

"PRESERVE THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT"

ST. PAUL'S exhortation that we preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, was never more necessary to the Church than now. We have already adverted to the fact that a peculiar bitterness of spirit and word seems to attach to those who oppose the Vow, and we wish to caution those who have taken the Vow against any participation in the spirit of strife, anger, bitterness. We cannot help what others may do or say to us, but we can see to it, each for himself, "that no man render evil for evil or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing."

Some time ago our attention was especially called in a variety of ways to the fact that the fallen angels are coming into a greater degree of liberty than they have had since the flood and their condemnation to chains of darkness. All that we said respecting the probable materializations, counterfeiting both the dead and the living, we still believe, and advise all to be on guard against; but we think it not improbable that while we were thus looking out for and exposing some of the Adversary's wiles, he was getting in his work along other lines – stirring up evil surmising, evil speaking, insinuations, malice, envy, hatred, strife – lovelessness. It is our present thought that the greatest danger to the Household of Faith lies along these subtle lines. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Hence, to whatever extent the Adversary may be able to inject into us an evil spirit, and to drive out the holy Spirit, to that extent he will be separating, alienating us from the Lord. Nor can we wonder that our Master would permit such trials to come upon us as a people. We have had much advantage every way above others – in knowledge, in appreciation of the deep things of God, in an opportunity for the development of the fruits and graces of the holy Spirit. Having preached to others, have we applied to ourselves these precious truths and graces, or shall we

eventually be castaways, because of being merely preachers of the Word and not doers of it? – because while preaching love for God and for the brethren, this love was not allowed to permeate and sanctify all the avenues of our hearts, our words, our thoughts, our deeds. We cannot complain that the Lord should test us along these lines.

For years we have been teaching respecting the peculiar trials of this hour, and calling attention to the statement of the Word that "A thousand shall fall at our side." Have we profited by the knowledge, or does the fact that some are now falling cause us surprise? The question is for each one of us. It is time for drawing near to the Captain of our Salvation, and time for complete separation from everything that would not have his and our Father's hearty approval. We believe that the Lord especially brought forward the Vow for this very time, and that it is doing a wonderful work of purifying in the hearts of God's children, as is abundantly evidenced by the letters which we are daily receiving and which tell of the showers of blessings enjoyed, and nearness to the Lord, as a result of this fresh statement of the original consecration.

We promised to announce from time to time the growth of our list of those taking the Vow, and we are pleased to mention now that the six thousand mark has been reached. In this connection we offer the suggestion that everywhere, so far as possible, the Vow be read daily, by everyone who has taken it, either publicly at the breakfast table for instance; or individually and privately. We are assured that there is a blessing in it, not only for the Bible House family, but for all. How wonderful it seems that without our so thinking of it, or intending it, the Lord has used this Vow so that it should call into existence a prayer-circle of six thousand of his consecrated ones who remember each other daily at the throne of grace.

With the Vow freshly before the mind each morning, reminding us of our resolution to guard, if possible, every word and every thought still more carefully than in the past, is it any wonder if more progress is being made in self-control and in the development of the fruits and graces of the holy Spirit? Such results are what we should expect. And those who have not taken the Vow and who realize frequently their shortcomings in word and thought and act, and lament over these – is it not worth their while to consider the help they would gain by this fresh resolution to the Lord, and the increased carefulness that it would bring to them?

We suggest that those who have taken the Vow remember **[R4338 : page 60]** also the dear ones who have not yet taken it, soliciting for them the Lord's blessing and guidance, and that they be careful in every sense of the word to exemplify the Gospel of peace and love and good will implied by their Vow, to more carefully than ever, if possible, scrutinize their words and thoughts. Let this greater carefulness be manifest to those who have not taken the Vow, that they may see your better self-control and be glad to glorify our Father in heaven.

While we deprecate anything looking toward a division or schism in the Body of Christ, and while we believe that there is no ground for a division in connection with the Vow, and that no one who has taken the Vow has a right to make it a test of fellowship with his brethren; nevertheless, we are free to admit that with those who oppose the Vow the case is different. In opposing it they seem to forfeit a measure of their confidence. They are either less wise or less good than we thought them to be; for we cannot see how either a wise or a good heart could place hindrances and opposition in the way of those who by this Vow are seeking to bind their sacrifice to the altar.

As before stated, the test of the Scripturalness or unscripturalness of the Vow is a very simple one. Take its statements one by one and see whether any Scripture can be found in opposition to any of them; then see how many Scriptures can be found favoring these very propositions either in the word or in spirit. Thus we determine that the Vow is Scriptural to the very last degree, and unscriptural in no degree. Does someone suggest that the taking of the Vow is not demanded in the Scriptures? We reply that the taking of the WATCH TOWER, the Cincinnati *Enquirer*, the *Dispatch* or the *World* is not stipulated in the Scriptures; neither is the publication of our tracts and SCRIPTURE-STUDIES directly commanded. Is it unscriptural to wear shoes, or trousers, or hats, because these are not mentioned in the Scriptures? Are they not all thoroughly Scriptural if they do not conflict with any of the holy provisions and regulations; just as any matter is thoroughly legal which does not conflict with any law? We are surprised at the weakness of the arguments by which [R4339 : page 60] some of the dear friends have confused themselves and hindered their reception of a great blessing through the taking of the Vow or Resolution to the Lord, that theirs shall hereafter be a still closer walk with God.

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