

THE STANDPOINT OF THE FUTURE.

"Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." – Isa. 33:17.

IT is always the part of wisdom to regard the present from the standpoint of the future, and to regulate the conduct of the present with a view to worthy future possibilities. Any other conception of life, or any other course in life, is unworthy of the dignity of man and dishonoring to his Maker who endowed him with those mental qualities of reason and judgment which, if used, place him far above the plane of a mere animal life of present gratification. The beasts that perish may indeed properly live for the present only, but not so man who was created in the image of God, and with the possibilities of eternal life and everlasting bliss before him. Howbeit, though that image was marred by the fall, yet, having been redeemed from the fall, the full restoration of that image is made possible by the assistance of divine grace; and it is only in the endeavor, in harmony with the divine directions, to regain that image, by daily overcoming sin, that true manhood can be reasserted and maintained. Otherwise, if any man persist in ignoring the future possibilities of worthy manhood, and, like the beasts that perish, live only for present gratification, then, like the beasts, he too will be esteemed of God unworthy of eternal existence, and must die. This verdict, however, will not be passed upon any until divine love and mercy and discipline have utterly failed to impress upon the heart a true sense of the dignity of manhood, and the obligation of honoring God in rising to that dignity by his assisting grace.

But here the question arises, How far into the future shall we look to find the standpoint from which to view and properly estimate the things of the present? That, we answer, must depend upon circumstances. In some instances we need to look only an [R2087 : page 10] instant ahead; while in others a week, or a year, or a few

years, as indicated by the time necessary to develop the project. In infancy we learn by experience to look just a short distance ahead, reasoning that it is best not to put the hand into the fire, because the fire will surely burn again, as it did yesterday; that this or that disobedience will bring the censure of parents or teachers, while the opposite will bring approval; and by and by childish plans are formed and carried forward with a view to anticipated results in the near future. In maturer years wider plans are formed with a view to desirable results a few years hence; as, for instance, plans for fame, or fortune, or for the good of others – the training up of children to noble manhood and womanhood, etc.

In all this there is a measure of wisdom; but the man whose thought and planning, either for himself or others, is based upon the standpoint of the future of this life only, is not a wise man in God's estimation, however wise he may appear in the eyes of his fellowmen; as it is written, "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." (1 Cor. 3:19.) It is not, therefore, the standpoint of the future of this life only that should be a criterion of present valuation with those who would be truly wise, but the standpoint of a possible destiny in the life which is to come, and which may be eternal if we so wisely and prudently conduct ourselves as to prove worthy of eternal life. It is to the future standpoint of a possible eternal life and blessedness and to the glorious consummation of the divine plan, that the Scriptures invite the attention of all the people of God. We are shown that God has a wise and benevolent plan for all his creatures, both in heaven and in earth; that the plan is wide and deep, requiring ages for its fulfilment; that the victory of that plan is assured; that it will culminate in that glorious victory at the end of Christ's Millennial reign; and that its victory will be the victory of truth and righteousness.

The truly wise man is the man who takes all this into account, accepting by faith all of the divine revelation concerning it, who, in this faith, makes and pursues all his plans, both for himself and others,

with the ends of ultimate victory and eternal life in view; and who therefore seeks daily to become more and more established and confirmed in righteousness.

Such a man the Prophet Isaiah describes as one that "walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; that despiseth the gain of oppression [refusing to be profited by any unrighteous scheme]; that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes [that cannot, by any consideration, be bribed to do evil], that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood [from any scheme of oppression that would cause a brother's blood to cry unto God for vengeance], and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil [from beholding evil approvingly, or with quiet acquiescence.]" – Isa. 33:15.

Such a course of conduct is one squared by those principles of truth and righteousness to which ultimate victory is assured through Christ, whose reign of righteousness will fully establish them in the earth, so that the will of God will then be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Such a man, the prophet further assures us, is fireproof even in this day of trial, when the fire is trying every man's work of what sort it is. He shall dwell in the midst of the devouring fire and the lasting burnings of this day of wrath, which shall burn until all opposition to God and his righteous way is consumed. (Isa. 33:14.) And not only shall these, like the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace, come out of the flames without even the smell of fire upon them, but they shall come out of every such fiery trial triumphantly. "He shall dwell on high [in the place of divine favor]: his place of defence shall be the strongholds of rocks [in the Rock of ages]: bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure"; for "no good thing will God withhold from them that walk uprightly," even in this present life while they tread this valley of humiliation and vale of tears. – Vs. 16; Psa. 84:11.

It is to these also that the words of our text are addressed: "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." "The land that is very far off" is not visible to the natural

eye; but to the eye of faith, looking through the telescope of God's Word, it is a glorious vision. There is the King in his beauty reigning in power and great glory, and with him all his elect, crowned at his side. There is the happy condition brought about by the victory of truth and righteousness, when all tears are wiped away. There the will of God is done on earth as it is done in heaven, and peace and everlasting joy are upon all heads. There the hitherto desert earth blossoms as the rose; for there is no more curse. And there the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and a little child shall lead them; and there shall be nothing to hurt nor to offend in all that holy Kingdom. – Isa. 11:9.

O what a vision of rest and peace, of glory and blessing, of joyful fellowship, of deathless love, of unsullied purity and unending bliss! Who, but those who have caught a glimpse of its glory, can estimate its power to inspire to holy zeal, to earnest endeavor, and to patient endurance of all the losses and crosses of the path of discipline that leads to it? It is no matter of surprise that not all who name the name of Christ are filled with the inspiration of this blessed vision; for but few, even of those who theoretically know these things, really behold the vision, and by faith realize that they have a place in it. Only those who do the **[R2087 : page 11]** will of God can thus know of the doctrine, – as a guide and inspiration to the perfecting of holiness in the fear of the Lord. Only such can really see afar off with a realizing sense that what God hath spoken he is abundantly able also to perform. Only such can have the inspiration of such a faith. If thou art a faithful doer of the Word of God, and not a hearer only, then, even now "thine eyes" of faith shall catch the inspiration of the glory to be revealed, and thy steps shall be quickened in the paths of righteousness.

The Apostle Peter reiterates the same truth in a negative form, when, after enumerating the virtues of the truly righteous character, he adds, – "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off." (2 Pet. 1:9.) That is, he cannot see them as an inspiring and

impelling power, though he may know of them theoretically, and hold the truth even in unrighteousness. (Rom. 1:18.) It is only those who truly love righteousness, and whose daily walk and conversation are therefore in harmony with the principles of righteousness, who can be in any measure inspired with the vision of faith of the ultimate victory of truth and righteousness and its firm establishment in all the earth. Who is so blind to the glories of righteousness as the man who is out of harmony with any of its principles? Can he who glories in oppression rejoice in the assurance that "the oppressor shall cease," and that the gain of oppression shall perish? Can he who despises the truth rejoice in the promise that the knowledge of the truth shall fill the whole earth as the waters cover the sea? Can he who hates his brother rejoice in the assurance that none shall have eternal life save those in whose hearts is written the law of love? No; to thus by faith behold afar off the blessed land of rest and peace, all radiant with the glory of the King in his beauty (Rev. 21:11,23-25; 22:4,5), the heart must be in sympathy with that glory and that beauty of holiness. No matter how much we may know about it, we cannot thus see it, unless, as both the prophet and the apostle assure us, we are lovers of righteousness – doers of the word, and not hearers only. **[R2088 : page 11]**

There is a note of solemn warning in these words of the Apostle, which all would do well to carefully consider; for not only does he affirm that the one lacking righteousness cannot see afar off, but he further states that he is blind – blind even to things near as well as afar off. A little reflection will show how very true this is; for there is a philosophy in the course of life which constantly tends either toward ultimate perfection, or toward ultimate degradation and ruin, according as the ways of righteousness or sin are pursued. The two principles, good and evil, tend to exactly opposite results, and their opposite fruits mature on the philosophical principles of cause and effect. Consequently, as the Apostle declares, only a blind man, – a man mentally blinded or deceived so that he cannot perceive the fruits that must inevitably result from his course – could expect ultimate

good results from an evil course of life. Such a one is blinded by his prejudices and preferences: his judgment is warped so that he cannot see ultimate results, being infatuated with the present gratification of his desires.

Let all who now see the King in his beauty and the land that is afar off continue to feast their eyes on the glorious vision, that they may catch more and more of its blessed inspiration, and let our treasure and our hearts be there. And let us guard carefully against any perversity of will which would so pervert the judgment as to hinder us from continuing to see afar off, and so blind us both to present and eternal interests.

MRS. M. F. RUSSELL.
