

"IT IS HIGH TIME TO AWAKE OUT OF SLEEP"

"And do this knowing the season, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand."

– Rom. 13:11,12.

PREVIOUS to this exhortation the Apostle had been giving some wholesome counsel concerning the proper course of the Lord's people in the every-day duties of life. His advice seems to cover a wide range of the little vexing cares and trials that every one must meet, and shows us how to triumph in them through the mighty power of love. He evidently thought of the thin veneer of politeness in the world which so often covers deep-seated selfishness, and showed that our politeness and love should be only the genuine solid article, saying, "Let love be without dissimulation [pretence or hypocrisy]. Abhor that which is evil [abhor all shams and pretence]; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another." He thought of the temptations and vexations of our business intercourse with the world, and of its natural tendency to engross time, energy and thought in worldly things, and therefore counselled, not that we should give up all business, but that, while we should be energetic and "not slothful in business," we should be careful always to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

He thought of the depressing tendency of the ever-present cares of life, and of the persecutions in one form or another that are sure to come to those who will live godly; and so, while admitting that no trial can for the present be otherwise than grievous, he tells us that we may rejoice *in hope*; for the trial will not continue forever, and by and by it will bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness if we are rightly exercised

thereby, and in the end the rewards of righteousness; and therefore he says we should be "patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer" for that grace which is promised according to our needs.

He thought of the poverty and losses of some and therefore counselled sympathy and hospitality – "Distributing to the necessity of saints, given to hospitality. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Bless [even] them which persecute you; bless and curse not. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men."

He thought of the numerous vexations arising from contact with those of undisciplined hearts and said, "If it be possible, as much as lieth *in you*, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. [You will thus make him ashamed of his own conduct in contrast with yours.]"

Finally, he says, "Be not overcome of evil [do not allow the trials of life to make you sour, or vindictive, or cold and unsympathetic; nor allow the more favorable circumstances to make you proud or highminded or wise in your own conceits]; but overcome evil [of every kind] with good." **[R3830 : page 246]**

Then he instructs us to be law-abiding and God-honoring citizens in the communities in which we live – "Rendering to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear [respectful deference or submission] to whom fear;

honor to whom honor." And after pointing to the several commandments of the moral law he adds, "If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

Yes, love; supreme love to God and then to the neighbor as to self, is that disposition of heart that will make us victorious in every trial and temptation. In its operations toward God it lays hold by faith upon his mighty power; it trusts his wisdom and his guidance; it takes his standpoint of observation and patiently waits the outworking of his deep designs, rejoicing in hope; and is persevering and faithful through all the painful processes that lead on to victory. In its operations toward our fellow-men it is pure, peaceable, kind, forbearing, gentle, sympathetic, tender, and in strict conformity to the golden rule.

"Do this," says the Apostle – cultivate this God-like disposition of love. And not only so, but he would have us be diligent in the cultivation, "knowing the season," knowing that the time is short in which to build up in ourselves this God-like and Christ-like character. We have not a moment to lose if we desire to be finally approved of God as meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

If the Apostle could say to the saints of his day, "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep," etc., because they had then entered upon the Gospel age with its privilege of running the race for the prize of our high calling, with how much greater force do his words apply to these closing days of the age. In the clear light of unfolded time-prophecy we see that we are now living in the latter half of the harvest period; that only eight years of the harvest time remain, and that before its close all the overcoming saints will have passed the vail of the flesh and entered into the joy of the Lord as co-workers with him

in the great work of the Kingdom. Yes, "the night is far spent" and "the day [the glorious Millennial day] is at hand." Even now the gray streaks of dawn appear. It is the day when the kingly Bridegroom shall receive unto himself his ready and waiting Bride, and the time is short in which to make ready for our gathering together unto him. It is high time indeed to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation, our glorious deliverance, very near.

It is possible that some, even of the very dear and fully consecrated children of God, surrounded by the cares of this life, or weary in the struggle against sin and evil, or somewhat beguiled by the present things of time and sense, may have become more or less drowsy, and so stand in special need of the stirring exhortation, "It is now high time to awake out of sleep." It is a time for earnest, searching self-examination, for a more diligent feeling after God, for a closer walk and more intimate fellowship with him, for more thorough self-abnegation, more diligent and persevering cross-bearing, and more faithful conformity in every respect to the whole will of God concerning us. **[R3831 : page 246]**

The Apostle says, "Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light;" and again, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." A careful, prayerful searching of our hearts will make plain wherein we lack of conformity to the perfect will of God. And if we discover in us any perverse way we will want to correct it and the more fully to put on the armor of light – the armor of righteousness and truth. Thus we put on the Lord Jesus Christ – the mind or disposition of Christ, that spirit of love which Paul says "is the fulfilling of the Law" – that love that worketh no ill to its neighbor; that suffereth long and is kind, that envieth not, that vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, that rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the

truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; and without which, though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have it not, we are only as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal; and though we have the gift of prophecy (teaching) and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though we have all faith so that we could remove mountains, and though we bestow all our goods to feed the poor, and even give our bodies to be burned, it profiteth nothing. – I Cor. 13:1-7.

How important, then, in the short time that remains to us here, that we awake fully and apply ourselves most diligently to the cultivation of this God-like and Christ-like disposition of love. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love... and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." – I John 4:7,8,16.
