

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

Question. – Are not present conditions less favorable to the performance of the injunctions of Eph. 4:28, and 2 Cor. 12:15, than were the conditions at the time the Apostle wrote? Is not the labor market more glutted now than then?

Answer. – No doubt circumstances and conditions varied in the Apostle's day as they do now, but we have no reason from history to suppose that the average working man of that time was more favorably situated in wages, opportunities for labor, etc., than at present. Indeed, it is very doubtful if labor was at any time in the past as well housed, as well clothed, and generally comfortable, as at the present time. This does not mean that we consider the laboring class too well cared for at the present time – nor that we think their condition all that could be desired. Gladly would we improve, if we could, the general conditions of labor. It is well, however, that we should not cultivate in ourselves or in each other a spirit of discontent, which can do no good, but is likely to work injury; and to this end it is well that we should not deceive ourselves or others into thinking our load unendurable or harder than that of other days, when it is really better by a very great deal.

Question. – In a family of seven, when all the incomes foot up an average of \$1 per day for working days, how would it be possible, after providing food, clothing, rent and fuel, to put by anything or to give away anything?

Answer. – If you mean that the total income of seven persons is only \$1 a day, \$6 a week, we admit that it is small, and that it would require extraordinary economy to "provide things decent." But permit a kindly suggestion, dear brother, that there should be no family of seven persons at the present time unable to earn more than \$6 per week – unless through some accident, some misfortune. A man who cannot

earn more than a dollar a day ought to consider very earnestly the question whether or not he could afford to get married, and assume the responsibilities of a father, and any woman asked to become a wife should give earnest thought to the financial side of the problem before accepting such an invitation. Circumstances and prospects may have been more favorable at the time of marriage, but so soon as such circumstances became unfavorable the propagation of a family, for which only an unsatisfactory provision could be made, should not have continued – continence, self-denial, should be practiced by Christians under such circumstances, and be considered not merely a "virtue," but a "duty." Nor should they unduly bemoan their lot, but on the contrary remember what the Scriptures so clearly set forth – that the heavenly Father knoweth what things his children have need of. By cheerfully seeking to conform to the proper necessities of the case, and accepting such as divine providences in the case of the consecrated, a great blessing may result, for, as the Apostle declares, "All things work together for good to them that love God – to the called ones according to his purpose."

Question. – Under such circumstances, how is the father to follow the Scriptural injunction to lay up for his children? Did Mary make provision for her son Jesus? Did not the son make provision for the parent?

Answer. – "How just are God's commands,

How wise his precepts are!"

Scriptural injunctions we may understand to be applicable only so far as it is possible for us to follow them. If we find it impossible to lay by anything, we may consider ourselves excused from this provision or advice. But our *effort* should be to follow the Scriptural injunction, if it should only be to lay aside one [R2513 : page 206] or two or five cents out of each day's earnings. The Lord should at least see our effort to follow his instructions, and we would surely have a blessing in such endeavors.

We do not understand the Apostle to mean that aged parents should slave themselves to provide for grown and healthy children. While the offspring are children their future welfare should be provided for by reasonable education, etc., and when such children are grown, they should take pleasure in caring for their aged parents. Mary was probably at least fifty-five years of age when Jesus, having evidently cared for her himself, committed her at his death to the care of John. And the Apostle shows that his thoughts on the subject were in full harmony with this, for, when speaking of widows, he says, "If any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home [by caring for their dependent relatives], and to requite their parents: for this is good and acceptable before God." – 1 Tim. 5:4.

Question. – Is there not in the Scriptures quoted a cold business tone, indicating that man's wisdom had more to do with them than the spirit of the Lord, who so tenderly spoke of the Father's care and love, and who must have known to what straits many of his people would be brought in taking up his cross and following on, and the separation from worldly ways and means of obtaining a living – clubs, labor unions, church unions, etc., in harmony with the injunction, "Come out from among them and be ye separate"?

Answer. – No, dear brother; we are to consider that the same holy spirit guided in all the writings of the apostles, and that God's Word is not yea and nay. Surely no Scripture writer more prominently or more fully set forth the Lord's love and care for his people, and the necessity for full separation from the world, than did the Apostle Paul who wrote the Scriptures which you criticise.

On the other hand, we are to realize that the circumstances in which we are placed have not come to us by accident, but, according to the Scriptures, have come to us under direct supervision of God, – if we are his consecrated people. Consequently, instead of repining, rebelling and bemoaning, we are to accept the Lord's provision as being the *best* for us, as "new creatures," according to his divine

wisdom. We are to seek to do as nearly as he has directed us as lies within our power, and the remainder entirely beyond our power we should take to the Lord in prayer, asking increase of wisdom, increase of grace, increase of strength, to know and to do his will more and more perfectly for the future, and whatever may have been our errors in the past, our loving Father has made abundant provision in Christ for our forgiveness and aid. And doubtless God's reason for permitting some of our experiences is that we may learn just such lessons necessary to the shaping and moulding of our characters into most perfect harmony with the divine pattern, our Lord Jesus.

Question. – In the Old Testament we read, "Trust in the Lord and do good, and verily thou shalt be fed." I would like to know whether or not this and similar Old Testament expressions are applicable to the called-out ones of this Gospel age, or were they merely applicable to the Jewish age, when, according to the Law Covenant, God gave temporal rewards for obedience?

Answer. – As heretofore pointed out, the promises to fleshly Israel were temporal and, as you suggest, guaranteed temporal prosperity as a reward for obedience. But are the promises to the Lord's faithful ones of this Gospel age smaller or less precious, because they do not guarantee riches and friends and freedom from blight and drouth? May we not realize that the promises made to us are much more comprehensive, [R2514 : page 206] having the promise of the life which now is, and also of that which is to come? (1 Tim. 4:8.) Is it not still true, and most abundantly emphasized in the New Testament, that "No *good* thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly"? If all things work together for *good* to them that love God, we may be sure that if riches or ease or luxury are withheld from us, they are withheld for our blessing, and may rejoice in such evidences of the divine care. Is it not in the New Testament that the Apostle declares, "Godliness with contentment is great gain"? and must not therefore contentment be a possible thing to those who will live godly

in this present time, even tho they suffer persecution, and even tho they be not so prosperous in temporal matters as some others?

The lesson of *faith*, dear brother, is an important one for all to learn and, if we are slow in learning it, we will probably be kept under the necessary experiences that much the longer – because the Father loveth us and seeketh in us this good quality. Faith will not look at any of the divine arrangements as unkind or cold, but will see in them all, and in all of life's experiences, the very blessing most needed, and can sing,

"Content, whatever lot I see,
Since 'tis my God that leadeth me."

Question. – Please consider, briefly, the following Scriptures additional to those recently sent you: – Phil. 4:10,15-17; 1 Cor. 4:14; 2 Cor. 11:8,9; Luke 6:38; 2 Cor. 10:11.

Answer. – These Scriptures seem to be along the same lines as those considered in our last issue, to which we again refer all readers. We consider them in order.

(1) Phil. 4:10,15-17: – This Scripture indicates that the Apostle, who was giving his entire time to the ministry of the Gospel, labored at tent-making or other secular business only when such a course was made necessary in providing things honest in the sight of all men – and rather than be burdensome to any, or even to request assistance. The Apostle here recognizes as the Lord's judgment that any laborer is worthy of his keep, unless he has missed his calling, or is incapacitated. The Apostle did not mistake his calling, and if the Church recognized him as a servant called of the Lord and being used effectively in the [R2514 : page 207] ministry of reconciliation, it then became their privilege to cooperate with him in that ministry by supplying his temporal needs. And in the case of the Church at Philippi it would appear from the Apostle's testimony that they had appreciated and used their opportunities properly and repeatedly. All are not

talented for public service of the truth, and whenever one is discovered by the brethren to have special gifts and talents and zeal for the ministry he should be encouraged in that direction, and the others less qualified in these respects should take pleasure in assisting such an one, and thus they would be reckoned as having a share with him in the fruit of their combined labors.

In the Apostle's case there was no room to doubt that his ministry was owned and accepted of the Lord, and that he was an apostle – one specially sent forth, and whose services were specially guided by the Master; and that his entire time was given to the work and was needed for the work.

(2) 1 Cor. 4:14: – The context preceding shows that the Apostle felt considerably hurt that the Church at Corinth, which he himself had established through the preaching of the gospel, had been quickly turned aside by false teachers, who had denied Paul's apostleship. The Church at Corinth had seemingly flourished financially and socially, and suffered little persecution. They were correspondingly unable to rightly sympathize with the Apostle in his active ministry of the truth, and the many hazardous incidents connected therewith. In the context he addresses them rather ironically, saying, "We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honorable, but we are despised,... and labor, working with our hands." In the 14th verse the Apostle assures his readers that he is not so writing in order to cause them pain and shame, but to awaken them to a proper appreciation of the true situation, to the intent that they might be to a larger extent co-laborers with him – sharers in the sufferings of Christ, that in due time also they might have share in the glory to follow.

(3) 2 Cor. 11:8,9: – These verses show us that the Apostle was careful to avoid the money question in his preaching. He never so much as asked assistance from the Corinthians while he was with them; not that he would have refused to accept assistance if it had been

tendered, nor that he considered that it would have been any less than their duty and privilege to have assisted him, but that he had confidence that the Lord would supply his necessities in the best way, and was willing rather to present the Word of God without charge, to the intent that his ministry should be the more impressive, as an exhibition of the fact that he sought not their money but their highest welfare. He assured them of this by letter afterward, explaining to them that others had been more careful to look after his necessities than they, and had a corresponding blessing. The Apostle wrote of the matter subsequently, not because he desired a gift, but because he realized that whoever receives the truth into a good and honest heart and is really benefited by it must partake of its spirit of generosity, and do his share in forwarding the truth, else he will go backward and lose some of the blessing and light already received.

(4) Luke 6:38: – This verse represents the general principle of divine dealing – "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver," and causes his smile and blessing to rest upon such, whereas those who receive the Lord's favor and fail to be exercised by the spirit of benevolence, receive correspondingly less of spiritual blessing.

(5) 2 Cor. 10:11: – This does not signify that if the Apostle wrote them respecting benevolence in money matters he would also preach to them upon this subject. His own expressions clearly indicate that he did not follow this course, and that his writing upon the subject of money-giving was from a standpoint wholly separate from any solicitations on his own account. The context shows that he was reproving some one in the Church who had been walking according to the flesh and not according to the spirit, and his declaration here is that he would speak in the same denunciatory manner if he were present with them.
