and to do. What things before were gained to us, these we then counted loss for Christ and we ceased forever to glory in the flesh or to be debtors to anything but the blood and righteousness of the Son of God. We learn to say God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 6.14 We ceased to work for salvation for we had got it without working. And we had got it not in order that we might indulge in sin because grace abounded, but in order that having our legal bonds all loosed and our prison opened we might henceforth serve God with our whole heart and soul. We thus became debtors not to the flesh to live after the flesh Romans 8.12 for the flesh had done nothing for us and we owed it nothing but debtors to God and to his love not to self or the old man for these had brought us only sin and evil but to Jesus Christ and his precious blood not to law for it only condemned us and held us in bondage but to that free spirit Psalm 51.12 that good spirit Nehemiah 9.20 that spirit of life which makes us free from the law of sin and death Romans 8.2 thus everything that could cause pride was swept away at the outset and that not by law but by the very necessity of the case by the very nature of that salvation which was brought to us not through anything which we either could or could not do but through the love and work and blood of another let us fling away self-esteem and high-mindedness for it is the very essence of

unbelief as the prophet told Israel hear ye and give ear be not proud for the Lord hath spoken Jeremiah 13.15 be meek be poor in spirit be humble be teachable be gentle and easy to be entreated putting away all high thought and lofty imaginations either about what we are or what we can do content to take the obscurest corner and the lowest seat and this not to indulge in a false lowliness or in the pride that apes humility feeding our vanity with the thought that we are martyrs and puffing up our fleshly mind with the idea of our wonderful condescension or by brooding over our supposed wrongs and trials let us be truly humble as was the Son of God content to live unknown and to do our work unnoticed as a work not for the eye of man but of God put away all envy and jealousy of others as well as all malice and evil speaking Ephesians 4.31 love to hear of a brother's prosperity don't grudge him a few words of honest praise nor try maliciously to turn the edge of it by an envious butt or a grave silence or a wise shake of the head unless you have very special reasons for disallowing the eulogy remember that Solomon's wicked man is one that winketh with his eyes and speaketh with his feet and teacheth with his fingers Proverbs 6.13 Proverbs 10.10 have a care of detraction and backbiting speak of a person's faults only to himself and to God be not censorious or uncharitable in thought or word inconsistent Christians are often more censorious than the world for they need to apologize to themselves for their inconsistencies by detracting from the excellencies of those who are more consistent than themselves and by trying to believe that good men are no better than others some love to speak and show their pride in this way both in private and in public if you are young and newly led out of your former ignorance beware of this snare remember Paul's advice not a novice that is, one newly converted lest being lifted up with pride he fall into condemnation and the snare of the devil 1 Timothy 3.6 if you have gifts use them quietly and modestly not ostentatiously do not be forward to tell your experience or give your opinion or to take rank above your seniors do not think that all zeal or wisdom is confined to you and a few about you do not condemn others because they don't go quite along with you in all things nor speak of them as cold and dead and unspiritual do not think that no one cares for souls but yourselves that no one can state the gospel or pray like you or that God is not likely to bless anyone so much as you be lowly and show this not by always speaking evil of yourselves to others or by using the conceited phrase in my humble opinion as some do in order to show their humility but by not speaking of yourselves at all keep self in the background and don't say or do anything that looks like baiting your hook for a little praise some love to rule and manage so did Diotrephes 3 John 9 they are not happy unless they are at the head of everything the originators of all plans the presidents of societies the speakers at meetings beware of this love of preeminence as ruinous to your own soul and injurious to the church of God if God puts work into your hands do it and do it faithfully through good report and bad report bear to be contradicted and spoken against do not fret when things go wrong with you or your schemes nor get petted like a spoiled child when you don't get your own way nor fling up everything in disgust when you happen to be thwarted do not take yourself for Solomon or suppose that wisdom will die with you Job 12 2 if called to preside or manage do it and do it with energy and authority as one who has a trust to fulfill but mind not high things Romans 12 16 seek not great things for thyself Jeremiah 45 5 he that is greatest among you let him be as the younger and he that is chief as he that doth serve Luke 22 26 all of you be subject one to another 1 Peter 5 5 in honor preferring one another Romans 12 10 yet be discriminating do not call error truth for the sake of charity do not praise earnest men merely because they are earnest to be earnest in truth is one thing to be earnest in error is another the first is blessed not so much because of the earnestness but

because of the truth the second is hateful to God and ought to be shunned by you remember how the Lord Jesus from heaven spoke concerning error which thing I hate Revelation 2 6-15 1 Timothy 6 4-5 true spiritual discernment is much lost sight of as a real Christian grace discernment between the evil and the good the false and the true beloved believe not every spirit but try the spirits whether they are of God because many false prophets are gone out into the world 1 John 4 1 this discernment which belongs to everyone who is taught of God is the very opposite of that which is called in our day by the boastful name of liberality spiritual discernment and liberal thought have little in common with each other abhor that which is evil cleave to that which is good Romans 12 9 the liberality which puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter Isaiah 5 20 is a very different thing from the charity which thinketh no evil 1 Corinthians 13 5 truth is a mighty thing in the eyes of God whatever it may be in those of men all error is more or less whether directly or indirectly a misrepresentation of God's character and a subversion of His revelation Revelation 22 18 19 9 watch against Satan he is above all others your enemy he the old serpent the dragon the liar and murderer from the beginning it is with him that you are to fight for we wrestle not against flesh and blood that is earthly foes men like ourselves but against principalities against powers against the rulers of the darkness of this world against spiritual wickedness in high places Ephesians 6 12 the world tries to bewitch and beguile us but it is the God of this world the prince of this world the prince of the power of the air that so especially lays snares for us making use of the world's beauty and pleasure and vanity for leading us captive at his will oh how as one has written are thou entrenched oh Satan how art thou entrenched in thy beautiful deceptions thou hast played thy part well in these last days thou art all but the holy one thou consummate deceiver it is this that gives to the ballroom and the dance and the theater and the voluptuous music their special power to harm for these are Satan's baits and nets by means of which he allures the unwary and leads back the believer to unbelieving ground disarming our watchfulness dazzling our vision reviving our worldliness and perhaps for a season lulling us wholly asleep we know that through his successful wiles perilous times are to come when many while lovers of self traitors heady high-minded lovers of pleasure are still to have the form of godliness 2 Timothy 3 1 through 4 and we know that the last days are to be like the days of Noah and Lot Luke 17 26 through 32 days of reveling and banqueting and luxury let us be wary lest standing as we do on the edge of these days we be drawn away into the sins of an age led captive by Satan at his will resist the devil and he will flee from you fight the good fight of faith against him and his hosts watch unto prayer be sober be vigilant because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour 1 Peter 5.8 in these last days he will lay his snares more cunningly than ever to deceive if it were possible the very elect he is coming down having great wrath because he knoweth he hath but a short time Revelation 12.12

Part 3

10. Beware of one-sided truth. There are few things more dangerous or more likely to lead into open error.

Take care, for instance, of misunderstanding what the scripture says about the old man and the new man, the flesh and the spirit, and so making void your own personal responsibility for all you say and do, and also setting aside the necessity for the blood of Christ as daily needed for our whole person and the power of the Spirit as needed constantly for our whole being as long as we live. Our Lord and His apostles use many figures to show the greatness of the change produced by being begotten again. They speak of this change as being an actual indwelling of Christ Himself personally.

Christ in you, the hope of glory. Colossians 1.27 Christ liveth in me. Galatians 2.20 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.

Ephesians 3.17 But this living and indwelling of Christ does not make us the same as Christ, or Christ the same as we, nor does it make the blood and the spirit less necessary. It does not make Christ responsible for our sins, nor does it make us sinless. It does not lead us to say, You need not care what you do, for Christ dwells in you, and all you do is His doing.

Again, on the other hand, Scripture speaks of our being in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5.17, 1 Corinthians 1.30 But our being in Christ does not mean that we, that is, our whole man, body, soul, and spirit, are actually put into Christ as water is put into a vessel. This would destroy the sense, and besides, it would either make us sinless, or it would make Christ the author of our sins and the doer of all that we do.

These figures do mean that there is such a wonderful nearness between Christ and us, such a living connection, that we receive His power and fullness, but they do not mean that we and Christ are no longer two persons, but one, no longer two bodies, but one, no longer two souls, but one. Again in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit says, A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. Ezekiel 36.26 This does not mean that an actual stone, whether of granite or marble, is taken out of us, and an actual piece of flesh, created in heaven, is inserted instead.

Nor does it mean that the whole of our old nature is at once taken out of us, leaving no part behind, and that a complete new nature is substituted, so that there shall be absolutely nothing in us but what is perfect and divine. If this be the meaning of the figure, then every conversion must be the passing into instantaneous perfection, no fragment of the old nature being left behind, and no feature of the new nature being left unperfected or undeveloped. Thus there could be no conflict, no difficulty, no declension, no possibility of backsliding.

The change thus figured to us is certainly a very great one, but it cannot mean the changing of one person into another, nor the transformation of a man into an angel. Again our Lord says to

Nicodemus, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. John 3.3 Nicodemus took Him literally, and so destroyed the whole meaning of this divine symbol.

Those in our day who maintain that actually and literally a new created thing is dropped into us at conversion, which they call the new man, are saying exactly what Nicodemus said. Can a man enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? The new birth does not mean a new person. Christ did not mean that Nicodemus was no longer to be Nicodemus, or that Peter was no longer to be Peter after conversion, but that such a spiritual work was to take place as to change their whole spiritual nature and character, while leaving them still Nicodemus and Peter, with all their original and proper personalities and humanities.

Our Lord does not say, except a part of a man is born again, but except a man is born again, the change may not be perfect at first, but it affects the whole man, so that he cannot say of himself, a part of me is born again, and a part of me is not born again, but I am born again. Connected with this, there are the statements regarding the new creature. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, or there is a new creation.

Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new. 2 Corinthians 5.17 It is not that a new creature has been put into a man, like new wine into old vessels, but the whole man is the new creature, and is regarded as such by God from the day of his being born again. That the transformation is perfect and complete from the outset, the figure does not imply.

That it will one day be all that is thus symbolized, it assures us beyond a doubt. So with regard to the flesh and the spirit, the old man and the new, the flesh is the man, call him Peter or Paul, with the remnants of his former self about him. The spirit is the same man, it may be Peter or Paul, with the new life unfolding itself within him.

The figure names two men, the old and the new, but we are not, like Nicodemus, to take the words in a carnal or ultra-literal sense, for, after all, the man is but one all the while. For thus the apostle speaks, I am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live.

Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. Galatians 2, 19 and 20 He does not say here, my old man is dead, but I myself am dead. Not, my old man is crucified, but I myself am crucified.

And this same person, I myself, who is dead and crucified, still liveth. He does not say, one section of me is dead and another is living, but I myself am dead and I myself am living. I, the same person, am both a dead and a living man.

This is the real sense of the figure. This conflict, not between two persons, but between two parts, or conditions of one person, is that which the apostle brings out in the seventh of the Romans. I was alive, I died, I am carnal, sold under sin.

That which I do, I allow not. What I would, that do I not. What I hate, that I do.

In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. To will is present with me. How to perform, I find not.

The good that I would, I do not. The evil which I would not, that I do. It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

When I would do good, evil is present with me. I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? It is Paul himself, speaking for himself, speaking as one delighting in the law of God that utters these strange things, these seeming contradictions.

It is not a perfect part of Paul fighting against an imperfect part of Paul, but it is Paul himself fighting against Paul himself. The one Paul, the one person, has two conflicting elements within him, each striving for the mastery. The inward man, says he, is renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 4.16 This process of daily renewal is that which goes on within him. The light and the darkness struggle together, but the light conquers and shines more and more unto the perfect day. Beware especially of this one-sidedness in everything connected with Christ himself.

Faith connects us with the person of Christ in all its parts and aspects. It connects us with the whole work of Christ from the cradle to the throne, from Bethlehem to the heaven of heavens. It connects us with his birth, his life, his death, his burial, his resurrection, his ascension and glory.

Out of all these it draws life and strength, life in a crucified Christ, life in a risen Christ, life in a glorified Christ. This is the heritage of faith. Out of death, the death of that cross where he was crucified through weakness, comes life and power to us.

And down from the throne on which he now sits, the possessor and dispenser of that spirit of promise, these same blessings come. In the cross is power. In the resurrection is power.

In the throne of that glory, there is power. It is as the glorified Christ, John 7, 39, that he has received for us the spirit with all his gifts. It is with the glorified Christ that we are linked by faith for blessing, for power, for life, for consolation.

Because I live, ye shall live also. You were neither born nor reborn for yourselves alone. You may not be able to do much, but do something.

Work while it is day. You may not be able to give much, but give something, according to your ability, remembering that the Lord loveth a cheerful giver. Take heed and beware of covetousness, for the love of money is the root of all evil.

Whenever worldliness comes in, in any shape, whether it be love of money or love of pleasure, you cease to be faithful to Christ and are trying to serve both God and man. Do something then for God while time lasts. It may not be long, for the day goeth away, and the shadows of evening are stretched out.

Do something every day. Work and throw your heart into the work. Work joyfully and with a right good will, as men who love both their work and their master.

Be not weary in well-doing. Work and work in faith. Work in love and patience and hope.

Don't shrink from hard labor or disagreeable duties, or a post trying to flesh and blood. Endure hardness as a good soldier in Jesus Christ. 2 Timothy 2.3 Be steadfast, unmovable, always

abounding in the work of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15.58 Don't fold your hands or lay aside your staff, or sheathe your sword. Don't give way to slothfulness and flesh-pleasing, saying to yourselves, I can get to heaven without working. Your gifts may be small, your time not much, your opportunities few, but work and do it quietly, without bustle or self-importance, not as pleasing men but God, not seeking the honor that cometh from men, but that which cometh from God.

The day of honor is coming, and the masters well done will make up for all hardship and labor here. When the Son of Man shall come in His glory with all His holy angels, and when He shall sit upon the throne of His glory, it will be blessed to be set upon His right hand and acknowledged as those who have fed Him and clothed and visited Him in prison. And it would be a bitter thing indeed to be saved so as by fire, namely, barely saved and no more, saved, if such a thing can be thought of, without doing anything for Him that saved us, having given Him no water when He was thirsty, no food when He was hungry, no clothes when He was naked, and when in prison, having never once come nigh Him.

Live waiting for your Lord. He that loves Christ will long to see Him and will not be content with the interviews which faith gives. The lover seeks the absent loved one, the wife, the husband, the child, the mother.

So do you, your Lord. It is not enough that you can communicate with Him daily by the epistles which faith brings and carries. You must see Him face to face.

Otherwise, there is a blank in your life, a void in your existence, a cloud over your love, and a faltering in your song. The saved one desires to meet his Savior and feels that his joy must be imperfect till then. It is the mark of a disciple that he waits for the Son of God from heaven, 1 Thessalonians 1.10, that he loves, looks for, longs for the appearance of Christ.

Let this mark be seen on you and be like the Corinthian saints of whom it was told by their apostle, ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 1.7. Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 1.13. 13. The Lord our God. I am the Lord your God was God's greeting of love to Israel, Leviticus 11.44. It is no less now His salutation of grace to everyone who has believed on the name of His Son, Christ Jesus.

God becomes our God the moment that we receive His testimony of His beloved Son. This new relationship between God and us in virtue of which He calls us His and we call Him ours is the simple result of a believed gospel. If anyone reading these lines is led to ask, how may I become a son? We answer in the words of truth.

He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. Nothing less than believing can bring about this sonship and nothing more is needed. The joy and the peace and the love and the warmth, these are the effects of faith, but they are not faith.

They are the fruit of a conscious sonship which has been formed by the belief of the divine testimony to Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior of the lost. As many as received Him, to them gave He the right of being sons of God, even to them that believed on His name. John 1.12. God's simple message of grace contains peace for the sinner and the sinner extracts the peace

therein contained not by effort or feeling but by the simple belief of the true sayings of God.

Good news makes glad by being believed and they refuse to yield up their precious treasure to anything but to simple faith. Believe the tidings of peace from God and the peace is all your own. It is not to him that worketh or feeleth or loveth, but to him that believeth that God says, I am the Lord your God.

And when God used the word believing, He just meant what He said and intended nothing else than what man means by that word. Had He meant anything else, He would have told us and not suffered us to be misled or deceived by our misunderstanding of a word of which the Bible is full. Had He meant working or feeling or loving, He would have said so and not allowed us to suppose that believing was really all.

What a book of deception and mystery the Bible would be if believing does not mean believing but something less or something more. To make it something less would be to take from God's word as truly as if we had struck out a book from the Bible. To make it something more would be to add to God's word as truly and as sinfully as if we had forged another gospel or another epistle or accepted the Apocrypha as part of the inspired record.

We make God a liar when we refuse to take Him at His word or give Him credit for speaking that simple truth in believing which we are saved. But let us remember the other side of His statement, namely, our being found liars by reason of our adding to His word. Every word of God is pure, Proverbs 30, 5. Can we make it purer or more transparent or more simple? We add to it lest it should be too simple, too childlike, too blessed.

We put something of our own into it to make it more substantial and complete. And that something, call it feeling or realizing or loving, destroys the divine simplicity and transparency of faith. Add thou not unto His words lest He reprove thee and thou be found a liar, Proverbs 30, 6. Does casting dust upon the sunbeam improve its quality or make it more like the sun from which it came? Would pouring filth into a cup of pure spring water make it more lucid and refreshing? Whatever we add to believing tends to destroy its real nature and to mar its effects.

If God had said that we are to be saved by believing that the deluge overflowed the earth and that the sun once stood still in the heavens, we should have understood what He meant by the word. And is there any more difficulty in understanding Him when He says, He that believeth is justified from all things? Does believing mean one thing in Genesis and another in Romans? Does it mean one thing to Abraham and another to us? Does it mean one thing today and another tomorrow? Or is it not the formula of salvation? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, meant to be the simplest and most intelligible of all declarations ever made to man. We believe the Holy Spirit's testimony that Jesus died and rose again, the just for the unjust.

That saves. We believe the divine promise annexed to this testimony that life is the possession of every man who believeth this heavenly testimony. And this belief of the promise, which some call appropriation, assures us on God's word that life is ours personally.

We do not get life by believing that life is ours, nor do we get Christ by believing that Christ is ours. This is as absurd as the idea of getting our debts paid by believing that they are paid. But we get life and Christ by believing God's glad tidings concerning Jesus and His finished work upon the

cross.

There is enough in Christ to pay every man's debt, but no man's debt is actually paid until he has taken God at His word and believed the record which God has given of His Son. It is the blood that pacifies my conscience. The sight of it is all I need to remove fear and impart confidence.

It is not my seeing that I see it that gives me boldness, but my direct and simple sight of it. My guilt passes away from me so soon as I believe, and I don't need to wait till I believe in my own act of believing before becoming conscious of this deliverance. The blood contains my pardon and my peace, and by looking at it, I extract the pardon and the peace.

I don't need to look at my looking. I need only to look at the blood. If I cannot extract from it pardon and peace, I shall never be able to extract them from my own act of seeing.

I am to believe in Jesus, not in my own faith, nor in my own feelings. I am to look to the cross, not to my own convictions or repentance. The well of peace is not within me, and to let down my bucket into my own heart for the purpose of drawing up the water of peace is mockery as well as foolishness.

I do not fill the cup of peace out of anything that is in myself. Christ has filled that cup already long, long ago, and in love, he presses it to my parched lips. Let me drink at once of it, for all the peace of God, the peace of heaven, is there.

When God said to Israel, I am the Lord your God, he added this, Ye shall therefore sanctify yourself, and ye shall be holy, for I am holy. Leviticus 11, 44, and he added this also, I am the Lord that bringeth you up, out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. Ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

Leviticus 11, 45. God calls us to be holy. He becomes our God to make us like himself.

He calls us to be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. He expects that we should represent him among our fellow men by our resemblance to himself. The carrying out of this holiness is his own work, the operation of his spirit.

Whether our perfection in holiness is to be wrought gradually or instantaneously is a question to be determined solely by his word and not by any theories of our own. But God could make each soul perfect the moment he believes we admit that he may have wise reasons for not doing this. Wise reasons for gradual growth will not be denied.

He has given us no instance in the Bible of anyone made instantaneously sinless, either at his conversion or during his afterlife. All the men of faith and holiness, the men full of the Holy Ghost, which he presents to us as our models, are imperfect men to the end of their days, needing forgiveness and cleansing constantly. He glorifies himself in our imperfect bodies, in an imperfect church, on an imperfect earth.

His object here is to glorify himself in imperfection and growth, as he is hereafter to glorify himself in perfection and completeness of every kind. Gradual growth is the law of all things here, man, beasts, trees, and flowers, so that unless we had some very notable example in Scripture of a sinless man or of miraculous and instantaneous perfection by an act of faith, we are not disposed

to accept the theory of instantaneous sinlessness, as that to which we are called in believing, even though that be veiled under the spacious name of entire consecration or accompanied with the profession of personal unworthiness, a personal unworthiness which, however, does not seem to require any actual confession of sin. Yet, God calls us to be holy.

He expects us to grow in unlikeness to this world and in likeness to that world which is to come. He expects us to follow him who did no sin, even though the attainment of perfection should not be in a day or a year, but the growth of a lifetime. It is for want of daily growth, not for want of complete and constant sinlessness that God so often challenges his own.

Let us grow. Let us bring forth fruit. Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof.

What is the use of taking so long to make us sinless, some may say? I answer, go and ask God. What was the use of taking six days to bring creation to perfection? Why did he let sin enter our world when he could have kept it out? What was the use of not making the whole church perfect at once? Why did he not make Abraham or David or Paul perfect at once? He could have done so. Why did he not? Let us study soberly and truly the word of God in regard to the past history of his saints.

Lest it be said to some in our day who think themselves on a far higher platform than others, more perfect than Paul or John. Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Let us grow. The impatience that demands instantaneous perfection is unbelief, refusing to recognize God's spiritual laws in the new creation.

The gradual evolution of the heavenly life in a lifelong course of conflict and imperfection is the way in which sin is unfolded, the human heart exposed to view, the power of the cross tested, the efficacy of the blood manifested, and the power as well as the love of the Father, Son, and Spirit magnified. God's purpose is not simply to reveal himself, but to reveal man. Not simply man dead in trespasses and sin, but man after he has been made alive unto righteousness, to exhibit step by step and day by day that most solemn and humbling of all processes, namely that by which the inward man is renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 4.16 While the strength of the human will for evil is manifested, the awful tenacity of sin shone forth, and the absolute hopelessness of any sinner's salvation demonstrated, saved by the omnipotence of God himself. Let us grow daily and hourly. Let us grow down.

Let us grow up. Let us strike our roots deeper. Let us spread out our branches more widely.

Let us not only blossom and bud, but let us bring forth fruit, ripe and plentiful, on every bough. Herein is my Father glorified that he bear much fruit. So shall ye be, my disciples.

John 15.8.14 Hindrances to avoid. Many things can hinder growth and fruit bearing. Mark the following.

Unbelief. So we see they could not enter in because of unbelief. Hebrews 3.19 This poisons the tree at its very root.

Christ can do no mighty works in us or for us because of unbelief. Matthew 13.58 Only believe. Mark 5.36 Have faith in God.

Mark 11.22 He that believeth. Mark 9.23 He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. John 7.38 Want of love.

No love, no fruit. Much love, much fruit. Hebrews 10.24 Labor of love means the labor which love produces, to which love stimulates.

1 Thessalonians 1.3 Love is by its very nature fruit bearing. When love waxes cold. Matthew 24.12 When we leave our first love.

Revelations 2.4 Then everything that deserves the name of fruit dies away. If there be fruit at all, it is poor and unripe. Our zeal is the zeal of Jehu.

2 Kings 10.16 Our warmth is false fire. Our energy is the vigor of the flesh. Our work is the work of men urged on by a false stimulus.

Our words, however earnest, are the words of excited self. If anyone asks, how am I to get love? I answer, look to Jesus. Deal with Him about it.

Learn anew to love by learning anew His love to you. I do not say work and that will stimulate you to love. No.

It is not first work and then love. But first love and then work. Get more love by dealing more with Jesus personally.

And then love will set you all on fire. You will work unbidden. You will work in the liberty of fellowship and in the joy of love.

1 Thessalonians 3.12 Galatians 5.6 2 Corinthians 5.14 Selfishness. Mark 8.34 Self in all its forms is a hindrance to our growth. Romans 14.7 Self-will, self-sufficiency, self-indulgence, self-importance, self-glory, self-seeking, self-brooding.

All these mar fruitfulness. Denying self is the beginning, the middle and the end of our course here as followers of Christ. Selfishness takes the form of covetousness or love of money, of luxury or love of meats and drinks and the good things of this life, of religious dissipation or love of excitement, of spiritual restlessness or running from meeting to meeting, or book to book, or opinion to opinion, or minister to minister, of craving for religious stimulants and spices with loathing of what is tame or common, however good and true.

These are some of the forms of selfishness which destroy both growth and fruitfulness. How can a man grow when he is pampering self instead of crucifying the flesh? When he is indulging and fondling the old man instead of nailing him to the cross? When he is enjoying all softness and ease and worldly comfort instead of enduring hardness and taking up his cross and mortifying his members which are upon the earth? Romans 8.13 Galatians 5.24 Colossians 3.5

Part 4

Covetousness. The love of money is the root of all evil. 1 Timothy 6.10. Few things are more hateful in a Christian man than this.

Few things more completely destroy his influence, and few things more sadly or more justly make him the scorn of the world than eagerness for money or niggardliness in parting with it. The covetous man cannot grow. He must ever remain a stunted Christian.

Filthy lucre is poison to the soul. If we do not make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness by laying out our substance for God, it will become the blight of spirituality, the destruction of our religious life. Proverbs 30.8. 1 Timothy 6.6-10. Be generous.

Be large-hearted. Be open-handed. Be loving.

Be free in giving, if you would grow. Pride. Self-satisfaction in any shape or self-admiration of any kind, in regard to person or property or accomplishments or position.

These are immensely hurtful to spiritual life. True godliness prospers only in the lowly heart, the heart which in proportion as it becomes more and more satisfied with Christ, becomes more and more dissatisfied with itself. If the master was meek and lowly, shall the disciple be anything else? Easy-mindedness.

To take things easy is by some reckoned a great virtue, and not to get warm or excited or zealous is regarded as proof of a noble and well-balanced mind. We might admit this to be the case were it confined to worldly matters. To lose a fortune and yet be calm is well.

To endure provocation and be unruffled is also well. But to take religion easy is not so to be commended. Easy-going religionists are strangers to the fervor of John or Paul.

To be contented while uncertain of our salvation is something very awful. To be contented while making no progress or perhaps going back is nearly as awful. Easy-minded religion is just the same as lifeless coldness, though perhaps not so repulsive to others.

The good-natured formality of thousands is just the hateful lukewarmness of Laodicea. But let these hints suffice. They will help a little, and guide a little, and teach a little, and warn a little.

In reading them, let there be much self-questioning and self-applying. Is it I, Lord? Is it I? 15. Be of good cheer.

A revival time is one of blessing, but it is one of peril. The running well and the going back, the flocking to the cross and the turning away from it, the warm confession and the subsequent silence, these are things which have been witnessed in other times, and may be witnessed again. Hence our anxiety to give all the guidance and the counsel that we can.

Let the young listen. Let them humble themselves to Christian counsel. Let them take heed and watch narrowly their own footsteps.

But still we would not dishearten any. Be not discouraged, we say, but be of good cheer. Faint not, though you may often be weary.

Though we bid you count the cost yet, we say to you, as God said to Israel, Behold, the Lord your God hath set the land before thee. Go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee, Fear not, neither be discouraged. Deuteronomy 1.21. We would not be of those to whom God spoke and said, Why discourage ye the hearts of the people? Numbers 32.7. We remember it is said that the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.

Numbers 21.4. And that this discouragement led to sin. We would not discourage the weakest. For we call to mind him who breaks not the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax.

Isaiah 42.3. Who gathers the lambs with his arms, who carries them in his bosom, and who gently leads those that are with young. Isaiah 40.11. We say to those who are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not. Isaiah 35.4. And we would strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees.

Isaiah 35.3. You say the fearful are among those who are cast into the lake of fire, and you fear you are one of them. Not so. The fearful specified in the book of Revelation, Revelation 21.8, are the cowards who have refused to confess to Christ, who have turned their back on Christ.

And they are very different from the fearful spoken of in Isaiah. Be of good courage. You have God on your side.

You have Christ to fight for you. You have the Holy Spirit to sustain and comfort you. You have more encouragement than discouragement.

You have the example of millions that have gone before you. You have exceeding great and precious promises. 2 Peter 1.4. You have many fellow travelers and fellow soldiers on the right hand and on the left.

You have a bright kingdom in view which will compensate for all trial and conflict here. And then the way is short. The toil will soon be over.

The battle will not last forever. Greater is He that is with you than all that can be against you. Be strong in the Lord.

Be strong in His love and in His power. Take to you the whole armor of God. Ephesians 6.10 and 11.

Do you say that you are in Christ and that you are abiding in Him? Then you ought to walk as He walked. You are bound to follow His footsteps. And if you say that you are not bound to do so, you set aside the divine teaching of the Apostle here given us.

The man who says, I am Christ, is under obligations to imitate Him. Duty and love alike constrain him to do so. Not duty without love, nor yet love without duty.

Duty without love would mean reluctance and compulsion. Love without duty would mean love fixed upon an unlawful object, whom it was not right to love. Duty and love going together mean that our love is fixed upon a worthy and lawful object, in loving whom we are feeling what is right, and in obeying whom we are doing what is right.

If I love that which is not my duty to love, I sin. If I love that which it is my duty to love, I am doing the right thing, the thing which God delights in. If I honor my parents, I do so for two reasons.

One, because God has said, honor thy father and thy mother. Two, because I love them. The two things, the duty and the love, are in perfect harmony with each other.

It is a beautiful thing to love, and it is a loving thing to be beautiful. Suppose you have a mother in Scotland and a father in India. You love both of them as truly as a son can love.

But the question may arise as to which of them you are going to visit or to stay with. Are you to remain in Scotland or go to India? Love cannot determine this question, for you love both equally. How is it to be decided? By duty.

You ask, is it my duty to go to my father or to remain with my mother? If you decided to leave your mother from a sense of duty, would she doubt your love and say, I want none of your professions of it? And when you went to India and told your father that it was a sense of duty that brought you to him, would he scorn you and say, I want none of your duty. Give me your love. Duty is a right and proper motive.

It is again and again referred to in scripture as the words ought, are bound, must, detour, oh, and the like abundantly show. He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself so to walk, even as he walked. 1 John 2.6. We read such passages as the following.

Ye also ought to wash one another's feet. John 13.14. We have done that which was our duty to do. Luke 17.10. We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.

Romans 15.1. So ought men to love their wives. Ephesians 5.28. We are bound to thank God. 2 Thessalonians 1.3. We are bound to give thanks.

2 Thessalonians 2.13. We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 1 John 3.16. We ought to love one another. 1 John 4.11. These are a few out of many passages in which duty is spoken of in very plain terms.

That duty and love should go together is no proof that there is no such thing as duty, or that a Christian should rise above it into the region of pure love, as Romish mystics have held. Duty means the thing that is due. Are we not to do it because it is due, because it is the right and proper thing? Let us exercise our common sense and understand the meaning of words, whether Greek or English, before soaring into transcendental regions into which neither prophets nor apostles have gone before us.

There is a danger of running to excess in our day, of attempting the superfine in religion, of soaring too high, of getting away from both Scripture and common sense, of indulging in a sentimentalism which looks very spiritual, but which when analyzed is simply absurdity, or at best a one-sided exaggeration of some isolated truth. There is great danger, in a time of spiritual quickening, of

being carried about with diverse and strange doctrines. Let us cleave to the Word.

Only thus can we find steadfastness and sobriety. Only by feeding on it and being guided by it can we maintain a manly and healthy religion, free from error, yet devoid of effeminacy, following out the old paths of reformers, apostles, prophets, and patriarchs, unshaken by novelties, yet unfettered by bigotry or self-will. He that is dead, says the apostle, is freed from sin.

Romans 6, 7. Or, more exactly, he that has died is justified from sin. Death was the penalty, and he who has paid the penalty is legally justified. There is no further claim against him.

We pay the penalty when we take the death of the substitute as ours, and God reckons the penalty paid when He obtains our consent to the exchange. It is the thought of having paid the penalty that pacifies the conscience, and it is the thought of God reckoning it paid that gives us peace with Him. When we come to understand the meaning and value of the work upon the cross, when we accept what God has declared concerning all who believe His testimony to that work, the burden drops, and we enter into liberty.

With that liberty comes holiness. We seek henceforth conformity to Him who has set us free, and who bids us follow Him in the path of conformity to the Father's will. With that liberty comes love, love to Him who hath brought our souls out of prison by going into prison for us.

With that love comes zeal, the zeal of Him who followed after His lost ones till He had recovered them. Of Him it is said, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. With this love and zeal there comes self-denial, the self-denial of Him who pleased not Himself, who lived on earth solely for others, though rich for our sakes becoming poor.

Of all this be it ever remembered that the root is peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and that this peace comes from the knowledge of the peacemaking blood, the blood of the one divine peace-offering, whom to know is peace. It is out of the sacrificial blood that we extract the peace which is the beginning of all service, all religion, all uprightness of walk. No condemnation commences the life of freedom and self-denial and zeal.

We cease to know the law as our enemy and begin to know it as our friend, for that which is holy and just and good must ever be our delight, our joy, our guide. I delight in the law of God after the inner man. Romans 7.22 is one of our truest watchwords, for we were set free from the law just in order that we might delight in the law, and in order that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.

Romans 8.4. With law satisfied, nay transformed into a friend, and speaking not condemnation, but pardon, not wrath, but love, we walk onwards and upwards, realizing in that blessed law what David did when he said, The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold. Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Psalm 19.8-10.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net