

WOES ANCIENT AND MODERN

– JUNE 22. – AMOS 6:1-8. –

"Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live." – Amos 5:14.

IT IS safe to say that everybody is seeking good, and not evil. Everybody is seeking pleasure, and not misery – happiness, and not woe. The difficulty is that all of our judgments are more or less perverted. Some have greater wisdom than others; but there is none perfect, "none righteous, no, not one." All come short of the glorious standard which God has set. The difficulty is that we have all been born in sin and are all misshapen. Not only our bodies are imperfect, but likewise our brains are unbalanced – some one way, and some another. Consequently young men and maidens, looking forth from childhood and youth upon the problems of life, have various conceptions of happiness, pleasure, joy, and make various resolutions and endeavors respecting the filling of their cup with blessings – long life, riches, ease, honor, etc.

The teachers of our public schools and colleges have a most wonderful opportunity for influencing the course of humanity. We rejoice in the thought that the teachers of the world in general are striving nobly for the fulfilment of gracious, benevolent ideals, and they are using their opportunities for the blessing and uplift of their pupils. And yet evidently many of them have but a slight appreciation of their great privileges. And some, of course, like the remainder of the world, are selfish, and think of their work from the standpoint of business – so much effort, so much pay.

Fain would we encourage the teachers of the world to look not entirely to the reward of the present, but especially to the still more important reward of the future. It is growingly the view of Bible students that our every act and word, yea, and our very thoughts, our motives, have to do not only with our present experiences, but also

with our future life – secured for all through the redemption Sacrifice at Calvary.

Of course, the first and chief responsibility for children rests upon their parents. And no doubt the majority of parents, to some extent, realize their responsibility in God's sight and man's, for the children they bring into the world. But they labor under the difficulties of their own ignorance. They knew not the proper course to take in life themselves. Their lives have been a succession of blunders – some more, some less, serious. They presume that their children must blunder similarly, and that success will be largely a matter of luck. Not seeing the principles underlying life's experiences, they are unable to guide their children intelligently. Here teachers, moralists, religionists and humanitarians, find their opportunity. But how little anyone seems able to accomplish along any line! And how discouraged the philanthropic become!

On the whole, however, a broad view, contrasting the present time with fifty years ago, shows that progress is being made in many directions. Our cities are cleaner – both physically and morally – so far, at least, as outward appearance and standards are concerned. However shocked and shamed we may be at occasional disclosures of corruption and vice, those whose memories go back half a century can tell that no longer do we have the vile "doggeries" of old, with poor sots sitting, lying, in various degrees of intoxication inside and outside the premise. **[R5243 : page 155]** No longer does vice flaunt itself in the face of society. The battle against intoxication and the social evil is making progress in that, at least, it has made former conditions impossible.

In some States the progress has been more than in others. The "doggeries" have been transferred into gilded palaces. The sot is disdained, even by the man who contributes to his fall by tempting his appetite beyond the power of his will.

NEW ISSUES NOW – NEW TEMPTATIONS

Our lesson tells of a time in the history of Israel when the prosperous class had become wealthy – when many of the nation's wisest and most brilliant people had settled down to ease and luxury – to self-gratification. They considered that they had won in the battle of life, and would now take their ease and enjoy the fruits of their strife and diligence. They would let the other fellow do the worrying for awhile, and they would live on Easy Street.

The Lord through the Prophet upbraided them, assuring them that He was not pleased with such a course. He tells them that woes are to be expected as a result. It was made the mission of Amos to call attention to the fact that aggressive selfishness had accumulated great riches, that the wealthy were living in great luxury, and that these conditions fostered pride and moral laxity amongst the wealthy; while the poor were being filled with avarice, losing respect for God and religion, for truth and mercy, and the desire for further knowledge of God. Society was on the edge of a great volcano, and God declared that an eruption was near at hand. Amos was His mouthpiece. Today's lesson is a part of the Message he delivered.

PRESENT DAY CONDITIONS CORRESPOND

Our lesson is not inappropriate to our times. Notwithstanding the progress that has been made in many good lines, and notwithstanding the philanthropic sentiments of many, inside and outside the Christian denominations, nevertheless there is danger. First of all, let us consider the danger of the rich. The wealth of our day to a certain extent reaches to the very humblest and scatters blessings to all.

But the bulk of the world's wealth is in the hands of the few. The inordinately rich are in great danger of injuring themselves. Some of these cannot devise ways and means by which to consume even their incomes. Luxuries of every kind are tasted in the hope of finding rest,

happiness, joy, peace. Not finding these, mankind still pursue them, seeking new avenues to happiness. Wealth brings increased opportunity for sin in its various forms, including debauchery.

The influence upon the poor is notable. The latter, seeking pleasure, imagine erroneously that the rich and indolent are finding it, while they themselves are seeking in vain. Thus the poorer, surrounded by the wonderful blessings of our day, are often miserable, because their minds are discontented. They want happiness, joy, pleasure, and believe they can obtain these only through wealth. The result is that their hearts are filling with anger and malice, and jealousy of the rich. The way is thus paved for most evil and atrocious conditions, and many are fully persuaded that our present favorable social conditions are maintained only through police and military power, backed by all the assistance of modern times – the telegraph, telephones, etc.

"WARN THEM THAT ARE RICH"

These words of the Apostle never were more in season than now. Those trusting in the uncertainty of riches need to arouse themselves. They need to learn the lesson [R5243 : page 156] that the pleasure they seek lies not in the direction of their indulgence of self, but rather in self-sacrifice – in the service of others. Indeed this is the great lesson for all to learn – both rich and poor. While millions are seeking for joy, pleasure, only a remarkably few have found them. Those few are God's saintly people – whether Catholics or Protestants.

The secret of their success in finding what others are still seeking for lies in the fact that they have been Heaven-directed, and that they have followed the guidance of God's Word. And the more fully they have heeded His instructions, the greater has been their blessing. God's Message to all is, Seek first God's righteousness, God's will, the Divine Rule or Kingdom. Father Adam rebelled against the Divine will, and by breaking his covenant precipitated

upon himself an avalanche of imperfection and death, which has since remained on the world – the reign of sin and death.

God's Word reveals that in due time He will roll away the curse, and bring blessings and opportunities to every member of our race. But meantime He would gather out a special class for a special purpose – the Church of the First-borns, whose names are written in Heaven. (Heb. 12:23.) These are to be highly exalted and to be used of the Almighty with the Savior Jesus in the great work of blessing the whole world. These are the Seed of Abraham, the Body of The Messiah, of which Jesus is the Head. – Galatians 3:16-29.

The greatest privilege of the present time is to get into this elect company of God's saints. In order to enter this company, faith and obedience are necessary requisites. That faith must recognize Jesus as the Lamb of God, the Sin-bearer. It must recognize Him also as the Pattern and Exemplar. The reward will be to those who have His spirit, His disposition, and who will walk through the present life in His footsteps. Such will eventually gain with Him glory, honor, immortality – the Kingdom.

In the present time, they will to the world seem to have the unfavorable side, a battle against the world, the flesh and the Adversary. The world cannot understand what pleasure and blessing these really enjoy because of the surrender of their wills to God's will, and because of the Spirit of the Lord, which they consequently receive. But these alone have the peace and joy and blessing which the world can neither give nor take away. What other men are seeking and failing to find, God's saints enjoy.

"Peace is theirs which knows no measure,
Joys which through all time abide."

