

## THE SPIRIT OF DISCONTENT

**"So far as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." – Rom. 12:18.**

THE SCRIPTURES speak of the hour of trial coming upon all men. (Rev. 3:3,10.) We believe that hour is upon us – already begun. To the world it means discontent, bitterness, evil-surmising, hatred, strife, robbery, murder. It is this spirit which is about to wreck society. The Scriptures seem very clearly to establish this fact.

Let us not forget that this trial hour in some respects begins with us, the Church. God permits it. He has given us great light respecting Himself, His character, His glorious plans, etc. He has instructed us respecting our "high calling" to the divine nature. We have accepted His invitation and have been begotten of His Holy Spirit. We have entered the School of Christ and have been given lessons respecting the character we must attain if we would be accepted as members of the Bride company. Much advantage every way has been ours. Now the examination is on. Which of us will graduate with honors? Which will show that, however poor and imperfect in the flesh through heredity, he has attained a character-likeness of the Lord in his heart and mind? This is the test.

How shall we expect this test to be applied? Dearly beloved, we see how it is being applied. We perceive from observation and through correspondence that the examination is going favorably with some and very unfavorably with others. In some places the entire Class of Bible Students seems to be involved. Petty questions respecting authority and methods are causing distraction and tending to arouse contentions. This detracts from service of the Truth. It cools the ardor of some; it makes others positively bitter. Anger, malice, hatred, envy, variances, strifes – all fruitages of the evil spirit – appear to some extent to gain control.

## **EACH SHOULD JUDGE HIMSELF**

We are not judging nor condemning anybody, but with the Apostle are saying to all that each should judge himself. Each should see to it, not only that he has the graces of the Spirit – humility, gentleness, meekness, patience, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, love – but that he manifests these qualities in his conduct, in his words. We should remember, too, that the Lord's test is not merely along the lines of love for the beautiful, the good and the gentle, but a patient, kind and loving forbearance also for those who are out of the way, and even for enemies. We should bear in mind that justice is as elementary a feature of the Divine character, as love itself. Hence if we would be god-like, if we would be copies of God's dear Son with His likeness, we must have the principle of justice firmly established in our character. We should be generous, benevolent, loving toward all; but we should be just even before we are generous. If we love not our brother whom we have seen, how can we show that we love his Father and our Father whom we have not seen?

This same spirit of discontent is testing God's people in their homes. Keener perceptions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, enable us all to see wherein we have ourselves been either just or unjust, and also where others have been either just or unjust toward us. This increase of knowledge brings a responsibility upon us individually, to see to it that any injustices of the past shall be fully, quickly, heartily apologized for and undone and henceforth avoided. This work thoroughly done will keep us thoroughly occupied – straightening ourselves, bringing the conduct and thoughts of our mortal bodies into full submission to the Divine standards, as we now more fully discern these.

## **TENDENCY NOT TO SEE OUR OWN FAULTS**

But there is a tendency in an opposite direction – not to see our own faults and rectify them, but to see the faults of others, to note the injustices which they have practised upon us and to resolve that they

must toe the mark of our new appreciation of our rights and that right quickly, or otherwise be forced so to do. This is the very spirit of the world, which is rapidly precipitating the great time of trouble. Those in power feel that they must use force. Labor realizes as never before its own power and is thereby tempted to exercise it and hastily enforce upon the world its convictions of right and justice.

As we urge the world not to undertake the matter by force, but to hearken to the Word of the Lord – "Wait ye upon Me, saith the Lord, until that day" – so we urge upon the Church of Christ: Do not attempt to force husbands, wives, parents and children up to the line of perfect justice toward you. Be sympathetic, forbearing, even as God has been sympathetic and forbearing toward us and toward all mankind. If the injustice has been long-standing, that is not a reason why it may not be quickly rectified, but, on the contrary, it is a reason why we should suffer long and be kind, while trying to show the erring one his fault, speaking the Truth in love, and in meekness instructing those who oppose us.

There is no doubt about it that more than half of humanity live in gross violation of the principles of justice, as well as contrary to the principles of love. Sometimes it is the husband, who, while loving his wife and children, rules them in so arbitrary a manner as to cause them to doubt his love and sympathy. Such a course on the part of a brother in the Lord is probably owing to some misconception of the Divine order. He knows the Bible teaches that the husband is the head of the family, but does he know how, properly, to take and to hold this noble headship? Apparently many have not learned that the chief function of headship is not merely to be the provider for the temporalities of life nor merely **[R4899 : page 390]** to be the responsible head who must finally decide in respect to the family's interests. Rightly seen, man's headship means much more. It is his duty to look out for the health, the happiness, the morals, and the spiritual interests of his family. And this includes a reasonable consideration of their natural weaknesses

and imperfections, mentally and morally, as well as for their physical weaknesses and imperfections.

## **DUTIES OF THE HEAD OF THE HOME**

A true head of a happy home must of necessity frequently ignore his own preferences and tastes in many things, because his duty to his family and to their happiness would so demand. Man's headship, then, from the Scriptural standpoint, means much more than to be the "boss," the judge, the decider of affairs. And this is further proven by the Scriptural declaration and illustration in which Christ and the Church and their mutual relationship are made a pattern of the proper love and respect and co-operation between husband and wife.

Our Lord is indeed Head over the Church, and to whatever extent we, His Church, recognize this Headship and follow His directions we find them wise and helpful and advantageous. And to whatever extent we do not follow them we later find that we have missed some blessing. Our Lord does not *force us* to recognize His headship. Our necessity forces it. So it should be in a properly regulated home. The conduct of the husband and father should be that of self-sacrificing devotion to those dependent upon him, rather than an attitude of general assertion of headship, commands or threats.

It may take days or weeks or years for the head of the family to demonstrate his love and care for those under his supervision – before they will realize the same. Perhaps his devotion may never be recognized in the present life. All the same his duties as a father, husband, caretaker, etc., are fully upon him, regardless of how his devotion may or may not be recognized by his family. As with the Lord, so with the husband – meekness, gentleness, consideration, should always be manifest.

We have heard with regret that some dear brethren of the Lord have misinterpreted **STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES**, Vol. VI., along this line and that as a result their lives, instead of being made

more loving and gracious, have become the reverse – more dictatorial, unsympathetic, tyrannical. We hope that these reports are overdrawn at least, and we hope also that the clearer knowledge on the subject has, at least, made some more noble and more loyal and more esteemed by their families.

### **"WOMAN'S RIGHTS" SENTIMENTS IN THE AIR**

And how about the sisters? Alas, not all of them are rightly exercised by the precious truths with which the Lord has so highly favored us! The greater knowledge of justice and injustice, and of the rights of man and woman, become tests to the sisters, as well as to the brethren. They, too, are in the hour of temptation, trial. The "Woman's Rights" sentiment is in the air. It does not make for peace and harmony. On the contrary, it is a part of the general spirit of discontent – the spirit of the world, which our great Adversary is stirring up more and more. As in the world this is stirring up the time of trouble, so in the Church and in the family it is bringing a time of trouble in advance of the world's tribulation. Alas! dear brethren and sisters, what shall it profit us if we gain a few rights and destroy our own peace and happiness and the peace and happiness of those whom we have vowed to assist and comfort and to sustain while life lasts?

As St. Paul says, "Ye were called to liberty, but use not that liberty for an occasion to the flesh." Our real liberty which brings us blessing and Divine favor and peace of soul is a liberty from error and superstition, and a liberty from the bondage of selfishness – a liberty to sacrifice, to serve, to lay down our lives for the brethren **[R4900 : page 390]** and for all men as we have opportunity – and particularly the liberty or privilege of showing to those of earthly relationship that we are copies of the Master and have His Spirit of self-denial, love, sympathy, good fruits.

There are, indeed, times and places where both the brethren and sisters must stand for principles and the liberty to worship God; but, these being granted, we may well sacrifice all other things as trivial;

or, if we must contend, let us contend for *only such things as our Redeemer would have contended for*. Thus let us "walk in His steps, as He has set us an example." – I Pet. 2:21.

