

THE HEART MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE HEAD

"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." – Prov. 4:23.

WE realize that our heads need keeping: and some of us at one time might have been inclined to say, "Keep thy head with all diligence, in line with the doctrines of Christ, and thy heart will be all right, for God will keep it." This, however, is a mistake. God has stated the matter correctly. We are not competent to keep our heads. We are competent and responsible for the keeping of our hearts. If we diligently keep, watch, guard our hearts from evil, and in full harmony with the Divine Word and its spirit of the Truth, righteousness, love, God will do the rest. He will guide our imperfect reasoning faculties, and we shall know his doctrines.

Keeping the heart signifies keeping guard over our sentiments. It signifies a critical inspection of every motive of life. Why do we speak? What is the object desired? Why do we do this, or not do that thing? Is the motive honorable, just, loving? Do we love righteousness? Do we hate iniquity? Is the love of God being more and more shed abroad in our hearts? Is it increasing God-ward and man-ward, and toward the brethren? This is watching, "keeping our hearts," and implies that if a selfish thought or motive or ambition be found lurking anywhere, or seeking to guide in act or word, it should be promptly expelled – that the heart may be pure, clean. Keeping the heart means also activities in love, benevolence, helpfulness and the cultivation of thoughts and sentiments in accord with the Divine. It means not only the purifying of the heart, but the garnishing of it with the fruits and graces of holiness and love, that it may be acceptable to the Lord. So surely as injustice or sin or impurity is harbored to any extent, the heart is

proportionately defiled and proportionately unacceptable to the Lord, and in the way leading towards repudiation by him.

The words, "the issues of life," would remind a lawyer of the fact that when a case is tried in court the jurors are sworn to do their duty in respect to the issue [R4345 : page 72] joined – the decision to be reached. So all of the Lord's consecrated people are on trial. The issue has been joined. It means, (1) life or death eternal; and (2) additionally to those who win life there is another issue, namely, whether that life eternal shall be on the highest plane – of the divine nature and Joint-Heirship with Christ – or on the lower spirit plane of the Great Company – like unto the angels. Do we realize the issue joined in this trial, the outcome of which is so vital? If we do, and if we believe the Lord's declaration that the issue or result will depend upon our heart condition, then we see a reason why we should use "all diligence" in keeping our hearts pure, sweet, tender, loving, "a copy, Lord, of thine."

Once, when our eyes of understanding began to open and we discerned the length and breadth and height and depth of love Divine and the wonderful Plan of Salvation, we inclined to think that the number who would fail to attain life everlasting, either in this age or in the Millennium, would be a small number. We would even have inclined to the Universalist view that all would ultimately be saved, had it not been for certain texts of Scripture which clearly intimate that, according to the Divine foreknowledge, there would be some who would die the Second Death, as a result of the "sin unto death" – "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that ye shall pray for it." – I John 5:16.

But as we have become more and more familiar with the mind of the Lord as presented to us in his Word, we discern that none will be granted eternal life, except they shall attain a certain character development, and that that character development

means not merely an outward loyalty and restraint from sin, but a heart loyalty and love for righteousness, and hatred toward iniquity. During the Millennium outward perfection will be the standard, yet ultimately in the end of that age, the heart development will be the test, which will determine who may go beyond to eternal life, and who may not.

The heart test may now be said to be the only one, because our flesh, justified, then consecrated to death, is not the New Creature which hopes for glory, honor and immortality, but merely its imperfect servant or tool. The New Creature's heart or affections must be loyal to the very highest principles of Justice and Love, and, according to its development along these lines, will be the Divine decision for life or for death – on some plane or on no plane of being. The Great Company must have the Christ-like character, as well as the Little Flock and as well as the Restitution class at the end of the Millennium. We are not to understand that there will be, for any of the consecrated, any further trial or education or development or testing after the present trial is ended. No one will be in either the Little Flock or the Great Company except those who are in loving loyalty to God, to the brethren, to the principles of righteousness. All others will be condemned as unfit for life eternal upon any plane of being.

Perhaps the worldly might say to us, It must be a great strain upon you and make your life miserable to be obliged to think continually of the right or the wrong of every act and every word and every thought, and to be obliged to repudiate and disown every sentiment not entirely just and loving. We reply, that at first it might have so appeared to us, but the Lord leads his people gently, graciously, step by step, to an appreciation of the principles of righteousness and love. Following on to know the Lord means, to such, continual growth in **[R4346 : page 72]** grace as well as in knowledge. We are glad that we see

distinctly the issue joined in our case – that it is for life or death. To us this is the chief consideration – the making of our calling and our election sure, to life eternal. As we get a glimpse of the wonderful things which God has in reservation for those who love him – earthly pleasures, self-denials, self-sacrifices, all lose their weight and power – and gradually we come to the place where we "delight" to know and to do the Lord's will – to the mental attitude in which these Divine regulations are not grievous to us, but really joyous. This means that our minds have been "transformed," so that the things which we once loved, now we hate; and the things which once we hated now we love. Yet we approached this high position gradually. Those who come into Present Truth now have advantages in many respects, but we must also remember that as the time of testing grows shorter, it signifies that the tests themselves will be the sharper.

LIFE UNTO LIFE OR DEATH UNTO DEATH

The Apostle, contemplating the situation of those who have been saved by faith, through the knowledge of the Lord, and of his gracious plans, declares that the message becomes to such a life or a death message. The demands of our consecration to some appear onerous, burdensome. They have an odor of death that repels them, and leads on to Second Death. To others the ways of the Lord and the requirements of his holiness have a sweet odor, a life odor, bringing refreshment. Such an appreciation of the Divine goodness and of the Divine Plan, the Apostle refers to as a sweet odor of life, and tending and leading up to the glorious life condition which they shall share in the Resurrection of the blessed.

The Apostle realized that the message he was preaching would have one or the other effect upon all who had the spiritual ears. It would be to them either a savour of life unto life or of death unto death. Then he adds, "Who is sufficient for these

things?" (2 Cor. 2:16.) There is a tremendous strain of responsibility upon all who minister the Lord's Truth. Who is sufficient for these things? How can any of us fully grasp and comprehend the value of present opportunities? And how can those who, in the name of the Lord, present his message sufficiently realize the weight of responsibility attaching?

Summing up, then, let us each know that if we do not keep our hearts from the leaven of malice, envy, hatred and strife, the issue with us will be the Second Death, and in the interim assuredly we would lose much of the light and spiritual blessings which we once enjoyed. If, on the other hand, we keep out the evils referred to, and put on the graces of the Lord's Spirit – meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, love – the decision in our case will be life, eternal life. And in the interim, while waiting for our resurrection "change," our experience will be continual growth in grace, in love, and in knowledge of the things freely given of the Lord to such as are in *this* heart condition. These shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make them free – not with the freedom of the unregenerate, but with the liberty of the sons of God – liberty to do right; liberty to suffer injustice for righteousness sake; liberty to lay down our lives for the brethren, and, in general, for the Truth, and in doing good to all men as we have opportunity.

"TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES"

The Apostle's words to the Elders of the Ephesus Church never were more fitting to the people of God in general than they are today. He said to them, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock, over [R4346 : page 73] the which the holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with the blood of his own Son. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall

men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore, watch and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."
– Acts 20:28-31.

The Elders everywhere need to take special heed; because in every trial the most favored and most prominent have the severest besetments and tests. Hence the Apostle exhorts, "Be not many of you teachers, brethren, knowing that a man shall receive the more severe testing." We, likewise, exhort all the Elders who in heart are pure, unselfish, that they have nothing but love and good wishes for all mankind, and that they become more and more filled with the fruits and graces of the holy Spirit, taking heed also to the flock. Remember, that the flock is the Lord's and that you have a responsibility to the Lord, as well as to them. Remember, that you are to watch for their souls (interests) as those who must give an account to the Great Chief Shepherd. Remember, that the principal thing is Love, in all; and, while not neglecting doctrines, give special heed to the development of the Lord's Spirit amongst the various members of his Body, that thus they may become "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," and, according to the Divine will, be not suffered to stumble in this evil day, but, having done all, to stand complete in Christ, his Body, his Members, his Joint-Sacrificers, his Joint-Heirs.

