

*****DISCLAIMER*** Chapters nineteen and twenty take a decidedly hard turn toward Calvinism - which this editor does not agree with. While we whole-heartedly agree with eternal salvation, and the doctrinal position of "once saved, always saved", we do not use the terminology which is the language of the T.U.L.I.P. of hyper-Calvinism *****

MABEL CLEMENT

by

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ECONOMY PRINTERS ASHLAND, KENTUCKY

CHAPTER TWENTY

Again the eager company was assembled. The interest the people felt in the discussion was shining in their faces. But a change had come over the little group since these meetings began. There was on the faces of a number of them an expression of don't-care how it goes so it goes right. They were once suspicious of anything that seemed Baptist. If it wore that name their prejudice at once condemned and rejected it. By now their foregone conclusions were laid aside and Baptist ideas were allowed a fair trial before the tribunal of their judgment. Many of them took kindly to Baptist notions.

"State your question, Mr. Tibbs," said Dr. Stanly.

"It is this," said he, "do the Scriptures teach that all Christians hold out to the end and get to Heaven, or that some fall from grace and perish?"

"Nothing is plainer," said Mr. Clement, who seemed eager to speak first - for apostasy had for years been a hobby of his - "than that some Christians do fall from grace and perish. We have indisputable proof of it here in our own town. Not half of our converts hold out. In a few weeks they are not seen at church, they go back to dancing, drinking, card playing and to general worldliness and downright wickedness. Some of them we have seen die in their wickedness - as bad people as we have in our town."

"These are facts," said the Doctor, "that cannot be denied. They come up constantly before our eyes. We cannot dispute what we see."

"I am bound to endorse what you say," said Brother Jones; "it is true, sure."

"How are we to settle this question?" inquired Mabel. "By observation? By critically watching human conduct? Surely not. And yet this is what my father and Dr. Stanly are doing. They say we have seen persons who were Christians give up Christianity and turn back to the world. And in this way they settle this great theological question.

Now there are two ungetoverable difficulties in the way of such a process:

First, we cannot prove by observation that one is a Christian; we may think so, and our judgment, may be correct, but it is impossible to be certain of it.

Secondly, to prove that one who had grace once has none now is an equal impossibility.

When we were children we saw many stars fall; but since we are grown, we have learned they were meteors - not stars at all, but only appeared to be. Now many have appeared to be Christians who were not. Judas was with JESUS and the eleven for three years and was almost universally believed to be a Christian; but in the early part of His ministry JESUS said: **'Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?'** (John 6:70). A year later he is called a thief, (John 12:6). Judas was a Christian only by external profession. This doctrine is to be settled, not by observation, not by human opinion, or reason, or votes, but by an appeal to the Word of GOD."

"That is correct," quoth the Doctor; "now let me settle it by the Word of GOD. In Galatians 5:4 Paul says: **'Ye are fallen from grace.'**"

"That indeed looks like settling it," exclaimed Mr. Tibbs.

"Tell us, Doctor," said Mabel, "who are fallen from grace?" "Those to whom Paul wrote," replied the Doctor.

"But who are they? Read verse 4," she insisted.

"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law."

"Hold there," interrupted Mabel; "those justified by law - they are the persons fallen from grace. Doctor, was anyone ever justified by the law?"

The Doctor hesitated, evidently puzzled as to what answer to give. Finally he answered, "No."

"How then could they fall from grace?" inquired Mabel. "You see, your interpretation is wrong. It does not mean grace in the sense of personal religion. By reading what goes before we learn that Paul had preached salvation by grace to the Galatians. After his departure Judaizing teachers came and told them they must not only believe in CHRIST, but must also be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, or they could not be saved. Paul in this Epistle condemns this teaching, calling it another Gospel than the Gospel of CHRIST.

Paul declares that we cannot mix Judaism and Christianity, grace and works; that JESUS will be a whole Saviour or none at all. So the meaning is that these people had turned away from the Gospel plan of salvation by grace to a plan of salvation by a mixture of works and grace."

"Well, I do not care to discuss that farther," replied the Doctor, "but there are many passages - in fact, the Bible is full of them. Here is one in Hebrews 6:4-6: **'For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.'**"

"Doctor," said Mabel, "there is a fatal if in your way. I admit the impossibility, if they fall away; but it does not say any ever did."

"That passage has nothing in it to prove a fall," said Mr. Tibbs.

"Daughter," said Mabel's father, "here is a passage that certainly proves a fall from grace: **'Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away.'** (John 15:2).

Christians are likened to branches in a vine. The Christian is in CHRIST; this branch is in CHRIST the true vine; it bears no fruit and is taken away and is burned up. If that is not a complete fall then I do not see why."

"Father," inquired Mabel, "are we naturally in CHRIST the vine, or are we grafted into Him?"

"Of course," he replied, "we are not naturally in, or savingly connected with CHRIST; hence we must be grafted in Him, or, as the Bible puts it, **'created in Him.'**

"Well, father, if you were to graft two branches into a vine and one of them should grow and bear grapes and the other did neither, but withered away, what would you think about it?"

"I would think the one was not so connected with the vine as to get its sap and support," was the reply.

"Just so, father, with the branch in CHRIST that bears no fruit and is taken away and burned. It never knit to CHRIST, had no vital connection with CHRIST, got nothing from CHRIST; hence was not a Christian, but only appeared to be."

"That is satisfactory and surely a true exposition," said Arthur. Neither Mr. Clement nor the Doctor seemed inclined to dispute it.

"Doctor," said Mr. Tibbs, "give us another passage that seems to teach falling from grace."

"Very well," he replied. "In II Peter 2:20,21, is a strong passage: **'If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.'**

The persons of whom Peter speaks have through the knowledge of CHRIST escaped the pollutions of the world and have known the way of righteousness. So they were Christians. Peter then warns them lest they are entangled again and get into a worse condition than they were before they heard of CHRIST. This could not be if they did not fall."

"There is another 'if' in your way, Doctor," responded Mabel. "If, if, if. Why we can suppose anything and make out a case. But these were not Christians. They had heard about CHRIST and were greatly influenced by what they heard. Many people are greatly influenced by the gospel, being persuaded to turn away from the defiling influences of the world, who never become

Christians. Herod heard John the Baptist gladly, was swayed by his preaching and induced to do many things. Mark 6:20.

But Peter leaves no doubt about the character of these persons. He says of them: **'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.'** It was still a dog - its nature unchanged; it was still a sow - its nature unchanged. If the nature of the dog and sow had been changed into the nature of sheep, they would not have turned again to the vomit and mire."

A ripple of pleasantry broke over the audience which embarrassed the Doctor. The statement did not seem funny to him.

The spectacled man swayed to and fro like the mast of a ship. He was both pleased and amused.

"Now," said Arthur, "there are doubtless many passages on both sides that have little bearing on the question and yet may be brought into the discussion and take up our time. If there are Scriptures, or Scriptural arguments that unquestionably teach the one doctrine or the other, surely they should have our attention during the rest of the evening."

All eyes turned to the Doctor and Mabel. Each seemed waiting for the other. Finally Mabel spoke:

"So far we have discussed only one side of the question. I think I have successfully refuted the arguments produced to prove falling from grace, and I believe all such can be shown to be unsustainable by the Word of GOD. I have some arguments on the other side, proving final perseverance, that I believe are unanswerable."

"Produce your infallible arguments," said the Doctor. "We wish to hear them and will be quiet and listen."

There was sarcasm in this speech and a smile of contempt that made Mabel's face flush; but her eye flashed with determination. With a short pause she proceeded as follows:

"I preface my arguments with this statement: It is hardly to be presumed that GOD, who knows everything - knows the beginning and the end, knows who will be saved and who will not, it is not to be presumed that He would undertake to save a soul when He knew He would not be able to do so. Men do not undertake to do what they know they will not be able to accomplish."

"GOD is forever trying to save men," interrupted the Doctor.

"This is not listening silently," was the cutting remark of Mr. Tibbs.

The Doctor bit his lip and Mabel proceeded:

"Does GOD undertake to do what He knows He cannot? I do not believe He is guilty of such folly as this. What does He do for one in saving him and bringing him to Heaven? He convicts him of sin, leads him to repent, by His mighty power works in him to believe; i. e., He

regenerates him, washes him in the blood of CHRIST and renews him by the power of the HOLY SPIRIT, adopts him into His family and works with him for years and years, knowing all the while the man will finally get away from Him and be lost! The thing is incredible and unreasonable. It is also unscriptural, for Paul declares: **'He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.'** (Philippians 1:6).

1. But my first argument is this: That which is produced in regeneration is immortal. Peter says **'the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible.'** (I Peter 3:4). Again, **'being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever'** (I Peter 1:23).

Now that which is incorruptible cannot be corrupted. So there is something about one born again that remains pure forever. Surely that will be saved. There is, if possible, a still stronger passage on this point: **'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, because he is born of God.'** (I John 3:9). Also in I John 5:18: **'We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not.'**

"Do you mean to say that Christians do not sin?" inquired the Doctor. "If so, I emphatically dispute it. Peter dissembled and sinned years after he became a Christian and even an Apostle; Paul acknowledged that he sinned and was made miserable."

"You need not argue that point, Doctor," interrupted Mabel.

"We agree with you; we all sin daily. But we must admit there is something about the one born again that does not sin and cannot sin. Do you admit it, Doctor?"

"Well,-well,-ye-yes," he replied.

"Well, can that part be lost?" she asked.

"Why, why,-I-I reckon not," he replied.

"Well, that part of the Christian holds out and gets to Heaven," she added.

"What part is that?" inquired Mr. Tibbs.

"It is that part," replied Mabel, "that is born again. That is the soul, the spiritual part of man. So JESUS said to Nicodemus, who thought JESUS meant a fleshly birth: **'That which is born of Spirit is spirit.'** (John 3:6). So the soul will get to Heaven whatever becomes of the body."

"Do the Scriptures teach," asked Arthur, "that our bodies are not born again?"

"Certainly," replied Mabel. "Our bodies are unchanged when we are converted; they just have the bridle put on them, by which they may be managed. Read Romans 7:15-25. There is no promise of new fleshly natures till CHRIST makes His second Advent (I Corinthians 15:51, 52 and Philippians 3:20, 21)."

"I declare this a strong point made, a point made out beyond dispute, that the soul is not only

saved but safe, eternally safe," said Mr. Tibbs, who seemed to find comfort in the doctrine. "What is the next argument, Miss Clement?" he asked.

"2. GOD's over-ruling Grace and Providence make everything that befalls the Christian do him good."

"Nonsense," exclaimed the Doctor. "Such a statement is mere moonshine, it is extravagant tomfoolery! The statement that nothing harms or hinders the Christian is contrary to all Scripture and all human observation and experience."

"If I believed that doctrine," added an auditor, - "that everything does the Christian good, I would live as I please."

"A Christian would not," replied Mabel; "he tries to live as GOD pleases. Notice, I do not say all things work out for the best to the Christian. The Bible does not say that. It would be better for the Christian, if many things did not happen to him, if many things were not done by him. But GOD's Word does say: '**All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose**' (Romans 8:28). Now will the Doctor dispute it?" And she eyed the Doctor inquiringly.

The confused Doctor remained silent.

"Will he dispute it?" she repeated, tantalizingly.

"No," he replied, while his cheeks mantled with the embarrassment of defeat.

"Then," said Mabel, triumphantly, "if everything does him good, what will make him fall?"

"Nothing," said Brother Jones, "there's nothin' left to make him fall,"

"This proves the Christian holds out, or is held out to the end," added Mabel. "He of whom, to whom and through whom are all things will not suffer His purpose to be thwarted by anything really adverse to us; He will make all, the dark as well as the light, the evil as well as the good, work together for good to His people. This is a wonderful statement; some one has said: 'Here is universal activity, all things work; and universal harmony, all things work together; and universal benevolence to GOD's people, all things work together for good to them that love GOD: Beside, Paul follows this by declaring that whom He foreknew He predestined, whom He predestined He called; whom He called He justified and whom He justified He glorified (Romans 8:29,30). This takes a sinner step by step from his lost state all the way to glory.

If this leaves any loop-hole to wriggle out of final perseverance, or preservation, I am not able to see it."

The Doctor's face betrayed his dismay and defeat. The faces of Arthur and Mr. Tibbs were radiant with satisfaction. The Methodist brother hung his head in significant silence. No one dared to touch the argument, or dispute the conclusion. So Mabel continued.

"3. The union of the believer with CHRIST cannot be dissolved.

'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?' Paul mentions the things most likely to separate us, if anything would, then adds, 'Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Romans 8:35-39).

'Hallelujah! who shall part
CHRIST's own church from CHRIST's own heart,
Sever from the Saviour's side
Souls for whom the Saviour died;
Dash one precious jewel down
From Immanuel's blood-bought crown."

"What is it that keeps us - is it our love and power that enables us to persevere?" inquired Mr. Clement.

"No," Mabel replied; "our salvation does not depend on our feeble selves. We are held by Divine love. JESUS taught that GOD loves His people as He loves His Son, (John 17:23) and declared:

'As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you' (John 15:9).

That is a great love with which the Father loves the Son; and both the FATHER and the SON love us with such a love. This eternal love holds us and watches us with unslumbering vigilance.

Suppose you were to see your child going to gather fruit or flowers where is coiled a deadly serpent. Could you be still? No! You would spring to its rescue. Well, GOD is a better father than you are and He cannot see His poor child going on to death without coming to its rescue. Again, we are held by Divine power. We do not have to keep ourselves. If we did, we would fall in less than fifteen minutes. Some poet has said truly:

'If ever it should come to pass
That sheep of CHRIST should go astray,
My fickle, feeble soul, alas!
Would fall a thousand times a day.'

Peter declares **'we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.'** (I Peter 1:5). And JESUS says of His sheep: **'I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them Me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.'**" (John 10:28,29).

"These Scriptures," said Arthur, "are not only convincing, but are full of comfort. I rejoice in them."

"The exposition of these passages," said the Doctor, "is altogether faulty, and the doctrine

advocated is dangerous. Convince men they are absolutely safe and they will become careless and their Christian life will be an exceedingly poor and unfruitful one. I do not want my people to believe it."

"Whether it is good or not to believe it," responded Mr. Tibbs, "depends on whether or not it is Scripture."

"The Doctor's reason is a fallacy. The whole drift of his argument is mere sophistry. Does a belief in this doctrine, admitted to be so full of comfort, make Christians careless about the manner of their lives? Are the Christians who believe it less consistent and less faithful in their effort to live the Christian life? I am sure a critical examination of the denominations will prove the contrary. Besides, those who are impelled to work by the fear of being lost are working from the wrong motive; they work to keep from being lost, to be saved, or keep themselves saved. Such a life is wholly selfish. On the other hand, we work because we love GOD and for His glory. This life is unselfish and enabling. The one life is for self; the other is for GOD. Judge you which is the better and safer."

This speech of Mabel seemed to gag the Doctor, for it completely silenced him on this point. In fact, he seemed to realize that all the fine feathers in which he so exulted were plucked away; and that he who for years had been the pride and pet of his people was losing caste.

"I am giving up my long cherished position," said Mr. Clement. "I cannot tell why I loved to believe in a fall. I see now there is no comfort in it, and I am glad, if it is not true. Have you other arguments, daughter?"

"Yes, father, there are many more. I will add one more.

"4. The Promises secure the believer in CHRIST. CHRIST gives His people eternal life and says: '**They shall never perish.**' (John 10:28). Again, He says the believer '**shall not come into condemnation.**' (John 5:24). These are both false, if the believer is ever lost. The Old Covenant did not secure the Lord's people. So CHRIST made a New one in its place, established on better promises. (Hebrews 8:6)

According to this New Covenant He says: '**I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.**' (Hebrews 8:10). He also declares: '**I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.**' (Jeremiah 32:40). Here is a double promise, - a promise that GOD will not turn away from His people and that they shall not depart from Him. This is security doubled up; it is safety doubly sure. Who can say now that the Christian does not hold out to the end?"

"No one," exclaimed Mr. Tibbs; "if he does I will dispute it, tell him he does not believe the Word of GOD and overthrow his arguments with the New Covenant."

The blood rushed to the Doctor's face, and he was on the brink of uttering angry words; but he did not.

"There is one more promise," added Mabel, "I wish to speak of. It filled me with comfort while studying it. It is in Hebrews 13:5: '**For He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.**' There are five negatives in this promise. Dr. Doddridge paraphrases it thus: 'I will not, I will not leave thee; I will never, never forsake thee.' Two negatives in English destroy each other and are equal to an affirmative; but it is not so, we are told, in the Greek. Every negative that is added strengthens the negation. Why did the Lord pile one negative on another till He had put five into this promise? It is because He meant to be understood about this matter and wished to be believed. He knew how prone His people would be to fear He would abandon them for their sinfulness; so He multiplied the negatives till He had quintupled the assurance that He will never leave nor forsake His people. George Keith has put this promise in verse which we often sing:

""The soul that on JESUS hath leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not, desert to his foes;
That soul tho' all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no, never, no, never, forsake.""

All listened to the exposition of this promise by the beautiful girl, whose heart had evidently found a well of comfort in it - listened with rapt attention. It seemed to cast a spell of quiet thoughtfulness over the company that no one was inclined to disturb. The promise had soothed and cheered the Christian heart.

The silence was broken by Arthur: "Are there not cases of apostasy recorded in the Scriptures?"

"Yes," answered the Doctor; "David, Solomon, Peter, Alexander, Hymaneus and a host of others fell away. GOD's promises are only to the faithful: '**Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.**'"

"But GOD promises," replied Mr. Tibbs, "that His people shall be faithful: that '**they shall not depart from me.**' How, sir, can you get around that?"

This fired the Doctor and made him very indignant; but he checked his choler. The speaker did not seem to care if his burning words did make the Doctor huffy. He, too, was indignant because the Doctor had done him and others an almost irreparable injury by his unscriptural teaching.

"It is true," added Mabel, "they fell away; but they did not fall from grace. The fall of David, of Solomon, of Peter, was not total, for they all after their fall became eminent servants of GOD. The others never had any grace. There are a great many falls that are not falls from grace. And this is the way apostasy is accounted for in the Scriptures; the apostates were not genuine Christians; they were only such by external profession.

So John says of such: '**They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us**' (I John 2:19). These are the people that permanently backslide; they were nominal, but not real Christians, and their turning back to their old ways is proof of this fact."

"I give it up; falling from grace, so as to be lost, is unscriptural, and final perseverance is the teaching of GOD's Word," said Mr. Clement.

"Every other Baptist position," said Mr. Tibbs, "seems to be right also. My friends, we have been wrong in nearly all our views of Scripture. I cannot think now of anything in which we have been right except immersion. If ever a man was convinced that Campbellism is unscriptural and Baptist doctrine and practice are Scriptural, I am the man."

Mr. Tibbs had risen to his feet to make these statements. He sat down, his eyes filled with tears and his voice choked with emotion. The Doctor's cheeks burned with indignation, but he spoke not. Silence prevailed. The end of the discussion was reached and some of the immediate results were apparent.

After a moment, during which all lips seemed sealed, Arthur Manly arose. He showed signs of being filled with deep emotion and said: "My friends, I feel it to be a duty I owe to my Saviour and to you to say that my Scriptural views have undergone a radical change during this discussion."

"At the beginning I was only a nominal Christian, confident, however, that I was a real and true one. I trust now I am one in truth, having been converted some nights ago. The change I experienced cannot be described by me now. Suffice it to say, it was entirely new to me, a joy and peace I had never felt before. Believing I had joy unspeakable and full of glory. And now a sense of duty constrains me to say I must leave my present moorings and seek admittance to a Baptist church.

"No one in this assembly, Dr. Stanly not excepted was farther from this at the opening of this discussion than I was. I was sure Miss Clement was wrong, felt pained that she had strayed from the faith of her father and mother and from what I firmly believed was the faith of the Bible; and I hoped she would be reclaimed. But she has shown we are wrong.

"I have been led gradually and against my will to believe what I now believe. I had never in life bestowed any study on these doctrines, contenting myself to believe what my pastor preached. Searching the Scriptures has made a thorough Baptist of me. I am unconscious of a single doubt that they are right, and I turn to them heartily, joyfully and forever."

These remarks had a thrilling effect upon the almost breathless audience. Mr. Clement announced the purpose of himself and wife to join the Baptists.

"Well, brethren," said Brother Jones, "we've been together a long time and I reckon we oughtn't to part now. So I guess I'll bear you company; that's so, sure."

Others expressed themselves similarly. Then the meeting adjourned *sine die*.

~ end of chapter 20 ~
