

HYPOCRISY A FOE TO GODLINESS

- MATT. 6:1-15. - FEBRUARY 6. -

Golden Text: – "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men to be seen of them." – V. 1.

PERHAPS no other sin was as roundly and thoroughly denounced by the Great Teacher as was the sin of hypocrisy. Its meanness is recognized and acknowledged, even by those who practice it. It is falsehood and deceit, the very opposites of righteousness and Truth. No matter what forms, ceremonies and garbs the hypocrite may wrap himself up in he cannot deceive God. Ere long he is sure to disclose his deformity to his fellow-men, also. So surely as one is dishonest, hypocritical, he is unworthy of the Truth – not one of the kind whom the Lord is now "drawing" and "calling" to membership in the Body of Christ, the elect Church. The hypocritical, therefore, cannot see the Truth, cannot comprehend it. They live on the plane of dishonesty and, in that sense of the word, are unrighteous or impure and unworthy of the Truth.

This does not signify, however, that all hypocrites are worthy of Second Death – extinction. It merely means that they are not worthy of a place with those now called to be joint-heirs with Christ in his Millennial Kingdom. Thank God, all that came down to us from the dark ages respecting eternal torment as the Divine provision for all who would not be of the little flock was falsehood – blasphemous misrepresentation of the God of Love and Justice. The Millennial Kingdom is for the very purpose of dealing with those who are hypocritical and otherwise degenerate. Under its restraints, corrections, rewards and punishments many of them "will learn righteousness," as the

Scriptures assure us. (Isa. 26:9.) Only the finally incorrigible will be destroyed in the Second Death.

To-day's Study illustrates various forms of hypocrisy and condemns them all:

(1) The doing of righteous acts before men *to be seen of them*, while pretending to do these for righteousness' sake, to be in harmony with the Divine will. Such will have no reward from God, though they may or may not get the reward they seek, namely, human praise from those whom they deceive. The alms and other righteous acts which God would approve are the unostentatious – not done for human praise, but from principle, from love for God and his righteousness, [R4560 : page 58] and love or sympathy for fellow-men. So quietly should this be done that even those close to us in life might only by accident discover our unselfish generosity.

(2) Hypocrisy may take the form of religion – pretended piety, worship, praise, church attendance, "chief seats," the amen corner, etc. It delights in religious garbs which say ostentatiously, My coat or bonnet or collar or tie will tell you that I am specially holy. Praying in the streets has become unfashionable, except for our Salvation Army friends. We should not be understood to mean that all who dress peculiarly, who go to church, who pray in public, etc., are hypocritical! God forbid! Nor do we understand this to have been the teaching of the Son of God. He taught rather that these supposed manifestations of holiness might be used hypocritically. His warnings were not that we should undertake to correct those who are addicted to these condemned practices, but that we should see to it in our own hearts and lives, and all of our own religious sentiments, that they are sincere – to God and not to men. He who does such things for outward effect upon his fellow-men should know that his hypocrisy is distinctly known of the Lord,

even when not recognized by his fellowmen. He should know that so far from receiving a blessing he goes the more deeply into Divine disfavor.

True prayer should be to the Lord – never to the public. Individual prayer is specially commended by our Lord. Family prayer is also Scripturally proper. Prayer in the Church is proper, because supposedly amongst those who constitute the family of the Lord – this is not *public* prayer in the proper sense of that term.

The prayers of God's people should be simple, earnest, heart-felt. They need not be long. Repetitions are useless. The Heavenly Father knoweth better than we what things we have need of. He waits to be gracious – waits to be asked for blessings. In so doing he cultivates in his people a proper spirit of appreciation of their needs and longing desires for the good things he is willing to give – to the intent that they may be blessings in the highest sense and degree.

THE SAMPLE PRAYER

What is generally styled "the model prayer" was given merely as an example. We are to pray after that manner, but not necessarily in those words. The order of the prayer is beautiful. How properly it opens by addressing "Our Father in heaven" and by expressing desire that the great name of God be hallowed, revered, honored, by all, and therefore by the petitioner also. It proceeds to express a desire that the Divine will may be accomplished on earth as in heaven and the confidence that this can come about only through the establishment of God's Kingdom – by Messiah's Millennial reign of righteousness, which will be enforced for the blessing and uplifting of mankind and the bringing of *all the willing* from sin and death conditions to life everlasting.

Thus the chief thing, the glory of God and the outworking of the Divine Plan, should be the most prominent things in our hearts as we approach the Throne of Grace. Then we may remember our own physical needs and ask for the bread of life. It is not for us to specify the spiritual or temporal food, but to petition the Giver of all good, in the spirit of submission to the Divine arrangements, whatever they may be.

We have not the wisdom which would warrant us in specifying, particularizing our wants; rather the proper spiritual child delights in the Father's will and providence in all things:

"Back of the loaf is the snowy flour
And back of the flour the mill;
And back of the mill is the wheat and shower
And the sun and the Father's will."

When told to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses," we are not to understand thereby Original Sin. That great transgression committed by our father Adam, which involved himself and all of his posterity in the sentence of death, cannot be forgiven upon request. For its cancellation God has already arranged – the death of Christ, "the Just for the unjust."

But we trespass through imperfection and temptation, contrary to our better intentions and wishes. These sins require acknowledgment and forgiveness. Divine mercy is pleased to remit the guilt of all unintentional sins and to reckon them as covered with the precious blood as part of Original Sin. The Lord waits to be thus gracious, but, desiring our blessing and development, he requires that we shall be similarly forgiving toward those with whom we have to do. "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt. 6:15.) What an incentive to sympathy, generosity and forgiveness is here!

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