

RESIST THE DEVIL.

"Be ye angry and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath; neither give place to the devil." – Eph. 4:26.

This text has been misconstrued and very generally misunderstood. The common idea of what constitutes saintship is a life in which patience and calmness are about the only graces. The above text, among others, is supposed to favor a condition of drowsy indifference, frequently misnamed patience. Those who hold such views of saintship gauge their Christian standing by their ability to have no feeling upon any subject. To such, "overcoming" means in substance bridling their tongues and feelings – or never getting angry.

We protest against this as another of the adversary's soothing drugs to lull the saints to sleep when they should be awake and on the watch. This is not the overcoming referred to in Scripture, and those who think so are deluding themselves, and need to be waked up, that they may "finish their course with joy" (Acts 20:24).

Do not misunderstand us. We recognize patience as one of the Christian graces – a grand quality – but it is not the chief grace; it is not the ruling or controlling grace. And patience ceases to be a grace entirely when exercised towards wrong and injustice. No, "brotherly kindness," godlikeness and charity (love) are all its superiors, and as such should control it (1 Cor. 13:13). Paul mentions three of the chief graces, saying: Now abideth faith, hope and charity (love), but the greatest of these is LOVE.

Yes, LOVE is the chief grace, and should control all who are Christ's. This accords with Jesus' saying, "A new commandment I give unto you that ye LOVE one another." And when explaining what would fulfill all the law, he explained that it would be Love to

God and to men. Amen. Then let the grace of LOVE rule, for "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." [R439 : page 2]

But again, we must object to what is usually called LOVE. Love, scripturally considered, is not that easy-going indifference which, while self is comfortable, merely says: "I wish you no harm, and hope you'll find things to your liking" – which calls everybody brother and sister, and delights to be thought very broad and liberal on all subjects. No, scriptural love is of a far less general character than this. Less of the general "good luck" and more of the particular and careful love.

Jesus and the Apostles recognized the grace of love as a special thing. Jesus loved all mankind – not in the sense of wishing them no harm, but to the extent that he "tasted death for every man." But among men he had his special loves. "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus" (John 11:5). And among his disciples there was both "that disciple whom Jesus [specially] loved" (John 21:7), and the "devil," or adversary, Judas (John 6:70).

It should be recognized by all who study the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles that love was in them the controlling principle. First, love to God; second, love to the Church; third, love to all men. Jesus' love for the Pharisees did not hinder his exposing their true character, for he loved more the truth and the earnest, humble Israelites, indeed, who were seeking for truth. Hence his scathing rebukes to the nominal Jewish Church and to the error-blinded doctors of divinity of his day, whose teachings were misleading the people. Jesus' words of rebuke: "Ye blind guides," "hypocrites," etc., were doubtless supposed to be un-loving, harsh and impatient expressions, but we can see that love was the principle which controlled him and prompted those remarks – love for truth and for the truthseekers – true Israelites.

When Paul (mildly?) said to a certain one, "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" (Acts 13:10), some would say Paul lost his patience and sinned, and that he allowed his love to give way to anger at having his teaching interfered with, etc. But we claim that true LOVE was the cause of the anger – love for truth, love for God, whose ambassador he was, and love for the people who were being deceived by the error. This view is sustained by the preceding verse, which says Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit when he uttered these sharp words of rebuke. Note, also, other similar expressions of Jesus and the Apostles: Matt. 23:13-33; 16:23; Gal. 2:11; Phil. 3:18.

"BE YE ANGRY."

This is the counsel of Brother Paul; but "let not the sun go down on your wrath"; that is, let not your anger amount to bitterness, malice, hatred, but let it be only such as is controlled by love. "Neither give place to the devil." Let not truth fall in the streets and error triumph over it. Every loyal soldier should lift high the royal standard of truth and right and valiantly defend it.

Is it an evidence of saintship never to be angry? It is rather a sign of imbecility and lazy carelessness, for no one can live in the present age, in which the prince of this world (Satan) has control, without finding just cause, and that which should arouse a righteous indignation. Injustice and wrong should be met with indignation and rebuke by God's true children.

If, as we pass through the streets, we see a dumb animal unjustly and wantonly abused, we should, if we possess a spirit of justice, feel angry. What action we should take depends on circumstances. If we are able to rebuke the offender, it should be done. It would be sin not to do so; it would be giving place to the devil. And if right to be angry over injustice done to a dumb brute,

how much more sinful to give place to the devil by allowing injustice or wrong to be done to a fellow human creature! And if our love prompts to defend these, how much should LOVE to God prompt us to **CONTEND** earnestly for truth and to reprove error, especially such errors and perversions of his word as would tend to overthrow the faith of God's children!

But beware. Note the word of caution: "Be ye angry and sin not." Anger prompted by love should be controlled by love. It must know no malice nor bitterness toward the individual who offends. Righteous indignation or anger, while it will pointedly and forcibly "reprove" and "rebuke," will yearn to see penitence and repentance.

The danger is in extremes. Some get angry to the extent of bitterness and personal hatred. We are cautioned against this sinful extreme, as well as against the other sinful extreme of giving place to the devil and permitting personal expediency, or convenience, or indolence, to hinder us from nobly upholding the right.

GOD'S ANGER.

We should notice that anger, though always having the same signification, viz., displeasure and opposition, will lead to various actions, according to the nature of the being exercised by it.

When we speak of an angry beast, it calls to mind the idea of mad ferocity and destructive, unreasoning rage. So, if we speak of an angry man, the impression of the effect of anger will depend on the extent to which the man is depraved.

A perfect man could be angry at evil or injustice and his anger would be controlled by reason, justice and love. The more depraved the being, the more unreasonable and unjust will be his anger and the expression of it.

If we think of a Christian as one filled with the spirit and love of truth and right, and under control of Christ's example and teaching, as being angry, we will conclude at once that his anger is a Godlike displeasure and opposition to something wrong, and that the anger is both caused and controlled by LOVE.

So, when we think of an angry God, we look to his general character and nature in order to learn what effect anger would have on him and how he would deal with those with whom he might be angry. When we come to know Jehovah's character – that He is love, very pitiful and of tender mercy, and that justice is the foundation of his throne – it assures us that all of his dealings must be in harmony with these elements of his character. Thus we see, that though repeatedly expressed in Scripture, "God is angry with the wicked," yet his anger is not the anger of injustice or malice, as of depraved men and devils, but an ANGER, displeasure, or opposition inspired by the LOVE of right and love for the creature which is injured by wrong and sin.

God's anger, too, must be controlled by his justice and love. The punishment for sin must be neither more nor less than right – a just punishment.

Now glance hastily at God's dealings with our representative Adam. God placed him on trial with the very simple arrangement that if he lived in harmony with, and obedience to, his Maker, he might live forever, and if he disobeyed he should die – lose his life and all right to it. How just this arrangement! God gave him life, and certainly had not only the power but the right to withdraw the life and allow the man to become extinct – "as though he had not been." This would be a reasonable punishment, yet a great loss, as Adam found, when, after enjoying life for a season, by a dying process, he finally lost it. Love could agree to this verdict of justice, because a

life out of harmony with God must bring ever increasing trouble on the man and on his descendants.

God's love and justice thus agreed to the penalty – cutting off from life the rebel who otherwise would have increased his own misery, yet it is apparent to all that malice or bitterness toward his creature is not shown. Nor could God be so, since his character is love. We have elsewhere shown that after having justly sentenced man to death – taken from him all right to live – God in LOVE marked out a plan by which whosoever will may again have life by a resurrection from the dead. This plan, as already shown, does not SET ASIDE the justness of God's opposition and displeasure and sentence of death on the sinner, but vindicates his justice and love by permitting the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world by giving his life a ransom (equivalent price) for all.

How grossly Jehovah's character has been misrepresented and his anger misunderstood for malice and bitterness by nearly all the nominal Churches of to-day! It is generally agreed, except by Calvinists, that Jehovah had none but good designs toward his human son Adam when he made him perfect and upright and placed him in Eden. When Adam sinned, all are agreed that God was angry, displeased, or opposed to his creatures. But more, it is claimed that his malice and hatred pursued them even beyond the tomb, and that when they died Jehovah exerted special power and continued their lives in some other place, generally called a "lake of fire" (by those who do not understand that expression in the book of symbols – Revelation). There, it is claimed, Adam has been kept in torture for over five thousand years.

All will agree that no being could continue to burn so long without burning up; but it is claimed that God has become so angry about the sin that he will keep Adam alive forever in order to torment him. No one can assume that justice would require such a penalty for

Adam's transgression, and certainly love finds no place in such dealing. Nay, more, it would be, as all who can and do reason must admit, a gross injustice, and if it were true it would give the lie to every expression of the love and justice of God in Scripture. But this is all a dark nightmare, conjured in dark ages of Papal priestcraft and without foundation in the words of inspiration. **[R440 : page 2]**

What a blessed relief to awaken now in the morning dawn and see, as we now do, the justice and love displayed in the anger of the Lord – how all men were justly consigned to the state of death (sheol and hades, improperly translated hell in the Bible), and that because love has redeemed all, therefore all shall be resurrected and come back into life again (Rom. 5:18,19).

How blessed to think of such a God whose justice and love have been exemplified in both our condemnation and redemption.

Let us emulate our Father: "Be ye angry and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil."
