

"LEAVING US AN EXAMPLE."

BY A. J. GORDON, D. D.

(*Pet. ii: xvi.*)

I. Christ our example in sinlessness. "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."

CHRIST had to be without sin in him in order to take our sins upon him. If he had not been free from original guilt he could not have borne imputed guilt; "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"

And who is he that I should look to him as my sin-bearer? He is a "Lamb without blemish and without spot," replies the Scripture. "By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified," says Paul. But how could he accomplish so much by one offering? Because, "He through the Eternal Spirit offered up himself without spot unto God," says the Bible. As undefiled as a beam of light, which falls from the sun upon our earth, so holy was the Son of Man who came down from heaven. His life had its spring in God as ours has its source in Adam. And as that sunbeam is refracted but not soiled in passing through a prism, so was the life of Christ broken by contact with our human nature—broken for our sins, broken by our sins, and yet forever holy and harmless and made higher than the heavens.

Now we are called to follow Christ in his self-denial; but in order to do so, we must be holy; by which I mean *holy in the Lord*. No man is required to copy the example of Christ who has not first come under the blood of Christ, and been made partaker of the Spirit of Christ, and for the plain reason that the imitation of Jesus carries one into an entirely different sphere from that to which he belongs by nature. The horse, however intelligent he may be, can never be taught music, nor the dog painting and sculpture, nor the bird philosophy and poetry. These arts belong to another world, into which from their very nature and constitution these brute creatures cannot enter. So a merely moral man—unregenerate and un sanctified—can never imitate Jesus Christ, because, not having been born again, he cannot enter the sphere in which Christ lives and moves. As disciples of Jesus

we have passed from the ten commandments into the eleventh commandment—that added commandment which Jesus promulgated from Calvary when he said: "*A new commandment give I unto you: that ye love one another.*" The old commandment said "Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself.*" Here you see self is the unit of measure; and when you have attained to that unit you have obeyed the moral law. But the new commandment says: "that ye love one another *as I have loved you.*" Here you perceive that Christ is the unit of measure, and the cross of Christ the standard of reckoning. "*As I have loved you!*" What length and breadth and depth and height are here described! As Christ stooped from the highest place unto the lowest in order to reach the sinner; as he made himself of no reputation and took upon himself the form of a servant that he might become the servant of all; as being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, so ought we to do—so must we do if we are to be imitators of Christ. You see the difference then between the moral law and the gospel law. "*Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ*" says Jesus. Get under the world's sin and shoulder the world's misery; bear the burden of the world's woe, and take the curse of the world's fall. Be ready to suffer and be condemned and die for your fellow-men. This is the law of Christ. Here is a world of doing and denying and dying into which you can never pass till you have been redeemed by the precious blood, and set apart by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. "For this cause," says Jesus, "I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth." So spake Christ as he was about to go to the cross; and through his atoning work we must be made holy before we can obey his voice, and take up his cross and follow him. When the paschal lamb was to be provided for the sacrifice, it was taken out of the flock and sealed with the temple seal, and so set apart for the altar. So Jesus was taken out from the great flock of our humanity into which he entered by his incarnation, and devoted to the cross. As it is written in the Hebrews "He was holy and harmless and

separated from sinners." Even so we must be set apart before we can follow him in cross-bearing and self-denial for a lost world.

II. *Christ our example in silence.* "Who when he was reviled, reviled not again."

"Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?" asked Pilate as the flood of false accusation poured in upon Jesus from lips of scribe and Pharisee and chief priest. "Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him not a word." Silence is the shield of innocence against which all the envenomed arrows of malice and envy and falsehood strike, but from which they never rebound to be picked up and hurled back again. Blessed is the Christian who has learned the Master's secret of spiritual warfare—"Who when he was reviled, reviled not again." The triumph of silence, we confess, is the hardest of all to achieve. "I must explain," says the maligned Christian, "or they will suppose that the charges against me are true." And certainly the impulse to do so is very reasonable. To carry for days or months a load of obloquy and misrepresentation, which you could throw off in five minutes, is certainly a needless trial. Nor do I, by any means, say that it ought always to be borne. But *sometimes* it is better to endure it. When your traducers persist in their falsehoods, when they only add insult to injury, then here is your blessed retreat; into that divine silence where the Lord so often dwelt when he had done all and spoken all that was needful.

But bear in mind that this is not a silence of shame and confusion of face—it is the silence of appeal. "Who when he was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." It is simply the resolve to wait for God to vindicate his servant, which he is bound to do. "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come," says the scripture, "who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will manifest the counsels of the heart; and then shall every man have praise of God." Can you not afford to bear the reproach of men now if you may have the praise of God hereafter? God can afford to wait for his vindication, and HE has much more at stake than

you have. In the fiftieth Psalm we hear Jehovah discussing this subject. To the sinner he says, "*Seeing thou hatest instruction and casteth my words behind thee*"—this he says to such as despise his gospel. "*When thou sawest a thief thou consentest with him*"—this he says of those who practice tricks in trade. "*Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother, thou slanderest thy own mother's son*"—this he says of tale-bearers and false witnesses. And what did God do about it? "*These things hast thou done and I kept silence!*" How majestic the words! But would not men misconstrue the silence? Yes! "*Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself*" says God. Silence gives consent; and the Lord would be charged with indifference to man because he did not at once punish an evil work. Yet he bears the imputation—"These things hast thou done and I kept silence!" But now he adds "*Our God shall come and shall not keep silence.*" Then will he vindicate the right, then will he give praise to those who endured as seeing him who is invisible. My brother, if God can afford to wait we can do so.

III. *Christ our example in sacrifice.* "Who himself bear our sins in his own body on the tree."

Is it possible that even here, in this sacred and solitary transaction of dying on the cross, we are to be imitators of Christ? Yes! for the apostle immediately adds, "*that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness.*" Dead to sin through union with him who died for our sins. This is the end of our Saviour's crucifixion. We say that Christ died that we might not die. It is far truer to say that he died that we might die—might die to sin, die to self and die to the world.

"The cross of Golgotha *alone* can never save thy soul, The cross in thine own heart must make thee whole."

Here observe the apostle Peter's practical conclusion from what he has just said—"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men but to the will of God." In other words, we are to make

Christ's death real within us, even as on Calvary it was made efficient for us. We are to make it the means of subduing sin in the heart, even as there it was the means of atoning for sin before the law.

My brethren, it is one thing to preach the cross, it is quite another thing to practise the cross. But this is what the apostle enjoined when he said "arm yourselves therefore with the same mind." Take the crucifixion nails and drive them through your hurtful lusts and passions till they are put to death. Take the vinegar and gall of self-denial and put them to the lips of your old nature till it give up the ghost. What a shame and scandal it is that we should consent to be saved by the sacrifice of Christ, and yet utterly refuse to practise the sacrifice of self! "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," exclaims Paul. What cross, oh apostle to the Gentiles? The cross of adornment which the jewelled beauty wears about her neck? Nay, never! away with it! away with it! The cross of atonement whereon Christ Jesus made satisfaction for the sins of the world? Yes truly; but not that alone. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." Complete attachment to God is only possible as there is complete detachment from the world. I am not speaking now of salvation, but of sanctification. To be out and out for Christ; to have Christ all in all to you—that cannot be, except you are completely divided from the world. That is what I have claimed to be—"crucified unto the world and the world to me." Oh to realize this wholly! The cross having sundered the nerves of worldliness—the theatre-going nerve, the ball-room nerve, the money-making nerve, the pleasure-seeking nerve—all these cut! Christ all-sufficient because fully embraced! Free to serve because let go by the world! What power we should have if we were so. I speak not as though I had already attained or were already perfect; but I confess that with the intensest longing I do grasp for this lofty ideal. My brethren, let us now be bowed in shame that we have no more realized the

power of Christ's cross in our lives. All his sacrifice *for* us met with such imperfect sacrifice *in* us! Oh Saviour, while we mourn that it is so, help us this day that we renounce the things which we have too much loved in the past and that we "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service."

THE COMING REVIVAL.

BY T. W. GREENWELL, F. R. S. L.

THESE are special phenomena in the religious world at the present day which indicate a great change. Ministers of all denominations notice increased stir and activity in their congregations on all theological and devotional questions. Evangelists, adventists, revivalists, and missionaries obtain wonderful results as a reward for their labors; higher forms of sanctification, consecration for service, and purity of life and conduct are in vogue, while the miracles of divine healing are attracting attention everywhere. During the last few years there has been a phenomenal growth of evangelistic work. God has raised up in all ranks and classes of society men of special abilities—prophets, apostles, evangelists, and teachers—who have gone forth into the world. A particular work requires a particular man to do it; and the great revivalists are all men of marked individuality and force of character.

In some cases, as for example in the movement which was originated by the late Edward Irving early in the present century, too much of human handiwork is observable—at least as regards the later developments. But whatever is ecclesiastical is of man; and whatever is spiritual is of God. The Almighty is apparently rebuking the proud ecclesiastical pretensions of the day by selecting his servants from the humbler walks of life, because they in no sense represent the great of this world. Such men as Irving, Miller, Taylor, Spurgeon, Moody, Varley, Muller, Radstock, Guinness, Booth, Jones, and others too numerous to mention, have been raised up and thrust out into the work of the ministry. Evangelists go forth into the street