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## "LOVING KINDNESS, O HOW GREAT!"

*- II SAMUEL 9. - OCTOBER 18. -*

**Golden Text:** – "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another." – Eph. 4:32. "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me." – Prov. 8:17.

THE Lord gives us a deep insight into David's character, and shows us one of the abilities he possessed which constituted him "A man after God's own heart." Entirely overlooking and forgetting the evils which he experienced from King Saul during the years in which the latter sought his life, King David remembered with appreciation the conduct of Saul's son, Jonathan; how the latter had befriended him, and how he had made a covenant that in turn he would show kindnesses to Jonathan's family. For a time, busy with the affairs of the kingdom, King David apparently forgot to make any special inquiry respecting the family of Saul, but something occurred which brought prominently to his mind his obligation to Jonathan. Presumably this was about the middle of his reign; and quite possibly it was David's serious sin with Bathsheba and his hearty repentance therefore that now quickened his mind in respect to his responsibilities to those about him, including the family of his deceased friend.

Ziba, chief servant of King Saul, was called to David and inquiry was made respecting any of the remaining members of Saul's family. This disclosed the fact that there was still living a son of Jonathan, who was a child of five years at the time of the death of Saul and Jonathan, and who was lamed in his feet by falling from his nurse's arms as they fled at the news of the defeat.

King David explained to Ziba that he desired to do kindnesses to Saul's posterity, and bade him bring to court Jonathan's lame son

Mephibosheth. The King's command was obeyed, although it must have been received with great fear and trepidation and doubt with respect to its sincerity. It was the custom at the time, that when one king succeeded to the dominion of another all the heirs of the throne should be sought and killed, lest they should give trouble later to the new dynasty. This was evidently expected of King David, and hence the secrecy in respect to the whereabouts of Jonathan's son was kept so that the King knew not of him. However, Ziba was a man of large family interests and realized that it was incumbent upon him to perform the King's bidding, even if it should mean the death of Saul's heir. And the latter, being lame and knowing that his present residence was known to the King, could [R4268 : page 325] do nothing less than respond and present himself at the court. His fear that the King's words might be treacherous, his thoughts that so great a generosity as has been suggested could not be expected or trusted, doubtless caused him fear and trepidation as, coming to the presence of the King, he prostrated himself at his feet, saying, "Behold thy servant!"

"Fear not," said David, "for I will surely show thee kindnesses for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the lands of Saul, thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually."

With the people of oriental lands the eating of food together as friends implies a pledge of friendship and fidelity; and to eat continually at the table signifies membership in the family. We are not to consider this a light matter, for David had two wives and their children were hopeful of being his successors to the kingdom and this bringing a stranger into the family might properly be considered as a menace to their interests, especially as that stranger already, according to the usages of nations, had a prior claim to the throne, superior even to that of the King.

The entire operation shows us the fearlessness of the King and confidence that the kingdom should not be taken away from his

posterity; and it shows us also the confidence which all the members must have felt towards him and respect to his judgment as to the affairs of the home and his headship in his home. This [R4269 : page 325] headship we cannot suppose was used in an austere and arbitrary manner, but with loving kindnesses and generosity and in the interest of his entire household. He who could be thus kind to the son of a friend, certainly could be kind and generous also to the members of his own family.

### **LESSONS FOR SPIRITUAL ISRAELITES**

The most advanced even of the Lord's consecrated people may draw some helpful suggestions from the incidents of this lesson.

(1) A friend in need is a friend indeed. Jonathan had been David's friend in his time of need and thus had attested his nobility of character, his faithfulness to principles of righteousness, his loyalty to the Lord, even when the Lord was taking his kingdom power to give it to David. David's friendship came in time of need to the poor man with lame feet, who lived in secret, fearful that anyone should recognize him lest his life should be taken.

(2) David's searching for the opportunities to do good reminds us that such should be our attitude; that we should not merely wait until circumstances force upon our attention the troubles of others and their need of assistance. Well do the Scriptures say, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." This is a God-like quality, and whoever practices it is to that extent godly. The Apostle says of God, that he looked down and beheld the "groaning of the prisoners" in their condition of sin, degradation, dying. He looked further to note that there were no other means of assistance, that they were wholly dependent upon him; then his own arm brought salvation. The arm of the Lord Jesus was revealed for man's uplift from the condition of death back to harmony with God. Our Lord suggested, "Be ye kind even as your father in heaven; for he is kind unto the unthankful and the evil and the good."

In harmony with this, our generous sentiments and helpfulness should not be confined to those who have claims upon us through love relationship. Our generosity is to go beyond, even to our enemies. "Yea, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." So shall we be the children of our Father in heaven; so shall we show that we have his disposition, "the mind of Christ," who, when we were enemies, died for us. We are not, however, urging the same degree of love and benevolence toward all. The Lord specially loves those who are in accord with him – and so should we, but our love and sympathy and assistance must not be confined only to these, for we have the admonition that "If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same." But God commended his love to us as an example of what ours should be in that his Son, "Christ, died for the ungodly."

(3) David's justice and generosity are both manifested in the course he pursued. Instead of coveting Saul's possessions and using his power to attach these to his own he deliberately settled the matter that the profits of Saul's estate should all go to his son, who at the same time would be continually partaker of the King's bounty at his table. Comparatively few would have been so just and so generous. The incident gives David's character a fresh luster and helps us to understand why he was so beloved of the Lord. He was not content with merely wishing to do right, willing to do right, he went forward and dealt justice. He put his bright thoughts and generous impulses into practice, and made "footprints on the sands of time" which have helped to mark the proper pathway for the millions who have since examined these in the holy records.

### **OUR FIRST GOLDEN TEXT**

While the Scriptures everywhere inculcate the thought that God's people are to be generous towards strangers as well as their own people, they make common the thought that they should have

a special interest in one another, as the Apostle expresses in these words, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another." Ah! Yes. Kindness is certainly one of the elements of love, as the Apostle says, and tender-heartedness must characterize those who would have a participation with our Lord in his Kingdom. Hardness of heart and cruelty are evidences of degradation – the loss of the image of God. The coldness and the hard-heartedness of the world make countless thousands mourn, even more than their circumstances necessitate. As the Apostle declares, "The whole creation groaneth," waiting for the King of Glory, who will bring in restitution. And it should be a part of the mission of every member of the Body of Christ to do something to help ameliorate the world's difficulty. And each may do something, even if it be no more than the cheering word. Indeed, we rejoice as we see the manifestations of the coming Kingdom of our Lord, "The times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." – Acts 3:20.

### **"FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER"**

Are not the Lord's people commended "to be perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"? And if this is so, what in each other's conduct would they have to forgive? Ah! there it is. At heart they must will perfection absolutely; but how to perform it they find not; hence, as the Apostle says, in many things we all fail. "There is none righteous; no, not one." More than this, the Lord's elect are not, according to the flesh, the highest, the noblest, the best. "Not many great, not many noble, not many rich hath God [R4269 : page 326] chosen." While the Apostle intimates that some great, some rich and some noble may be expected amongst the elect, he emphatically declares that God has chosen chiefly the mean things of the world, and the things that are despised, and the things that are not, to bring to naught the things that are. How strange! Nevertheless, it is just like the Lord to pass by the self-

righteous and the proud, and to declare that "Only those who humble themselves shall be exalted and those that exalt themselves shall be abased." This fact, then, that God will accept none but the humble, accounts for the fact that those who have received the message in humility are chiefly the mean, the ignoble. It is only the humble-minded, taught in the school of Christ, who are able and willing to accept the ignoble ones who rally to the Lord's standard and who may be accepted. To love the ignoble signifies that we must view them from the divine standpoint and love them as God loves them – not because of their ignoble and mean qualities, but in spite of these; because of their heart's desires towards God and righteousness. As we come to love and appreciate all those who stand for and strive for those principles, we take our position with God and view the situation from the divine standpoint, having compassion upon those who are weak and out of the way and doing all we can to assist them, if they are of those who love righteousness and hate iniquity and are striving in harmony with their ideals.

The more such have to contend with the more will they call forth the love and sympathy of God and all who are his. God has promised to "cover their blemishes" and this must be the sentiment of all who are on his side. As the Apostle said in this text we must be disposed to forgive one another and, as he again in I Cor. 12 teaches, that "Those members in the Body of Christ which are most ungainly," upon them we should bestow more efforts and energy for their assistance, especially covering their blemishes, especially assisting them. Along this line the Apostle elsewhere says that we ought to follow the example of Jesus in laying down our lives for the brethren – "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." – Romans 15:1.

Too often the Lord's people forget this injunction and are disposed to lay down their lives for themselves, for their own

comfort, or to lay down their lives, their time, their energy, in fellowshiping with those of the brethren most congenial to them in cultivation or in advancement. Is not this pleasing ourselves in ignoring to serve those members of the Body who need our assistance most – the more ignoble?

## **OUR SECOND GOLDEN TEXT**

The Sunday-School Lesson Committee have appointed this date for a special prayer to God in behalf of Sunday-School people the world over. While the lesson itself does not seem to have been chosen in connection with this thought our second Golden Text is very appropriate to it, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me." This is said respecting wisdom, but God himself is the very personification of wisdom, and hence this applies to God. Similarly to those who are privileged to hear of God's grace, Christ is wisdom. As the Apostle declares, "He is made unto us wisdom" – unto all who rightly, properly accept him.

It is not our thought that the Gospel call was sent especially to children, nor do we find our Lord's teaching specially adapted to the child mind, nor that he taught children, nor that he or the apostles established Sunday-Schools. (See our comment on Sunday-School work in DAWN-STUDIES, Vol. 6, pages 544-7.) We may properly say, however, that whatever were the limitations of the Jewish Law which hindered Christ and the apostles from becoming ministers of the Truth until after they were thirty years of age, there are no such limitations applying now, and hence "Whosoever has an ear to hear, let him hear," however old, however young.

We encourage the dear brethren of the Truth everywhere to see to it that their children have the very best religious instruction, as well as their own example in daily living. Every home should have its Sunday-School **[R4270 : page 326]** class, even though there be but one child. Every Sunday should have its quiet, sacred

hour of fellowship, communion and praise, participated in by the parents and the children. It is beautiful to note the influence of a proper home-life in the families of some – in joy and love and truth. Will not all so resolve and by the grace of God fulfil?

There is a charm about childhood – its innocence, its faith – and the child-mind is peculiarly susceptible to the Truth and its spirit, too, the spirit of consecration. How blessed it would be if all of our children from earliest infancy were taught to love the Lord as the Giver of all good; to consider his will, to consecrate their little all to him! Such children so instructed often become teachers of their parents, showing forth the true spirit of devotion. Here and there on our Pilgrim visits we are introduced to little ones thus early given to the Lord and trained in harmony with his will. Some of these have the spirit of devotion so strongly developed that any pennies coming to them, instead of being spent for sweets, are laid by as consecrated to the Lord, to be sent to Brother Russell from time to time to print tracts to help the people understand the Bible and to see that God is love. We seek not the pennies of the dear children, but their welfare, the great spiritual blessing which comes into their lives and which will surely go with them through coming days to their comfort and joy. The little, loving hearts thus early given to God, surely find a blessing and a protection from much of the evil that is in the world.

Many of the little ones who thus began a life of consecration and self-denial for the Truth's sake before they could rightly appreciate the situation in full have since matured most remarkably, and at twelve and thirteen years have requested opportunity for symbolizing their consecration, and have given clear evidence of a comprehensive knowledge of the fundamentals of the Gospel and of a heart-appreciation of the sacrifice presented to the Lord.



Our Lord said, "I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me." And similarly our prayers need not go up on behalf of the world, for whose blessing the Millennial Kingdom and its opportunities have been provided, but our petitions may ascend on behalf of those who have become consecrated to him, our brethren in Christ, and this will include the younger ones of the consecrated as well as the aged. We may also in a general way include those whom the Father has given to us as our wards, as being under our care and instruction; we may pray for these favorable providences of God for their highest welfare, and for ourselves wisdom and grace, that we may present to them the Lord's message in its best form and exemplify the same in our daily conduct and in our dealing with our children. **[R4270 : page 327]**

## **LORD, THIS VOW THAT I HAVE TAKEN**

(Tune: Nettleton)

Heavenly Father, I adore thee!  
Hallowed be thy holy name;  
Mighty angels bow before thee,  
Should not mortals do the same?  
May thy rule of love control me,  
And thy will in me be done;  
Hear the Vow I make before thee,  
In the name of Christ, thy Son.

Daily will I pray, remember  
All thy servants, dearest Lord,  
Those who labor as one family,  
To dispense thy precious Word;  
Those who lonely go, as Pilgrims,  
Those who travel two by two,  
Those who volunteer to scatter  
Golden gems, like morning dew.

O'er my thoughts, and words and actions,  
I a closer watch will keep,  
That I may be used more freely  
In the feeding of thy sheep.  
Oh, I want thy power to cleanse me,  
By its power to set me free,  
From all fleshly imperfections,  
And to make me more like thee.

Lord, I know the powers of evil  
Are increasing every day;  
Trying to ensnare and hinder  
Those who walk the narrow way.  
Never will I listen to them;  
Lord, I fear their subtle power,  
From their every snare protect me,  
Help me, keep me, every hour.

Lord, in all my daily dealings  
Toward my brethren in the Truth,  
I will not by word or action  
Do what thou wouldst not approve.  
Purity shall mark my conduct;  
Chaste in thought and word I'll be,  
That the image of my Master  
May be perfected in me.

Lord, this Vow, that I have taken  
I could never keep alone.  
When I think of self, I tremble;  
When I look to thee I'm strong.  
Leaning on thee, in my weakness,  
Trusting thee for promised grace,  
I will take this Vow and keep it,  
Till I see thee face to face.

***Rebecca F. Doney.***

