

"CONSIDER HIM LEST YE BE WEARIED"

"Consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

TO "CONSIDER HIM" seems to be to take note of, to have in mind, to reflect upon and not to easily forget how our Lord endured various trials and oppositions of sinners against himself. In our own experiences we have, as the Lord's followers, endured some opposition of sin and sinners against ourselves; but we have not yet resisted unto blood. We have not yet passed through the trying experiences through which he passed. When we remember that while we are poor, imperfect creatures like our neighbors, he was "holy, harmless, undefiled," then it is good to reflect that he endured patiently the opposition of sinners. When trying experiences came to him, he did not consider them as being merely from the individual with whom they originated, but as being, on the other hand, under the supervision of the Father. If, therefore, the Father permitted such experiences to come to him, he was bound to prove his loyalty by patient endurance. As he said, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" – John 18:11.

So it is with us, Spiritual Israel, "*The Lord your God proveth you.*" (Deut. 13:3.) In proportion as we are able to take our Lord's viewpoint in our experiences in life, we may be calm. If the Father permits trying experiences for our testing, or for the testing or proving of others, in ways we may not understand, it is for us to rejoice to have his will done. The poet has beautifully expressed this thought when he says: –

"My times are in thy hands,
My God, I wish them there."

If we faithfully endure to the end, the reward will be ours. If we prove our loyalty and *keep our faith that God is supervising our affairs*, and that no good thing will be withhold from those who are

walking uprightly, we shall some day hear his "Well done, good and faithful servant."

We know that our Lord endured *physical* opposition. But our English word "*contradiction*" properly translates the original, implying *verbal contradiction* of *his words*. As we consider our Lord's case, we see that the people opposed him, not physically, but *in his words*, his *teachings*. It was left for the high priest and Sanhedrin and soldiers to do him *physical* violence and put him to death; and he could have resisted them if he had so chosen.

"WHEN HE WAS REVILED, HE REVILED NOT AGAIN"

The Apostle, therefore, seems to refer to the contradiction of his words. This is implied by St. Peter, who says, "When he was reviled, he reviled not again." (I Pet. 2:23.) So when we consider the three and a half years of Christ's ministry, we find that his doctrines were disputed, and that he was slandered. The Jews said that he had a demon; that he performed his miracles by the Prince of demons; that he was a blasphemer. These contradictions and oppositions on their part might have called out from him some very just, truthful statements, respecting them. He might have given them as good as he got, and better. He might have told them that the *Devil* was working with *them*, etc. His perfect power of language would have given him ability to more than cope with them. When they thought to entrap him in his *words*, he entrapped them in *their words*. But he reviled not. He did not render evil for evil, nor railing for railing. This, the Apostle shows, is the proper course.

But in the daily affairs of life, when people say all manner of evil against us, when they revile us, it is natural to the fallen flesh to think of something evil to say in return. Thus these things become tests upon us. If we yield to such a spirit, we are following the course of the enemy and not that of the Lord.

"Consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" when

attacked by the Adversary – whoever may be his agents and whatever may be their missiles. He cannot harm but will only increase our reputation in the Lords' sight, if we *endure faithfully*; and he can do [R4803 : page 122] no outward harm that God cannot overrule for the *good* of his cause – though that *good* may mean "siftings" of "chaff" and "tares" from the "wheat."

Evil speaking, backbiting and slandering are *strictly forbidden* to God's people as *wholly contrary* to his spirit of *love, even if the evil thing be true*. As a preventive of anything in the nature of slander, the Scriptures very carefully mark out *only one way of redress of grievances*. – Matt. 18:15-17.

PROFESSED CHRISTIANS OFTEN WORST SCANDALMONGERS

Many, among even advanced Christians, seem to be *utterly in ignorance of this Divine ruling*, and hence professed Christians are often the most pronounced scandalmongers. Yet this is one of the few *special, specific commandments* given by our Lord; and considered in connection with the statement, "Ye are my *friends*, if ye do whatsoever I command you," the constant violation of this, our Lord's command, proves that many are not far advanced in friendship – discipleship. [R4803 : page 123]

Let us look carefully at this rule, which if followed would prevent gossip, "evil speaking," "backbiting." See, as above cited, Matt. 18:15-17. Its first provision, for a conference between the principals *alone*, implies candor on the part of the accuser, who thinks that he has suffered. It also implies his thinking no evil of the accused. They meet as "brethren," each thinking *his own course* the *right* one, to discuss the matter; to see whether they can come to the same view. If they agree, all is well; the matter is settled; peace prevails; the threatened break has been averted, and no one is the wiser. In the great majority of cases, a frank, open discussion between the principals will bring

about harmony. But both must be equally candid and governed by the Spirit of the Lord.

Thus did our Lord guard his true disciples from the insidious sin of slander, which leads onward to other and grosser works of the flesh and the Devil, and stops growth in the Truth and its spirit of love. Let us also note that those who *hear* slanders and thus encourage slanderers in their course of wrongdoing, are *partakers of their evil deeds*; guilty partners in the violation of the Master's commands. God's true people should refuse to listen to slanders and should point the offender to the Lord's Word and the *only* method therein authorized. Are we wiser than God? Experience teaches that we cannot trust to our own judgments and are on safe ground only when following the voice of the Shepherd implicitly.

WE SHOULD REFUSE TO HEAR GOSSIP AND SLANDER

If any Brother or Sister brings to you an evil report of others, stop him at once, kindly but *firmly*. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." (Eph. 5:11.) Refuse to have any share in this violation of the Master's commands, which does great mischief in the Church. If the Brother or Sister be only a "babe" in spiritual matters, call attention to the Lord's ruling on the subject. (Matt. 18:15; I Tim. 5:19.) If the conversation is not addressed to you but merely in your hearing, promptly show your disapproval by withdrawing.

If, after having had his attention called to the Lord's command on this subject, the slanderer still persists in "evil speaking," "backbiting" and telling you his "evil-surmisings," reprove him more sharply, saying as you go, "I cannot, must not, hear you; for if I did, I would be as criminal in the matter as you are, violating the Lord's command. And even if I were to hear your story I could not believe it; for the Christian who does not respect the Lord's Word and follow his Plan for the redress of grievances, shows so little of the Lord's spirit that his word cannot be trusted. He who twists and dodges the Lord's words would

not hesitate to twist and misrepresent the words and deeds of fellow-disciples." Then withdraw fellowship from such until his error has been confessed with promises of reform. If to any extent you listen to such conversation, or express "*sympathy*" with it or with the gossiper or slanderer, ***you are a partner in the sin and in all its consequences***; and if a "root of bitterness" is thus developed, you are more than likely to be one of those "defiled" by it. – Heb. 12:15.

Be pure: maintain a conscience void of offense toward God and men. Begin with the heart; harbor no thoughts that in any sense of the word would be evil. To make sure of this, have Christ Jesus as your pattern, well and much before your mind. When evil is obtruded upon you, either from without or from within, lift up your heart in prayer to him for the grace promised in every time of need. Keep constantly before you the prayer, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer." – Psa. 19:14.

LET US CULTIVATE APPRECIATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF DIVINE LAW

While seeking to follow the various specific commands of Scripture, let us seek more and more to understand and come in sympathy with the ***principles which underlie*** the Divine Law. These will enable us to judge of the right and the wrong of such of our words, thoughts and acts as may not be particularly specified in the Lord's Word. Indeed, as we come to understand and sympathize with the principles of Divine Law, to that extent we are getting the spirit of the Divine Word. Note the testimony of the Psalmist on this point, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou, ***through thy commandments***, hast made me wiser than mine enemies, ***for they are ever with me***. I have more understanding than all my teachers, ***for thy testimonies are my meditation***. I understand more than the ancients, ***because I keep thy precepts***. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, ***that I might keep thy Word***. I have not departed from

thy judgments, *for thou hast taught me. How sweet are thy words unto my taste!* yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! *Through thy precepts* I get understanding; *therefore, I hate every false way. Thy Word* is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." – Psa. 119:97-105.

Shun a contentious and fault-finding disposition as contrary to the spirit, or disposition of Christ – contrary to *love*. A certain amount of combative courage is demanded in overcoming the world, the flesh and the Devil and their various snares. This fighting disposition may become a valuable aid to ourselves and to the Master's cause if rightly and wisely directed against sin, *first* in *ourselves* and *secondly* in others; if used for the Lord and his people and against Satan and all his powers of darkness and superstition. This, in the Scriptures, is called fighting the *good fight*, and we all should be gallant soldiers in this battle for Right and Truth, lovingly defending our Captain's honor and his people's liberties.

THE POWERS OF EVIL WOULD MAKE COMBATIVENESS A CHIEF VIRTUE

But such a good use of combativeness is not pleasing to the Prince of this world, who will seek to *pervert* what he cannot directly *use*. Consequently, he attempts with some to make combativeness a chief virtue. He encourages them to fight everything and everybody; the brethren, more than the powers of darkness; nominal churchmen, more than the errors and ignorance which blind them and make them such. Indeed, his desire is to get us to "fight against God."

Let us be on our guard on this point. Let us, first of all, *judge ourselves*, lest we cast a stumbling-block before others; let us fight down in *our own hearts* the wrong spirit which seeks to make mountains out of trifles and disposes us to be captious and contentious over non-essentials. Greater is "He that ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city." (Prov. 16:32.) Let us guard ourselves that our defense of the Truth be, not from motives of self-glorification, but from

love for the Truth, love for the Lord, for his people, the brethren. If *love* be the impelling spirit, or motive, it will show itself accordingly in a loving, gentle, patient, humble course toward all the fellow-servants. Let us be "gentle toward all." Let "the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God," which is quick and powerful, do all the *cutting*.

Beware of all thoughts, feelings and conditions of heart directly or remotely connected with malice, envy, [R4803 : page 124] hatred, strife. Give these no place in your heart even for a moment; for they will surely do *you* great injury, aside from leading to the injury of others. Keep your heart, your will, your intentions and desires full of love toward God and all his creatures – the most fervent toward God, and proportionately toward all who have his spirit and walk in the way of his direction.

DO NOT TRUST TO CONSCIENCE ALONE

If conscience were a *sufficient* guide you would have no need of the Scriptures. The majority of people have as good as no conscience; for they are blind to the principles and laws of God given to *guide* conscience; and still worse off than these are those mentioned in I Tim. 4:2. Hence the imperative necessity for carefully heeding the Lord's Word, and *walking circumspectly* according to its light.

We are not to faint in our minds nor become discouraged, feeling that so much has been said against us that we must give up the race. On the contrary, we are to feel assured like our Lord, that nothing can befall us except with the knowledge of the Father, who is working all things for our good. It was thus our Lord was prepared for his exaltation. So we, if we are rightly exercised by our various experiences and follow as closely as possible the commands laid down for our guidance, will find that even revilings, slanders, oppositions to righteousness, will work out blessings for us, as they did for our Lord. [R4804 : page 124]

But how many become weary and are in danger of losing the prize because they fail to consider what *the Lord* faithfully endured of opposition! If such would consider that the Lord, who was *perfect*, suffered in every sense *unjustly* for righteousness' sake, and that their own conduct is *imperfect*, they would not be weary in well doing, but would learn to fight and to "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ"; they would continue to "fight the good fight of faith."

"We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we [the Church] are, yet without sin." – Heb. 4:15.

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