

WHOLESOME COUNSEL.

– SEPT. 20. – Prov. 16:22-33. –

Golden Text – "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death." – Prov. 16:25.

THE most important thought of this lesson is expressed in the Golden Text. It is a solemn warning against self-deception – against pursuing a course of conduct which is radically wrong, being opposed to the spirit and intent of the divine law, and yet which may be made to *seem* right by a line of false reasoning, suggested by the will of the flesh and apparently founded upon the Word of God, yet denying its fundamental principles of righteousness. The delusions of Satan also greatly help along such deceptions, and thus the blinded one is urged along in a course which seems to him to be right, but the end of which is death.

Christians should above all things guard themselves against the folly of this way. To do this, let us ever remember that, even though through Christ we have a reckoned standing of justification before God, the human heart which we still have is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9), and that it requires constant watching and purging to enable us to put in practice the Apostle Paul's rule, – In simplicity and godly sincerity have your conversation in the world. (2 Cor. 1:12.) To do this requires humility, sobriety, godliness. If the heart be puffed up with pride, or ambitious for vain glory, or if it be selfish, or in any measure intoxicated with the spirit of the world, then beware; for there is great danger of getting into that way that seemeth right, to a man *because* blinded by his own perverse will or fleshly mind.

The best safeguard which a Christian can have against the snares of Satan is that understanding which is here (vs. 22) described as "a well-spring of life unto him that hath it." Such understanding is not

merely that of the head, but of the heart specially; for, "With the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness," and "out of the *heart* are the issues of life." If the heart be wrong, the head will seek to justify it, and in so doing will pervert judgment and truth. Therefore, take heed, and "keep thy heart with all diligence."

Not only will the "wise and understanding heart" keep the feet in the paths of righteousness, but also "the heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips" (verse 23), so that he shall speak forth "words of truth and soberness," words of wisdom, of kindness and of love. How important that the fountain should be sweet, that thus the stream that issues from it may be healthful and refreshing to all within the range of its current! Truly, "pleasant words [of wisdom, of counsel and of loving kindness] are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones [in that they refresh and comfort and stimulate courage and thus fortify the soul and strengthen it to noble deeds]." – Verse 24.

How different is the picture of the ungodly man! (Verses 27-29.) "An ungodly man diggeth up evil [apparently finding a morbid satisfaction in searching for it], and in his lips there is a burning fire. A froward man *soweth strife*, and a whisperer separateth chief friends. A violent man enticeth his neighbor, and leadeth him into the way that is not good. He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips, he bringeth evil to pass." Thus, as Isaiah says, "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." – Isa. 57:20,21.

But blessed is the man that hath learned the right ways of the Lord and walketh therein with a perfect heart. Such a one, unlike the wicked who go about digging up evil, delights himself in doing good and in speaking forth the words of truth and soberness. He is slow to anger, and studies carefully how to rule his own spirit, which is surely a great work and worthy of the ambition and effort of every Christian. (Verse 32.) How blessed (vs. 31) are the closing years of a long life devoted

to this most worthy end of ruling one's own spirit in harmony with the principles and precepts of the Word of God; when, as Mr. Whittier has beautifully expressed it, –

"All the jarring notes of life
Seem blending in a psalm,
And all the angels of the strife
Are rounding into calm;"

and when the hallowed influences of ripened Christian graces are manifest to every beholder. Truly, "the hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness." But if not, it is but a monument of folly and its ripened evil fruitage is most undesirable.

The statement of verse 33 is to the effect that God's overruling power takes cognizance of even those things which men may regard as mere chance, and that nothing can come to pass without his knowledge and permission, **[R2038 : page 224]** and that eventually all things will be overruled to the accomplishment of his purposes.

SEPTEMBER 27, REVIEW LESSON.

Golden Text – "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it and is safe." – Prov. 18:10.

The earnest Christian of many years has had this assurance amply verified by blessed experience. Let those younger take heed, apply their hearts unto instruction, learn to trust the Lord with implicit faith, and he will make you also to realize the blessedness of this refuge, and the sweetness of abiding in him. Let the language of our hearts continually be, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee."
