

MERCY AND TRUTH COMPONENT ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

"Let not mercy and truth forsake thee; bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart." "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" – Prov. 3:3; Micah 6:8.

MERCY and Truth are great principles of righteousness. Truth and righteousness are, we may say, synonymous. That which is right is true, and that which is true – firm, faithful, steady, genuine – is usually right. The record does not say that we shall bind justice about our neck. Justice is a quality which we are not permitted to exalt too highly, except in our hearts and minds, as a principle of the Divine standard. We are to remember that there is none righteous, no, not one – none perfect. Hence our course in respect to Justice cannot be the same as that of our Heavenly Father. He recognizes no lower standard than justice, up to which everything must measure.

GIVE MERCY AND TRUTH PROMINENT PLACE

If we are acceptable to the Father, it can be only by righteousness. And if we have not righteousness, it must be obtained from Christ; for God receives nothing short of perfection. Though imperfect in ourselves, we are to come up to the standard of justice as nearly as possible in our own personal conduct, but we are not to exact full justice from mankind. Since they have no one to *make good* for them, it is our duty to be benevolent toward them, and thus emulate the character of God, who is merciful. While He keeps the two qualities, Justice and Mercy, distinctly separate in His dealings, it is not for us to do so.

For one to keep the principles of truth and of righteousness before his own mind, is to be a thoroughly upright man or woman, one in whom truth, purity, goodness, will be in control. But a person who has merely these principles in control should cultivate more and more the quality of *mercy*. We should bind these about our neck. The thought is that of a necklace, or ornamental band. As a man puts around his neck a cravat, with a jewel in it as an ornament, placed where it will be displayed, so these qualities of character are jewels. Give them a prominent place; for they will help to make you better, help to make you more acceptable to the Lord.

The preferable place for the display of a jewel is the neck. There a jewel is especially conspicuous and ornamental. So we should fasten these noble qualities of character where they will be manifest in all the affairs of life. Whether we buy or sell, or whatever we do, we should wear these ornaments. They will show what is the character of the man or woman – right on the outside, in the very front. They should be seen as we meet others. There should be nothing mean, nothing contemptible, nothing niggardly about us.

RE-WRITING MERCY AND TRUTH UPON THE HEART

More than this, we are to write mercy and truth in our hearts. We are to remember that originally God wrote the Divine Law in Adam's heart. We know that in the Divine heart, the Divine character, are the quantities of Truth and Mercy. God is merciful, kind and loving. And as God has these traits of character, so when He made man in His own image, His own likeness, man was created with these qualities in his character. Man was not created an unrighteous, an untruthful being.

But man fell from his original perfection. With the centuries of falling and imperfection of mind and body, and with every interest pressing for self-gratification at the expense of others, these principles of mercy and truth have become largely effaced from our

hearts, just as the constant dropping of water, and the general wear and tear of the weather would tend to efface the original inscription on a stone. In time one could scarcely discern the characters. So we see in mankind that some have apparently lost all sense of justice, all sense of mercy, nearly all sense of patience, gentleness, brotherly kindness and love. All these qualities that belong to the heart, as originally placed there by God, have been more or less effaced – in some more than in others.

PURPOSE OF GOD'S PROVIDENCES

Under the terms of the New Covenant and through the ministrations of Christ's Kingdom, God purposes to re-write upon the heart of man the original character which was in his heart, and which has been effaced by selfishness. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a New Covenant with the House of Israel, and with the House of Judah....I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." (Jer. 31:31-33.) "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." – Ezekiel 36:26.

God's Law is the Law of truth and mercy. Truth **[R5309 : page 276]** would include everything righteous, toward God and toward man. Mercy includes all the graces of character. The Millennium will be the time for the re-writing of these qualities in the character. And this work of re-writing the Divine character in the heart, which will progress in the world by and by, for a thousand years, is already begun in the Church. We write these qualities within our own hearts. The entering the School of Christ is voluntary, not compulsory. In the next Age mankind *must* write these qualities in their hearts, through the assistance of the Mediator. There will be stripes to bring mankind to righteousness. And if they are intentionally unwilling to obey the Laws of righteousness, they will be destroyed.

But now obedience is a voluntary matter. We declare that we desire to have these lessons written in our hearts; and to attain this end, we enter the School and submit ourselves to the great Teacher. Then, by the various providences of our lives, He shows us where we have not yet engraved these qualities within our hearts. As we pray for patience, He gives us lessons of experience that will engender this quality in our hearts, and that will strengthen it more and more. As we pray for love, He gives us tests of love. As we pray that we may develop mercy, we find more opposition, which will develop mercy. Thus God gives us opportunities for the writing of truth and mercy in our hearts.

We must attain to that condition of heart where we shall *love* truth and righteousness, and where we shall *hate* iniquity and unrighteousness. As the people of God, we have the first opportunity now to develop these traits. And the Lord tells us that if we prove faithful in learning our lessons, it is His intention to use us during the Millennial Reign, His intention to make us judges of the world – its rulers, teachers.

THE JEWISH LAW HELPFUL TO CHRISTIANS

The words of our second text were addressed to the Hebrew people and not to Christians; for there were no Christians at that time, of course. The words do not seem to be prophetic, but an exhortation to the people. Apparently the Jews thought that the Lord was asking too much of them; and since this was so, they felt that they should not take the Law too seriously. The Lord seems to bring the matter down to a specific statement: What is required of thee but three things; namely, to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? This would seem to be the sum total of the Law.

The Lord was looking to see Israel live as nearly up to the requirements of the Law as possible. And He purposed to bring them, in due time, the promised New Covenant, which would take

away the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, thus making them tender-hearted. But if now they would walk as nearly as possible in harmony with the requirements of this law, doing justly, loving mercy and walking humbly with their **[R5310 : page 276]** God, they would be blessed accordingly.

While this Law was given to the Hebrews alone, nevertheless the principles inculcated therein are applicable to the whole world. Everybody who would have any standing with the Lord, is required to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly. Therefore every statement of the Law, in that it gives the Christian a conception of God's standards, is helpful to the Christian; it shows him the standards of perfection. But the standard of a Christian goes higher than that of the Law. The Law is merely an amplification of the Golden Rule – Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you. Deal justly with others, if you would expect them to deal justly with you; and be merciful to others, if you would expect them to be merciful toward you.

In thinking of these qualities and considering which should be put first, we decide that in our conduct toward another, we could not think for a moment of giving anything less than *justice*. Additionally we might be as merciful as the circumstances would permit. But nothing *less* than justice should be thought of. In our requirements of others, however, we are – as before stated – not to expect full justice. Remember that the whole human family are imperfect. If by the grace of God we are able to be more just or more merciful than the average, it is through God's Spirit.

GOD'S STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUS CONDUCT

To walk humbly with the Lord would imply that we were in that condition of mind in which we could be taught of Him, could appreciate His goodness and our own insignificance; that we were receiving whatever instructions He was sending. While God made

our race in His image, we have largely lost that image. Therefore we should be very humble and teachable in all things.

Comparing God's requirements of Israel, as given in the text, with His requirements of the Church, we would say that God *requires* nothing more than this from the Church. This is as much as justice could require from any creature. The peculiarity of the position of the Church is that it is not one of *requirement*, but of *privilege*. But we see operating in the Church a still higher principle than that of Law; namely, that of *sacrifice*. As Jesus loved the Father and loved righteousness, and sacrificed His earthly will and earthly ambitions and privileges, so He set us an example that we should walk in His steps. It was not required of *Him* that He should do more than justice, but He was *permitted* to do more. And so with the Church. *We* are not required to do more than justice, but are permitted to do more. If we present our bodies living sacrifices, and are faithful to the end, the Lord will count us among those to whom He will be pleased to give, very soon, the glorious Kingdom, the Kingdom for which we pray.

VARIOUS DEGREES OF LOVE

After we came voluntarily into this condition of sacrifice, it became a bondage to us in that we had taken vows to this effect, and we are bound by *our own vows*. We vowed that we would lay down our lives in harmony with the invitation: "Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a Covenant with Me by sacrifice." Still the Lord is not requiring more of us than justice. But He is waiting and watching to see to what extent we will be faithful to the agreement of our Covenant. If we are joint-sacrificers with Jesus, then we shall become joint-heirs with Him. At our consecration, we took His yoke upon us. Could we go back and take up the privilege of Restitution? No; this we gave up entirely! The only thing for us is to fulfil our Covenant of Sacrifice; and rebellion

against that Covenant would mean the Second Death, everlasting destruction.

There are various degrees of love. That degree to which we have consecrated ourselves is the sacrificing love, which goes beyond what would be *just* to a brother, a neighbor or an enemy. This is the Love of God, which is an all-absorbing, an all-comprehensive love.

That the requirements of the texts are very reasonable will be conceded by all. That God could not require less from those whom He is educating for the future judging of the world, is evident, and yet all of these qualities specified through the Prophet are comprehended in the one word – *Love*. Love requires that we shall deal [R5310 : page 277] justly with our neighbors, with our brethren, with our families, with ourselves; that we shall seek to cultivate our appreciation of the rights of others – their physical rights, their moral and intellectual rights, their liberties; and that, appreciating these, we shall in no sense of the word seek to abridge or deny them. But, additionally, Love leads us to have the spirit of sacrifice that gladly lays down life itself for the brethren.

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