

## THE SAINTS AS LAW STUDENTS.

"Let your speech be always with grace seasoned with salt."  
– Col. 4:6.

The whole world is full of suffering; and the more we partake of the spirit of our Lord, the more will our sympathies be drawn out toward the suffering ones around us and cause us to measurably forget our own. And while our present chief business is not to devote special time and attention to the temporary amelioration of present suffering, we rejoice that the time is coming, and that at no distant day, when that will be our chief business, – when with a strong hand which no opposer can stay, we shall be able to help all. With this end in view we rejoice in the present preparatory work, in which we are engaged as co-workers with our Lord – the developing and harvesting of the Church, the body of Christ, which, together with our Lord and Head, is to be the Seed of Abraham which was promised to bless all the families of the earth.

Though this preparation for a future work for the world is not at present appreciated by the world, and does not directly alleviate its present suffering, yet it is the grandest and most important movement in this direction which can at present be made.

And it is to the direct and indirect influence of this consecrated class, preparing for the great future work, that all present benevolent and philanthropical enterprises are due. The truth concerning God's great and loving plan, and the spirit of that truth reflected upon the world, are the moonlight of the present dark night and the promise of coming sunlight in the Millennial day of blessing.

Every educator well knows that if his school is to be a success it must have an educated, disciplined and competent faculty to take charge of the various departments of the work. If the crude,

undisciplined and uneducated were placed in such positions, the institution could only imperfectly bless those under its charge. If such an institution were contemplated and no such faculty could be found, its work could not begin, nor its blessings be felt, until the faculty were first selected and prepared for the work. And this work, though it might have little direct or present bearing upon the prospective pupils of that institution, would be the most necessary work for their future welfare. And any side issues which would detract from, or delay this preparatory work, would be detrimental to the great work of general education designed to be accomplished by the proposed institution.

Just so it is with the work now before the church. The great "Prophet," or Teacher of the world under the New Covenant, the Christ, head and body, must first be developed and exalted to his position, before the work of instructing, training and educating the world up to perfection can really begin. We must not expect the world to understand or appreciate our present work; for that is as impossible as for an infant to appreciate a parent's plans for its future good. We, as children of God approaching maturity, have been taken into our Heavenly Father's confidence, and have been shown his plan for the blessing of his entire family in heaven and in earth, and have been privileged to become co-workers with him in carrying out that plan. As the scope of the plan is so broad and comprehensive, it is necessarily of slower development than those would suppose who have narrow, contracted views. The world, and Christians who keep the world's standpoint of observation, have no wider plans for the blessing of others than those bounded by the narrow limits of the present life, while God's plan stretches on into eternity and is for the thorough reformation and eternal blessing of all. Its foundations are therefore laid broad and deep, so as to last eternally, and every step of the plan is accomplished with unerring wisdom.

As co-workers together with our Lord, we are permitted to assist in the gathering and developing of the various members of the body of Christ, building one another up in the truth, and in the spirit of it. And

in this very work of assisting one another, come up all those principles of the divine law, by which the whole world is to be governed when the kingdom of God is established in the earth. As children of God, therefore, called to be of that little flock which shall judge both angels and men, we should be constant students of divine law. We should not only acquaint ourselves with its surface meaning, but also with its great underlying principles and all their ramifications, as they apply to the practical affairs of life; and our own course should be ruled accordingly, however squarely in opposition to current opinions it may run.

While in the flesh we have to deal with the questions which confront the rest of mankind with regard to our duties in the various relations of life – our duties to God and to each other, as members of society, and as husbands, wives, parents and children. When the law of God and its underlying principles are carefully studied, it will be found to touch every contingency which can arise, and to point out the narrow path of duty in every emergency. No question of duty is too mixed and complicated for God's law to unravel and justly settle, if appealed to with studious effort. And if we make a study of that law, we will not only find the solution of all the perplexing questions in our own experience, but we will have a fund of information which may be of great service to others in times of trouble and perplexity, whether of the church or of the world, when they come to us for sympathy and advice. Our own human judgment in many cases would be very imperfect, being biased by our ignorance, or prejudices, or our natural dispositions; but if we are law students under the great Teacher we will be able to say, Thus and so is the law of God on this subject, and as it applies in this particular case. Neither our own affairs, nor the affairs of others who seek our counsel, should be decided upon by the impulse of the moment, but always with a careful consideration of the law of God on the subject. Thus may our speech be always "with grace seasoned with salt." Salt is a preserving element keeping that which is good from decay and putrefaction. And just so, the influence of wise and well instructed saints tends to the preservation of everything that

is good; and their counsel and sympathy will assist and encourage every earnest seeker after righteousness. And if their own lives and affairs are continually governed by the high principles of true Christianity, they are living epistles known and read of all men.

As intelligent creatures of God, we stand related in some sense to the entire family of God in heaven, and in earth. Our very existence has brought us into these relationships, with all their corresponding privileges and obligations, and as intelligent beings it should be our desire and effort to learn the exact measure of privilege and obligation which these varied relationships involve.

To our great Creator, we originally stood related as children, and to all his intelligent creatures as brethren – brethren of the family of God, though not as great as our brethren the angels, who are of higher nature (Eph. 3:15): and to earthly creatures lower than human nature, we stood as rulers. When we became sinners, these privileges, blessings and relationships were canceled by our Heavenly Father's decree. As unworthy of life and its blessings, we were condemned to death. Thenceforth we were no longer recognized as children of God, or brethren of his family, but were regarded and treated as aliens and enemies until the death sentence should be fully executed upon us – until existence should terminate.

After our redemption by his grace, through the precious blood of Christ, and our acceptance of the same by faith, the former natural relationships are again recognized, though all their privileges are not enjoyed, nor all their obligations insisted upon, until the effects of the fall are fully overcome – until we are actually restored to perfection. Though again recognized by our Heavenly Father as sons and heirs through Christ, yet until actually perfect all communication with him must be through the name and merit of our Mediator, Christ, who represents us and our interests before the Father. All judgment is therefore now committed unto the Son of God who purchased us by his blood. (John 5:22.) Believers now, therefore, stand in a new

relationship to Christ, who becomes Lord and life-giver (a father) to those whom he purchased and proposes to restore out of condemnation and death to fellowship and life. Hence he is called the Everlasting Father. (Isa. 9:6.) And when the age of his reign is over, the restored ones will again recognize Jehovah as the great Father of all, and Christ as their Lord and Redeemer.

Thus far, no reference is made to the peculiar relationships of the church as new creatures in Christ. We wish first to consider the human relationships and their privileges and obligations, and then to inquire **[R1116 : page 6]** how the new conditions, into which we come by consecration during the Gospel age, affect our former relationships.

First then we inquire, What, in the way of privilege and obligation, is involved in our relationship to God as justified human sons? As justified human sons we come into possession of all the rights and privileges bestowed upon Adam, viz.: life and the dominion of earth – life in its blessed fulness, unmixed with any element of death, perfect health without an ache or a pain, life which will never terminate unless forfeited by misuse. To be given the dominion of earth, signifies the full enjoyment of every earthly good. The earth was made for man. "God created it not in vain, he created it to be inhabited" (Eccl. 1:4; Isa. 45:18) and enjoyed forever by a glorious race of perfect **[R1117 : page 6]** beings, to whose wants it will be perfectly adjusted when both they and it have attained his ideal perfection, which was at first illustrated in our progenitor, Adam, and his specially prepared Eden home. Then the whole earth shall blossom as the rose, and the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad. (Isa. 35:1.) The animal, the mineral, and the vegetable kingdoms will all be at man's command, to serve his pleasure and to supply his needs. And the laws of nature which govern their increase, and circumscribe their power and place, are so appointed, and, we are guaranteed, will so continue, as to forever minister to human necessities and happiness. Earth, air and water are teeming with blessings, constantly inviting man to prove by still deeper investigation their wonderful power to enhance his

comfort and pleasure. Delve into the mines, bore into the earth, dive into the waters, soar upon the wings of the wind, harness the electric currents, study and apply the divinely appointed laws of nature, and prove the Creator's power and will to bless his creatures. And as we lift our hearts in grateful praise for his goodness and love, let the smiling heavens again whisper to our hearts that "God is love;" for he has appointed the sun to bless us by day, and the moon and the stars by night.

And yet the half has not been told. Consider your own organism – how wonderfully made! not only your physical, but your mental organism, those wonderful mental faculties which answer to God's own glorious attributes – the will, the judgment, the reasoning powers, the conscience, the memory, the imagination, the aesthetic tastes, and the capacity for social enjoyment founded upon the love and appreciation of the good, the pure, and the beautiful. Then remember that all this capacity for happiness, as well as all the means of happiness within our reach, is God-given. We are not attempting now to account for the irregularities and miseries brought about by sin, we are merely considering the perfect condition of humanity, when fully justified, not only reckonedly, but actually, when as it is promised, there shall be nothing to hurt nor destroy (Isa. 11:9), when sin and its consequences will have been forever banished. And yet quite a measure of these blessings we are permitted to enjoy even now. We now taste and see that the Lord is good, but the fulness of his favor will be realized when he hath made all things new. – Rev. 21:5.

Then consider that all these blessings flow to us from purest love; that God created us for his pleasure, that he might have a father's delight in us as his children, that he might bestow upon us the wealth of his affection and bounty, and that he might find in us the corresponding satisfaction of filial love and gratitude. When we thus consider the object of our creation and the love and bounty of our Creator, love and gratitude spring up spontaneously in our hearts towards him who thus first loved us.

Some say, It is our *duty* to love God; but duty is not the word. We never love any person or any thing because it is our *duty* to love them. We love because we cannot help loving, because the object is worthy of love, good, beautiful, true, or in some way precious to us. A feeling of selfishness or gratification which springs from any other source, is not true love. Love is a pure and noble quality. By a law of our mental constitution, love springs up spontaneously for the good, the pure, and the beautiful in all who are right-minded. To love God, therefore, we need but to acquaint ourselves with his character and to meditate upon it. Therefore it is our duty to acquaint ourselves with God, and to meditate upon his goodness and favor toward us, and when he is fully known and appreciated, as he will be by the restored race, then will men love him voluntarily with all their heart, with all their mind, and with all their strength.

Thus the first commandment will be fulfilled; and the second, being like unto it and springing from a similar source, will be fulfilled just as spontaneously or naturally – "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Why? For a two-fold reason: First, All our neighbors are creatures of God, and therefore, like ourselves, objects of his love and care; and to love God with the whole heart, is to love all that he loves, for the same reason that he loves them. And secondly, the germ of the future perfect man, however now degraded by sin, must be a thing of great value when God gave his only begotten Son to redeem it; and therefore, every man for whom Christ died is worthy of love. However, from the very nature of the case, the creatures must always take a subordinate place to the great Creator in the affections of each other, when that upon which love is to be based is fully known and recognized.

The justified man's relationship, therefore, to the Creator, is that of a child to a father. His condition is that of *entire dependence* upon God for every thing, from least to greatest. And his wisdom and justice being faultless and infallible, his power omnipotent, and his love fathomless, our only safety and security is in implicit confidence and

obedience to his will in every matter, whether in our shortsightedness we can or cannot understand it as the expression of infallible wisdom, justice and love. We can safely trust such a Father, even where we cannot trace him.

It is because it is necessary for our good, and because it is the proper attitude in which filial love and gratitude should naturally place us, that God requires of his creatures implicit obedience. It is for the same reason that you as a parent require obedience from your children. And as you accept cheerful and prompt obedience from your children as the expression and measure of their love to you, so God measures our love to him. And since an enforced obedience is no expression of filial love or confidence, he has given to all his intelligent creatures freedom to either obey or disobey, that thereby he may prove them, and that thereby the eternal blessedness of all his loyal and obedient children may be established in the universal mutual love which shall bind and cement all hearts with the tenderest, most beautiful, and strongest cord – love.

Then our deepest and warmest affections, our profoundest gratitude, and our implicit faith and obedience, are due to our heavenly Father, and should be manifested in our conduct toward him in studious efforts to learn, and ambitious efforts to do, his will. On the first commandment, and the second which grows out of the first, hang all the Law and the prophets, said Jesus (Luke 22:40); for "love is the fulfilling of the law." – Rom. 13:10.

Having thus considered our relationship to our Heavenly Father, let us remember his words – that he would also have us honor his dear Anointed Son "even as we honor the Father:" not that he should take the Father's place in our affections, but that next to the Father, as the executor of his plan, he should receive the honor, love and praise of our hearts. To love and honor and obey him, not only for his personal character, and because of his great love for us, but also because he was the willing obedient agent of our Father in the execution of his



benevolent plan, is the natural outgrowth of deep love to the great Designer of the plan.

When we observe closely our relationship to God and all of duty and privilege which that relationship involves, we find that the same principles carried out, apply to all our relationships with each other. For the very same reasons that as children of God we should love, honor and obey him, children of earthly parents should love, honor and obey them. Their love and care and sacrifice and bountiful providence during the years of helplessness and ignorance, should ever be held in loving remembrance, and should be rewarded with gratitude, and with kindest attentions when their age and infirmities require it. And though the helplessness and ignorance of our early years, which necessitated our obedience to earthly parents until the years of maturity were reached, then no longer require subjection to parental authority, yet the duty of love and honor and grateful recognition and preferment, is never canceled.

So, likewise, when we observe God's attitude toward his children, we see the model for all parents to imitate. We see how love, justice, benevolence, generosity, economy, wisdom and prudence harmoniously work together for the good of his family. And as we study his plan and his methods for discipline, development, and culture, we have practical suggestions to parents for every emergency which can arise in the family. We have in his methods the example of love which never grows cold or indifferent and of firm justice which never bends; and the two always act in harmony. Let earthly parents study and copy the divine pattern; and let the children of earthly parents be taught to be grateful for all favors, from whatsoever source they come, and to recognize the principles of love, justice, benevolence and generosity, as manifested in God's dealing with us, and to act on them from earliest infancy.

It will be comforting, too, to perplexed earthly parents, the fruitage of whose best efforts seems to tarry long, to observe that time

is a large factor in the outworking of God's disciplinary measures. For six thousand years he has let his refractory children try and prove the futility of their own plans, before he attempts to force their submission to his, knowing that the rough experience is necessary to their final good; and looking forward to the end to be gained, he is undisturbed by present discords, and firm and unmoved in his unerring purposes.

The obligation, arising from the relationship of brothers and sisters, whether considered as bound by the narrow limits [R1118 : page 6] of the family circle, or the wider sphere of the whole family of God, is simply that of mutual love, as children of common parentage. And love worketh no ill to his neighbor, but delights to be gracious.

But alas! love does not reign in human society. Men do not generally consider the duties and obligations arising out of their varied relationships. Parents do not consider, children do not consider, and generally are not so taught, brothers and sisters do not consider; and so in all the other relationships. Men and women, from infancy up, are generally heady, high-minded, proud, boasters, and lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. And those who resolutely set themselves against the overwhelming tide of popular opinion, to live Godly, and if they have families to bring them up in the way of truth and righteousness, must ignore the opinions of others, and study and closely follow the divine law.

Let us now inquire, how the new conditions into which some come by special consecration, during the Gospel age, affect our relationships. Those whose ambitions are not now of an earthly character, but who are seeking the heavenly prize – the divine nature and joint-heirship with Christ – while they are in the world and have to do with the world, must ever bear in mind that *they* are not *of* the world, but that they are God's representatives in the world to faithfully carry out and exemplify the principles of his government in whatever position in life they may be placed, whether as parents or children, or

brothers and sisters, or members of society. They should not only exemplify the principles of the divine government, but should have such a clear understanding of them as to be able to fairly present them to any inquirer.

While we are in the world our business is the King's business, and all cares of an earthly character must be resolutely pushed aside, so far as may be consistent with the obligations we had assumed before we came into the Lord's service, so that all the time and energy we can possibly spare from the necessary duties of this life may be spent on the great work of preparation for our future work of teaching and restoring the world.

Our duties of an earthly character must be performed in exactly the same way that we would counsel the world to do, if they would heed our counsel. As parents and children and husbands and wives and brothers and sisters, our rightful obligations to each other are not canceled by our higher relationships as sons of God and heirs with Christ of the kingdom to come. But our duties must be limited by the *necessities* of ourselves and those dependent upon us.

Study and apply the principles of the divine law in all its bearings, both on the present and the future, and let your course be ruled accordingly and your counsel to others be drawn from it. "Let your words be always with grace, seasoned with salt." Ye are the lights of the world; let your light shine, as a beacon on a dark and stormy sea.

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