

## "FULL OF MERCY AND GOOD FRUITS."

ONE HALF of a year is gone, and we wonder to what extent the text selected as our year text for 1905 has been remembered by all the dear readers, and to what extent they have sought to secure the wisdom to which our text referred.

-----

*"Wisdom is the Principal Thing:  
Therefore Get Wisdom." – Prov. 4:7*

\* \* \*

*"The Wisdom that is from Above  
is First Pure,  
Then Peaceable, Gentle, Easy of Entreatment,  
Full of Mercy and Good Fruits." – Jas. 3:17*

-----

These heavenly counsels have been in the Lord's Word for centuries, they have been in our hands and before our eyes for years. We know them, we assent to them and yet how many – how few – seem to know how to apply them in the ordinary affairs of life. Surely as the Lord looks down upon us he must say, These people require line upon line, precept upon precept, instruction and repetition continually. Alas that it is so! We all might well be thoroughly discouraged were it not for the assurance we have that the Lord looks deeper than the outward conduct, that he is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and that according to what he sees to be our desires and efforts is his judgment respecting us. The thoughts and intents of our hearts are sometimes short of the standard that we ourselves approve, and O how short of any standard we could

approve would be much of our conduct if we could but see ourselves as others see us and especially as the Lord sees us!

We are not writing with a view to discouraging any dear brother or sister who is painfully, laboriously, striving to climb up Zion's hill along the narrow way. On the contrary, we have nothing but sympathy for them, and are assured that the Lord regards both them and us compassionately – "he remembereth our frame, he knoweth that we are dust." The Lord recognizes **[R3604 : page 230]** that we are imperfect, fallen creatures, and he is not expecting perfection of us. He has made provision for the covering of such of our imperfections as we do not at heart assent to; he has also given us instruction respecting his will, and he is carefully scrutinizing us day by day to see to what extent our love for him and for the principles of righteousness, which he has enunciated and which we have acknowledged, are entering into and controlling the forces and conduct of our lives; for, after all, the words of our mouths are but the echoes of our hearts, and to whatever extent our hearts are clean our words will be pure, and to whatever extent our hearts are loving and gentle and kind our words and conduct will be in accord with these divinely approved qualities.

### **FIRST PURE, THEN PEACEABLE.**

Let us examine ourselves afresh to know the condition of our hearts, remembering the word of the Lord, that if we judge ourselves we would not require that he should judge us, but that if we neglect to judge ourselves he will chasten us, because we put our cause in his hand, because we are his. The word pure has in it the thought of innocent, without deceit; it has in it the thought of virtue and chastity; it contains the thought of clean, true and truthful. We cannot hope that any, either in the Church or out of it, are actually pure in the absolute sense of this word, but we do rejoice that our dear Master gave the key to a proper understanding of the matter when he said, "Blessed are the pure in heart." So long as we are in this present,

mortal, imperfect condition absolute purity is impossible; for us to be pure of heart is possible – purity of intention, purity of motive.

When we begin a self-examination to see whether or not we are using our time and talents and influence [R3604 : page 231] wisely, this is the first point for scrutiny, Are we pure in heart, in our daily course of life? Are we sincere in the prayers that we utter to the Lord, in our endeavors to please him? In our relationship toward the Father are we candid and honest? Do we love him with a pure love, heartily, fervently, or do we not? Let each decide this point for himself before proceeding to the next. If upon examination we find that our hearts have not been pure in respect to our covenants and relationship to the Lord and his Word and to the Father, let us go no farther until we have asked divine forgiveness and resolve that by the Lord's assisting grace we will be nothing less than pure in heart, pure in endeavor.

If we can assure ourselves that our motives and intentions have nothing of selfishness connected with them, that our purposes are pure in the sight of the Lord, then, indeed, our hearts may rejoice whatever may have been our weaknesses and imperfections of the flesh, in our relationship toward the Lord or the Father or our neighbors or the world.

The next point is, Are we peaceable? Have we thus far in the year been seeking to cultivate peace, or, as the Scriptures put it, "Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"? Have we lived thus far in the year as peaceable, as pure of heart toward God and his Word and his brethren as is possible for us? If so we have cause for rejoicing afresh and being of good courage; if not, here is another lesson and opportunity for going to the throne of grace to acknowledge our fault, to pray for more of this wisdom from above, which is first pure and then so far as possible peaceable toward all – peace loving, peace disposed.

## **"EASY OF ENTREATMENT."**

How has it been with us so far? Have we been hard-hearted, cold and repulsive, or have we been gentle, kind, sympathetic with those with whom we are in contact, easy to be entreated, willing, yes, anxious to do everything which in our judgments would seem to be in the interest and for the welfare of others – proper, reasonable and right to do? If so, happy are we, but let us not too hastily conclude, not too hastily congratulate ourselves along this line, until we have made close inspection of the pathway of the last six months. Have any appealed to us for forgiveness and been refused? If so ours is a very dangerous position. The Lord declares most positively that while that is our attitude we can expect no mercy from him. He insists upon this – "After this manner pray ye, Forgive us our trespasses as we also forgive those who trespass against us."

Emphasizing the matter, we remember that the Master explained, "Unless ye forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." What a thought! Do we need mercy? Do we need to have our faults and weaknesses of the flesh covered? Do we rejoice in the privilege of approaching the throne of heavenly grace to obtain mercy? Then, as a condition to those privileges and blessings, we must be in the attitude of heart where we not only will forgive those who trespass against us, but forgive them gladly, freely, heartily. Our Lord specially warns us against a forgiving with the lips which does not include a forgiving from the heart, saying, "Except ye shall from your hearts forgive," etc. – Matt. 18:35.

Let no one deceive himself – mercy is a prime essential to everyone who would be counted amongst the Lord's saints, and who would count himself as having any of the evidences of acceptance with the Lord to a participation in the glorious high calling. If we have been derelict in this matter in the past, let us be the more zealous

now to correct matters, and the more on our guard as respects the future that we may not err farther in this same direction.

### **"FULL OF MERCY AND GOOD FRUITS."**

Ah! Here we have the pith of the whole matter: Full of mercy does not signify that we are not wholly without mercy, merciless; nor does it signify that we should have a little tinge or coloring of mercy in connection with our thoughts, words and doings. On the contrary, it does mean that the Lord is very merciful, Love is his name, and that in proportion as we have received his spirit, in that proportion we are full of love and full of mercy. He that lacks mercy lacks the spirit of the Lord, as though when we read, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his," we should substitute the word mercy and say, If any man have not mercy he is none of Christ's. O, Merciful Lord, help us, we pray thee, that we may have more and more of thy spirit of compassion and sympathy and love, that we may more and more become copies of thy dear Son and thus copies of our Father whose mercy endureth forever, and obedient followers of him who said that unto seventy times seven we should be ready to fully and freely forgive from the heart those who transgress against us and repent!

Full of good fruits! Yes, mercy is one of the good fruits of the Lord's Spirit, but there are others, and it is a consolation that being filled with mercy does not mean that we shall be unable to contain the other graces, but rather that the fuller we are of mercy the more of the other graces of the Lord's spirit we may possess. Mercy is not one of the good fruits, although it is classed high. It is really a negative quality: it signifies merely that we do not resent the evils of others, that we are willing to forgive, to have compassion. Still more is necessary, we must also have the active traits of character that will reach out toward others, not to injure them, not to pull them down, not to slander them, not to backbite them, but to do them good. The fruits of the spirit of evil are anger, malice, hatred, envy, strife.

Whoever finds any of these lurking anywhere in his heart should both labor and pray to have himself cleansed from the leaven of corruption that he might be completely filled with the fruits of the spirit, good fruits, meekness, gentleness, patience, long suffering, brotherly kindness, love, that these things might be in him and abound.

If we have mercy towards a dear brother or sister who may have transgressed against us, we are not to feel boastful of the matter, but to realize that we also have **[R3604 : page 232]** been forgiven much and are objects of divine mercy, and we are to go on to cultivate in our hearts and to be filled with the other good fruits. We ought to learn to exercise patience toward a brother, to help him over his natural difficulties and weaknesses in a most kind, gentle, sympathetic manner, remembering ourselves also lest we should be tempted. We should be on the alert to exercise brotherly kindness, not merely toward those whose natural dispositions we admire because like or superior to our own; but rather our love for the Lord and love for the brethren should lead us to sacrifice our natural tastes and inclinations to some degree, that we might give aid and encouragement and assistance in the good way to those members of the body who are naturally less amiable or who have made less progress or whose weaknesses or shortcomings are more apparent.

This will be brotherly kindness, and it will also be God-likeness, for thus the Almighty and our Lord Jesus, while having the common fellowship with the holy in heaven, condescended to us and continually bow down to hear us, to sympathize with us and to assist us. Let us be more and more God-like then in our relationship and dealings with and toward each other, and finally these various elements of love will form in us more and more completely until, by the grace of God, eventually we shall be filled with his spirit, the spirit of love – until we shall have that perfect law in full control of all our words and thoughts and doings, and thus attaining let us stand fast, waiting for the glorious conditions of the first resurrection,

which the Lord has promised to all such overcomers of the world and its spirit of sin and bitterness and evil.

