

Self-abnegation

W. Kelly. (BT Vol. N6, page 61.)

In all things Jesus was perfect, and in nothing more than this — that He, knowing all things, the end from the beginning, came down into a scene where He tasted rejection at every step — rejection not merely as a babe when He was carried away into Egypt, but rejection all through a life of the most blameless yet divinely ordered obscurity; then through a ministry which excited growing hatred on man's part. There is nothing a man more dreads than to be nothing at all. Even to be spoken against is not so dreadful to the poor proud spirit of man as to be absolutely unnoticed; and yet the very much greater part of the life of Jesus was spent in this entire obscurity. We have but a single incident recorded of Jesus from His earliest years until He emerges for the ministry of the word of God and the gospel of the kingdom. But then He lived in Nazareth, proverbially the lowest of poor despised Galilee — so much so that even a godly Galilean slighted and wondered if any good thing could come out of Nazareth. Such was Jesus; but more than this. When He did enter on the publicity of divine testimony, there too He meets opposition, though at first there was a welcome which would have gratified most men, yea servants of God. But He the Son, the divine person who was pleased to serve in this world, saw through that which would have been sweet to others when they, astonished and attracted, hung on the gracious words that fell from His lips. And how soon a dark cloud passed over it! For even that self-same day in which men heard such words as had never fallen on the ears of man, miserable and infatuated they could not endure the grace of God, and had they been left to themselves, would have cast Him down headlong from the precipice outside their city. Such man was and is. How truly all that was fair was but as the morning cloud and early dew. But Jesus, we see, accepts a ministry of which He knew from the first the character, course, and results, perfectly aware that the more divine grace and truth were brought out by Him, the sterner rejection He should meet with among men.

God deals very tenderly with us in this respect. He does not fail to send somewhat to cheer and lift up the heart of the workman in praise to Himself; and only just so far as there is faith to bear it does He put on him a heavier burden. But as to the Lord Jesus, there was no burden that *He* was spared; and if none in His life, what shall we say of His death? There indeed a deeper question was raised, on which we need not enter now.

So too in the apostle Paul, a man, not only of flesh and blood but, of like passions as we. Who ever suffered like him the afflictions of the gospel? Who with burning love to Israel so spent himself in untiring labours among the Gentiles — labours too so unrequited then, that among the Gentiles themselves who believed, he so often knew what it is to be less loved the more abundantly he loved?

On the other hand Jesus had no sin. Although perfectly man, every thought, feeling, and inward motion was holy in Jesus: not only not a flaw in His ways was ever seen, but not a stain in His nature. Whatever men reason or dream, He was as pure humanly as divinely; and this may serve to show us the all-importance of holding fast what men call orthodoxy as to His person. I shall yield to none in jealousy for it, and loyally maintain that it is of the substance and essence of the faith of God's elect that we should confess the immaculate purity of His humanity just as much as the reality of His assumption of our nature. Assuredly He did take the proper manhood of His mother, but He never took manhood in the state of His mother, but as the body prepared for Him by the Holy Ghost, who expelled every taint of otherwise transmitted evil. In His mother that nature was under the taint of sin; she was fallen, as were all others naturally begotten and born in Adam's line. In Him it was not so; and in order that it should not be so, we learn in God's word that He was not begotten in a merely natural

generation, which would have perpetuated the corruption of the nature and have linked Jesus with the fall; but by the power of the Holy Ghost He and He alone was born of woman without a human father. Consequently as the Son was necessarily pure, as pure as the Father, in His own proper divine nature, so also in the human nature which He thus received from His mother: both the divine and the human were found for ever afterwards joined in that one and the same person — the Word made flesh.