

THE CHRISTIAN'S COURSE DELINEATED.

DAVID, the Prophet, in the first Psalm, has significantly marked out the proper Christian course and its blessings and outcome. In the first verse he designates three classes from whom the Lord's people should stand aloof – three classes with whom, if they have fellowship, it will be to their detriment. (1) The ungodly, or more properly, the wicked (margin, Leeser, Young). (2) Sinners. (3) The scornful. "Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." – Psa. 1:1.

Applying this Psalm prophetically, it is proper that we should determine what classes of persons are meant by the *wicked*, the *sinners* and the *scornful*. We suggest that under the terms of the present Gospel age, not murderers and thieves, etc., can be meant by the wicked, for such, generally at least, are deluded and "blinded by the god of this world," so that they have never seen the true Gospel light; and not seeing it they have not had such responsibilities in connection with it as would properly brand them as wicked from the divine standpoint. The "wicked" are to be looked for in the Church, and in harmony with this thought is our Lord's parable which, referring to the Church and the talents bestowed upon its members, declares respecting the one who received the talent of the Lord, but failed to use it – "Thou wicked and slothful servant." The "wicked" of this age would seem to be those who have enjoyed the light of divine favor, who have come to a knowledge of the truth, been made partakers of the holy spirit, etc., and who then, despite all these favors and blessings, [R2698 : page 280] and despite their covenant with the Lord to be his servants and to lay down their lives in his service, neglect the same.

The Apostle also points out a certain class in the Church as wicked, saying of them that if they fall away "it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance" (Heb. 6:6), "for it had been better for them

that they had never known the way of righteousness, than that having known it they should turn from the holy commandment." (2 Pet. 2:21.) The same class is again described as those who sin wilfully after receiving a knowledge of the truth, and for whom, consequently, no further share in the sacrifice for sins remains; and consequently no hope for them in the coming age. (Heb. 10:26.) In a word, then, [R2698 : page 281] the wicked class of the present age would seem, from the Lord's standpoint, to be those in the Church nominal who have received clear light and knowledge respecting the divine plan, and who have either sinned wilfully by turning away from a life of righteousness to a life of intentional sin, or those who repudiate the precious blood of Christ and the atonement made for them by the same, counting the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified a common or ordinary thing.

If then we have found a class denominated "the wicked," let us consider what can be meant by the injunction that the blessed of the Lord should not walk in the counsel of these wicked ones – should not follow their guidance, their suggestions, their instructions, their leading.

Every man and every woman has more or less of an influence which attracts others to walk in his way. And all who repudiate the ransom, all who deny original sin and its sentence of death, and the necessity for our redemption from sin and death, – all who thus deny the foundation of the Gospel, the "wicked" above described, seem to make it their special business to endeavor to seduce the minds of others – to lead others astray by their evil counsel. If they cannot secure prompt attention, they invariably suggest, – Walk with us awhile, keep our company, and see whether you will not *gradually come to believe as we do, that we were not bought with a price*, even the precious blood of Christ – that man needed not to be bought; that he did not fall from perfection; that he was not sold under sin by our first parents; and, hence, that he needed not a redemption in any sense of the word, and

therefore the Scriptures are false and misleading in making this the centre and pith of the Gospel.

Their false suggestion is that our only need was a good and holy *example*. They are blind to the fact that all through the past there were many noble examples, and that there are many today, far beyond the ability of the average natural man to follow, and that we needed something decidedly more helpful and efficacious than an *example*. They seem blind to the fact that an example would never justify to life one who was justly condemned to death. They do not seem to realize that God was just in pronouncing the penalty against our race, and that he could by no means clear the guilty through any process of injustice; and that, therefore, it was necessary that a ransom, a corresponding price, should be paid before the resurrection and reconciliation were possibilities. (Rom. 3:26.) But they say, Walk with us in our counsels and see; and, as the Apostle suggests, many follow their pernicious ways, denying the Lord having bought them. – 2 Pet. 2:1,2.

Those who would be of the class pronounced "blessed" of the Lord, in our text, must not follow the counsel of these "wicked," but, on the contrary, should stand firmly by the Gospel of the redemption, and seek no other. Let all who desire to be blessed of the Lord mark well this counsel and follow it, and have no fellowship whatever with the "wicked," nor in any degree walk after their counsels.

"Sinners" are mentioned as another class, separate and distinct from the "wicked" above referred to, and they are evidently a class whose transgressions are much less heinous in the sight of the Lord: these sinners we must look for in the Church also, not in the world. Since the world is not yet on trial there is nothing to demonstrate the standing of any of its people. The "sinners" of our text we would understand to be those who, without repudiating the covenant, without denying the Lord that bought them, and thus falling utterly from divine favor, are nevertheless failing to live according to the terms of their covenant, their consecration. These would seem to be sinners against

the covenant they have made – those who fail to carry out the covenant of self-sacrifice. This class possibly includes some who are described by the Lord as "overcharged with the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches," and who for these reasons are sinners against their covenant, violators of it. The Lord's people who would be of the "blessed" of the Lord, and receive his ultimate "Well done," are not to stand with these covenant-violators even. To stand with them might imply to treat them as companions, to enter into their plans and schemes; and surely all who would thus do would be likely to become partakers of their spirit, and to become careless of their consecration vows, and overcharged with earthly cares and ambitions.

The "scorners" are designated as a still different class, and might possibly represent some not of the Church, but possessing more or less knowledge of holy things and rejecting them, speaking of them lightly and scornfully. The Lord's people are not to be intimately associated with such, nor make them their companions and friends. They cannot have fellowship with such without receiving injury; hence, so far as possible the Christian is to avoid this class, in business partnerships, in society, and especially in marriage. No one who could speak lightly or scornfully of our Heavenly Father or of our Lord Jesus or of the exceeding great and precious things set before the Lord's people in his promises, could be other than a hindrance to those who are seeking to gain the prize of our high calling. He therefore who would be blessed of the Lord, and who would attain that for which he was "called," should take heed to the instructions and avoid the scornful. **[R2698 : page 282]**

This does not signify, however, as the Apostle points out, that we are to have no dealings in the world with any but saints, for, as he tells us, in that event we would needs go out of the world (1 Cor. 5:10); but it does imply a recognition of the principle that evil is contagious, and that the Lord's people cannot be too careful to avoid every contact with evil. They should separate themselves to the Lord, to holiness, and seek

to place themselves under influences in harmony with their holy and true and pure aspirations, begotten by the holy spirit.

The Prophet implies that those who have fellowship with the scornful and with covenant-breakers and with the wicked who deny the precious blood of the covenant, cannot be blessed of the Lord, because they are in a wrong attitude of heart; for, as his words imply, those who are in the right attitude of heart to be blessed of the Lord can readily find something much better, much more interesting, much more profitable, than fellowship with any of these classes; "Their delight is in the Law of the Lord, and they meditate in his Law by day and by night."

This does not imply a reading over of the Ten Commandments, nor of the Mosaic ritual, but to the Christian it implies a delight in the Law of righteousness, which law is briefly comprehended in the word "Love." The right-minded Christian who is in the line of heavenly blessing now, and of heavenly glory by and by, has found and will continually find in the great Law of Love something well worthy of his time and his study. He finds this Law applicable to every relationship between the heavenly Father and himself; he sees that all of his conduct, his every service toward God as a son, adopted into his family, must be the result of love. He sees also that love is the Law which must govern all of his conduct toward the brethren in Christ and toward all men; and he finds in this abundant and satisfactory food for reflection in his leisure hours, so that he is interested neither in the speculations and quibblings of the "scoffers," nor in the worldly matters which overcharge the "sinners," nor in the false Gospel which engages the attention of the "wicked," who deny the ransom.

He finds that this Law of God contains, or is related to, every feature of the divine plan; and hence his meditations and studies of its various ramifications lead his thoughts hither and thither, in contact with all the exceeding great and precious promises which God has bestowed upon them that love him, both as respects the life that now is

and also that which is to come. And the more this is his attitude the more is he blessed of the Lord; and the more blessed he is of the Lord the more surely will this be his attitude and experience.

Such an one, the Lord declares through the Prophet, will be like a tree planted near rivulets of water, which will always be abundantly refreshed and never fail in his yield of the fruits of the spirit, which under such circumstances must grow and flourish exceedingly. And as his fruit will be abundant, so his leaf (his hopes) will be ever green; he can and will have faith in him who promised the coming blessings, and whose riches of grace he comes to appreciate more and more daily.

"All that he doeth shall prosper." This is literally true, tho not, perhaps, in the way in which the world might view the subject. But what is it that such a child of God doeth? What is his aim? What is his object in life? Wealth, fame, worldly honors? No, none of these. His aim, that which he doeth, that which he seeketh, is to glorify his Heavenly Father and eventually to attain to the glory, honor and immortality [R2699 : page 282] which God has promised to them that love him. (Rom. 2:7.) If then the Christian but attain these his objects, surely all his experiences will have been prosperous, and that abundantly. What matters it to him if under divine providence he was permitted to err in judgment respecting some business venture, so that instead of earthly prosperity it brought financial loss, if it worked out spiritual gain? To this blessed man the loss was prosperity, and he proved the truth of the divine promise, that all things shall work together for his good. Under such a promise, under such guidance of divine wisdom in his affairs, guaranteeing him just such experiences, trials, difficulties, earthly disappointments and disadvantages as will, under the Lord's providence, bring him richest blessing in the attainment of the great prize of the future which he seeks, and for which every other thing, interest, hope and aim has been sacrificed, how could any be considered otherwise than prospered? (Rom. 8:28.) Surely indeed, all that he doeth shall prosper – not because of his own wisdom, not because of infallibility in the management of his affairs, but

because his infallible Lord is supervising his interests, and outworking them for good to him.

It is this same class of blessed ones that our Lord addresses, saying, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake" – things may seem to be going contrary to your welfare, and hence to be working out incalculable harm; but have faith – "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven:" and it is this heavenly reward for which you have been called, and for which you have entered the race, and the attainment of which will be exceedingly abundant above all that you could ask or think. – Matt. 5:11,12; Eph. 3:20.
