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## "MY PEOPLE DO NOT CONSIDER."

"Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding."  
– 2 Tim. 2:7.

CONSIDER – reflect, think, study, ponder. Whatever may be said of the heathen religions and of churchianity in respect to their requiring little thought, little study, this is not the case with the religion of the Bible. It is not a religion of credulity – "shut your eyes and open your mouth," and swallow what is put therein. True, it is a religion of faith; – but a faith based upon reasonable evidences – a knowledge of God, whose plan and character it reveals. Hence it is that the Scriptures invite the faithful to consider, to search, to prove, saying, "Come, let us reason together." And it is worthy of note that all the false systems of [R3312 : page 37] religion and churchianity, misnamed Christianity, to a large extent reverse this scriptural order, endeavoring to obtain harmony, union, on a basis of comparative ignorance, rather than on a basis of growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Truth.

As we see this to be true today in nominal spiritual Israel, so we find it was true in olden times in fleshly Israel, to whom the Lord declares, – "The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people *do not consider.*" (Isa. 1:3.) We are not to understand the Lord to mean that the Jews had no knowledge of him whose sacrifices and ceremonial law and worship had their daily attention: neither should we be understood to imply that nominal Christians, who in various ways manifest some respect and reverence for the Lord, are wholly ignorant of him. The thought is rather that God's professed people today, as in olden times, while knowing something about their Creator and Redeemer, do not *know him* in the sense of being really acquainted with his character. In many respects they worship a strange God, because they have failed to get rightly, thoroughly, acquainted with him. Such an

acquaintance can only be obtained along the line suggested in our text: by giving heed, by *considering*, reflecting, studying the revelation which God has made respecting himself. Not that the Scriptures give us a detailed description of our Creator; but, rather, by revealing to us his plans, they permit us through an understanding of the divine plans to have an understanding of the divine character which those plans exemplify and illustrate. As a man is known by his works, so God is known by his works. Whoever, therefore, would know God – appreciate the divine character – must come to such a knowledge through an acquaintance with the divine plan which God is outworking.

Satan, the great adversary, seems to understand this matter thoroughly, and employs his arts of deception to hinder men from appreciating the divine plan, and thus to hinder an appreciation of the divine character – to prevent a real knowledge of God. He has been successful, marvelously so, as the Apostle declares, along these lines. The God of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, – lest the glorious light of the goodness of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, should shine into their hearts. (2 Cor. 4:4,6.) It is impossible for him to hinder all knowledge and all appreciation of the Creator, because the quality [R3313 : page 37] of reverence is deeply engraven in the natural man who, though fallen and deranged, nevertheless instinctively looks for a God to worship. Satan's work, therefore, is and has been the blinding and deceiving men, – many of whom, as the Apostle declares, are feeling after God, if haply they might find him. – Acts 17:27.

The adversary's success in blinding mankind would not be so easily accomplished were it not that he persuades men not to reason upon religious subjects; – that upon every other subject than religion, thought, consideration, reasoning, are advisable, but that on religious subjects, credulity, mistaken for faith, is the safe, the wise, the acceptable course. So great has been his success that we find not only the heathen world in ignorance, and superstitious upon religious

matters, but that the same principles, in a lighter form, prevail in Christendom – not only amongst Catholics but also amongst Protestants. The remedy for this general evil must be sought and found by all who would be saints, overcomers, – every one of whom must know the Lord not merely theoretically but actually, through a knowledge of his character by a knowledge of his plan.

Let us note how the Scriptures urge God's people to *consider*. They are to consider the natural things of the Lord's provision, as they touch with these in the course of human life, and are to read in them certain great lessons respecting the Creator. For instance, notice our Lord's statements, "*Consider* the lilies of the field." (Matt. 6:28.) "*Consider* the ravens." (Luke 12:24.) Our Lord calls attention to how such simple things in nature should be studied, be *considered*. The lessons to be learned in connection with all the affairs of life will be helpful to such as approach the study from the right standpoint, of faith in the Creator, and a realization that he is necessarily the embodiment and representative of the very highest and very noblest qualities of which the human mind could conceive; – that he is perfect in Justice, perfect in Wisdom, perfect in Power, perfect in Love. From this standpoint of faith we can learn a great lesson from *considering* the lilies. Their beauty teaches us that the Lord has a keen appreciation of the beautiful, and the fact that it comes to them without their toiling or spinning, teaches us that God is abundantly able to produce the beautiful without our aid, and that if necessary he could likewise clothe us miraculously. It teaches, further, that since he has not thus made provision for our necessities, it must be because he has seen (as the Word declares) that the experiences of life in the development of the resources of nature, in providing for our own needs, will be helpful to us.

As we *consider* the ravens and sparrows, and note how the Lord has made provision for their necessities without barns for the winter time, it teaches us that his power and wisdom could similarly, if necessary, provide for the necessities of his people, miraculously or

otherwise; and that in leaving humanity more subject to the vicissitudes of life than the little birds, the Lord doubtless intends thus to instruct mankind and to develop its reasoning faculties in respect to life's interests and necessary provisions, and in a manner that will be more [R3313 : page 38] helpful to him, better calculated for his development than would such a provision as is made for the dumb brutes. Faith can learn in all the affairs of life lessons of divine wisdom, and may assure itself reasonably, in harmony with the Lord's suggestion, that human beings are much more valuable than many sparrows, many ravens, many lilies, in God's sight; and that we may therefore more reasonably trust to his goodness and his interest in human affairs.

Thus *considering*, and looking through the little affairs of life, and noting the divine character as revealed in them, the mind is prepared for the still greater revelation of God's goodness set forth in his Word, which assures of his sympathy for humanity in its fallen condition, and of his willingness to assist in man's recovery from sin and death along lines in harmony with justice and love. *Considering*, from this standpoint, the love of God revealed through his Son Jesus commends itself at once to our hearts as being in full accord with what we find to be his general character – justice, wisdom, love. The heart that thus *considers* makes progress, grows in grace, in knowledge, in love. The heart that fails to *consider* the little things fails to be able to appreciate the larger things, and thus is hindered from a proper consideration of God and from a proper appreciation of his plan, and thus from a proper appreciation of his character.

It is David, the prophet, who exclaims, "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers!" (Psalm 8:3.) To the Prophet, whose mind was rightly directed and who *considered* these things, "day unto day uttered speech and night unto night showed forth knowledge;" and as a result King David – before the Gospel dispensation, before the giving of the holy Spirit of adoption, before the coming of the inestimable blessings which are ours today –

gained a large appreciation of his Creator, which became to him an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. The large conception of the divine character gained from the consideration of the divine work, even as seen in nature, brought the prophet-king near to God, in humility, in veneration, in love.

But if such a consideration of the heavens and the things of nature are profitable and helpful, how much more profitable is the consideration of the still higher things revealed to the Gospel Church through the holy Spirit since Pentecost. The Apostle Paul calls our attention in this direction saying, "**Consider** the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." (Heb. 3:1.) But how few of those who read the Scriptures have ever followed the Apostle's suggestion? how few have ever **considered** Jesus from the standpoint suggested, – as the Church's Apostle or special teacher sent of God to specially guide and instruct the Church, and as the church's High Priest to whom the faithful occupy the relationship of under priests? Had more **consideration** been given by the Lord's people to these matters, a larger number would undoubtedly be much farther advanced than they are today, in the knowledge and love of God. They would have seen that if Christ is a special teacher, a special High Priest of the Church, and the Church his special pupils, brethren and under priests, then there must be, according to the Scriptures, at some future time, a still greater blessing in which both High Priests and under priests will be the agents of God in blessing all the families of the earth.

Again the Apostle speaks of the high spiritual things which we are to **consider**, after we have taken our first lessons in considering the natural things, the lilies, ravens, heavens, etc., saying, "**Consider** him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." (Heb. 12:3.) Alas, how many of God's true children become weary and faint in their minds, and are in danger of losing the chief prize because they have failed to think upon, to study out, to comprehend,

to *consider* the Lord and what he faithfully endured of opposition. As they would *consider* his perfection and how, as represented in him, the light shined in darkness and was not appreciated, so they would expect that the light shining from them would not be appreciated either. – (John 1:5.) As they would *consider* how the Lord suffered in every sense unjustly and for righteousness' sake, and then would reflect that their own conduct, even though well meant, is imperfect, it would strengthen them to endure hardness as good soldiers, and not to be weary in well doing, and not to faint under opposition. It would enable them to realize what the Scriptures plainly declare, namely, that experiences and testings are necessary to the Lord's people and if rightly received these all work out everlasting blessings.

Such consideration of the Lord and what he endured and the reflection and realization of their own imperfections while seeking to walk in his footsteps, would tend to bring them not only to appreciation of the Lord's sympathy for his people and his grace toward them in covering from his sight their unwilling imperfections, but additionally, this consideration would lead to sympathy for their fellows in the narrow way. The Apostle intimates the propriety of such reflections, saying, "Consider one another to provoke [incite, inspire] unto love and good works." – (Heb. 10:24.) Oh, how much the Lord's people need to remember this injunction, if they would have proper forbearance and love one toward another, – to consider one another's sacrifice, to think of each other's imperfections, peculiarities or good qualities, as the case may be. With the Christian brother consideration always means to think kindly, **[R3313 : page 39]** charitably, even of the blemishes which love cannot hide. These blemishes are not to be considered lest they sour our hearts and arouse in our minds an opposition to one another; nor are they to be considered as an excuse for gossip or slander. The Apostle explains that we are to consider one another with a view to ascertaining how we can be most helpful to each other in the narrow way, most edifying, most strengthening, most inspiring.

But now another matter: Looking back to our text we find that the Apostle has united in it two thoughts: first, the necessity of considering; second, the necessity of having divine assistance in order to the reaching of a right understanding. "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding."

The natural man may assent to a great deal of what we have here written; yet in some particulars it will be beyond his grasp. It is only for those who approach the study of the divine will from the right direction – only for those who *consider* from the standpoint of the school of Christ, learning of him – only such have the divine assistance which the Apostle mentions, the understanding which comes from the Lord. It requires faith in God and his Word in order to be able to rightly appreciate either the natural or the spiritual things which are ours, and to feed thereon in our hearts and to grow strong thereby in our characters.

