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"WALK HONESTLY AS IN THE DAY"

– ROMANS 13:8-13. – JUNE 27. –

Golden Text: – "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." – Rom. 13:14.

THIS is the regular quarterly temperance lesson, and an excellent one. It inculcates temperance in respect to every thought, word and act of the consecrated Christian. It opens with a delineation of the Divine Law, showing its comprehensive character – that it relates to all of life's affairs. "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." We can never discharge that obligation. It is upon us every day and every hour of life and enters into all of life's interests. Other debts or obligations we may meet and be through with, but this debt of love, the essence of Divine command, is our obligation toward God, toward the Church, toward our families, toward all men, even our enemies. Why? Because, "He that loveth his neighbor has fulfilled the law." No wonder no Jew could keep the Law! No wonder no Gentiles would try to keep it!

No wonder the Scriptures suggest the keeping of the Law of love only to Christians – to those begotten of the holy Spirit and thus have the assistance of the grace of God in daily living, as well as the mercy of God in Christ to cover all of their imperfections, all of their unintentional shortcomings. But it is expected of these consecrated ones that they will keep that Law. Whoever comes short of it *in spirit*, in heart intention, is unfit for the Kingdom, and will not be of the "little flock." More than this, if he comes short of this standard of heart intention he cannot be in the "great company" either, for God has not provided eternal life for any except such as shall now attain to this condition of love in the heart, the will or intention; and during the Millennial Age only to those who shall attain perfect love actually.

"LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF"

The Apostle next enumerates some of the perspicuous commandments – the one against adultery, the one against murder, the one against theft, the one against false witness, the one against covetousness. All of these commands presuppose a fallen condition of mind, out of harmony with God – *a selfish heart*. Is it not selfishness that leads any to covet the things which belong to another? Is it not selfishness, the opposite of love, that leads to false witnessing? Is it not selfishness, the opposite of love, that leads to theft? Is it not selfishness that lies back of murder and adultery – self-love, self-gratification? And the essence of all the other commands is Love, the same love to our neighbor that we have for ourselves, the same desire for his welfare, his prosperity, his happiness, his health, etc. Whoever, therefore, attains to this position of full consecration to God, a begetting of the holy Spirit, has before him this great lesson – to learn to love his neighbor as himself.

Well does the Apostle add, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor," no injury of any sort. Love would prompt us to be as careful of the health of our neighbor as of our own, as careful of his reputation as of our own, as careful of his property as of our own, as careful of his feelings as of our own. What a wonderful world it will be when the Kingdom of God's dear Son in the Millennial Age shall have brought all mankind back, mentally, morally and physically, to the original perfection of human nature, in the image and likeness of the God of Love – having destroyed all refusing to co-operate!

"IT IS HIGH TIME TO AWAKE"

We must bear in memory that the Apostle was addressing Christians in whom the new life had been begun. His language implies what we know is very frequently the case, namely, that after the early Christian experience of turning from sin to

righteousness, from ignorance and superstition to faith and knowledge, and from the feelings of the stranger to a realization of adoption and membership in the family of God, there comes later to some a measure of carelessness, drowsiness. A spirit of the world comes in and threatens to overwhelm the New Creature. The beautiful truths lose some of their freshness, crispness, beauty and flavor. Something *new* is looked for, and is provided by the Adversary, along the lines of more or less self-gratification in earthly things.

The strenuousness of the new experience reacts and spiritual lethargy comes on. The experience of realizing sins forgiven and ourselves adopted into the family of God and the necessity for learning the lessons of the School of Christ is considerably forgotten. Some such occasionally cry out, "Where is the blessedness I knew when first I knew the Lord? Where is the soul-refreshing view of Jesus and his Word?" Such a cry implies an awakening of the kind which the Apostle wished to encourage. In other words, in this lesson he says, "Knowing the time 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; let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light." The thought here evidently is a double one: –

(1) We who have accepted Christ should be awake. Each day and week and month and year should find us more awake and more zealous and more appreciative of our wonderful privileges. Our salvation, our resurrection "change," is surely nearing day by day.

(2) From whatever standpoint we view the matter it must be that the night-time of sin is far spent. It must be that the morning of the new dispensation is near. The Apostle wrote after four thousand years had passed and when the fifth was under way. We live when the **[R4401 : page 151]** entire six thousand-year days

are in the past and the seventh, the Millennium of promise, is chronologically already begun.

From both standpoints, with both arguments, it is proper for us to cast off the works of darkness and everything pertaining to sin and error and to put on the armor of light to prepare us for the duties of the new day, the morning light of which shines now.

The exhortation of the Apostle is as appropriate today as it was when written, and we urge its forcefulness upon all. In our estimation the Lord has sent to his people in the present time the exhortation of the Vow we have suggested to wake them up. One dear brother recently said to us, "I have already told you of my ungodly life, before the Truth reached me. When I accepted the Truth and made my full consecration to the Lord I experienced a blessing of great joy and peace. [R4402 : page 151] Afterwards I lost this joyful feeling in considerable measure. At first the loss of it distressed me. I sought it carefully, but found it not. I am more pleased to tell you that since I took that Vow and brought my original Vow of consecration up to date, as it were – since then the joy has returned to me and I have ever precious fellowship and communion with my Lord. I am striving to continue in this relationship and not to 'grieve the holy Spirit, whereby I am sealed, unto the day of redemption.'" We believe that this is the experience of a great many and the lesson for us is not far to seek. Any endeavor to draw near to the Lord by the renunciation of hindrances and the making of straight paths for our feet must surely bring a blessing.

"HONESTLY AS IN THE DAY"

The word here rendered "honestly" might more properly be translated *becomingly*, in harmony with our faith, our hope, our appreciation of the Lord, our appreciation of the morning light. By way of contrast the Apostle stipulates certain things as belonging to the night which would be unbecoming to us, not only in their

grosser sense, but also in the more refined. Live not in intoxication. Surely it would be unbecoming for any saint to become literally intoxicated at a banquet or a revel, but surely, also, there is a more refined sort of reveling and intoxication. One can become intoxicated with a revel in pleasure of any kind, in automobiling, in golfing, cricketing or social whirl. The true Christian must recognize all of these as things that do not belong to the morning of the new dispensation, things that are incompatible with the light of Present Truth, which show us where we stand at the opening of a new dispensation and what wonderful possibilities arise for the sacrificing of the present life and for the attainment of the glories of the Kingdom.

As Christians we should not walk (live) in chambering (unlawful intercourse), wantonness (self-gratification). These experiences apply to some in a gross sense, but to others surely in their refined sense. There is no fellowship or communion between light and darkness on any plane, because the two are opposites. Any intercourse, therefore, with things of darkness, the things of sin, the things occult, the things that are not in fullest harmony with the Lord are an unwarranted, unlawful intercourse or fellowship. Likewise wantonness (selfishness) may apply to a refined kind of selfishness (self-gratification), pampering of appetites and failure to sacrifice earthly pleasures, in harmony with our consecration Vow to engage in the service of the Lord, the Truth and the brethren; or in doing good to all with whom we come in contact and have opportunity.

The Christian should not live (walk) in strife and envying. Here again a coarse and a refined thought may be apparent. To the world the strife may be understood grossly to mean fisticuffs and physical encounters and such bitter jealousies as would lead to evil deeds and murder, actual or in the heart; or we could apply these injunctions in a more refined way to saints as an exhortation that our lives be not strifeful, but that we follow peace, seek to promote

the interests of peace everywhere – in our own home, in our neighborhood, amongst the Lord's people far and near. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Envyings, jealousies, alas, in a refined sense, are to be found with nearly all mankind. Often, unrecognized by the New Creature, jealousy is a fruitful source of much injury in the Church, which is the Body of Christ. No other evil quality can lead to more harm to ourselves and others than envy, jealousy. We are to put off all these things.

"PUT YE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST"

Here we have the thought. Our hearts are already consecrated to the Lord. We are already adopted into his family by the begetting of his holy Spirit. But our flesh is not perfect and it continues to love many of the garments of the old nature, which we are to put off. Gradually we are to substitute the new clothing, the livery of heaven, by which all may know us outwardly as well as know us by profession to be children of God, brethren of Christ, "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord."

Putting on the Lord Jesus is not the work of a moment, nor of an hour, nor of a month, nor of a year; it is the work of a life time. But unless it be begun it will never be completed. And indeed we may be sure that we can never fully put on Christ's characteristics. However, the Lord will see our endeavor, our strenuous fighting to put off the old nature, to put off the works of the flesh and to be clothed with the garments of righteousness, suitable to our relationship to him – the livery, the clothing, that will make us separate from the world, sanctified to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

"MAKE NO PROVISION FOR THE FLESH"

Ah, here we have an important point to be remembered. On it will greatly depend our success or our failure as respects the

winning of the prize. When as New Creatures we made full consecration to the Lord and surrendered all the rights of the human nature our flesh did not agree to the contract, but protested. Subsequently it found it good policy to reason with the New Creature quietly, calmly, urging moderation in righteousness and self-sacrifice – urging, too, that we should not be more extreme than are others; that we should not make ourselves foolish in the estimation of others, lest this bring contempt upon the cause we desire to serve.

Ah, how shrewd, how cunning, how deceitful is the flesh! If we would give heed to its plausible reasoning we would go out of the race altogether, failing to sacrifice, and hence failing to become members of the "royal priesthood," and to share the Kingdom glory of our Redeemer. Occasionally the New Creature wakes up and purposes energetic, thorough-going measures of self-sacrifice in every direction; but the old nature, the flesh, quietly makes its appeal – You must at least reserve thus and so; and, You cannot cut off thus and so entirely; and, it would be monstrous and unjust to yourself to practise self-denial to such an extent. *You must make provision for the flesh!* is its claim. "Make no provision for the flesh," urges the Apostle. And the flesh generally has its own way; for that reason the overcoming self-sacrificers will be but a "little flock," while those who will go into the Second Death or into the "Great Company" will be more numerous.

The question, Shall I make provision for the flesh to fulfil its desires, or, shall I not? should be weighed by every saint. Much depends upon the *decision*. It is at this very juncture that the "Vow to the Lord" which we have been recently advocating as seasonable to all of the "household" of faith is proving a great blessing to many. It is helping them to the point of making absolutely *no provision for the flesh to further its desires along any line*. It promises, if possible, more careful inspection than

ever of each word and thought and act. It raises barricades at various weak points and thus [R4402 : page 152] strengthens the New Creature and confirms its highest resolutions, and it proportionately binds the old nature and mortifies (deadens) it.

The old nature is exceedingly deceitful. It will not admit that it is afraid of the Vow. Rather it will boast that it has no need of it, because it is already *dead*. The difficulty all the time is that the old nature fears to see the New Creature shut and permanently bar every door to its liberties. It urges that if the New Creature makes no provision for the flesh, it should not at least make such strenuous provision *against the flesh* and its liberties. Let us hearken to the voice of the Lord through the Apostle and close every avenue whereby the flesh might attack us in a moment of weakness or inattention. Let us throw out the pickets of prayer and watchfulness against every thought and word and act not in fullest harmony with the Spirit of our Lord. Let us thus by the aid of the Vow put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil its desires.

