

LET US PUT ON THE ARMOR OF LIGHT.

– *ROM. 13:8-14.* – *JUNE 22.* –

"Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light."

NOT THE NATURAL man, but the new creature, is addressed in this lesson. The natural man is a bundle of selfishness – personal selfishness – family selfishness – sect and party selfishness – clan and national selfishness. True, the organs of the brain representing love are not wholly lacking in any member of the race, and so far as they exist may be reckoned as representatives of the original mental image of God, in which man was created. But even such fragmentary elements of love as still remain are warped and twisted and diverted into selfish channels; – self love, family love, fatherland love, patriotism. The natural man does not realize this selfish character of the natural heart as does the new creature; because the latter, being begotten by the spirit of truth, the holy spirit of love divine, finds now a wide difference between his old kind of love and his new ideal. While this distinction may be clearly recognized from our start in the Christian way, nevertheless, our discernment at first between the selfish loves of the natural man and the divine love are indistinct and indefinite, as compared with the clearer views and sharper distinctions realized as we grow in grace, in knowledge and in the spirit of love divine, and come to know definitely the love of God which passeth all [human] understanding.

The Apostle exhorts these new creatures, justified by faith in Jesus Christ, called of God and begotten of the holy spirit, to grow as rapidly as possible in their appreciation and heart-sympathy with the Lord's spirit of love. These should realize that they are debtors to the Lord to an untold amount, because of his love and mercy extended toward them in Christ; and they should see, also, that having thus received the Lord's grace and the spirit of it, they are to have so broad and so generous a

feeling toward all mankind that they will desire first of all to pay off every obligation, of every kind, and to "owe no man anything."

The Apostle declared that he was a debtor both to the Jews and to the Greeks; and looking at matters from a similar standpoint, we may say likewise, that we are under many obligations to many people. We owe a real debt to our parents, through whom, in God's providence, we have come into being; we owe a debt to the community and commonwealth in which we live for the measure of peace, order, social convenience and advantages every way, which we, in common with others, share; we owe a debt to our nation at large in consideration of the many blessings, liberties, advantages, etc., which come to us through it by divine providence. And above and beyond all these debts to our fellow creatures, we recognize a debt and obligation to our Creator – not only for earthly life, its blessings, its privileges, its opportunities, such liberties as we enjoy; but still more for our redemption with the precious blood, for our knowledge of the same, for our call to joint-heirship with our Lord, for the begetting of the holy spirit, for the assistance and encouragement of the Word and its exceeding great and precious promises which strengthen, encourage, and direct us in the way of life eternal.

True, some arguments may be made on the other side of the proposition, but these are not for us; we had no claims, we had no riches, we had nothing until **[R3029 : page 188]** we had a being. We might perhaps wish that our parents might have been more wise, and that therefore we might have been born with a more liberal endowment mentally, morally and physically; we might perhaps wish that our community and commonwealth were still more advanced, still more beneficent, still more liberal than they are; we might perhaps wish that our nation had still better laws and still better regulations than it has; we might perhaps wish that our Creator had favored us with natural and earthly things still more than he has favored us. But, as before stated, we are debtors for all that we have; it is, therefore, appropriate that we should be thankful for everything that we do possess and enjoy,

temporal and spiritual; and that we should realize that while it is our privilege to do for others and to assist others, to encourage and bless and help others, nevertheless, being debtors for all that we have, we have no grounds on which to claim more.

A realization of the subject, from this standpoint, should tend to make all of the Lord's people, all of the "new creatures in Christ Jesus," very contented, very appreciative, very thankful for mercies, both temporal and spiritual. Seeing that in all these respects we are debtors, we should seek to discharge our duty toward all our beneficiaries: toward God the fountain of every good and perfect gift toward our nation, toward our commonwealth and community, toward our parents. We should see to it not only that none of these are injured by reason of our living in the world, but that our lives shall in some measure and degree testify to our appreciation of them all, and directly or indirectly be a help, an assistance, toward the best interests of each and all with whom we have to do. This is but simple justice – justice demands that we pay our debts, that we owe no man anything.

But we are to go beyond this just discharge of our obligations and are to love God and our fellow man – to seek not only to do our duty, to pay our share of the taxes and burdens and responsibilities of life and social order and parental protection and comfort, but love is to prompt us according to our best judgment, guided by the new mind, the Lord's spirit, to do something more than mere duty might demand – to sacrifice something in the interests of the Lord's service and in the blessing and comforting of our fellow creatures, as the spirit of the Lord may direct through his inspired Word.

He that loveth all others so that he is constantly seeking to do them good, is following the holy law, the perfect will of God. It is less a question of outward conduct than of heart intention, though undoubtedly the heart intention will generally find appropriate expression through the lips and through **[R3030 : page 188]** the actions of life. The Lord, however, knows the imperfections of our judgments

and the weaknesses of the flesh, and therefore, very graciously under the New Covenant accepts the perfection of our intentions, of our wills, as instead of the absolute perfection of our every word and deed. Thus "The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit" – and as nearly up to the spirit as possible.

"THOU SHALT NOT"

The Apostle explains that the commands of the decalogue were merely attempts to bring down to the natural man's comprehension the real spirit of the divine law. And yet the prohibitions of that law, "Thou shalt not," in respect to various things that would be injurious to the neighbor, could never fully express the comprehensiveness of the divine will. The prohibitions of the decalogue were proper enough for the "house of servants," but when the "house of sons" was instituted (Heb. 3:5,6), and when these sons were begotten of the holy spirit so that they could appreciate the law of Love, it was substituted, as higher every way and more comprehensive than the prohibitions of the decalogue. Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not bear false witness; Thou shalt not covet; – because all these things would be contrary to the law of love under which alone the "new creature" is placed.

But the new law of the New Covenant – Love – is so much more comprehensive than the decalogue which was the basis of the Jewish Covenant, that as the Apostle says, if there be any other commandment, any other thing that should be prohibited, any other things contrary to the law of God, it is briefly comprehended in the declaration "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The law of love marks as transgressions many things which would not have been violations of the decalogue: for instance, the decalogue commanded the house of servants not to bear false witness against a neighbor; but the law of love indicates to the house of sons that they should "speak evil of no man" even if such witness would not be false; it instructs them further, that even if it be necessary to tell an unpleasant truth – if it becomes duty

or obligation of law – even the truth is to be spoken in love without acrimony, hatred, malice, envy or strife. Oh, what a valuable lesson it would be to the house of sons if they could all equally grasp this comprehensive thought, – if their obligations not only to each other and to their families and friends, but also to their neighbors and their enemies – to love them, to so consider their interests and their welfare in general, that they would do nothing and say nothing to the contrary; but gladly at the sacrifice of their own convenience, assist them in any and every way, – "Doing good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially to the household of faith!" This is loving our neighbor as ourselves – not as he loves us.

THIS IS THE GOLDEN RULE – LOVE.

Since love works blessings to the neighbor and seeks his welfare, it follows as a matter of course that "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor." Will we not, as the Lord's consecrated people, seek to put this lesson into practice in our daily lives? Will we not learn to consider the words of our mouths, and to remember that we can smite and injure a brother or a neighbor with the tongue as truly and more seriously than with our hands? Will we not learn that in even mentioning anything uncomplimentary respecting a brother or a neighbor, we are surely working [R3030 : page 189] him ill, doing him an injury, – injuring his reputation and standing – however true the uncomplimentary thing may be; and that in so doing we are violating the law of God, the law of love? Will we not learn that the only instance in which we would have a right to mention an uncomplimentary thing would be in the event of our seeing a brother or a neighbor in danger of injury by another and thus out of love for him be called upon to warn him of the source of danger?

This warning we should be sure was necessary, before giving it; and it should be couched in such language as sincere love for the dangerous one would dictate. Will we not learn to think charitably of the words and actions of others, and to suppose their intentions good,

until we have positive evidence to the contrary: and will we not learn that then we should go to the offender, alone, according to Matt. 18:15; subsequently, if occasion require and the matter seem to be of vital importance, taking with us two others, fair and impartial in judgment, that in the presence of the wrong-doer they may hear from him as well as from us and give their judgment or opinion. And even if they agree with us and the wrong-doer is not yet corrected and the injury to us is still unabated, we are still not at liberty under the law of love to make mention of the case to others, but to call a meeting of the entire congregation and there, with the condemned one present, to have a hearing and a judgment of the Church in respect to the matter.

Let us learn much more thoroughly the meaning of this expression "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor"; and again, "Speak evil of no man." Love is the fulfilling of the law; and our hearts, at least, must fulfill this law – whatever mistakes of tongue or deed we may unintentionally make – else we cannot hope to be reckoned as having reached the "mark" for the prize for which we are called to run with patience. It will require patience in dealing with ourselves and bringing our hearts into conformity with this divine law, but it is necessary, and the sooner and the more perseveringly undertaken, the greater and surer will be the blessings, and our ultimate acceptance to joint-heirship in the Kingdom.

HIGH TIME TO AWAKE OUT OF SLEEP.

The Lord's people may know now just where we are on the stream of time, but this matter was sealed up and hidden until "the time of the end," as the Lord informed Daniel: hence the Apostle and early Church could only speak of the time question from a general standpoint. They knew that time was passing, that the day of deliverance was drawing nearer and nearer, and was thus surely closer at hand than when they had first believed. If the world's seven thousand years be considered as a week, and the Millennial age reckoned as the seventh day – the Sabbath or rest day – then the preceding six days constitutes the night

time, in which sin abounds, in which "darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people"; – in which the true children of God as candles are to set themselves upon the candlestick (and not to put their light under a bushel) to give light to all in darkness about them. It is the time mentioned by the Prophet in which "weeping endures for the night," because sin abounds and because the wages of sin, death, and its comcomitants of sickness, pain and trouble prevail; but if weeping endures for a night of six thousand years," the Prophet also assures us, that "joy cometh in the morning" of the (seventh) Millennium when "the Sun of righteousness," the Lord of glory, shall shine forth and chase the darkness away, and cause the earth to be filled with the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. From this standpoint the 6,000 year night was far spent in the Apostle's day, and whether he realized this fully, or whether he wrote as he did prophetically, under inspiration, no matter; his declaration was strictly true; the night was far spent because over two thirds of it had passed. The Apostle wrote this letter somewhere about the year 4188 A.M. – about 1812 years of the night remaining before the Millennial dawning.

The Apostle's words were true, as uttered, and his exhortation was appropriate then; but how much more appropriate is that exhortation to us who are now living; – to us who already see with the eye of faith the Day Star, and the first rays of the Millennial morning's light. "Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light." He who casts off the works of darkness, thus intimates that he is no longer in sympathy with the things of darkness, the things of sin, of selfishness, of injustice. He who puts on the armor of light not only intimates that he has enlisted on the side of God, of righteousness, truth, uprightness, light, – but he also intimates, in putting on an armor, that he realizes that he will be obliged to contend, to battle with the forces of darkness, which will oppose him now that he has enlisted on the side of the light, as they never before assailed him when he was one with them either in heart or in hand.

THE ARMOR OF LIGHT.

This armor of light the Apostle elsewhere describes: Its *helmet* of salvation represents intellectual protection, which we all need from the time we join the Lord's standard; – we need to know something, to have our sanctified reasons guided through the Word of the Lord. The *breastplate* of righteousness we need also – not the filthy rags of our own righteousness, but the righteousness of God in Christ – the justification from sin which God has provided through the sacrifice of his Son. Our faith in the ransom is all important to our protection in this battle. The *shield* of faith is another part of our armor, absolutely necessary; without it, the fiery darts of the Adversary might frequently reach us, between the joints of our breastplate of imputed righteousness, and our helmet of intellectual appreciation. The *sword* of the spirit, the Word of God, is also absolutely indispensable for our protection against the wiles of the Adversary and his deluded followers; otherwise they would come close up to us and smite us notwithstanding our armor. We should be comparatively at their mercy without the sword of the spirit, used in conjunction with the shield of faith, the breastplate of imputed righteousness, and the helmet of knowledge. But with all these we shall, by the grace of God, be able to fight the good fight of faith [R3031 : page 190] and be enabled to come off conquerors and more than conquerors through him who loved us and bought us with his own precious blood. For although we will have nothing to spare but will still have need of Christ's grace, imputed to make up for our deficiencies, nevertheless since we are his, all of his is ours, and not only are we complete in him, but abiding in him shall have an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom.

Let us "walk honestly as in the day." It is not yet day, the shadows of night still linger; injustice and sin are everywhere about us; it is, therefore, much more difficult now to walk honestly than it would be if the day had fully come, and all the temptations and allurements of darkness were thoroughly banished by the bright shining of the Sun of righteousness. Thank God! the world in general during the Millennial

age will have an opportunity for walking in the full light of the Millennial day, up the highway of holiness, unto its grand consummation, perfection and eternal life. We praise God on their behalf, that not only will the darkness be gone and the evil influences be restrained, but that all stumbling-stones will be gathered out of the way. But as we are still in the night-time, we still need the lamp of the divine Word to guide our steps. There are still stumbling-stones, there are still inducements from the Evil One toward sin, unrighteousness, selfishness, envy, malice, hatred, strife.

And yet ours is a time and condition in some respects to be appreciated more highly than that which the world will occupy during the Millennial age; because to us who are "called" now, during the night season, to walk by faith and not by sight – to walk contrary to the course of this world – to walk in love and not in selfishness, – to us "are given exceeding great and precious promises" of glory, honor, immortality, if we prove faithful in following the Captain of our salvation, who assures us not only that he has trodden the way before us and left us his footprints that we should walk in his steps, but, additionally, that he will be with us, an ever present helper in time of need. This matter of walking honestly at the present time, therefore, signifies considerable; – to be honest with God, to love him with all our heart, mind, being, strength; to be honest with ourselves, honest with our neighbors, honest with the brethren – to exercise toward all the law of the spirit of love, to love them as we love ourselves.

We are not to indulge in the revelries and drunkenness, the lasciviousness and debauchery of the grossest sinners, nor are we to indulge in these things in the more refined figurative sense of reveling in worldliness, fashion and ostentation, and in living wantonly and illicitly in worldliness or sectarianism. We are to remember on the contrary, that we are not of this world, that we are citizens of the heavenly Kingdom, that we are betrothed to the Lord Jesus as his Bride and are to be separate from the world, pure in heart, undefiled by wrong union with Babylon. (Rev. 14:4.) As new creatures in Christ we are

neither to indulge in the strifes and envyings of the national sort, leading to wars, nor of the commercial sort leading to injustice and unkind competition; neither are we to indulge in strifes and envyings amongst the brethren; but are in honor to prefer one another wherever the conditions and talents permit, contending, earnestly as well as lovingly, only when it is for the faith once delivered to the saints.

These strifes, envyings, self-indulgences and improper associations, are to be put away from us, as so much of "the works of darkness" still clinging to us, notwithstanding our having become the Lord's people, "a royal priesthood;" and as another statement corresponding to that concerning the armor of light, the Apostle says, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof." Putting on Christ implies a change of the will, which when renewed, desires to be Christ-like; but it implies also such a change of the outward appearance, conduct, habits of life, etc., as will enable us more and more to rightly represent our Lord before men, as his ambassadors. Thus are we changed, into our Lord's likeness of character, as day by day we get clearer views of his glorious character and seek to copy it, – until, by and by we shall be actually changed in the First resurrection and made actually like him. – 2 Cor. 3:18; I Cor. 15:42-51.

"And make no provision of the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof." Ah, yes! how often the Lord's people have made a mistake on this point. Although the heart, the new mind, be thoroughly consecrated to the Lord, we still have the fleshly bodies and they still have their natural appetites and these call out loudly to us that they should not be ignored. They insist upon their rights, etc.; but the Apostle instructs us that having started to walk after the spirit, as new creatures, we should make no provision for gratifying the flesh; – we should not shape our affairs so as to yield to any of the demands of the flesh which we recognize to be contrary to the will of the Lord. In proportion as we yield to the improper desires of the flesh, in that same proportion the flesh will prosper and the spiritual new nature will languish. In proportion as we

deny all the illegitimate appetites of the flesh and mortify them, put them to death, in that same proportion will we grow strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. As the Apostle again says, "The flesh lusteth [desireth] against the spirit [the new will or mind] and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." – Gal. 5:17.

QUARTERLY REVIEW – JUNE 29.

"A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of my people Israel."

– Luke 2:32.

A review of the lessons of the past quarter will undoubtedly prove interesting and profitable to all. The design of the committee selecting the lessons seems to have been to bring prominently before our minds the thought first, of how Jerusalem became the general center from which the Gospel light, as lamps in a dark place, was carried in various directions; and secondly, how one of these places receiving the light from Jerusalem – Antioch – became itself a center from which the Lord sent forth Paul and Barnabas, who in turn lighted other lamps, in other places, and thus spread abroad the knowledge of the Lord – especially **[R3031 : page 191]** in Asia Minor, and even unto Europe. The same principle still applies; – God still uses human agencies. He who now receives the light of truth is to be the agent, channel, representative of God in carrying the same to others still in need of it.

Our Golden Text sets forth the thought that Christ is the light of the world. Not yet is the Sun of righteousness shining in glory, and dispelling earth's darkness; not yet is it enlightening all the Gentiles; not yet has Christ become the glory of his people Israel. He is, nevertheless, all through this Gospel age, a great light to all those whose eyes are opened that they may see it. This light is still shining in the darkness and the darkness comprehends it not; but blessed are our eyes for they see; and correspondingly the responsibility of the light is with us. Let us walk as children of light, even before the day dawns,

rejoicing also in the blessings that are ultimately to come to all the families of the earth through God's Anointed.

