

**"IF WE SUFFER WITH HIM WE SHALL ALSO
REIGN WITH HIM."**

APRIL 10. – MATT. 16:21-28.

"He was bruised for our iniquities." – Isa. 53:5.

THIS lesson brings us down to near the time of the crucifixion. The former part of our Lord's ministry was devoted apparently to the establishment of his disciples' faith, through cures and miracles and instructions. He had taught them that he was the King long promised, the Messiah; and had promised them that if faithful to him they should participate in the glories of the Kingdom; but up to this time he had not explained to them how sufferings and death must precede the glories. "From that time forth began Jesus to show to his disciples how he must... suffer,...be killed, and be raised again the third day." It was necessary that they should know of the sufferings, that were to be expected as well as the glories to follow; but it was not expedient that they should learn of the sufferings at first, nor until their faith and confidence should become established. Here is a valuable lesson to all who are seeking to walk in the Master's footsteps – especially to such as endeavor to teach others: namely, that the truth should be told as the hearers are able to hear it; "milk for babes," "meat for men."

Noble, impulsive Peter had previously been commended for his good confession, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the long promised Messiah: perhaps the Master's approval on that occasion had something to do with Peter's forwardness on this occasion. With our poor, weak, fallen natures, it is a difficult matter always to keep well balanced and to say the right thing at the right time. On this occasion Peter made a serious mistake, for he attempted to turn teacher and got out of his place as pupil or disciple, when he attempted to reprove the Master and to instruct him, saying, "This shall not be unto thee."

In his commendation of Peter's confession of him as the Christ, our Lord had intimated that it was not merely by his own wisdom that he had thus recognized and confessed, but that he had been under the guidance of the Father, – "Flesh and blood hath not revealed [R2288 : page 109] it unto thee, but my Father." So in this case, our Lord intimates that Peter evidently had come under the control of a different spirit or influence – the influence of Satan: and since Peter had become the mouthpiece of error, of Satan, our Lord addresses him as tho he himself were Satan, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Our Lord recognized that the temptation put to him at the beginning of his ministry, and which he had resisted in the wilderness, was now again being thrust at him by the same great enemy of God who was seeking to use Peter as a channel of temptation, to hinder him from progressing in the way to sacrifice which the Father's plan had marked out for him. [R2288 : page 110]

What a lesson is here for every one of us to the effect that we may be either mouthpieces of God and righteousness or error and Satan; – helps or hindrances to the fellow-members of the body of Christ. How careful we should be that our words and conduct are in full accord with the divine plan as presented to us lesson by lesson through the great Teacher and his appointed, and since Pentecost, inspired, apostles. We remember in this connection the words of our Lord, "His servants ye are to whom ye render service." Many are professing to render service to the Lord and his cause, who in reality are serving the great Adversary of God and the truth.

And how many there are to-day, who like Peter attempt to turn aside those who have consecrated themselves as living sacrifices: not that they wish to do evil, but that they have not the spirit of the truth themselves, but the spirit of the world, and hence speak from the worldly standpoint, which is in direct conflict with the divine plan as respects God's consecrated Church. Let each of us take heed first, that we be not thus tools of the Adversary in stumbling others, and second, that we be not stumbled by any of the Adversary's tools who may take

such positions, no matter how kind and sympathetic their manner and intentions. If they seek to turn us aside from the narrow path which our Lord marked out, they are not our true friends but most seductive enemies.

Our Lord lost no opportunity of enforcing the lesson which he had started and which Peter attempted to interrupt. He proceeded to show the disciples that not only he, their Master, must suffer, but that all who desired to be his disciples, and to sit with him in his throne and share the honors of his Kingdom, must likewise expect to suffer. Each must "deny himself, and take up his cross" and follow the Captain of their salvation. He enforces this by laying it down as a general principle, that the disposition to preserve the present life and its comforts at any cost is the disposition which will be deprived of eternal life; while the reverse disposition, that is willing to lay down the present life in the service of the Lord, his truth and his people, is the one to which God will be pleased to grant life eternal. The word that is here rendered "life," is the same that in the next verse is rendered "soul:" it is the Greek word *psuche*, and signifies *being* or *existence*.

Our Lord put the proposition squarely before his disciples and inquired whether they thought it would be profitable to a man if he should gain the whole world in this present life, and then lose his being, – utterly perish. The implication is that it would be much more desirable for him to lose all things pertaining to this present life, yea, and the present life itself also, if thereby the eternal life of the future might be obtained. What could be considered a valuable exchange for the everlasting life of the future which God hath promised to them that love him?

It should be noticed that our Lord says nothing here in favor of the common fallacies on this subject usually drawn from his words by mistaken inference: his words by the plainest inference contradict the very unreasonable and so-called "orthodox" views of this subject. Our Lord did not say, What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world

and be cast into an eternal torture – be roasted and boiled in liquid flame? Not a word of the kind. Such a statement, altho in harmony with the views often advocated by Christian people, would be wholly contrary to the divine plan and Word. Such "orthodox" teachings are, like Peter's expression, instigated by the great Adversary, Satan, as a libel and slander upon the divine character and plan. Our Lord's statement was most explicit; that is a question of life or no life; of being or no being; of existence or non-existence; of eternal life or destruction in the second death. Let those who will not hear the Lord's words believe Satan's falsehood if they prefer it: we may be sure that all who have the Lord's spirit and who are seeking to walk in his footsteps will hear his voice and be guided into the truth which now, as meat in due season, is provided for the household of faith.

In the 27th verse our Lord handles very rudely another of Satan's deceptions. Satan, through many mouth-pieces in many church pulpits and at many funerals is declaring that every man is rewarded either with heaven or hell for all eternity at the instant of death. But here our Lord expressly declares that he will reward every man when he shall come in the glory of the Father – at the establishment of his Kingdom. This, taken in connection with the preceding verse, gave to the disciples and gives to us the correct thought; viz., that if we now are willing to lay down our lives for the truth, in the service of God and Christ (including the members of his body), and thus shall suffer the loss of earthly things which otherwise we might have gained or attempted to gain, we shall be rewarded by the Master with eternal life and a share in his glory – ***at his second coming***.

The 28th verse is separated from its connection by the starting of a new chapter and thus many are confused,* and fail to see that the record of the fulfilment of this promise immediately follows it. But this is a part of our next lesson.

*For the division of the Scriptures into chapters and verses is a modern invention, and while intended for convenience is sometimes misleading, as in this case. In the Revised Version this difficulty has been corrected.
