

Section I. the Conviction Produced

by Jesse T. Peck

The sermon emphasizes the importance of conviction in Christianity, highlighting the role of the Holy Spirit in conviction and the need for believers to submit to His work.

Scripture: Romans 12:1, Colossians 2:10, Hebrews 4:16, Hebrews 10:22, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Consecration", "Holiness"

Description

Jesse T. Peck preaches about the importance of consecration and faith in seeking holiness. He emphasizes the need to renounce worldly dependencies and fully trust in the cleansing power of Jesus' blood. The sermon highlights the significance of making a sincere consecration to God, separating oneself from worldly influences, and dedicating all aspects of life to His service. It encourages the listener to exercise faith in the sympathy and triumph of Jesus, approaching the throne of grace boldly to obtain mercy and find grace in times of need.

Transcript

The conclusions reached are such as must command attention. Holiness is not an outside or accidental appendage of Christianity. It is the very centre of it -- the grand element of its power -- the essential fact of its value; and yet, it is generally neglected, so that a large proportion of converted men are sanctified but in part, and the church comes very far short of accomplishing her mission. It is time for us to ask "what shall we do?" May we not assume that the reader has already determined that it is desirable to be holy -- it is possible to be holy -- it is necessary to be holy? The most anxious desire must then be to understand the way; and there is certainly no need of mistake. The central idea which has produced revelation has filled it with counsels which "he that runs may read," and which followed in the spirit of humble confidence, will surely lead us to the full realization of this glorious state.

But let us not be superficial. Whatever is valuable in religion must be grounded in conviction. The receptive intellect must take in the subject. If it disappear, memory must recall it, and attention detain it, for the most careful examination. The reason must determine its truth, its importance and its claims. The heart must yield to its deep impressions, and the resolves of the soul must harmonize with the understanding.

Conviction is a law term. It implies that the accused has been arrested, tried, and condemned -- brought in guilty of the crime alleged against him in the indictment.

But in theology, this term has a special sense. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, imparting to the soul positive evidence of its guilt, its depravity, and its exposures. "And when he is come he will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." So perverted is the natural conscience, that it cannot be relied upon, for accurate moral discriminations, for safe and decisive moral impulses, or just and remedial retributions. Man left to himself, accumulates guilt, with no true estimate of its enormity, becomes harder and darker as crime increases, and "treasures up to himself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." The light of reason, or of philosophy shines too feebly to penetrate the gloom of his depravity.

But the spirit of God has the intelligence required for the revelation of the facts. His omniscient eye scans the minutest particulars of our history, and gazes into the profoundest depths of the soul. He can, therefore, certainly reveal to us the wrongs and the dangers which we have failed to see. Besides, it is not enough to know how our outward or inward sins appear to us. Our own view must in any event be superficial and entirely insufficient for the purposes of reform. We must know God's estimate of these wrongs; at least, so far as he has made us capable of receiving divine communications, and is pleased to make them. To us, his decisions are of paramount importance, and nothing but these may be relied upon with safety. We may, therefore, be humbly grateful that full provision has been made for this necessity. "When he, the spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." This very general and positive declaration is not made for any one class of men, nor intended to refer to any one fact of the moral state or relations. It presents us with the Holy Ghost as the great truth-telling agent to the souls of men. He, and he alone, knows the truth which men have occasion to ascertain. Just as no "man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him, even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God."

In a very important sense, the awakened sinner must therefore have "the witness of the Spirit" to the fact of his guilt, or the divine attestation to the light in which his sins are viewed, by the Being against whom they have been committed.

It is necessary in this discussion to distinguish between the conviction of an unpardoned sinner, and the conviction which must be felt by the inquirer after holiness. In the former instance, the soul is pained and oppressed with a sense of guilt. It is not merely the general knowledge of the fact that he is a sinner that distresses him. Of this he has always been aware. But now, from an agency out of himself, and to him invisible, he is deeply impressed with "the exceeding sinfulness of sin" -- especially of his sins. The memory of his crimes against God is strangely quickened, and the examination is surprisingly minute and searching. He feels that he is justly arraigned before the Sovereign he has offended, and all efforts at self-justification are utterly vain. So many hidden crimes are brought to light; -- so overwhelming is his feeling of remorse, that he cries out in anguish, I am lost -- I am sinking to perdition. "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" There is no relief from earth or heaven but in pardon. And the same spirit that leads the sinner into the truth of his guilt, must lead him into the further truth of his justification; for this is one of the "things of God" which no one knoweth but the Spirit of God.

We are thus particular in stating the phenomena of conviction in the case of the unpardoned, not only that the conviction due for "sin in believers," may be placed in its own distinct light, but that we may aid inquiring minds in avoiding a dangerous error in the character of experience. It must be of the highest importance for the reader to inquire whether there is guilt in his soul -- whether he has been pardoned for the past, or has retained upon his conscience the crimes of a lifetime; or, having "known the way of righteousness, he has turned from the holy commandment delivered unto him," and so lives before God

with the crime of apostasy unatoned and unforgiven. That the truth may be known, the Holy Ghost asking for entrance must be admitted. His divine illumination must reach the utmost extremities of the soul, and from the depths of his being this guilty one must repent of the wrongs he has committed. To him the question of pardon is first. His soul must be relieved of its guilt, and, alive from the dead, it must be brought into fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, before he will be in a condition to receive the profound convictions, and enter upon the holier work of seeking entire sanctification. Unpardoned guilt will obstruct the light, and bar the power which this completed work implies; and we cannot fail to urge upon all who would become "pure in heart," that they must first be justified by faith -- must be born again. Many doubtless have sought, and sought in vain, for "the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ," wondering why they did not receive it, when the grand obstruction has been in some indulged offense which has brought unpardoned guilt upon their souls. And many others have been seeking for higher attainments received a great blessing, and supposed it to be entire sanctification; when in fact they were only reclaimed from apostasy, or newly born from above. Hence, early doubts arising from the recognition of inward depravity, from which they had believed themselves entirely saved. Hence, also, premature professions and inconsistent living, which bring the work of holiness into discredit before the church and the world. Let us urge upon all to mark carefully the nature of their convictions. Do they refer to offenses voluntarily committed? Are they the evidence of allowed "unrighteousness," or of "knowing to do good, and doing it not?" or of "a transgression of the law?" If so, let the deepest repentance and the clearest justifying faith become the first concern of the soul. And when "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," then let us invite and give heed to the convictions which are necessary to the completion of the work of purification so auspiciously begun.

It is important, however, to observe that it is not for the justification of delay, but to prevent serious mistake, that we make this discrimination. We have already shown that no specified length of time can be required for the transition from the one state to the other. This must depend upon the clearness with which the subject is grasped and understood -- upon the character and power of the faith exercised, and, we believe, to some extent, upon the previous experience of the individual; for, doubtless, one who has once believed to the justification or entire sanctification of the soul, better understands the process of faith than before he had such experience. However difficult it may be for such an one to yield, to determine, and to trust, he knows the way, and when the crisis is reached, may, by an act of faith, make a prompter and even more comprehensive claim upon the atoning blood, than would have been otherwise probable. We grant indeed, here, and elsewhere, that the transition from guilt to forgiveness, and from impurity to holiness, may, in rare instances of discriminating and appropriating faith, be so rapid as to be unnoticed by consciousness; and that, hence, some really do suddenly pass from a state of guilt into the full enjoyment of perfect purity. But the order of events is not the less real because unnoticed. It is well known that succession is often so rapid as to be unnoticeable at the time, and yet a critical analysis of the same subject, under circumstances more favorable for observation, will reveal the fact of succession. So we find it to be in the case under consideration. The seeming exceptions, have, therefore, no tendency to destroy the distinctive character of the great work of entire sanctification; and yet they allow us to give all confidence to the candid testimony of those who have found themselves from the time of conversion in possession of "a clean heart," and of those who, after having received the blessing, have relapsed into their former state, and, in the absence of a clear justifying faith at first, have sought and obtained the renewed evidence of perfect love; only requiring in these, as in all other cases, that they "have their fruit unto holiness."

But there is a conviction for inward impurity -- for "sin in believers," which is eminently the work of the Holy Spirit. Depravity of the heart, however subdued, cannot remain long concealed. Its first motions, as we have seen, are felt with surprise by the truly regenerated. They produce more or less of pain and exposure, but if promptly resisted, they do not bring a feeling of guilt upon the spirit trusting in Christ. Further experience, however, shows that the life of the Christian is to be almost a continual battle, not merely with outward foes, but with himself. The recognition of these inward wrongs will depend not only upon what they are, but upon the habit of attention to the state of the soul, and the degree of divine influence secured by the cooperation of the human agent. The truly devout man will, however, frequently find his attention silently but powerfully drawn to these inward impurities. Sometimes when, so far as his consciousness reports, no train of reflection has led to it; -- in the midst of passing engagements, and of other thoughts, the conviction will flash upon him suddenly, and he will feel like hiding himself from the sight of men, burying his face in the dust, and crying out for deliverance. At other times this sense of wrong tendencies assumes an amazing distinctness in the midst of spiritual exercises, and even of powerful outpourings of the Holy Spirit. This cannot be due to unprompted reason. Left merely to ourselves, we should sensibly or insensibly yield to the rising evil, and allow the conquest of the heart by its own subjugated foes. Whatever influence we may attribute to the associations of the hour, and to the habits of the life, they are not sufficient to account for the searching light that breaks in upon the soul, and the power which humbles it to the dust. The great reprover "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment," is there in the faithfulness and authority of a God, performing the work for which he has appeared among men.

These convictions, let it be expressly stated, differ from those felt by the unpardoned sinner. They are convictions of inward depravity, and not of guilt; they are connected with felt aversion to the impurity recognized, and a conscious dependence upon the Savior's merits for gracious acceptance; they produce pain, but not condemnation; they are not unfrequently strongest in the midst of fervent spirit-pleadings for gracious influence, and increase with the advance of the soul in its longings after God, and in the elements of a higher Christian life.

We are aware that the evidence of these positions is chiefly that of experience; but we claim that it is perfectly decisive. We have never yet conversed with a Christian man or woman, whose experience did not confirm every position here taken. And as perfectly do these positions accord with the special revelations of the Bible, repeatedly quoted in this volume, and with the humble lamentations of good men recorded in the Scriptures, that we regard them as settled facts which no man can safely deny.

But it may be asked, if these convictions are the work of the Holy Spirit, how are they dependent upon us, and what counsels in relation to them are suggested by the central idea of Christianity? To this it must be answered, God has arranged that in this, as in all other instances, the essential freedom of man shall be recognized. The Holy Spirit enlightens, arouses and guides the soul directly, but the power and effects of these divine influences, will depend upon the voluntary condition and bearing of the mind addressed.

1. Would you avail yourself of divine teachings? You must entertain the subject, and candidly seek to know the truth. Your views of theology, and your habits of mind may have been entirely opposed to the special consideration of holiness. The very name has produced in your mind a strange aversion, and such has been your dread of the responsibilities involved in efforts to be saved from all sin, that you have shrunk from them, and repelled the convictions which you have felt.

Thus God's Spurt has been grieved, and you have lost the benefits of those gracious influences which he proposed to vouchsafe to your necessities. Alas! my brother, you have deeply wronged your own soul, You now see that the words you have rejected are the very "words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." Is it not to be regretted that the blindness of your education, or of your own indulged habits of mind, has led you to reject the chosen language of inspiration, for the inculcation of the richest truths of the gospel scheme, while these sacred words --"pure in heart," -- "be ye holy," -- "sanctify you wholly," -- "be ye therefore perfect," --"perfect love casteth out fear," -- with innumerable others, have been laden with blessings for you?

What untold privileges have you thus unconsciously rejected. Nay, but a better understanding, and a truer, profounder humility, would have led you to say, these are God's own words. They are better than mine, I will receive and study them with filial docility. I will search for their utmost scope and power, and the higher and holier the privilege they reveal for me -- for the church of God, the more delighted and humbly thankful I shall be. You will come to this at last. This determined preference of human to divine wisdom, has long enough robbed you of your richest privileges.

It is full of wrong and danger. It has sent myriads to hell, and but for the amazing goodness of the being you have slighted -- of the Savior, whose power you have limited, and of the Holy Ghost, whose proffered purifying work you have feared to allow, it had long since ruined you. Turn then, we beseech you, your thoughts and studies in the direction of holiness, and fear not the rich, the ennobling grace of full salvation now again proffered to you. Again, we beseech you, examine your heart with the profoundest sincerity.

Nay, shrink not from the revelations unfolded to your view. Submit to know the worst. Whatever the pain -- whatever the loathing produced by the discovery of the facts, still invite this discovery. Secure it by every means in your power. We entreat you to think -- to read the holy Bible -- to read the books which speak clearly upon this great theme -- to study the whole system of redemption, in the light of that holiness which we have found at its centre, and we are well assured that there will then be no want of conviction.

You will know -- you will feel in every part of your being, that you are deeply depraved -- that you cannot remain so -- that you must be holy, or wrong your own soul, and wrong your Savior whose blood is freely offered to cleanse you from all sin.

2. But most emphatically and earnestly do we entreat you, "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Pray -- O pray that he will deign to come to your aid. Invite him as your friend -- your welcome guest. Beseech him to increase the light which reveals the defects of your Christian state, and to uncover to your view the most secret wrongs within you. Invite even the anguish, if need be, of the most humiliating self-exposures, and shrink not from the rod of correction, which shall drive you to the bosom of your only protector. Need you again be reminded, how far beneath your privilege you have lived -- how numerous have been the evidences of your internal depravity -- how frequent have been your failures to honor God, and advance the interests of his cause? Prayer -- humble, believing, mighty prayer -- prayer from your heart -- prayer as you walk the streets -- prayer with your brethren, and especially prayer in the closet -- long-continued, inquiring, struggling prayer, will help you to know yourself better -- will bring the special grace of God to your aid. Let nothing discourage you. In darkness, in coldness, in hardness, if it must be, pray until the subduing melting grace shall be given.

3. Your conviction, to be available, must not be superficial -- must not be the merely ordinary impression, with occasional increase, that you are not what you ought to be. It must be profound, penetrating, and

abiding, or you will never make it the starting-point of successful effort to obtain purity of heart and life.

One thing you surely feel; that your efforts at reform have been heretofore quite too superficial. You have again and again marveled at your failures. One particular and another, known, perhaps, only to yourself and to God, you have determined to change. One reform after another you have resolved, in the strength of grace, to make -- have thought they really were made, but have been amazed almost directly, to detect the same things returning, and find to your grief that you were the same man as before. Your mistake is an obvious one. You have been trying to purify the streams, but have neglected the fountain. The grand source of impure thoughts, and words, and actions, has remained within you unremedied, and thus you have struggled on. Your religion has been a religion of victories over "the flesh," as well as the world, and the devil. Are you convinced at last that this is all unnecessary -- that the fountain may be cleansed, and the streams become pure? Are you convicted by the Holy Spirit, by the word of God, by your own enlightened conscience, that entire salvation is not only your high privilege, but your indispensable duty? Then with humble confidence advance. You have only to act upon these convictions, and the most gracious results will follow.

SECTION II. THE RESOLUTION FORMED.

You have often resolved to live a better life. Your failures have grieved and alarmed you. You have said it is strange that I should know the way so well; see in it so much of beauty and righteousness, and yet not walk in it steadily and rapidly. I will begin anew. I will reconsecrate myself to God, and henceforth my walk and conversation shall show that I am a true Christian. Then, it is likely you have poured out your soul in prayer. God has been pleased with the sincerity with which you have entertained the thoughts and purposes of duty he himself has suggested. He has seen the true spirit of loyalty to him, and faith in his Son, in which you have bowed and asked his blessing, and he has granted it. With humble gratitude you remember the many instances in which you have been melted down before the Lord, and baptized with his love.

The great fact, however, has perplexed and distressed you, that these improvements were quite too temporary. Why, you have been ready to ask, is there no more strength in my resolutions? Why must my evils of heart, and the necessity for repentance and conquests over myself, return upon me so frequently?

It is presumed, that, after all your experience, your self-examination, your prayers, your reading in the Bible and other excellent books, you have at last no doubt as to the true explanation of these failures; that you are now fully convinced that the evil is within you, and that a profound conviction from the Holy Spirit of inward impurity, of the necessity of holiness, has taken possession of your soul. What now will you do?

Nothing is of moral force which has not the sanction of the will. Your own free spirit must act. Your purpose must be fixed under a high sense of right, and a longing desire to be pure in heart. Why should you delay? Is not the evidence conclusive? Have not all your delays been injurious to you? Have you not deprived yourself of much pure enjoyment, the church of much efficient labor, by putting off, from time to time, the work of entire dedication to the service of God? In many particulars, have you not failed to glorify him as you would have done, with a heart glowing with perfect love? How long shall this halting continue? In the name of Christ, we beseech you to end it.

Do you ask what shall be the character of the resolve now to be made? We answer not merely a resolution to reform, though it is inclusive of this. To resolve to live near to God, to be more thoughtful, more devout, more guarded in spirit, in word, and in action, is a high duty, and you will never in this life, be beyond it. To

resolve upon a reconsecration of yourself to God, and to seek a deeper work of grace will be all well, and what you have done, and will have occasion to do times without number; but your experience shows that this does not reach the case. Some profounder remedy is demanded than any you have thus found.

But, do you say, I am resolved to be henceforth entirely a Christian? I have long enough endured the evil of a divided life. I have tried to meet the claims of God, and yet I have failed to separate myself wholly from worldly influences. I see the wrong, I feel it more deeply than words can express. To be wholly the Lord's -- to be a Christian in every thing -- to be prepared to glorify God at all times in life or in death, seems now the most desirable of all privileges on earth. I am determined that this shall be my future course. For such a noble purpose we humbly join with you to thank Almighty God, who has given you grace to form it. But we have one thing more to suggest. Let your resolution relate to your inner being -- to the very source of your thoughts, your affections, your life. Nay, resolve directly and explicitly that you will seek for holiness of heart; that nothing but this shall satisfy you. Several things are essential to this resolution.

1. It must be grounded in conviction. Of this we have written at length. We trust you have felt its truth -- that it has aided you in inviting the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, by which this conviction has been produced. Without it your resolution will be feeble and temporary -- little more indeed, than a mere impulse. Many excellent resolves have been formed under the influence of temporary excitement, or the special pleadings of a friend, or even the force of arguments which you did not know how to resist, and hence felt forced to yield your assent, against some of your strongest inclinations. These resolutions were right in themselves, and in some degree influential over your subsequent lives, and yet they fell short of their object. They had not the strength, the power, the reliable durability which your condition and wants demanded. But thorough conviction of inward depravity and of the need of entire sanctification, wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost, will remedy this defect. Let there be no failure now. Have you a doubt that your inward impurities have been the sources of your trouble? Has God fully shown you these secret wrongs, so that you now know what must be done to render your life a holy life -- a life of perfect love? Has that conviction gone through and through you, so that you have no doubt as to the complete remedy -- the full salvation you need, and are entitled to receive through the merits of Christ? Has the conviction become more than a matter of feeling with you? Has it become a fact, a deep-seated pervading fact of your being, so that you do not find it trembling, hesitating, and yielding after a few hours of trial? Is it present yet? Does every effort of prayer, and examination, and faith strengthen it? Then you have reliable ground for the resolution to seek for holiness until you obtain it. Your convictions will make such a resolution as is now due, possible -- will give it soundness and force, -- will move on with it to sustain it and increase its power.

2. But carefully observe that this resolution is not made in your own strength. Poor human nature has no strength for such a purpose. How often have your most solemn vows failed, for no other reason than some secret reliance upon your own power. But, now let this error also be remedied. You have no strength of your own. You see this more clearly than before. You are nothing; God is all. The Holy Spirit can sustain you in the purpose to seek for a pure heart, until you obtain it. Think now in earnest sincerity; -- are you satisfied that divine power alone can support you? Do you feel that you may trust that power without the least reserve? Fix your whole soul upon the Almighty Spirit, until you see and feel that he is given for you; that he has come to accomplish the work of cleansing for you; that in the unlimited power of God he is with you, to be might in your weakness, and to uphold you in this struggle. Now, make the resolution. With every energy, of intellect and heart, confiding in the strength of the Holy Ghost, venture to say, I will seek for holiness until I obtain it. Why should you fear? This resolution is in harmony with God's will -- with the

teaching of the Bible -- with the whole plan of redemption. It is just the point to which you have been urged for many months, and probably years. God invites you, he urges you, he pleads with you. Surely you will not refuse. Then is the resolution formed?

3. There must be no mental reservation. Did you think, as you were settling the question, I will make an effort -- I will see whether it is for me -- I will try the theory by an experiment? Alas! then you have been deceived by your enemy. Do you not see how marked is the evidence of unbelief in all this? Is it, then, only a resolution to ascertain whether God is true or false? Do you propose to debate the promises of the gospel, and to proceed only upon conditions that you shall find them reliable? No. This would be a fearful responsibility. We trust you are fully apprized of its wrong, and its danger. This alone would account for the failure of your effort. The resolution, to be successful, must be based upon the absolute unchangeable veracity of God -- upon the unquestioned integrity of the promises, upon the positive certainty that the blood of Jesus can cleanse from all sin, and that it can, and will cleanse you, so soon as you take the right position in regard to it.

4. Another caution suffer us to suggest. An attempt to prescribe your own states of mind before and after this work is wrought, and the manner in which it is to be effected, will mislead you. Should you say, as you make the resolve, I must advance in a particular manner, or continue a long time in this effort to seek for holiness, you would be liable to disappointment and discouragement at every step. The methods of divine grace upon the souls of men are various. Characters differ; -- some feel more deeply, some think more profoundly; some have dulness and some liveliness of soul. "There are diversities of operations, but the same spirit." The manner in which you will be affected is not, therefore, a question submitted to yourself; you may have some power over it, but you ought to have as little as possible; at least, include nothing of this in your resolution; leave it all with God. The resolution must be absolutely without condition; -- simply and purely a resolution, made in the strength of grace to seek for perfect love, in the use of all the means God has appointed, according to your best ability, until you gain the blessing. To say beforehand it cannot be done now; -- I must agonize and pray for days, or weeks; -- at least there must be some delay in the matter; is to limit God, -- is to assume to judge beyond your light; nay, in opposition to your light; for all this deferring and selection of times, is surely against the word of God. True, there may be a delay, but the reason will be in you, not in God. All we mean here, is, that the time, whether longer or shorter, is to make no difference with your resolution. It is a resolve to seek until you obtain, and especially to seek now. Is this your resolution f

5. Finally, the resolution must be made with a full purpose to accept all the requirements of God's word. Some of them may be crossing to your nature; some may be difficult for you, with your habits of life, to meet. You may feel the shrinkings of the flesh, while the spirit is willing, and yet every cross must be borne, every trial endured, every apparent danger braved. The thing you have undertaken is, to obtain a clean heart, to be in soul, body, and spirit, wholly the Lord's. This rises in dignity and importance above every thing else, and must be preferred to every thing else. Every sacrifice required for the fulfillment of the revealed condition must be considered a privilege for the sake of the object, for the honor of Christ, for the glory of God. But be not alarmed; as we proceed to develop the work before you, you will be delighted to see how right, how perfectly in accordance with your sense of duty every particular of it is. You will feel an agreeable surprise at the perfect simplicity of the way; and as you proceed to take one step after another, you will see difficulties vanish, and the most dreaded crosses turn into the most grateful privileges.

We trust we may now consider it settled that you have advanced with us through the second stage of this great experience; -- that you have formed the resolution, grounded in conviction; -- formed it in the strength of God, with no mental reservations, and with simple purpose to accept all the requirements of God's word,-- to seek for perfect love until you obtain it. A noble triumph is this! May God help you to maintain it against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

SECTION III. THE FEELING NECESSARY.

A hard heart is unfriendly to the purpose you have determined, by the grace of God, to execute. Indeed, in the strictest sense, it is guilt, and is associated with impenitence and wrath. Hence, the language of inspiration to the wicked, "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance ~ but after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Such guilty hardness we by no means attribute to you; and yet, there is a state of the heart which does not harmonize with the determination to seek for entire sanctification.

The intellect is not unfrequently in advance of the sensibilities in this great work. Strong arguments against sin, even all in-dwelling sin, are not wanting to the rejecting mind. They are suggested with more or less frequency and power, as the days and nights pass on. The reason of a converted man is perpetually suggesting to him that he ought to go further. Consciousness of inward corruption nearly simultaneous with the evidence of pardon, strikes him as a lamentable and unnecessary antagonism within him. His enlightened conscience brings his inconsistencies strongly to his view. The memory brings back unnumbered instances of unfaithfulness, growing out of remaining wrong tendencies of the soul, and sound judgment condemns the state out of which they arise. The Holy Spirit pours divine light upon the facts and the arguments, and urges on to the conclusion that there is need of a further cleansing. The conviction takes strong hold of the intellect, and hence the high resolution in its greatest propriety and strength may be formed to seek for holiness, while the heart is not in precisely the state which promotes, and invites the realization of the object. Who does not know this? How many times have you said, O, that I could feel as I ought to feel! If I were broken down before the Lord, if my whole soul were melted in his presence, then I should be capable of higher spiritual exercises, I could receive more readily and permanently the divine impress.

It is necessary, however, to guard a point here. No certain standard of feeling can be fixed which all must reach, or never be filled with perfect love. Doubtless this is a question with which constitutional temperament has much to do. With some, feeling is excessive under powerful conviction, and needs rather to be checked than excited, in order to calm reaction and permanent consecration. Some who feel most deeply, make little outward demonstration of feeling, and might even suppose themselves to be wanting in conviction, when, really, their whole souls are roused, and unalterably fixed on the glorious prize, and they may be carried forward through the most vigorous efforts of faith with no bursting emotion. We should commit an error, therefore, to compare ourselves with others, or to predetermine precisely what amount of feeling we must have, before we can realize the great blessing. Indeed, we are free to admit that too much dependence may be placed upon the mere matter of feeling -- so much as to make room for a very ruinous temptation. Many, we doubt not, have even thought it a sufficient excuse for making no effort to obtain the blessing, that they had not so much feeling as others manifested, and their arch enemy has, perhaps, for years induced them to wait for the feeling they have judged to be necessary to make the effort successful. Let this snare be broken. The duty is a present and pressing one, and nothing should be plead as an apology for delaying the work which, under the divine blessing, depends

upon your volitions.

But there is a high sense in which the heart is involved in this great work, and we think we may reach an exposition of this fact which will relieve a difficulty, and greatly aid those who, in judgment, are soundly convinced that without holiness, they cannot see the Lord.

The idea that just as you are, in any state of feeling, under the convictions of the intellect, and the resolves of the will, you can meet the conditions of entire sanctification, is monstrous, and is repudiated by all sound teaching upon this subject. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Most sincere seekers of holiness feel that they can do little in the effort until they have true tenderness of heart. Their devotions, their attempts at the exercise of the faith that purifies, are too cold, too mechanical; and they regret it, they mourn over it. They need a breaking up of soul, a soft and impressible state of the heart, fully prepared to receive the stamp of the divine image. They must be all alive to the work they propose to do, and the blessing they expect to receive.

It may be said, a devout Christian is always in a state of sensibility; -- never cold, or dull, and doubtless there is a degree of tender susceptibility which is implied in the justified state; but that all feel as much and as deeply as they ought, and that the true Christian is at all times in a state of feeling that is most friendly to high religious efforts, is not according to fact. Indeed we lay it down as a matter of experience, that the heart has need of melting, subduing grace, before it can be capable of the exercises which rouse and precede entire sanctification. So the sound and growing Christian feels, and, we believe, will generally affirm.

It is, then, a question of grave importance, how is the right feeling to be acquired? How may we obtain such tenderness of spirit, as will enable us to receive the stamp of God's image?

1. Our strong and general answer is, prayer. We deem it legitimate for the seeker of holiness to ask God directly for "a broken and a contrite heart." He alone can grant the peculiar influences which subdue the soul, and melt it to humble contrition. "He is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him, than parents are to give good gifts to their children." Yes, more willing, for while theirs is a finite, his is an infinite love, and with the yearnings of an infinite heart, he longs to give his children all that their wants require. The Holy Spirit melts the heart; and it is this very gift that your heavenly Father is so willing to bestow upon you. But your will must accord with his. He will hold you to the conditions. "Ask and ye shall receive." You may rely upon it. His promise is "yea and amen to him that believeth." In the name of Jesus "ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." You want this tenderness of soul; more than all the wealth of earth you desire the blessing of tears. Then ask for it humbly, believingly, perseveringly, in the name of Christ, and it shall be given you. Be assured that this gracious result is at the command of faith. How many hardened sinners have commenced to pray without conscious emotion, and been presently bathed in tears. How many, cold in religion, have been warmed and revived, in answer to prayer. How many in precisely your condition, with their intellects convinced, and their wills determined, but with a painful want of emotion, feeling that they would give the world for tears, have at length been all dissolved in answer to prayer. Then go to the fountain of melting tenderness and love, and plead with God, for Christ's sake, to give you the state of heart you require, to be able at once to receive the image of God.

2. In the midst of your praying, there is much that you can do, which will facilitate this result. Let memory be active now. Call to mind your past unfaithfulness,-- your want of faith, of zeal and love. The view of these deficiencies will affect your heart. Remember your Savior's dying love; -- how much he has suffered for you; how graciously he pardoned you at the first; how amazingly he has sympathized with you in your

infirmities, and in your sore temptations; how many times he has delivered you out of the hand of your enemy, and how often and richly he has blessed you in spite of all your unworthiness, and you will be sure to feel. Look into the holy Bible; read the penitential psalms; read the weeping prophet; read the words of the suffering Jesus; mingle all with fervent breathings after the melting power of God's Holy Spirit. You shall not complain of a want of tears. The fountain of the great deep will be broken up, and then what a view you will have of yourself. What discoveries of your inward pollution, of your entire unworthiness, of your helplessness before the Lord. How utterly will you then abhor your vanity and unholy ambition. How empty will the proffers of the world appear to you. You will feel yourself sinking lower and lower in your own eyes, until all self-consequence is utterly gone.

O, how sweet this subduing, melting grace! How humbling, how profitable to our naturally proud and rebellious spirits! We must have it. No cold reasonings, no independent purpose, no resolution to believe, no forced exertions will suffice in the stead of it. And there are none who may not have it. May the prayers you are even now urging before the throne, be speedily answered in this gracious special gift.

SECTION IV. THE CONFESSION REQUIRED.

We must suggest that this conviction for holiness and resolution to obtain it, can in no case be made a secret. Not, that this or any other religious exercise is to be a matter for ostentatious publication. Certainly, far otherwise. To proclaim it merely that it may be known, would not comport with that deep humility which you are bound to cultivate. We wonder not that you feel no disposition to attract attention, or make a vain show of your effort to obtain the higher religious life. Your felt unworthiness -- the chastisements of your Heavenly Father -- your bowing down of spirit before the Lord are all against it. In deepest self-abasement, were it possible, you would shrink from the sight of men, and bury yourself in the dust. This is all as it should be. You are now fast acquiring just views of your own nothingness. Self, that once adored idol, is sinking in your own eyes. Let it go down to the deepest self-abasement. God only knows how often and how perilously it has risen and strengthened itself into rivalry with your meek and holy Savior. Would that this might be the last of its unhallowed usurpations.

And yet you must be consistent. God will not allow you to be one thing to your own consciousness, and another in the reasonable apprehensions of others. You may not inwardly reckon yourself a seeker of entire salvation, and outwardly appear to be content with the ordinary Christian state. You cannot ask God to look upon you as a determined seeker of holiness, and ask your brethren to look upon you as having no peculiar convictions, or purposes, or feelings in regard to this great question. No duplicity can be allowed here or elsewhere. Honestly, just what you are, you must be willing to be considered. Nay, so entirely averse should you be, to becoming a party to any false impressions, in regard to your views of yourself and your humble resolve to seek the blessing of holiness, that you will feel inwardly urged to inform your friends that you feel the need of a clean heart -- that you are panting after God as the hart panteth after the water-brooks -- that you have felt yourself arrested by a divine invisible power, and shut up to a life of simple faith -- of completed holiness, and perfect love; that you have heard the call of God ringing through your soul with the solemnity of the trump of judgment, and yet with the gladness of the notes of jubilee; and you have accepted the call, reluctantly indeed, and after far too long delay, and yet, at last, freely, fully, and understandingly. Humbly ask your Christian brethren to help you in the execution of your solemn covenant -- to accompany you in the effort, and seek for themselves the blessed assurance that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin.

1. There is an involuntary expression of this important covenant. If it be genuine, it will be difficult to conceal it. The deepening solemnity of your spirit will appear in your countenance. Your restless breathings after God will be audible and intelligible to the church. Your groanings and strugglings to be set free may be too mighty to be suppressed, and your rising power of faith and prayer -- your serene delight and holy rapture, as a growing, conquering, justified Christian, rapidly alternating, and even mingling with your efforts to seek for holiness, will be noticeable, without your intention, and even beyond your desire. These are speaking convictions and triumphs, which can by no means be concealed.

2. And yet, when the opportunity offers, there is distinctly something for the lips to utter. In the presence of those who know whereof you affirm, whose prayers you seek, and whose counsels must aid you, fail not to own that you feel the need of cleansing -- that you believe provision has been made by your adorable Savior to cleanse you, and that you have covenanted to give yourself up to this work, and seek in the scriptural way until you obtain the blessing. How could you, even practically, deny this without grieving the Holy Spirit, and bringing upon your soul the guilt of falsehood? What reason have you for concealing on earth the facts which make heaven ring with joy? Surely, none.

But you will find some stubborn difficulties in your way. There are some unavoidable implications in the confessions you are called upon to make, that will be deeply humbling to the soul. You have probably been long known and recognized as a Christian -- perhaps a faithful fervent Christian; you may have been a leader in the armies of Israel -- a minister in the church of God, -- even an eminent minister among your brethren. In either case, it is not quite easy to confess that you have been all this time without a pure heart -- that your religion has been a religion of contests with yourself, as well as the world and Satan, and that, though you have advocated for years a religion of purity, you have never yet fully availed yourself of the purifying provisions of the gospel. You dread to confess it, and yet is it not true? Do not God, and angels, and men know it well? and why should you seek to conceal it? Confess, we beseech you, to your brethren near you, that they may be induced to do the same, and so together you will fulfill the holy Scripture, "Confess your faults one to another that you may be healed." Conceal nothing that candor or righteousness demands. Have you felt the risings of self, of anger, of pride, of an unholy ambition for distinction, for wealth or power? in the the name of God acknowledge it. An honest, truth-telling spirit is of the greatest possible importance to you. We refer not to minute details; -- these are not due except to individuals whom you may have injured, and to whom you owe reparation; and this, it is presumed, you have not knowingly withheld, or you would have lost your justification. Nor is it upon any principle of penance, or self-mortification, or with any view to priestly absolution, that confession is required. The grand principle of this whole concession is truth; truth to the conscience; truth to the facts of the present and the past; truth to the convictions of the soul by the Holy Spirit; truth to the vows you have made, and to the demands of the church; all of which requires, and must have, candid expression; and you will be gratified, you will be thankful to God for the benefits it confers.

3. When you have distinctly and meekly avowed your convictions and resolutions, you will be surprised at the relief it will bring to your soul. It will be like the falling off of a burden. You will hear a silent whisper within you saying, this is right. I have long owed this clear acknowledgment to my brethren, to my own sense of propriety, and I thank God for enabling me to make it. You will feel humbled in the dust, as you conclude it, but you will feel a sweet sense of the divine approbation, and a blessing that no language can describe.

4. Besides, there is much in being committed to what is right. This is a principle that extends through all the relations of man to God, and to his fellows. We are formed with a constitutional love of consistency.

We do not wish to be known as faithless to our word. We shrink from violated integrity with instinctive dread. God avails himself of this important fact, in his holy covenant, and in his whole system of religious vows. Certainly no one will presume that a reckless, trifling method of making pledges of any kind, is authorized by Scripture, or suggested here. Indeed, it is no formal promise to others to which we refer. It is the firm and willing disclosure of solemn facts and pledges already made to God, that we urge, and the moral force of the principles of religious honor with which we sustain it. We know all this may be forgotten, and disregarded in the future, but we claim that commitment to the right is the law of God; and the moral power of the principle involved, is of the highest practical moment in this important struggle.

5. It will moreover secure a strong sympathy for you, and the most fervent prayers from those who love you. You will feel the power of this collateral support. It will sustain your resolution mightily, and the richness of the blessings called down in answer to united intercessions, from faithful believing ones, will more than compensate you for the cross you have borne.

True, there may be unbelievers in your presence. You will not seek to overtax their confidence in the words and manner of your confession. You will, of course, prefer to avoid it. But should any of the select circle usually present amid such solemnities as these, turn coolly and incredulously away, -- should the spirit of resistance to the doctrine and experience of holiness be avowed, -- should cavil and criticism follow, instead of united longings and prayers for a clean heart; and even cold neglect or stern opposition appear, you have nevertheless done right in avowing the truth, and you are gathering more and more the power of holy love with which to conquer not for yourself, but for your master.

A little resistance will do you no harm. You may be all the more thorough and evangelical on the account of it. Your warfare is by no means ended, and is never to be ended on earth. Only the opposition of yourself is to cease. You seek, and with the highest warrant from God your Savior, to be wholly on the side of right, and this, it may not be concealed, will have no tendency to destroy the opposition from without.

Regret not, therefore, the candid avowal, though it may have brought you into severe trials. It will probably be your humble privilege to find, in another world, and even here, that confession has roused many slumbering consciences, brought many beloved disciples into "the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace," and added many stars to the crown of your rejoicing. Will you make the confession?

SECTION V. THE CONSECRATION MADE.

May we assume that the reader has felt the conviction, formed the resolution, received the melting divine influence, and made the confession, which we have ventured to suggest? Another point of great practical importance must now be introduced. Consecration is literally "the act, or ceremony of separating from a common to a sacred use." We have already introduced it as a law of sanctification, and mentioned humility as its test. But it is here introduced as a thing to be done. It is for you to make the consecration which your determination to seek for holiness requires. Your soul must be separated from all carnal, worldly use, and formally set apart as the exclusive property of God. Your powers of intelligence, reason, imagination, feeling, will, must be solemnly dedicated to the service of Almighty God, Your affections are henceforth to belong only to him who made the power to love. Your body is to be given up as "the temple of the Holy Ghost," and never to be "defiled." Your talents, natural and acquired, are to be reckoned henceforth wholly his. Your property in part, and in whole, is to be held subject to the divine will. Your dearest loved ones must be no longer yours, but God's. Yourself, and your all, must be without reserve consecrated to the Lord for time and eternity; for he is to be your only object of adoration. He is to reign alone within your

heart. Absorbed in the contemplation of his divine excellence; -- devoted to the execution of his holy will, -- seeking and recognizing the labor he has authorized, and the spirit in which he wishes every thing done; rejecting every thing, whether of honor, or pleasure, or profit, which is not for his glory; your life in all the future is to flow out in the channels of divine love.

1. Can you do this? You fear you cannot. You really cannot if your own power alone is to be brought into exercise. But shrink not from the effort -- look not now into the future, confine yourself to the present. The question is not now what will you do -- what can you do before you die -- next year, or even the next moment; but at this present time can you -- will you hand all over to God. Think carefully. If you had property in your hands that belonged to another, could you not hand it over to him, and in such a way as to consider it henceforth in every sense entirely his?

You say, Certainly I could do this, and would do it at once. God forbid that I should claim any thing that does not belong to me. But here is a fundamental principle of the consecration you are now called upon to make, "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." It has been an error to conceive of yourself and your possessions as your own. Of this you have been long aware, and you have been gradually coming to the light, until you have at length discovered that all rivalry of God within you, is not only to be conquered but totally eradicated.

This you now understand. You know whose these powers and possessions are; will you promptly and unreservedly hand them over to him? We mean not that you can, as a natural act, make this consecration to God with the same ease, and in the same manner, as you could restore the goods belonging to another. We seek only to illustrate the right, and the practicability of the duty. There are acknowledged difficulties in the way of the one not in the way of the other. Your remaining selfishness is in the form of depravity which resists with cruel obstinacy this last and unrestricted effort to destroy it ; and the arch enemy who would have nothing to object to the payment of an honest debt, because objection would be hopeless, will exhaust all his skill and power to prevent this entire surrender to God.

And then, there is the force of a long established and habitual error in the conception of every thing as of right belonging to you, and you may not easily break the snare, and make the entire consecration. Besides, this is a good act which you are called upon to do, -- a religious act ; and you are well aware that you can by no means do a good act, or speak a good word, without the grace of God in Christ Jesus preventing you,--going before, preparing the way and powerfully aiding you.

It is not, therefore, after the manner of a mere ordinary business transaction that you can make this consecration. And yet, surely, you can make it. You are entreated to make it, " I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies [yourselves] a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." There can, therefore, be nothing impossible in it. Indeed, nothing can be easier, if you do it by the grace of God, by the aid of the Holy Spirit.

If you say, in so many words, and from the undisguised sincerity of your heart, I will, by thy help, O, my Savior, give up all to thee forever, you will be graciously aided, -- you will be able to say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

2. And what will you lose -- what will you really sacrifice? You must renounce the world; and do you not feel called to this? We mean not that you are to go out of the world,--not that you are to resign any of its lawful pleasures. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein;" but he has placed us here to honor him in its appropriation. It must therefore be acknowledged his, as it

really is. No man is allowed a more delightful use of the precious gifts of God, temporal and spiritual, than he who is wholly consecrated. It is a sanctified use -- a use which recognizes all the claims of God in behalf of his church and the world; -- reserves his portion for his special service, with a conceded claim on all the rest, for whatever the exigencies of religion may require; -- wastes nothing -- uses nothing in needless self-indulgence, and uses that which is wanted for present purposes, as much as the portion given, for the glory of God. All this you feel to be delightfully true in its strongest sense, and it is in perfect harmony with this that you are ordered, "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." And in a yet broader sense, you are entreated, "be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed, by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Here is the evidence of your duty; what will you do with it? The help is at your command. O lift up your heart to God for the needed aid, and,

"strong in the strength which God supplies,

Through his eternal Son,"

renounce the world -- its carnal pleasures -- its honors -- its wealth forever.

3. As you repeat the vows of your baptism now, with a deeper, holier significance than ever before, saying, "I renounce them all," does not God know you are sincere? that you now make this renunciation understandingly to include everything? Then is it not really done? As you feel yourself sinking humbly down at the Savior's feet, and say again, I renounce them, do you not see them retiring? and can you regret them? Surely you cannot. How fearfully have they deceived you . Riches have promised you happiness, but bitterly disappointed you; let them go. Honor has been to you a bubble, and never redeemed one of its promises; let it go. Pleasure has been to you like the fair but bitter apple of Sodom; let it go. Your worldly associations have been but the scene of your unhallowed dissipation, and the precursor of darkness and despair; let them go. See these visions of your torture -- of your severest troubles, as they retire! Would you call them back? No. Let them go. You part with them without a pang. All -- all is gone but your Savior, and you are alone with him. Nothing else is left for you in earth or heaven. And is not he enough? "In him all fulness dwells." Shut up to him, and him alone, are you not entirely safe? There rest your weary spirit.

SECTION VI. THE FAITH EXERCISED.

You have now reached a point in which the question of faith is of paramount importance. You have renounced all dependence upon self; all trust in an arm of flesh. You have seen one after another of your earthly supports fail. You dare not trust again, anything less than infinite power. You would not recall one worldly dependence which you have renounced. To you, there is now absolutely but one hope, one confidence left, and you need no other. "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Pause humbly, silently, before the crucified. You have now but one all-absorbing desire -- to be "cleansed from all sin,"--to be fully prepared to glorify God and enjoy him forever. See, now, the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanseth from all sin. How entirely efficacious, -- how completely it meets the demands of the law, -- how fully it pays your debt, -- how sovereign the remedy. Dare you trust it? Nay, dare you do otherwise? You do trust it now; -- you depend upon it for pardon, for acceptance; why not for salvation from all inward defilement?

1. You long for the fulness, and "in him all fulness dwells." Gaze for a while into that noble, throbbing heart. For you it beats with infinite love. You cannot, -- do not doubt his love. He suffered for you. He

grappled with death for you. He rose from the tomb leading captive your captivity. How kindly he bore with you in your rebellion! With what compassion he lifted you up, and embraced you when you came all guilty and trembling, and fell at his feet. How he blest you -- forgave all your sins, and made you his child, his heir to all his blood had purchased! Can you doubt?

2. Call some precious Scripture to your aid. This, for instance, "For we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need," "Touched with the feeling of our infirmities!" Is it possible? The sympathy of Jesus! A revealed, a glorious fact.

You are in a condition to need sympathy. How great your infirmities. How deeply you have felt them. How weak and erring at every step, and how fearful that you should some time fall to rise no more. How many efforts to reform have you made and found yourself failing in the midst of them. How often in the morning have you risen, and on your knees covenanted that every moment of the day should be the Lord's, but when the night has come, with what feelings of regret have you bowed to seek forgiveness for your unholy tempers, your unguarded levity, your worldly desires, your want of devotion, or your idleness in your Master's vineyard! How strangely feeble when you ought to have been strong -- how timid and doubting when you should have triumphed in the power of living faith. Yes, you have needed sympathy, and need it still. There you lie at the foot of the cross "weaker than a bruised reed." What can you do?

Christ is qualified to sympathize with you. He is a man; he is your weeping, sympathizing brother; he is a tried man; he has passed through every fiery ordeal. Remember the mountain and the forty days. Remember Gethsemane, the bar of Pilate and Calvary. He is a triumphant man. "Yet without sin." What a volume of meaning -- what a comprehensive theology in these few words! He encountered the foe, and he conquered -- conquered for you. See him on Tabor, with "his garments white and glistening." See him rising from the sepulcher; -- stand with him upon Olivet, and see him ascending! for you "he ascended up on high -- he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." Here is triumph -- here is victory -- victory for you.

The sympathy of Jesus is no mere name. It is an available sympathy. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace." "The throne" is the seat and the emblem of royalty. Grace is enthroned, a sovereign in this dispensation. Grace personifies the risen Christ, who has royal prerogatives now. "The government is upon his shoulder, and his name is Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Look into the sanctum sanctorum of the Jewish tabernacle. There is the ark of the testimony. The law is here, with its power unbroken, and its wrath threatening the sinner with instant death. But, let the priest of God approach. His ceremonial preparations complete, there is no danger. The covering to the ark of the testimony is the seat of mercy. Mercy is enthroned there directly above and upon the law. The wings of cherubim are spread over the mercy seat, and the Shechinah is there to symbolize the glory of him who reigns a prince upon the throne of mercy. And, mark the import of these expressive symbols. They directly proclaim to the approaching culprit, "Draw near without alarm. The law is here, it is true, I must preserve its integrity ; but it shall not harm you. I hold its thunders in abeyance. I satisfy its claims, and dispense mercy to those who deserve its fiercest wrath." Here is your safety.

Since your Savior came in person, and has redeemed the pledges of prophecy, the throne of grace is no longer local. Everywhere he reigns, and invites the world to his feet; not for trial, not for punishment, but "that they may obtain mercy." You have tried it, you went where the wrath of the law should have flamed

out and consumed you, and you found "mercy." Come again. Here is "grace to help in time of need." Just in this hour of extremity the grace of full salvation is here at your command. Come, and come "boldly." This, you will say, is a strange liberty for a worm of earth. How can a poor

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