

Compromise

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In divine truth compromise has no place. It would be the surrender of God's authority and manifest rebellion. We are sanctified by the Spirit to the obedience of Jesus Christ, not more surely than to the sprinkling of His blood. We are not left to our desires after good or our devices to give it effect. He that hath Christ's commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Him. Nor is this all. The new life is exercised; the love that is of God grows. And it is not only His "injunction" that governs the heart: His "word" forms it in obedience and is a deeper test of it. Therefore the Lord adds (John 14), "If anyone love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my words; and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me."

In matters of outward arrangement, or of moral indifference such as questions of time and place, there is ample room for grace in mutual consideration and in special care of the poor, the weak, and the suffering. Here the principle applies, though in another sense, that the strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves: rather, that everyone of us please his neighbour for good to edification. The strong may well afford to seek unselfishness and make it sweeter for all. And here Christ is our blessed pattern, Who in glorifying His Father never sought His own will, though it was all untainted and holy, and pleased not Himself, but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me.

But where the will of God is expressed, there is no option for ought else. Our duty then is clear and unqualified: we have only to obey Him. Of His own purpose did He beget us by the word of truth that we might be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures (James 1). All else are under sin and ruin, under death and judgment. This new and divine nature, of which His grace has made us partakers (2 Peter 1: 4), rejects all filthiness and superfluity of malice, receiving with meekness the implanted word which has the power of saying our souls, assuredly not in mere hearing but in practising the word. Thus it becomes the perfect law of liberty; for as the new life craves the revealed word, so the word exactly suits the life one has in Christ; not the old I, each believer can say, but Christ, living in me. Undoubtedly this life is not independent of its source, but lives independence on Him. For what I live now in flesh, I live in faith that is in the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me. All is the grace of God, whether it be Christ's death or life thus given.

What shall we say then? should we continue in sin that grace may abound? Far be it from us! We who died in sin, how shall we live longer therein? Or know ye not that so many of us as were baptised unto Christ Jesus were baptised unto His death? Therefore were we buried with Him by baptism unto death, that even as Christ was raised out of the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we were identified with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in [that] of resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin. For he who died has been justified from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, being raised out of the dead, dies no more: death has no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died to sin once for all; and in that He lives, He lives to God. So do ye also reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body unto obeying it in your lusts, nor render your members to sin instruments of iniquity; but render yourselves to God as

alive out of the dead, and your members instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law but under grace.

Such is the apostle Paul's handling of this great matter in Romans 6; and he is as far as possible from compromise as to either the principle or the power. We are baptised to Christ's death as the principle; we are not under law but grace as the power. In both, sin is triumphed over and wholly disallowed. Delivered from sin but enslaved to righteousness, enslaved to God, we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end life eternal. Our condition is mixed no doubt, which indeed is to say but little of the sad reality; but this is not to enfeeble the absolute truth of our deliverance on the one hand, or of our responsibility on the other. Compromise is excluded; and no wonder, for Christ is dead and risen. Further, the Holy Spirit is given to us.

So in 1 Cor. 3 we are no longer to walk as men, but as sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints called. Once we were all "the unrighteous," some this horror, some that; but receiving Christ, we were washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. For know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit that is in you, which ye had from God, and ye are not your own? For ye were bought with a price. Glorify then God in your body (1 Cor. 6). There is no compromise here.

As it is in these two great Epistles, the one very markedly individual, while the other is also ecclesiastical or corporate, so it is in every other part of the Christian deposit we are bound to keep. There is no sanction of laxity; grace condemns sin more solemnly and profoundly than law. We are Christ's epistle, responsible to be so known and read of all men. Consistency with Christ, with the truth, with holiness, is obligatory on all saints even the weakest. Compromise here is altogether a sin and nothing but shame.

Is there, again, any latitude allowed in the ministry of the Spirit? Is there licence of unfaithfulness in those that preach or teach Christ? May we in the Lord's work associate with known inconsistency, with deliberate playing fast and loose, with divine ways openly set at naught? So the Corinthians thought, and for a while rose up rebelliously against the apostle whom God had blessed to their souls. For a while they were haughty and alienated from the true, abjectly listening to the false teachers who brought them into bondage with their own objects. Was it not a grief and scandal that such things should be done by such as claimed to be the Lord's servants? For what can one think of any professing fidelity joining hands with unrepented evil ways? what of the deplorable and unholy scheme of fancying that such union is of God to get wrong-doers right? Can the simplest believer fail to see that it is doing evil that good may come? whose judgment is just.

But may not the object be good? So say all religious guides, and many of them sincerely, however differing or even opposed. It would be uncharitable to doubt of many that they ate each in earnest with their methods, and more or less satisfied with the cause they plead. But this only makes evident that an apparently good object is not the least guarantee of either truth or holiness.

Were the aim ever so excellent, it is essential that it be prosecuted according to the Lord's mind; and this can only be in obedience to His word. To oppose it is courting destruction, to do without it is self-will. In His work compromise is evil. The Lord is jealous that the known walk be consistent with His testimony. His servant is bound to have clean hands, and not to partake of other men's sins. How contrasted is God's way for His servants!

Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the

sight of God"; and again, "Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed, but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." Indeed all of 2 Cor. 6 is worthy of the consideration of all God's servants and His saints. But this may suffice to point out what His word enjoins to the total uprooting of that compromise which is man's device in His work, as offensive to His Spirit as it is defiant of His word.