

Zion's Landmarks.

DEVOTED TO THE DEFENSE OF THE PRIMITIVE BAPTISTS.

"TO THE LAW AND TO THE TESTIMONY."

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"But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." 2 Pet. 2: 22.

It is believed by some that the above text sets forth the final apostacy of christians and that, though they are once converted to God and born of the Spirit, they may at last be lost and perish forever. Others are of the opinion that it represents disobedient christians who fall into practical sins and simply defile the outward garment of their holy profession, but that they will be finally saved at last "as by fire." It seems evident to me however, that the whole connection from the very first verse of the chapter shows that the Apostle speaks of false teachers and of those who follow their "pernicious ways." He speaks of them as "speaking evil of the things they understand not" of such as have "eyes full of adultery," thus showing that they are continual violators of the law of God, whose natural lusts are unsubdued, having full play without any warfare, so that they "cannot cease from sin, beguiling unstable souls, a heart they have exercised with covetous practices, cursed children." It is true they profess to be washed very clean and as having "escaped from those who live in error," but while they promise liberty to such as live in error they themselves, who promise this liberty from the curse of the law and from the galling yoke of sin, are the "servants of corruption," both in doctrine and in practice.

A little attention to the connection of this subject will show that the Apostle speaks both of the real and assumed character of these false teachers. He tells us what they really are, and also what they assume, or profess to be. In their real character they are "cursed children"—and compared to "wells without water" clouds that are "carried with a tempest" that only go by passion or excitement, having no gentle showers to distil upon the tender plants of grace to cheer the drooping hope or strengthen the faith of God's people. In their assumed character or the character which they profess to be, they have escaped the common pollutions of the world, and are clean in their own eyes, yet, in their true character they are the very servants of corruption all the time. If servants, they are under the reigning power of corrupt principles, being governed by corrupt motives and all their religious pre-

tentions being false and delusive. It is true they profess to have escaped the pollutions of the world "through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" but being again entangled in these corruptions and pollutions shows that their natural principles and carnal propensities predominate and so it "happens unto them" as with the sow that was washed. We know that no amount of washing and outward cleansing, and dressing of a sow, or of swine generally, would give any new or inward principle, nor would it change the natural instincts of the dog, but, with all the outward washing, of hot days the sow will manifest her true character by voluntarily wallowing in the mud, even though she might have a beautiful sheep-skin nicely fastened over her all will go into the mud together. So it is with those nominal professors of christianity who simply have the outward form of godliness without the inward principle. They have the outward garb very often of moral cleansing from the common base pollutions of the world, yet as they are still of the world in their principles, the world with all its polluted charms is their natural element and they can wallow in its luxuries, pleasures, applause, vanities and institutions with as much composure as the sow when she quietly rests in the mud.

No one who is at all acquainted with the nature of swine ever thinks it strange to see them wallowing in the mire, because they know it is their nature and that it is soothing and pleasant for them so to do, but it would be passing strange for a sheep voluntarily to wallow in the same mud-pond with the swine or to eat the same foul diet with the dog. True, the sheep may sometimes through fright or by carelessness fall into the mud, but it will make all possible effort to get away and ever after shun that muddy place. It seems most in accordance with the figure of the dog and of the sow as mentioned in the text to apply it to such as have never been born of the Spirit, to such as the Apostle Jude speaks of who "separate themselves, sensual, not having the Spirit." There certainly is a very important difference between the character of such as separate themselves, from sensual motives, from the common herd of mankind, and the character of those whom God separates and unto whom he gives his holy Spirit. The spirit or principle that is in a man is what forms his general character, and this principle is so intimately connected, and so interwoven with

the man himself that sometimes one is spoken of for the other, the principle—the governing principle is mentioned for the man, and the man for his principle. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." James 1: 27. Here in this text "pure religion" and the man himself are terms interchangeably used. It is not said that pure religion must or can be kept pure and unspotted unless the man himself is so in principle and in practice. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." 2 Cor. 5: 17. If he is a new creature he has a new heart, new understanding, new desires and new joys, and he looks upon himself in a new light and knowing that he is poor, sinful and helpless, he looks unto Jesus for merit to give him acceptance with God the Father. He feels the importance of "laying aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset him," but he is taught by a feeling sense of his own weakness to look or trust unto the grace of God in Christ to help him to do all things that he is required to do, and so run with patience the race that is set before him.

In the scriptures every man's character is fully delineated as he stands before God: Not simply as he appears before men, but as he is in the sight of God. A man's religious sentiments may be very acceptable to men, "but God knoweth your hearts, for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16: 15. Some of the most zealous and who have the greatest outward appearance unto men of being righteous God describes as being inwardly, "full of hypocrisy and iniquity." Matt. 23: 28. All the works of such characters are done to be seen of men and for filthy lucre and hence one point in the descriptive list that God gives of them is that "they have men's persons in admiration because of advantage." They deal with men as a good business man would with articles of merchandise, that which the most profit, or "filthy lucre" can be realized from is the most desirable, and so of course wealthy persons are most in admiration because of advantage. Jude. 16, 2 Peter. 2: 3. In conclusion I request the reader to read the whole second chapt. 2 Peter, and perhaps you will not think strange that it happens unto these false teachers as to the washed sow that returned to

her wallowing in the mire. It is her nature and she has no other nature to overcome it.

W. M. M.

May 7th, 1874.

FORSYTH, GA.,
March 22d, 1874. }

Dear Brother Gold:—

I will send you a few lines written on the subject of baptism, which you can publish in the LANDMARKS, if you think they will be worth their room. I understand that baptism is an ordinance ordained to commemorate the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and that none but those who have been baptized with the Holy Ghost into the death of Christ should be baptized in his name with water.

When a sinner is repenting he is then being planted in the likeness of Christ's death, for as he feels the curse of the law and is burdened by sin, so the captain of our sufferings felt the curse of the law for all his children, was burdened with all their sins, and was as a cart laden with many sheaves. The death and sufferings of Christ redeemed his people from their sins, from the curse of the law, and their sufferings have no part in their redemption, but it is necessary for them to feel the terror of God's holy law, and feel the great burden of sin, that they may attest to the purity and justice of the law, and learn the exceeding sinfulness of sin; that they may die to sin, abhor it, and not let it reign in their mortal bodies; that they may have some faint conception of the great sufferings of Christ on the cross for them; that they may appreciate what he did for them, that they may have fellowship for him in his sufferings, and be made fit temples for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. And when the Holy Ghost is sent, he takes the things of Christ, his death and sufferings, and shows them unto the sinner, and when he witnesses and tastes them, it is then a fellow-feeling between him and Christ is felt, and being enabled by faith to see that these sufferings were to redeem his poor soul from hell the sinner loves him, because he first loved him. And in our pilgrimage, whenever we are burdened on account of the sin that is in our mortal bodies, and we involuntarily groan or sigh on account of our sinfulness, it is then we die again, and again, to sin, and have fellowship with him who was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death, who was a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief. Hence the apostle Paul said, "I die daily." Wm. M.