

## Devotedness and Separation

Romans 12: 1, 2.

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At different times we see that the testimony of the Spirit of God has been to some particular truths to meet the special need of the day. In our day it is a testimony *to practical devotedness, and entire separation from the evil that is in the world*. It has been through God's laying these two truths home on the conscience that anything like revival in this country has been accomplished. Notice the lever the apostle uses in this chapter to move the saints. Had he not a *heart* for the sheep? Assuredly he had. But there was another he had a heart for, and that was the Lord Jesus Christ. He begins, "I beseech," etc. (observe the claim which this emphatic love is led to use), "by the *mercies* of God." This is the motive by which he appeals to them. Mercies went up to the *God of heaven*, and down to the mind of the poor feeble Christian. Without a sense of the *mercies* there cannot be devotedness to God, and separation from evil. *Holiness* will not do it. If I am lingering in Sodom, it is because I have not learnt what *mercy* is. What do you think God ought to do towards you? Have you any claim upon Him, but that He should hate you? Are you just clay in the hands of the Potter, what no other potter could make anything with? Are you in His hand, for Him to mould you as He will, guilty and loathsome as you are in contrast with Christ? Christ is light, and you are darkness. God could do nothing with you but pick you up in *mercy*.

Observe what this mercy really is. It is not merely providential mercy as men talk, but the mercies are summed up in all the preceding chapters of the epistle; and the summing up does not even close at Romans 8, but after showing the dispensations in Romans 9 to 11, when He has opened and shut all that for the earth, etc., he breaks out, "I beseech you, by the mercies of God." What there is for man must be all on the ground of *mercy*. God does not want a testimony from us in *heaven*, but He does upon the earth; and He will have one. We must get into God's thoughts about things, and we see that God never brings any one into such a position as not to need *mercy*.

"That ye may prove what is that perfect, and acceptable," etc. The thought is, that we are to prove what the *risen Christ* is in one who has the conscience of sin in the members. We are told to "cease to do evil." Aye, but you say, I find evil is within me, and I cannot get away from it. But you are told to cease to *do evil*, not cease from evil. Satan may put things into my thoughts; but I am not to give heed to them. No; I have done with them, you say. But it may be suggested that your heart and mind are running upon the evil. No; *I have done with it, done with it*. John Bunyan vexed his soul for many a long year with what was afterwards his very joy. "Tell Him, tell Him!" was the tormenting word to him. But afterwards he found it was because *Christ was his* that Satan had vexed him; and when he could take things boldly for Christ, things went more easily with him.

Why is the Christian left here at all? If a man makes a clock, it is for a purpose. It has hands to

show the time, and they are like the living members of Christ here — made for use, *for service to Christ*; or else why are you converted before you are just going to die? It would have saved God a great deal of trouble and much dishonour if He had not converted people till just before they died. God meant to get honour to Himself down here. As the clock is made to show the time, so God's people were intended to show forth His praises. A clock is never kept in order if it is not kept going; and you will never find a body in health if not in action; and in spiritual things, you will never find a Christian in a healthy state who does not keep his body a living sacrifice for God. A Christian ought to be full of joy and of the Holy Ghost.

The second exhortation of the apostle is to nonconformity to the world, and this is a point which tests us all very closely. It is a most difficult thing to get the true test as to what worldliness is. There is one thing certain — you will never get it if you keep to the *outside features* of conduct; for worldliness may as nicely be fed in the heart with all the appearance of denying it. In Cain we see the selfishness of his plea — 'Lest any finding me, kill *me*.' What does He do when God sets His mark upon him? He goes and settles himself down nicely without God. It was self and not God he thought of. He had not the single eye, his thoughts all clustering round self, and not the God that had spared him; and there was his sin. If a man is grasping after something for self, he is not satisfied with God, and is wanting something else, and something by which he may exalt himself a little in the world. "It is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." All these deny that God made us for Himself. The moment Adam and Eve catered for themselves, all the mischief was done. With Christ Satan tried these three things, but could not get in, because Christ had no mind to cater for Himself. The world can creep in between the leaves of the thoughts of one's mind, and do more mischief than the bookworm in a library. Just as the worm does the harm in secret, so does the world in the heart: self is most difficult to detect.

That form of worldliness which connects itself with feebleness of conscience is most deceitful. The body, soul, and spirit is for Christ. A man says, "I am not at liberty to eat meat." Well, he must not eat it against his conscience, and yet after awhile he may find it was just the world in his conscience that hindered his doing it. It might be his own great religiousness, and more light will show him this. How can you decide between *conscience* and feeling? In answer to this question, I would ask another: Do you really mean to say to God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Thou requirest this of me, and I give it thee"? Ah! I say, Take care you do not mistake *feeling* for conscience. If you walk like the world, you are no witness for Christ, and you have to pick your way out of Sodom as quickly as you can. Does the world come in where God should be? If I am seeking something apart from God, it is the world, lust, etc. The only power to sustain this pilgrim course is *mercy*. If you leave it behind you for a moment you break down directly. Nothing dissolves the ties to the world first or last but that which separated us at first. G. V. W.

### **Crucified to the World. (C.F. vol. 7, p. 84)**

It can never be true that we are crucified to the world unless the heart is in constant communion with the cross of Christ. The cross comes in, in everything, as a matter of daily experience. How is one to pass into the old age of a Christian? How find one's self laid aside, no longer with any energy? Surely only by the cross. How can one meet difficulties with a word, and be kept in perfect quietness? Only by the cross. How can we keep under such flesh as ours? Does the "old man" ever get to be better? Not a bit! but you must learn to be able to carry the cross, saying of everything that is evil, "I have nothing to do with that, because my Lord was crucified on account of it." G. V. W.

## **Inside the Veil. (C.F. vol. 7, p. 224)**

If dwelling inside the veil, I say, Oh the immeasurableness of the love of God in what He has done! How can I repay Him? I am preserved from ten thousand things which would have affected me if not there. I am in another place; as one said, "I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down." I am not trying what I can squeeze out of this or that little circumstance for myself. I am saying, Why, God has given me every thing He could give in giving me His Son. What return can I make Him? Cannot I give up this or that little thing for Him who gave His Son for me? It makes it seem as nothing. It is because we are not dwelling there, that some little thing seems very great to give up; or perhaps some little disappointment, then we shrink from the cross, and we are not ready to rise and go forth to meet it, because not living in heaven, not occupied with all the vastness of the blessing that is ours. G. V. W.

People complain that there is so little outward power in their walk. Ah! that is because they are receiving so little from Christ. G. V. W.