

January 21

If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. Matthew 16:24

CROSS-BEARING is closely related to self-denial, and yet a distinction between them may be noted. Self-denial relates more particularly to passive obedience and endur-

ance for the Lord's sake; cross-bearing has to do more especially with activities in the Lord's service, which we find to be contrary to our natural inclinations. Faithfulness in self-denial means courage and zeal; cross-bearing means victory, overcoming. Our self-denials may be victories in our own hearts, of which others may know nothing,

and of which they should know nothing, if we desire to have the fullness of the Lord's blessing. Our cross-bearing, however, may be seen to some extent at least, by those who are in close contact with us, and especially by those who are walking in the same "narrow way." *Z.'00-118R2616:2*

R2615 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0 2006)

SELF-DENIAL AND CROSS-BEARING CONDITIONS

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me [be my follower], let him deny himself, and take up his cross." -- Matt. 16:24

GENERALLY the thought attached to this passage in the minds of Christian people is that the Lord is here laying down the terms and conditions upon which eternal torment may be escaped. This result of false teaching, received from earliest infancy, thus casts a false shadow upon very many of the utterances of our Lord and the apostles. To the Jew, however, who had no thought in his mind of eternal torment for anybody, the above utterance would have no such significance. The disciples, to whom it was addressed, received it exactly for what it says. To understand it as they did let us take their standpoint: As Jews they shared the nation's hopes, based upon the Abrahamic promise, viz., that in due time God proposed to bless all nations, and that Israel was to be his instrumentality through which the blessings would flow. We are to remember that based upon this hope all Israel was in expectation of a Messiah whose first work it would be to organize Israel in some sense of the word, and then, as its great Head and guide, bring to pass the blessed conditions.

The disciples knew that Jesus claimed to be this great Messiah, and they had left all to follow him, in order that they might have a share with him in his Kingdom--according to his promise, a very honorable share in it, a seat in his throne. When, therefore, he addressed them on this subject in the above words nothing could have been further from their thoughts than that he should mean that only those who would conform to these strict rules would escape an eternity of torture: on the contrary, their understanding would be that all who would not conform to these rules, and be close followers of Jesus' example, would fail to share with him in the Kingdom glories and honors--fail to be associated with him as joint-heirs of the Kingdom. They certainly expected that his Kingdom, when organized, would bless all nations, and if it would bless all other nations assuredly it would bless also the Jewish nation, out of which the Master was proposing to select his joint-heirs. From this standpoint our Lord's words are reasonable, and from no other standpoint.

It would be thoroughly unreasonable every way to suppose that the Lord laid down the hard and fast condition that everyone who would not become his follower and a cross-bearer to the full extent of self-denial, even of parents and children if need be, would be tormented on this account, or even destroyed. In fact, we know that the same great Teacher declared, "No man can come unto me except the Father which sent me draw him," and we see most evidently that but a small proportion of the nation was at that time drawn to Jesus by the Father through the word of grace. We see that the great majority were blinded. How evident, then, it is that our Lord had no reference to the blinded ones who did not become his disciples, but intended his remarks exclusively for the class addressed, whose eyes had been opened and whose ears had been unstopped, and who had become his followers by a consecration. Note the Master's words, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear;"--here is the suggestion that the majority of the Jews did not see and did not hear, and hence had no call to be followers of Jesus in the same special sense; the majority being not even drawn of the Father, not being in a condition of heart to be drawn by the truth.

Note how our Lord refers to this matter, and speaks of the Jewish leaders, saying that they were blind guides, leading the blind people, and all about to "fall into the ditch." (Matt. 15:14.) This falling into the ditch seems to those who are deluded by the eternal torment theory, to be but another suggestion that all of the Jewish nation, both leaders and people, were fast hastening to "hell," to torment. But on the contrary, the Scriptures show clearly that the ditch to which they were hastening was the great time of trouble which came upon their nation after our Lord's crucifixion, and which culminated with the utter destruction of their city by the army of Titus in the year 70 A.D.--since which time they have been nationally disintegrated and destroyed.

That the apostles did not understand that all who did not follow with them in the narrow way of self-sacrifice, self-denial, cross-

bearing, were to be tormented, is testified by the Apostle Peter who, speaking under the inspiration of the holy spirit, declared to these same Jews that they had crucified Messiah, and then he adds, "But I wot that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers."--Acts 3:17.

This blind ignorance is referred to also by the Apostle Paul: in discussing the matter in his Epistle to the Romans he pointed out that Israel was blinded, and did stumble and fall into the ditch, and did not attain the great prize which it was seeking, and that the elect only obtained that prize. He points us to the elect "remnant" selected from the nation before its complete disintegration, and informs us that this remnant, being less than the number which God had pre-terminated, the elect Church, is to be completed during this Gospel age by the selection of the remainder from amongst the Gentiles to be fellow-heirs with the Israelites in the same promise made to Abraham. These are denominated "spiritual Israel," and the Apostle points out that this change in the divine operation was foreknown to the Lord, and was a part of his plan, as revealed through the prophets--that the Gentiles also should be fellow-heirs of the same promise.--Rom. 11:7-12.

The Apostle proceeds to show that the blindness will continue upon fleshly Israel until the Gospel Church is completed, and that then blindness will be turned from them, and they shall see; and God's favor shall come upon them, and they will be amongst the first to be blessed under the new order of things following the glorification of the elect Church.

With these thoughts in our minds, putting ourselves exactly in the place of the apostles, we are much better prepared to understand the meaning of the Master's words, "If any man will be my follower he must deny himself and take up his cross." The Apostle points us to the same thought, saying that it is only if we suffer with him that we shall reign with him; if we be dead with him, that we shall live with him. The reference is exclusively to those on the "narrow way," and does not at all refer to the world of mankind. The verses following, a part of the same discourse, declare that whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for the Lord's sake shall find it; this also is exclusively applicable to those who had had their eyes opened, and had become his followers, and is not at all applicable to others.

All who become Jesus' followers first take two steps, viz., justification and consecration, or sanctification. Justification is imputed to them as the result of faith in Christ as their Redeemer, and its object is to place fallen sinful human beings on such a reckonedly perfect plane or standing before God as would permit them to present their bodies living sacrifices, "holy and acceptable to God" through Christ. Consecration, self-surrender, sanctification, called in our text self-denial, consists in the giving up of our wills to the will of the Lord: and our wills controlling this implies our all.

This class, having received their share of the ransom, (justification) and having used it exchanging its hopes of restitution for the heavenly hopes, "heavenly calling," spiritual prosperity and prospective joint-heirship with Christ, have no longer any earthly rights or hopes: hence such must either gain the spiritual life they have started out for or must lose all life. And the terms or conditions upon which the heavenly life is to be attained are the sacrifice of the earthly life and its interests. Therefore, as here stated, in respect to this class, whoever of them saves his earthly life (refusing to sacrifice it, etc.) after having made the consecration, loses it entirely--loses all hope of a future life. And on the other hand, those of this class who are now faithful in laying down the present life for the Lord's sake shall find life eternal under the glorious conditions of the Kingdom. "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him."--2 Tim. 2:11,12.

The succeeding *verse* (26) is a part of the same discourse, not to people in general, but applicable to the disciples, the followers and cross-bearers only, the little flock. It reads: "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul (being, existence), or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul (his

future existence)?" We are to remember that only one offer of life eternal has yet been made to mankind; and this was the offer that Jesus was making to his followers, and that has since been made throughout this Gospel age to whoever had ears to hear and a will to walk in the narrow way. There is no offer of eternal life to the world yet, altho the Scriptures clearly show us that there is to be an offer of eternal life under other conditions during the Millennial age; but none can either accept or reject those conditions yet, for they are not offered to any.

Those now invited to eternal life under its most glorious conditions of "glory, honor, immortality," and joint-heirship with the Redeemer in the Kingdom are exhorted by our Lord to appreciate highly the value of eternal life; and it is implied that anyone who will at all consider the matter will readily acknowledge that to give all that he has of earthly life and its vanities in exchange for life eternal would be to get that great boon at a very small price--at a great bargain! We see men who, as death draws near, are willing to give their all to retain their hold a little longer on the present life: how much more should we be willing to lay down our lives voluntary sacrifices, in daily self-denials, in sharing the sufferings of Christ in this present time, that we may thereby attain, according to God's good promise in Christ, the glorious and eternal life promised to the overcomers.

WHAT CONSTITUTES CROSS-BEARING?

But now we come back to the original proposition of our text, and inquire particularly respecting the declared terms of discipleship, What do they signify, and how do they apply to us individually in our daily lives? What is it for us to deny ourselves? It signifies that having consecrated ourselves to the Lord we should have no wills of our own; self should be ignored, or, as the Apostle Paul expresses it, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." "Reckon ye yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God." Self-denial, then, means to ignore self-will, self-gratification: and this includes all the earthly ambitions and desires, the sinful, and no less those that are laudable and proper. We pledge ourselves at the very beginning that we are not following our own inclinations and our own wills, but are to be wholly subject to the will of our Head, the Lord Jesus, if we may be in turn counted in as members in particular of his body, the elect Church.

Very graciously, the Lord veils from our sight at the beginning of the way some of the trials of the flesh and conflicts between the mind of the flesh and the new mind, which this full consecration must involve if we press along the line toward the mark which he has set for us, as the standard of character. Could we see all that is implied from the very beginning of the race we would be disheartened no doubt, but as we grow in grace, and become strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, we grow also in knowledge and in love toward the Lord and toward all who are in fellowship with him, and thus it becomes daily easier for us, as we sing,

⁽¹⁾"...the pathway smooths

Since first we learned to love it."

As a result, by and by the trials which came at first seem to be as nothing, but other trials come instead, as we discern more distinctly, more clearly, the good, the acceptable, the perfect will of God. Thus our trial condition progresses, and what is required of us is that step by step we shall be faithful to what we see to be the Lord's will, and shall seek to the best of our ability to submit ourselves thereto. This is self-denial,--forsaking all else to be Jesus' disciples.

⁽²⁾Cross-bearing is closely related to self-denial, and yet a distinction between them may be noted. Self-denial relates more particularly to passive obedience and endurance for the Lord's sake; cross-bearing relates more particularly to activities in the Lord's service, which we find to be contrary to our natural inclinations. Faithfulness in self-denial means courage and zeal; cross-bearing means victory, overcoming. Our self-denials may be victories gained in our own hearts, of which others may know nothing, and of which they should know nothing, if we desire to have the fullness of the Lord's blessing, for we are to make sure that we do not deny ourselves to be seen of men, but merely for the Lord's approval. Our cross-bearings, however, may be seen, to some extent at least, by those who are in close contact with us, and especially by those who are walking in the same "narrow way."

And how appropriate it is that all cross-bearers should recognize each other, and be able to sympathize with one another, and

give an encouraging word, a sympathizing look or a helping hand, as opportunity may offer. As for others, we cannot expect sympathy from them, for from their standpoint we are counted fools (Acts 26:24; 1 Cor. 1:18; 2:14; 3:18), unwise, following an unwise course, bringing our difficulties upon ourselves, because we insist on following an ideal Pattern, the pattern of our dear Redeemer, instead of following the pattern of churchianity and the world. Such, of course, have only sneers for the faithful, and often no doubt think of them as they speak of them, as being hypocrites. This indeed is a part of the cross-bearing, especially when those who deride and who sneer are those whom we love and whose esteem we would enjoy, if we could have it in conjunction with the Master's "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Look, for instance, at our Lord Jesus, and the cross which he bore--not the literal cross of wood which he bore to Calvary, amid shame and jeers, but the cross-bearing which he practiced continually throughout the three and a half years of his ministry from the time of his consecration at Jordan. Note how faithfulness to the truth, in testifying respecting his mission, the Kingdom that he was establishing, and the terms and conditions of membership in it, being misunderstood by the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees, led to opposition continually, so that they not only maligned his name, but in their hatred sought his life and finally obtained it. Note that these were not worldly people, as that word is generally understood, but members of the leading denominations of his day: and that the so-called holiness people of that day were his most bitter assailants. He could indeed have fallen into line with the Pharisees or with the Sadducees, and have been considered "respectable," and have had a large following, but fidelity to the truth would not permit him to do this, but forced him to take a stand independent of all sects and parties, and this brought against him the wrath of all of them, and was his continual and daily cross-bearing, that had to be borne, if he would "overcome" and be granted association with the Father in the Kingdom. And may not all of his faithful followers expect similar experiences, under similar conditions now? We think so; we know so; they have such experiences.

The Apostle mentions some of these crosses, and declares that the endurance of them are marks of his faithfulness as a servant of the Lord: "In much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings," by dishonor, by evil report, as deceivers and yet true, as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing, yet possessing all things. (2 Cor. 6:4-10.) How much our Master knew of being counted a deceiver, while yet he was the true one, of being called Beelzebub, while really the Prince of light! What a cross it must have been to endure such slanderous misrepresentations, and contradictions of sinners against himself; and how faithfully he bore the cross. And shall not all of his followers expect to similarly share this cross with him, and be misunderstood, misrepresented, misjudged, by those who are more or less blinded by the Adversary! Such dishonor, such evil reports, are amongst the things which our Lord specifically declared would be a part of our cross-bearing when he said, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad (in all such cross-bearings), for great is your reward in heaven."

In a word, our Lord calls upon his disciples to follow him, in direct opposition to the world-current. He declares that the disciple must not expect to be above his Lord in being spared such experiences, but promises great rewards at the end of the journey--life eternal, with exceeding glory.

The awfulness of the teaching of the creeds of Christendom respecting the fate of the world in general is only grasped when we begin to seriously consider the narrowness of the way in which all of the Lord's true followers are called to walk in his footsteps. Surely, if all except such faithful saints, an extremely "little flock," are to be eternally tormented, it would mean that there are to be many members of every family on earth consigned to that awful and unending agony. How absurd is the proposition, how unreasonable, how unscriptural, when the Scriptures are rightly understood!

But how reasonable is the proper interpretation of our text, how reasonable its application to those who have been drawn of the Father to the Son, and who then have accepted of the Son and his great sacrifice for sin, and who have considered it a reasonable service to present their bodies living sacrifices, and have consecrated their all to him, that they might have fellowship in his sufferings, and ultimate fellowship also in his glory. These can see readily that the Kingdom honor and glory to which they are called, are blessings so great, honors so profound, and their works as kings and priests and judges in the Millennial age so particular, that all of these testings of

⁽¹⁾ Hymn 179

⁽²⁾ Jan.21 Manna, Mat. 16:24

faith, patience, love and obedience are wholly reasonable to them.

All such we exhort, especially at this particular season of the commemoration of our dear Redeemer's death, that they catch not merely at the outward form of self-denial, practiced by nominal Christendom during the Lenten season, but that whatever of outward self-denial they may practice they may learn the full meaning of self-consecration and immolation which our Lord's words signify: and that they be not content with the wearing of a cross as an orna-

ment, but grasp fully and clearly the purport of the Master's words respecting the true cross-bearing, that in due time they may also attain to the crown-bearing promised as a reward to the faithful. Let us at this season of the year renew our covenant of sacrifice with the Lord, determined, in the words of the Apostle, that we will more zealously than ever--Lay aside every weight, and every besetting sin, and run with patience the race set before us in the Gospel, looking unto Jesus, in whose footsteps we seek to tread.--Heb. 12:1.

R3235" FOLLOWERS OF JESUS: CROSS-BEARERS "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."--Matt. 16:24...

It is because, under the Lord's providences, the mists of the dark ages are scattering and the light of the Millennial morning creeping in, that we are privileged to see the inconsistencies and falsities of the traditions of men which have beclouded the inspired records; and, therefore, we are led to inquire for the "old paths," and to listen, not for the confused babel of error, but for the clear words of the great Shepherd of the flock and his inspired representatives, the apostles. Listening to these--listening to the voice of God through these--the inspired plan of God is becoming clear and luminous to us, and its every feature reasonable, harmonious and beautiful.

It is from this standpoint that we are enabled to view our text with pleasure; and seeing the grand designs of our Almighty Father, are enabled to rejoice that we are accounted worthy, through our Redeemer's merit, to be invited to walk in his footsteps and to take up our crosses and to follow him through evil and through good report...

Cross-bearing signifies endurance of trials, difficulties, disappointments--the crossing of the human will and preferences by circumstances and conditions permitted of the Father. Our Lord's will was fully submitted to God, so that it was his delight to do the Father's will, and this must be our attitude to commence with; but after this consecration has taken place comes the trial and testing. If we were in heaven, where all is in full accord with the divine will, we could have no crosses from the time we fully consecrated to the Lord; because our wills being in accord with the Father's will and with all righteousness, and there being nothing in heaven contrary to that which is right, we would be in accord with everything, and everything would be in accord with our newly consecrated minds. Our crosses come because we are living in "this present evil world," because the spirit of the world is contrary to the Lord and his Spirit of righteousness and equity, and because our Adversary, Satan, seeketh continually to stumble and ensnare us; because, also, our new wills are circumscribed and hindered and opposed by the desires of our natural bodies, which are more or less in accord with the things of this present time, its conditions, its aims, its sentiments; and because the new will strives to use the body in a manner and in a service which, under present evil conditions, continually causes it annoyance and suffering...

We could not see or appreciate, beforehand, the rewards and blessings which under divine providence come to us in connection with every trial--more than compensating us for every earthly self-denial and endurance. Nor can we in advance appreciate how the Lord wishes to test our zeal and our faith, by letting us come to the crosses of life one at a time, and letting us see their

ruggedness, -- hiding from us the assisting hand by which, as soon as we take hold of the cross and put forth our efforts, our Lord lifts the real weight of it, so that we have no more at any time than we are able to bear. So careful is he of all those who thus become his footstep followers and cross-bearers, and prospectively his joint-heirs in the Kingdom, that he will not "suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but with the temptation will provide also a way of escape."-- 1 Cor. 10:13.

SACRIFICING PRECEDES CROSS-BEARING

The first step in following the Lord is properly designated in the Scriptures a sacrifice; but it is not a taking up of the cross. When we sacrifice our wills, when we submit ourselves fully to the Lord, it is the sum of all sacrifice--in the sense that the giving up of the will means the surrender of our all to the Lord, that his will may be done in respect to all our affairs. The will is the individual, the ego, and holds the command, the rulership of our time, influence, abilities, and every talent; hence the surrender of the will to God means a surrender of all these things to him. All subsequent sacrifices which we may make in the Lord's service are included in and represented by this sacrifice of the will. If the will changes, draws back, ceases to be obedient to God, ceases to be submissive to his arrangements, the whole condition changes and the relationship to God as a member of the body of Christ terminates. But if the will continues faithful to God and desirous of serving him and his cause, though the service and cross-bearing be not done faithfully, the Lord will carry such through, and by chastisements and corrections in righteousness they shall ultimately be "saved so as by fire"--by tribulation. This is the essence of the doctrine of "the final perseverance of the saints." So long as they continue to be consecrated--to have their wills sanctified to the Lord--they continue to be his, even should they, from lack of zeal, fail to win the prize offered to the zealous, the "overcomers."

But if the will remain loyal to the Lord, and the crosses are approached and lifted and borne in faith and trust, not only will the Lord's grace suffice, but his comfort and assistance will be given in the narrow way;--so that its trials and difficulties may be esteemed as "light afflictions, but for a moment." Eventually this class shall be the victors, joint-heirs with the Master in his Kingdom, because by his assisting grace they shall have walked in his footsteps faithfully, even unto death--and that with greater ease and peace and joy and satisfaction than others who with less zeal seek to avoid the crosses of their consecration.

The statement that the consecration of the will -- its surrender, its sacrifice, that the Lord's will may be received instead -- is not one of the crosses we are called on to bear, may need further explanation. In order for the sacrifice of our wills to be acceptable to the Lord at all, it must be no cross to us; the

desire to give up our own will and to accept God's will must be a joy, a pleasure. Our wills must be sacrificed willingly, else the sacrifice will not be accepted of the Lord, and we shall have neither part nor lot with him. Unless the will be joyfully resigned to the Lord's will, all subsequent sacrificing or cross-bearing will count nothing whatever to our advantage. Our Master's expression respecting the surrender, the sacrifice, of his will to do the Father's will, illustrates this matter clearly; and it will be noticed from the language that there was no cross connected therewith.

Our Lord's sentiments were, "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." (Psa. 40:8.) And so all who would be his disciples must not only count the cost of cross-bearing because of the opposition of the world, the flesh and the devil, but they must have a somewhat similar spirit to that of our Lord in connection with the sacrificing of their wills; they, too, must delight to have God's will done in them--delight to surrender or sacrifice their own wills. Let us see this clearly, and if there is anything lacking in respect to the sacrifice of our wills let us give it our first attention. He who has completely sacrificed his will to the Lord's will has gained the victory at the start which will make all the remainder of the "narrow way" comparatively easy. He who has merely hacked and mutilated his will instead of killing it outright, will find extra difficulty at every step of his journey, and can never gain the victory until he has finished the sacrifice which he imperfectly began.

IN WHAT DOES CROSS-BEARING CONSIST?

The Master's cross-bearing did not consist in fighting the weaknesses of the flesh, for he had none; nor are these weaknesses of the flesh our crosses. Because all our weaknesses of the flesh are fully covered by the merit of our Lord's sacrifice; our standing before God is as New Creatures and not as imperfect fleshly creatures--the imperfections of the flesh, which are contrary to our wills and opposed by them, being fully pardoned by the Lord. The Lord's cross-bearing consisted in the *doing of the Father's will under unfavorable conditions*. This course brought upon him the envy, hatred, malice, strife, persecution, etc., of those who thought themselves to be God's people, but whom our Lord, who read their hearts, declared to be of their father, the devil. We are not able to read the hearts of those about us who profess to be the Lord's people, yet we may be sure that there are plenty still who profess the name of God and of Christ and who have none of his Spirit and are not his children, but are the children of the Adversary,--begotten of an evil spirit.

Since we are walking in the same "narrow way" that our Master walked, we may reasonably expect that our crosses will be of similar kind to his--oppositions to our doing the will of our Father in heaven-- oppositions to our serving his cause and letting the

light shine out as our Master and Leader directed. It is a pleasure for us to do the Father's will--no cross about that. We delight not only to consecrate our wills, but the Lord's law of righteousness is in our hearts to such an extent that we delight to serve the right, the Truth. Our cross-bearing comes when we find that the Truth, so beautiful to us, so charming, is hated by others and draws upon us their anger, malice, hatred, as the same truths drew the same opposition upon our Master. Our faithfulness in cross-bearing consists in our willingness to stand up for the Truth and for every principle of righteousness; --meekly, humbly, yet firmly, speaking the truth in love, no matter what the cost of friendships broken or enmities enkindled, or evil words spoken against us falsely for the Truth's sake.

Our Master forewarned us of just such experiences when he spoke of our crosses in following him. He was explaining the matter more fully when he said, "Marvel not if the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." "If ye were of the world the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub,--prince of devils,--think it not strange if they will call his followers by evil names also. Yea, he forewarned us, "They shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake." He even implied that some who are not children of the devil would be found amongst the persecutors of the cross-bearers, and assured us that some of these would verily think that they were doing God service. And are they not doing God and us also a service in the sense that Satan is serving God's purposes in the present time, in the persecution of the Church;--in making her path a "narrow" one, and filling it with difficulties; that thus the Lord's faithful cross-bearers might be tested and proven, and that he might thus select and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works and zealous of the Truth?

CROSS-BEARERS MUST BATTLE WITH THE FLESH, ALSO

While we pointed out, foregoing, that cross-bearing is quite separate from battling with the weaknesses of the flesh, nevertheless whoever has the mind of Christ, whoever is seeking to be a cross-bearer and to stand up as a representative of the Lord and the Truth in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation, as an ambassador of God, will surely realize that he could not be an acceptable ambassador and could not claim that his will is sacrificed to the Lord's will, if he did not strive against the weaknesses and imperfections in himself as well as stand for the general principles of righteousness and truth everywhere. The Apostle included this thought and much more in this expression,--"He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." (1 John 2:6.) He is to walk as our Lord walked, in his general deportment and relationship to everything that is good; and correspondingly to avoid everything that is evil. He is to walk as nearly as possible in the footsteps of Jesus.

This, however, does not mean that he either should or could, in an imperfect body, walk up to all the perfection of his Lord, who even in the flesh was perfect. It means

just what it says, that we should walk as he walked--in the same way, in the same direction, toward the same mark and standard that he recognized and established. The Apostle Paul gives us a suggestion along this line, very helpful when rightly understood. His words are, "The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." (Rom. 8:4.) To walk after the flesh is to walk after sin--to knowingly, willingly, intentionally, do those things which we recognize to be contrary to the divine will, even though we should not go to the extreme of wickedness. So, likewise, to walk after the Spirit does not mean to walk up to the standard of the Spirit, which would be impossible for us who were born in sin, shapen in iniquity, and thus blemished by sin according to the flesh. As "New Creatures" we are living in the earthly tabernacle, which is imperfect; and so long as we are thus limited, we cannot do all that we would. As "New Creatures," begotten of the holy Spirit, we desire to do perfectly. We desire that every thought, word and act should be perfect in the sight of our heavenly Father,--as perfect as were those of our dear Redeemer; but this we know from the Scriptures and from experience is impossible...

It is because we could not walk up to the Spirit, up to the perfect standard of the divine requirement, that God has mercifully provided an arrangement of *grace* on our behalf. By this grace, those who start as members of the body of Christ, to walk in the footsteps of Jesus--to walk henceforth not *after the flesh*, but on the contrary to walk *after the Spirit*, and as nearly as possible up to the Spirit's requirements-- have their deficiencies made up for them by their Redeemer's meritorious sacrifice. The divine arrangement for this is a unique one, which adapts itself to the various conditions and circumstances of each and all called to walk in this narrow way. If one by reason of being well born and having a good environment has for this reason a better balanced and equipped mortal body in which the new mind can exercise itself with the greater freedom;--and if such a one by reason of these advantages be able to walk nearer to the Spirit's standard than a less favored brother, whose will, however, is equally loyal to the Lord, the divine arrangement is that each shall have imputed to him *grace sufficient*,--so that both may be counted perfect--counted as having walked up to the Spirit's requirements.

This matter may be more clearly before our minds if we imagine a scale marked off from naught (0) to one hundred (100)--a scale on which we will suppose moral stamina to be measurable, one hundred representing the full, complete character which God requires. On this scale imagine five brethren with different degrees of physical imperfections, yet all fully consecrated to the Lord, all seeking to the best of their ability to "walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit"--as nearly up to the full (one hundred) standard as possible. One has ten points of character, another twenty, another thirty, another forty, another fifty. From the Lord's standpoint, because they are all trusting in Christ and walking in his way, and seeking to do his will, they are all counted as up to the full standard, one hundred--all acceptable with the Lord--the weakest as

well as the strongest of them. This wonderful divine arrangement for man's necessities tells of the wisdom of God as well as of his mercy and love. Who else could have devised such an equitable plan, by which whosoever cometh unto the Father through the Redeemer, with full consecration of heart, of will, and full intention of life, might be acceptable --nothing short of perfection being acceptable.

It is for this reason that we are told that we are reckonedly justified--"justified by faith." Mark now the words of the Apostle, "Where sin abounded, there did grace so much more abound." He here expresses a general principle of the divine arrangement. Those hearing the invitation in this present time, and desiring to accept God's grace and call, are all thus put on an equality: he who has little character with many weaknesses and imperfections, has accredited to him of the Lord's grace and merit proportionately; he who has more of character naturally and who needs, therefore, less of grace, gets also according to his needs. But let it be clearly noted that there is "none righteous, no, not one"--none who can come up to the divine standard. All need to have the Lord's merit imputed to them, and hence the Lord makes this arrangement for all who would approach him and accept his favor, his call to joint-heirship with his Son. They can have neither part nor lot in the matter until they have acknowledged their own imperfections and have accepted the imputed merits of our Redeemer, "In whom we have redemption through his blood."

All of the Lord's people--not all of the nominal church, not merely nominal disciples, but the true followers mentioned in the text--are not only walking in the same pathway, but similarly all find it narrow and difficult. Similarly all in this pathway have the same spirit, mind or disposition--to do the Father's will and to serve his cause. This is the Spirit of Christ, and by it all men may take knowledge of his disciples; they, like him, will be loyal to the principles of righteousness and truth. They will be willing to suffer opposition and persecution for the Truth's sake, for righteousness' sake, and thus with him to be cross-bearers.

The Apostle Paul brings out this thought when, writing to the Corinthians respecting Titus, he asks, "Walked we not in the same spirit? Walked we not in the same steps?" (2 Cor. 12:18.) Assuredly Paul and Titus must have been walking in the same spirit and the same steps if they were both walking in the Spirit and steps of the Master,--taking up life's crosses and following him. And this, dear brethren and sisters, will be true of each and all of us. While we each have our individual peculiarities and differences of temperament, conditions, surroundings, opportunities, etc., the same spirit and the same steps can be noted in all who are followers of the Lamb. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If any man walk not in the footsteps of Jesus he is not one of his followers, in this special sense pointed out by our text, and consequently would not be one of the joint-heirs in the Kingdom. But let us keep in memory the Lord's assurance that his grace is sufficient for us, and that his strength is made perfect in our weakness, and that this is the victory that overcometh the world--even our faith."