

RELATIVE VALUES OF THE HEAVENLY AND EARTHLY TREASURES.

"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." – Luke 12:15.

THIS statement of our Lord reminds us also of the exhortation of the Apostle Paul, "Let us lay aside every weight, and run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus." All that the Lord's people have and are should be consecrated to their most efficient use in the divine service, according to their understanding of the teaching of God's Word. As we reflect upon it, how manifest it becomes that all earthly riches which are not consecrated to God are only weights and hindrances to the Christian. And not only so: it is not enough that our all be consecrated to God as an acceptable sacrifice; for if all be consecrated to sacrifice, and yet never subjected to the flames of the altar, of what avail is it, except as a broken vow to rise up against us in judgment?

Many, indeed, are foolish enough to think that abundance of possessions is the only thing worth living for; and when they are obtained they put their trust in these uncertain riches and forget God. Their time and attention are all engrossed and their interest absorbed in the accumulation and care of the earthly treasures, which shut out all nobler aspirations toward spiritual things. It is for this reason that the Lord cautions his people not to be overcharged with the cares of this life. It is right to be charged to the extent of our necessities, and also to the extent of the responsibilities of our stewardship in the Lord's service, to be provident and thoughtful, not only for ourselves, but also for others whom it may be in our power to assist; but to be charged is one thing, to be *over*charged is quite another. To be *over*charged is to permit corroding care and anxious solicitude to absorb our thought, our time, our interest, and so crowd out spiritual interests and spiritual aspirations.

In the discourse from which the above text is selected, our Lord was endeavoring to give to his disciples that amount of confidence in God which would enable them to cast all their care upon him, knowing that he careth for his children as a wise and loving parent, and that his tender mercies are over all his works. He drew illustrations from the sparrows, the ravens, the lilies of the field and the grass, showing that God had not forgotten nor failed in his care of even these comparatively insignificant things, then adding, How much more will he clothe and feed you, who are of more value than many sparrows. The very hairs of your head are all numbered, so minute is his knowledge of you. Do not be anxious about what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, or wherewithal you shall be clothed; for your Father knoweth that you have need of these things. Seek the Kingdom of God *and his righteousness*, and all these things shall be added [R2129 : page 99] [supplied as needed] unto you. Sell that you have, and do good with it, as wise and faithful stewards of your consecrated talents, and fear no want of any good thing in consequence; for "no *good* thing will the Lord withhold from them that walk uprightly."

What a blessed promise that is! Not only will he make all, even the adverse things, work together for good to them that love God, to the called according to his purpose, but he will not withhold any really good thing from us. Can we fully appreciate this tender, loving solicitude and watchful care for us personally? Can we understand how it takes cognizance of every interest, temporal and spiritual, and how, with wise and loving forethought, it maps out our present course and guides our steps in view of those eternal interests which at present we cannot fully comprehend? Perhaps we cannot fully do so all at once; but let us take it into consideration, praying for a clearer vision of [R2130 : page 99] the love of God, and by and by the blessedness of these promises will dawn upon us more and more; and we will begin to realize more fully than ever before that, having placed our all upon the altar of sacrifice, subject to the consuming flames of the altar, we thenceforth belong to that blessed "little flock" to whom our Lord addresses these comforting teachings, and whom he exhorts to loving,

patient faith, saying, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

Truly, those who follow the Lord's leading in this narrow way of sacrifice and of faith are only a little flock; for only a few thus apply their hearts unto instruction and wholly follow the divine direction. Consequently, only a few know the blessedness of the realization of the Lord's tender care. But to those who follow this leading there is a growing sense of his love which the daily walk with him deepens, confirms and sweetens as the years go by, and as experience makes plain the guidance of his loving hand. As one after another of the trials of life come, and we mark his overruling power, which caused even the adverse elements to work together for our good, faith takes deeper root and the character becomes more stable, sturdy and pleasing to God.

It is for this very purpose that the Lord permits us to be subject to the various vicissitudes of the present life, and that those who belong to the Kingdom of heaven suffer violence at the hands of an unfriendly world. There are lessons of immense value to be learned in this hard school of experience – lessons of faith, of fortitude, of heroism, of courage, of endurance, of meekness, of patience, of sympathy for the suffering, and of loving helpfulness to others. There are works of grace to be wrought out in us which only the hard experiences of life can accomplish. For instance, we would be inclined to lean too much to our own understanding, if we were not at times brought face to face with problems that baffle our skill. It is when we are "afraid to touch things that involve so much," that in our perplexity we come to him who has kindly said, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain thee," and ask him to undertake for us. Or we might be inclined to trust too much in the arm of flesh, if the arm of flesh had never failed us, and the disappointment driven us to the Lord to seek the shelter of his wing. Or we might learn to trust in uncertain riches, if moth and rust had never corrupted nor thieves stolen the little or much of our earthly possessions. Or we might have been satisfied with earthly friendships and earthly loves, had not their loss sometimes left us alone with God

to prove the sweetness of his consolation. Or we might be weak and imbecile, had not the storms of life swept over us and the very emergencies of our case nerved us to courage, endurance and Christian fortitude. In view of all these necessities to the development of character, the Christian can truly feel that whatever the Lord permits to come upon him will be made to work together for his good; and in this confidence he can peacefully sing, –

"If on a quiet sea toward home I calmly sail,
With grateful heart, O God, to thee, I'll own the favoring gale.

"But should the surges rise, and rest delay to come,
Blest be the tempest, kind the storm, which drives me nearer home."

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose in view of the Lord's promised care over all our interests, that he would in every case make things work together for our *temporal advantage*. There was at least one in the company to whom our Lord was speaking who seemed to interpret him thus, and who therefore requested his interposition on his behalf in the matter of an inheritance, saying, "Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me."

In reply to this request Jesus said, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" and then followed the instructions concerning the superior value of the heavenly treasure, showing that the earthly things are not worth the strife to obtain them. Jesus had not yet come to judge the world, but referring to that time when he would be the divinely appointed Judge of all the earth, he showed that the searching scrutiny of that judgment would extend to all the minutiae of human affairs. Every selfish act, every injustice, every unkindness, every wrong thing, will *then*, – but not now, except in very few instances, – receive its just recompense of reward. "For there is *nothing* covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known...Whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and [R2130 : page 100] that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops."

Men and women in their present selfish condition of mind and heart, and intoxicated with the spirit of the world, although thus forewarned, do not consider with what shame and confusion of face they will one day have to meet the record of the past, when the little mean acts which they supposed none they cared for knew of, and the unkind words to the defenseless which they thought no one else would ever know all rise up to bear testimony against them. Such often overlook their own folly, and consider that the penalties will fall only upon the criminal class. But the Lord's judgment will be discriminating and exact; "God shall bring *every work* into judgment, with *every secret thing*; whether it be good or whether it be evil;" and "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

In view of this judgment to come, when the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall be established in his Kingdom, Paul says to all of the Lord's people who realize oppression or injustice or unkindness of any kind, – "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord....Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

No, Jesus is not the Judge or divider of the earthly things now: that will be the work of the Millennium; and so far as the earthly things are concerned now, his people may suffer many injustices and difficulties of various kinds; but the Lord's counsel is to dismiss all anxious care concerning them, and, having food and raiment, to be contented, and wait for the great reward of patient endurance.

Meanwhile, let Christians see to it that they are rightly exercised by all the disciplinary experiences of the present time; let them learn the lessons of trust in God and all the other valuable lessons so necessary to fit them for the exalted position to which they are called; let them rejoice in the present favor and communion with God which is the privilege of all the saints, and, with steadfast faith, look forward to the rest that remaineth for his tried and disciplined people.

Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, and let your heart be there. Then disappointments, ingratitude and all the vexing trials of the present life which go to make up the daily cross can be borne with a comparatively easy grace. Your life consisteth not in the abundance of the things you possess: you, beloved, are not dependent upon these earthly things; the Lord is the portion of your inheritance; yea, you have a goodly heritage. (Psa. 16:5,6.) "Fear not, little flock" – fear not to carry out your consecration to the full, keeping your little all upon the altar of sacrifice, and subject to the consuming fire, trusting all of your future, both for the present life and that which is to come, to the loving care of your covenant-keeping God; and, by and by, in the glory of the Kingdom, you shall prove the superior value of the heavenly treasures when the victory of faith shall be fully realized. Praise the Lord for his abundant grace and his precious promises!

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