

LIGHT FOR THE RIGHTEOUS.

"Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." – Psa. 97:11.

Light is a most beautiful and fitting symbol for truth; and not only do the Scriptures so use it, but it is a symbol in common use to-day. Men frequently speak of the "light of our day," and in contrast speak of the ages past as "the dark ages;" they speak of the light of civilization, the light of truth, etc.; and that remarkable statue recently erected in New York harbor is an apt illustration of this symbol in present use. It represents liberty enlightening the world – liberty as an aid to the finding of light, truth. And truly as men gain liberty, and make proper use of it, truth on various subjects begins to open up, and brings with it its train of blessings. But liberty and light abused are as sure to sink those who abuse them, in deeper darkness and greater evils.

In the above text reference is made particularly to one certain class of truth, nevertheless we recognize it as a principle in the divine economy in dealing with mankind in general, that to the extent that men observe the principles of righteousness, they are correspondingly favored with truth and its attendant blessings.

The Scripture saith, "There is none righteous; no, not one." All mankind are unrighteous, they are under the penalty of death. But thank God, a redemption has been provided, and those who lay hold of it by faith, are justified, reckoned righteous in God's sight. And it is for these justified (reckonedly righteous) ones, who by faith have accepted the righteousness of Christ, and who in gratitude and love to God for such favor are endeavoring to live lives of obedience and faithfulness, that light is specially sown.

It is not for those who once by faith accepted of justification through the ransom, and who, simply consoling themselves with this

thought, straightway turned back to the world to revel with it and stifle all thought of responsibility. Truth is not for such, but for the righteous who not only thankfully accept the righteousness of Christ, but who go further and consecrate themselves to the divine service, their rightful, reasonable service. Only such grow in grace and in knowledge.

It is in the Word of God that this light for this special, justified and consecrated [R946 : page 6] class, is sown; and while the justified and sanctified of past ages enjoyed a measure of light, all that was then due, the justified and sanctified of this age have far greater privileges in this direction than any of former times; for in the ages past the light, the truth, was being sown for our special benefit. Unto the prophets, to whom so much truth was given, yet in such a way that but little of it was understood by them, it was revealed, in answer to their earnest searching, that not unto themselves, but unto *us* (the Gospel Church) they did minister (1 Pet. 1:12) – that the truth which God was sowing, through their instrumentality, was not then due, but was being sown for the righteous some centuries down the stream of time.

The faithful prophets were not left in darkness, however, to blindly grope their way along without special evidence of divine favor. They had their measure of light, and because faithful to it, great will be their advantage in the resurrection. And while it is true that a great storehouse of divine truth was prepared for the Christian Church through the instrumentality of the prophets of past ages, and while much more was added to it by the Lord and the Apostles, yet it has only been revealed by degrees, as the age advanced toward its termination; consequently the early church did not enjoy as great light as it is our privilege to enjoy to-day. Occupying our present position on the stream of time, it is the privilege of the Christian Church to enjoy such views of God's plans and doings as none before our day could possibly have. Yet only this special class, the righteous, are so privileged; and their continuance of the privilege is conditioned upon their faithfulness, both in searching for and in using the light.

It is a very noticeable fact that those who have been greatly blessed with light and have made no use of it, have not been privileged to retain it. The truth always brings with it its measure of responsibility, and to the extent that we measure up to that responsibility, more light is given. And *vice versa* – to the extent that we ignore that responsibility, further increase of light is denied, and the light that is in us, begins to wane.

If we accept the truth, and begin to act from its standpoint, very soon we find ourselves marked as peculiar, very different from the world, and very different too, from merely nominal Christians. This is as it should be. If this be your experience, brother or sister, go on; you are on the right track. But if you find yourself very much like other people, then take heed. Quite likely you are looking and acting from the world's standpoint, and not from the divine standpoint in which the truth has placed you.

You have made a covenant with God, and have received favors from him, which alter your position and responsibility entirely. Think of this: Let your mind run back to your earliest experiences as a child of God. When you first realized that *you* were bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ, that *you* were redeemed from death through faith in that blood, call to mind how your heart was filled with joy and praise to God for his loving favor toward a justly condemned sinner. And when you turned the sacred page on which you read your title clear to everlasting life, and read further the exhortation of our brother Paul – "This is the will of God, even your sanctification," – "Present your body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (1 Thes. 4:3; Rom. 12:1), you said, Yes, surely all that I can do to express my love and gratitude for such favor is at best but a poor return; and then on bended knees you said in all sincerity and fervency, Here, Lord, I give myself away; 'tis all that I can do.

Then you joined a church – as you supposed, a company of people all justified and consecrated like yourself. Your own heart was full of

warm, fresh zeal: you meant to do just what you had covenanted to do. Your heart's inquiry was very much like that of Brother Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Then the Lord began to show you what you should do, how you should make your life one worthy of imitation, how you should let the spirit of God rule in your heart, conforming every feature of your character to the principles of the gospel, how in eating, and drinking, and wearing of apparel, in manner and conversation, and home and business life, you should first of all be a living epistle known and read of all with whom you come in contact. Then he began to point out fields of usefulness in his service, which would afford you the privilege of cross-bearing.

But do you remember how the love that **[R946 : page 7]** was in your heart helped you to set a vigilant watch over yourself, and to bravely and cheerfully take up your cross and follow the Master? And as thus for a time you stepped along joyfully in the narrow way, you said, Yes, truly I am proving day by day that his yoke is easy and his burden light.

But by and by your first love began to cool a little, and turning your thoughts upon yourself you began to think, How weary I am! how much I have to suffer by conforming so strictly to these principles. No one thinks more of me for it. Why there is brother A. and sister B.; they don't seem to trouble themselves about cross-bearing; they do very much as others do; they look and talk and act very much as others do, except that they make long and seemingly very earnest prayers in public, and make themselves generally agreeable, particularly in the church. And they are considered the very cream of the church, and most devoted Christians. As you looked around a little further, you noticed that nearly all were doing just so, except perhaps a poor old saint very generally overlooked, or else considered an extremist or a fool, unworthy of respect and attention. And verily you began to feel that you also were losing ground in their estimation. Why, surely, you thought, these are good Christians, and you must have taken an extreme view of your obligation to God. As you thus looked more and more at the examples of those around you,

and less and less at the Word of God and the noble example of the Lord and the apostles, your own zeal became cold and you concluded that your first impressions of the Christian life must have been erroneous.

But they were not erroneous; they were right, and were derived from the right source, the Word of God, and should have been followed regardless of consequences. You would have had plenty of cross-bearing, but your Christian character would to-day be much stronger and more symmetrical. But thank God, he considered your unfavorable surroundings, and that while you were still willing to follow him, your flesh was weak; and so he sent you a special message of meat in due season which wonderfully awakened and encouraged you. Wonderful love! Do you suppose the Lord would so tenderly call you by his grace, and encourage and help you, if he did not desire to make you his bride? Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, O favored one, to whom God has granted present light, and forget not that if thou wilt prove faithful unto death, faithful is he that hath called you, who also will exalt you in due time, according to his promise. – 1 Thes. 5:24.

Take for your examples the noblest runners on this course. They looked not at the things behind, to pine and fret for those things they had covenanted to sacrifice, but walked according to the light they had. Consider, for instance, the daily life of Jesus after his consecration: While with his unequalled abilities as a man he might have had the esteem and honor of his fellow men, and while he might have had an honorable fame throughout the world, and while he might have spent time in accumulating wealth, and in the gratification of other legitimate earthly ambitions, he turned aside from all these and chose the life of continuous service of his Father esteeming it a privilege to preach the gospel to one or two or many, as opportunity might offer. With it came reproach, poverty, persecution, ingratitude from those he benefitted, and finally death by ignominious crucifixion.

Then look at our beloved brother Paul: With all his talents and advantages of birth and education, his worldly prospects were fair, but

he resolutely curbed all ambitions in that direction. And when he inquired, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" he conferred not with flesh and blood, but set himself at once to doing what the Lord directed. And though the Lord said he would show him how he must suffer great things for his name's sake, Paul counted the sufferings as not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall follow, though as yet he only saw that glory by faith. Truly, Paul suffered great things, but mark how he rejoiced even in those sufferings. When he and Silas were publicly beaten and then cast into prison, did they complain and say, they had had about enough of this, that some of the other apostles up there at Jerusalem ought to come out now and take their turn, that he was getting old and it was about time for him to settle down and take care of number one, he couldn't stand this kind of thing much longer?

No, you never heard a word of that kind from Paul. He had no notion of giving up, or of resting on his oars; he had learned the valuable lesson of contentment in whatever condition duty required him to be in (Phil. 4:11). Nay, more! he had learned to rejoice always, and in every thing to give thanks; and so he rejoiced even in tribulation, and sung for joy even in prison. The light of God's truth received in unfaltering confidence gave him a joy which the world could neither give nor take away. And no amount of persecution stopped Paul from rejoicing; for he remembered that all the sufferings endured for Christ's sake, work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

But he warns us, that if we would so run as to obtain the prize of our high calling, if we would receive the light of divine **[R947 : page 7]** truth and walk accordingly, we must look, not at the things which are behind, which we have covenanted to sacrifice, but at the things which are before, and which are yet unseen, except by the eye of faith.

To look back is one step, and a long one, towards ignoring and breaking our covenant. It is the first step in unrighteousness, and if not quickly retraced, it will sooner or later lead to darkness and apostacy;

and the joy and peace we once experienced in believing will be taken away. He that looketh back is unfit for the Kingdom. – Luke 9:26,62.

We cannot too strongly urge upon God's covenant people their duty and responsibility in view of the light they have received – the duty of living for the heavenly things, and using the earthly things only as necessary aids in the divine service; the duty of viewing every matter of an earthly character from the standpoint in which the truth has placed us, from God's standpoint; the duty of acting promptly upon our convictions, and thereby giving no advantage to the adversary; the duty of enduring toil and persecution in the Master's service with uncomplaining meekness and joyful thanksgiving for the privilege; the duty of preaching the truth at any cost and at any sacrifice.

Light was indeed carefully sown centuries ago for the righteous, and it is now being most gloriously revealed to those for whom it was sown; but take heed, ye that have received it; for if through unfaithfulness the light that is in thee be turned to darkness, how great is that darkness! The messengers of darkness were never so active as in this "evil day," to overthrow the faith of the consecrated children of God; and never were their methods so subtle and so deceptive. Truly, they are calculated to deceive *if it were possible the very elect*. But thank God, that is not possible. The elect are those who faithfully, carefully study to know the will of God and are very earnest and faithful in doing it. Take heed that you make your calling and election sure.

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