

THE DAWN OF THE MORNING

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness."

– Romans 13:12,13.

FOR A long time the world had been more or less in darkness, in sin, in ignorance, in superstition. By one man's disobedience sin entered the world. This darkness still continues. "Darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people." The Bible accounts for this condition of things by explaining that man by heredity is born in sin, and that additionally Satan takes advantage of the situation, with a view to further alienating mankind from the great Creator, and thus, if possible, preventing any reconciliation that might ever be undertaken.

Satan is called the Prince of Darkness, and he is working in the children of disobedience. The children of disobedience being far more numerous than the children of *obedience*, it follows that the present is a dark time. The Bible tells us that God will not leave mankind always in this darkness; but that the curse shall be rolled away and all the darkness shall be dissipated, and instead, shall come His blessing, His light. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the great deep. (Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14.) Provision for this recovery was made in the Divine Purpose, before the foundation of the world.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

About nineteen hundred years ago God began to take steps to bring to pass the things which He had promised. The first step was the sending of His Son, that He might be the Redeemer of man. Our Lord is spoken of as being a great Light, in the same sense that the Heavenly Father is called the Father of Lights. Jesus said, "I am the

Light of the world." Mankind, under the influence of Satan and their own imperfect judgments, became twisted in their minds, and are in a state of darkness, so that they cannot reason correctly. The majority are not able to see the desirability of the Truth, and so they live in darkness – "darkness covers the earth."

However, we have every reason to believe that there are a choice few in the world, who love righteousness and hate iniquity. And this class God desires to *take out* first. The selection of this class has been going on throughout the Gospel Age. The majority of the world would doubtless prefer *right* rather than *wrong* if all the conditions were favorable. If they could be as comfortable financially, as popular socially, etc., by serving the right as by serving the wrong, they would much prefer to serve the right.

These are really good people. They have a preference for the right. They are very moral, very just. And yet their preference for the right is not so strong that they would be willing to lay down their lives for the right. It is one thing to say, I love the cause of God; and it is another thing to say, I will devote my time, strength, fortune, *all*, to it.

But it is only the latter kind that God is calling now – those who are willing to take up the cross in the interest of Truth and righteousness. And to these God gives encouragement, assuring them that He appreciates their love of righteousness: and that if they persist in the course of faithfulness they will be made associates with Christ in His Kingdom. He tells them that He is seeking just such a class. And these are encouraged and inspired to keep on, as God sets before them the glorious hope of the Gospel – the Divine nature and glory.

RESPONSIBILITY PROPORTIONATE TO LIGHT

But all this is going on in the night time; for, although Jesus came into the world, and is to be the Light of the world, this Light has not yet illumined mankind, nor scattered the darkness. The

Jewish people had the light of the *moon*, in the sense that the Law Covenant and its promises were like the moon, which shines with a light reflected from the sun, a light not its own. They had the light of the moon, if they wished to walk in its light. But they often went from the light of their Law and walked in the shadows. The Jews also had *stars* – Abraham, David and the Prophets. These were luminaries that shed more or less light upon their pathway.

But when Jesus came, He was the great Light of the world; i. e., He was the one chosen of God to be the Light of the world. But Jesus as a man was not this light to *all*. The Light that shone from Him while He was in the flesh was very local. And even to many of those upon whom it shone, His light was obscure, because of their ignorance, blindness. Jesus intimated that some could see the light and others could not: "Blessed are *your* eyes, for *they see!*" (Matt. 13:16.) He also intimated that some of the Jewish leaders saw to some extent, and were responsible for what they saw.

Our Lord presented to them the true light. They had been hoping to attain the blessing God promised in His Covenant with Abraham. They knew from the teachings [R5338 : page 324] of the Law that they must be holy. But they did not realize how high is the true standard. Consequently they thought they could keep up a certain standard of outward conduct, and thus become the Seed of Abraham. And when Jesus said to them. You are so careful to keep the letter of the Law that you would strain out a gnat from your drink, and swallow a camel, He intimated that they were very careful about the small things, and would let great matters, important things, pass by!

Jesus told them they would devour widows' houses; that is, that they would take advantage of this or that technicality of the Law to take possession of a widow's substance. And in thus doing, they were violating God's Law, which is a law of justice and love and mercy. It was only the few, therefore, who were *Israelites indeed*. And these

would be the true Seed of Abraham – the select few of that nation.
– Rom. 9:6; Gal. 3:16,29. [R5339 : page 324]

THE TRUE LIGHT-BEARERS

So the selection went on, and the faithful ones, having the right spirit, the same spirit that Christ had – love for justice, love for God and God's Law – these were selected – the Elect of that people. These not being a sufficiency, God continued to select others from different nations. To His disciples Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men"; and again, Put not your light under a bushel; but put it on a candlestick, that it may be seen of others. And so all of God's people have been lights. Those who have the Holy Spirit are the only true light-bearers in the world. Others may have various lights – science, geology, chemistry – but much of their light is darkness. Our Lord, however, was referring only to the light on God's Plan.

Some who have light on morality, say that they will not become intoxicated, will not use profanity, etc. They may have light in those directions, but this is not the true light. Much of the true light has been lost on the whole world, though they have still some of the original light remaining, as is evidenced in man's conscience and moral sense. Saul of Tarsus had some of this light, and yet persecuted the Church. Conscience is not a sufficient guide. We need the light of God's Word.

The Holy Spirit is the light of the *Church*, by which we are being specially guided into the Truth. St. Peter tells us that we have a more sure Word of prophecy, whereunto we do well that we take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place. (2 Peter 1:19.) The light on the path of the just "shineth more and more unto the perfect Day." We are still in the dark place, and shall be until the darkness gives way and the Day is here. And so, as St. Peter says, we have need of this Word of prophecy "until the Day dawn." Thus we find that one Scripture helps to elucidate another.

Apparently many of our Christian friends have the thought that the Apostle meant that the Lord might come at any hour, on any day. But when we come to understand the Scriptures, and know that God has fixed times and seasons, and when we learn more about God's Plan, we see what He has revealed respecting the length of the night and the time for the dawning of the morning. The Apostle had sufficient knowledge to realize that the morning was coming and that the night would then have an end. He knew that Christ at His Second Coming would be the Sun of Righteousness. We also know this. He knew that Christ would be the Light of the world. We likewise know this; and that the glorified Church will be, with Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, which will arise with healing in its beams, and will enlighten the world, and lift it up and bless it.

SIGNS OF THE DAWNING

We know something of God's times and seasons. There is a great difference, however, between knowing the *day* and the *hour* and knowing the times and the seasons. You might know that your Pastor intended to go sometimes this season to Great Britain. When the season arrives you might say, Well, this is the season. Yes, but you would not know what steamer he would take. You say, We know the time he will reach London, but do not know just the day the boat sails. And thus the Lord has guaranteed that His people shall not be left in darkness – that we shall have light and knowledge sufficient – that we shall not be in darkness with the world.

Just so surely as we are of the Brethren, just so surely that Day will not come upon us as a thief. We shall know how to expect it. We shall know about the time. Those who think that the Apostles had no knowledge of the matter have, we think, taken a superficial view of some of the Scriptures. Take, for example, the text under discussion. "The night is far spent, the Day is at hand." They have thought this meant that this Day might dawn that very year, or the following year.

ST. PAUL HAD SPECIAL INFORMATION

The Apostle evidently had no such idea; for he goes on to explain, in one of his Epistles, *how* that Day would come, and that there would be a time of trouble, and that the Lord would permit a strong delusion; that the man of Sin must first be revealed. He assured the Church that the Day would not come until first there was a great falling away. He reminded them: You have been told about an evil system arising. Know now that this Day of the Lord absolutely *cannot* come, until the Abomination of Desolation has been set up, as noted in the prophecy of Daniel. And he warned, "Let no man deceive you by any means." – 2 Thess. 2 – entire chapter.

In one of his Epistles to the Church at Corinth, St. Paul said, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." (I Cor. 15:51,52.) The early Church thought that St. Paul meant that *they* would not sleep. But St. Paul was referring to the Church as a whole – instructing them that some of the Church would remain until the Day of Christ. St. Paul and St. Peter both intimated that they were not of those who would remain to be changed in a moment from the earthly body to the Heavenly.

So, coming back to our text, we are to recognize that the Apostle Paul had special information from the Lord. He tells us so. He says he had visions and revelations more than all the other Apostles. And he declares that the Lord revealed to him things not proper to be uttered at that time. He must not explain these visions; their meaning was a secret intrusted to him. (2 Cor. 12:4.) The Apostle's mind being thus illuminated, he was able to write with great intelligence, clearness and power, so that we, with the increasing light upon the Holy Scriptures now due, might be able to see a depth to his writings, and get a grasp on the Truth, not otherwise possible. And we do. Nearly all of our knowledge of the deep things comes from St. Paul's Epistles, because he had this light and it permeated all that he wrote.

So we today are able to explore and to understand many things which were secrets, known only to the Apostle Paul in his day.

"THE LAST DAY"

The Day spoken of in our text is the Last Day. Martha said of Lazarus, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." (John 11:24.) Which is the Last Day? It is the great Seventh Day. This Day will not be a time of darkness, but a time of **[R5339 : page 325] daylight**. That being so, the other six Days represent the night of darkness and sin. In the morning of the new Day, the reign of the Prince of Darkness is to be overthrown by the Prince of Light; and thus the Day will be ushered in. From this standpoint of the six great Days of a thousand years each, we are to remember that the Apostles and the early Church were living in the Fifth Day – there was only one more Day to intervene before the Seventh Day, and then would be due the great shining forth of the glory of the Lord. From this standpoint the Apostle's words are clear.

During the Dark Ages God's people were permitted to have only a measure of light, a measure of knowledge. Yet they had certain great landmarks. And so when the Papacy was developed, God's people said, This is that Man of Sin – this is that *falling away* which was predicted. Thus they could locate themselves. We see that in the Dark Ages there was quite a clear understanding that the Papacy was the Man of Sin. Still it was not God's intention to guide the Church into the fulness of Truth until the *due time*. And we are not claiming now that *we* know the day (the day in the shorter sense) and the hour of the setting up of the Kingdom. But we are not ignorant of the times and seasons.

"PUT OFF THE WORKS OF DARKNESS"

In view of this knowledge of the wonderful Day about to dawn, how shall we who are hoping to be of the Kingdom class of that Day deport ourselves *now*? How shall we live? Ah! says the Apostle, if

we are "children of the Day," we are to show it. We are God's representatives and ambassadors. We are to tell the people about the light and knowledge and glory of God that is to come so soon, that will fill the whole earth, by and by. We are to help them to contrast the present with the glorious conditions that will then exist, so that all who love the light may take heed to the Word of God and get ready to be members of that Kingdom class.

What must we do? We must put off the works of darkness, everything that is selfish and sinful – for that which is selfish is sinful, and that which is sinful is selfish. We are to put these off because we belong to the new order of things. The works of darkness would be any works whatsoever that would not stand the fullest investigation; that would not stand approved in the light of the New Dispensation, if it were fully ushered in. Let us remember that we belong to the New Dispensation, and not to the old, and should, therefore, live in accordance with our citizenship and our responsibilities toward the Prince of Light and in opposition to the Prince of Darkness, his works and his ways.

"PUT ON THE ARMOR OF LIGHT"

We have enlisted with Christ, and we will fight against the enemies of our new nature. We will be worthy children of God and strive earnestly, that we may be associated with the Lord in His Kingdom of Righteousness. And when we have *put off* the darkness, what must we do? We must *put on* the armor of light. What is the armor of light? It is the armor which protects from the darts of the Adversary, and includes the helmet of salvation – the protection of our intellects through a knowledge of the Truth, from the attacks of our great foe.

As the Apostle urges, let us "Stand therefore, having our loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and our feet shod with the preparation [R5340 : page 325] of the Gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith we

shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." (Eph. 6:14-17.) This is the armor with which we are to withstand the attacks which appeal to the evil tendencies of the fallen nature, that we may come off "more than conquerors" through Christ, that we may be of that glorious band of overcomers who will be made kings and priests of God in that glorious Day – in the dawning of the Morning.

LIGHT MANIFEST IN PURITY OF INTENTION

The Apostle continues the figure of speech which refers to the on-coming Day, in contrast with the night time of sorrow, sin and death, during which evil and sin have prevailed. The Scriptures declare that evil-doers prefer that it be dark, in order that their real aims and objects be not known; for they do that in secret which they would not wish to have known in the light and open to the public in general.

Then the Apostle discusses what should be the attitude of the Church. "Let us walk honestly, as in the Day" – honestly, in the sense of conscientiously, openly – having nothing that we would need to secrete from the whole world, if they were able to understand our motives. They would know we had no evil purposes, but only pure, honest, good intentions. Our Lord was the great Light of the world. But He was misunderstood and misrepresented. So all of His followers, in proportion as they are light-bearers, will be subject to attacks from Satan, who seeks to perpetuate his hold upon mankind.

Nevertheless, whether it cost us much or little, our whole course of life is to be honest, upright. Our lives are to be devoted to the cause of righteousness – we are to see to it that we do nothing contrary to the principles of righteousness. Sincerity, honesty of purpose, should make all our life as open as the Day when everything wicked is to be disclosed. By showing the right and exposing the wrong deeds, thus

making known the character of these, the Lord will put men on test as to which they love.

For those who love evil, wickedness, after they see it in its true colors, after they see where it leads and all its consequences, and shall have had full opportunity to know and to choose between right and wrong, light and darkness – for such God's portion will be death – Second Death. The only final reward and punishment for evil is *destruction*. "All the wicked will God destroy."

So during the Millennial Day, the Day of Christ, the Day of the Lord in the largest sense, the light will prevail, and all the hidden things of darkness will be exposed. Those who love these things are the ones who will suffer disadvantage; while all who love the light will be blessed and will make progress toward human perfection.

HOW TO OVERCOME FLESHLY WEAKNESSES

Those of the Church – those who are hoping to be kings and priests and to reign with Christ and to be judges of the world – their conduct should be as far as possible in accord with God's standard. Everything should be open, honest, subject to the investigation of the Lord or of anybody. In thus living we shall be proving our faithfulness to the Lord. We must demonstrate our loyalty to Him by being willing to suffer rebuffs and adversity. We must strive most earnestly to overcome our human weaknesses and imperfections, and thus manifest our love for righteousness and for God. We see that our Lord Jesus is the embodiment of these glorious principles for which God stands; and we are to be like Him, our Pattern.

We are to be so in love with God's gracious character and God's methods that we shall greatly prefer to be on His side, under the banner of light, rather than to be children of darkness, whatever its present reward. So **[R5340 : page 326]** let us walk as the children of the light – the children of the Day, and thus we shall be laying up treasures above, and shall prepare ourselves for the glorious things

which the Lord has in reservation for those that love Him – for those who are seeking to walk in the Master's footsteps.

"He will never fail us, He will not forsake;
His eternal Covenant He will never break;
Resting on His Promise, what have we to fear?
God is all sufficient for the coming year.
Onward, then, and fear not, children of the Day,
For His Word shall never, never pass away."

GROSS FORMS OF RIOTING AND DRUNKENNESS

The Apostle's use of the first person – we, our, us – in the verses preceding our text, would seem to indicate very clearly that he is speaking to the Church, including himself. Indeed, the introduction to the Epistle shows this to be the case. St. Paul is here showing what should be the course of the Church, as in contrast with the attitude of the world. When he says, "Let us walk," he means, Let us daily progress – walk not along the lines of rioting and drunkenness. He does not say that the Lord's people may not occasionally be *overtaken in a fault*. But if they are thus overtaken, they are to know that they are not then walking in the footsteps of Jesus, but are for the time being walking in the opposite direction.

We are to remember that the Church are at this time imperfect, in an embryotic state – not fully developed. The New Creature has as yet no body of its own, but is merely given possession of this earthly body, which is an enemy of God. The New Creature is obliged to use this instrumentality. As a New Creature, he will ultimately be judged, not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit, for the Lord will make up for unintentional blemishes. But these bodies which have been the instruments of sin, are to be put into the service of righteousness. All of our present experiences must be in the flesh, because we have no other instrument of service.

Now, the Apostle says, we are to beware of rioting and drunkenness, for all *excesses* are of the *world*. We are living in a time when the bacchanalian orgies of the past are disapproved by the community in general. Many may continue to practise some of these in secret, but they think that it is not wise to let it in any way be public. And those who sympathize with liquor interests, brewers, saloon-keepers, etc., realize that they can no longer do as formerly – they can no longer continue to sell liquor to a person until he has reached the condition of beastly intoxication. All of these evils will be banished when the new Kingdom shall have sway.

THE LORD'S SPIRIT A SPIRIT OF SOBRIETY

The true Christian has the mind of the Lord, and the Lord's mind is thoroughly in opposition to anything in the nature of drunkenness of any kind. The Spirit of the Lord gives a sober mind, a thoughtful mind, a reasonable mind. All rioting and drunkenness are the result of inebriation, befuddling the mind. We are not to suppose that any New Creature would have any sympathy with anything of the kind. The Apostle's suggestion is not that some New Creatures may *think* this the *proper course*, but that some New Creatures may become *careless* in their walk. As the New Creature grows and has more experience, he should learn that the only proper course is to avoid all places and conditions tending to excess and to worldliness. He should study to have new entertainments for his mind, study how to turn his mind in a new direction, toward Heavenly things.

While it is true that we have comparatively few of the orgies of olden times, it is also true that the world today has a more refined kind of rioting and drunkenness. There are social functions that might be called riotous, in the sense that they are unreasonable and disorderly. We might apply this criticism even to nominal Christianity. There is a certain kind of rioting mentioned in Revelation. We read that great Babylon made drunk the inhabitants

of the earth with her wine. This might, in some cases, be a stupefaction of the mind; in other cases, a crazed condition.

We once believed many things without any real ground at all for believing. For example, we have believed in fire-proof devils, eternal flames, the roasting of humanity, etc. Now we find that we were merely having the hobgoblins of nightmare. God is not using His mighty power for the injury and useless torture of His creatures. We find that we were very seriously intoxicated with the wine of false doctrine. We are now becoming sober. The people are beginning to wink and blink, and to try to overcome the effects of the stupefying drafts of error.

Some have gotten out of these errors. But there are some who still have a kind of frenzy of mind, and some of these are attacking us. They launch forth as though they would demolish us, and they battle for the error as though it were the Truth. In their warfare they use the weapons of slander, malice, hatred, strife, and various other works of the flesh and of the Devil. Their choice of weapons is a proof that they are under a delusion, blinding them through false doctrine.

RELIGIOUS INTOXICATION

Sometimes there is rioting, even to the extent of hilarious conduct in meetings. We were once present at a religious meeting where there were all sorts of rioting, evil spirits and demonism. Yet the people were apparently sincere and honest. This occurred some years ago. The preacher hammered the pulpit, while two or three men tried to pray, etc. It was a regular pandemonium. The young people would go there and eat peanuts and snicker and giggle, seeming to consider the service a kind of circus. These people were evidently "drunk" – it was from a bad kind of "liquor," too. **[R5341 : page 326]**

This principle might apply to some of those who have gotten free from the errors of the past. There is a spirit of anarchy, a lack of

orderly behavior with some who have come into the Truth. Sometimes it will manifest itself in one of a Bible-Class, who will try to have his own way and to override the rest. He is simply rioting; he has not gotten rid of the wrong spirit; he has not applied the principle of righteousness – the Lord's Spirit, the spirit of a sound mind – to his conduct.

Then sometimes it is the leader of the Class who shows a riotous spirit. The Scriptures very clearly set forth what would be proper in such a case. Each has a perfect right to his own opinion on any subject, but no one has a right to override others and try to force his opinions on them. To do so is contrary to the Lord's Spirit. We should not walk that way. We should walk prayerfully and carefully along the lines of the Golden Rule, doing unto others as we would that they should do unto us.

Let us walk as becometh saints, showing forth more and more "the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous Light."

"Watchman, tell me, does the morning
Of fair Zion's glory dawn?
Have the signs that mark its coming
Yet upon thy pathway shone?
Pilgrim, yes! arise! look 'round thee!
Light is breaking in the skies!
Gird thy bridal robes around thee;
Morning dawns! arise! arise!"

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