

## GOOD CONFESSION VERSUS BAD CONFESSION

– FEBRUARY 22. – LUKE 12:1-12. –

**"Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God." – V.8.**

ALARGE crowd surrounded the Savior, anxious to hear Him who "spake as never man spake." Ignoring the multitude, Jesus addressed His disciples, saying: "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." Here, as elsewhere in His teachings, Jesus uses leaven as a symbol, or figure, of an evil influence. We know not of one instance in which leaven is used to represent anything good or pure. During the Passover season Jews were prohibited from using it, thus symbolizing the putting away of sin.

Jesus declared that the hypocrisies practised by the Pharisees – the learned people of that time – were leaven, impurity, sin, contaminating in their influence. His disciples should be honest, sincere, pure, free from cant and deception. Their words and works should be such as would not need to be covered. Jesus declared that ultimately all hypocrisies and sins will be uncovered, revealed. Undoubtedly He meant that during His Kingdom, when the power of the resurrection will be exercised, all the hidden things of darkness will be abolished, the secrets of mankind will be exposed. No doubt this will constitute the basis of the shame and contempt which will be the punishment of many, as foretold.

Thus we read that in the resurrection some will come forth to shine as the stars of heaven, and others to shame and everlasting contempt. (Daniel 12:2.) However, it is comforting to know that the Hebrew text signifies lasting and not *everlasting*. The shame and contempt will last as long as the shameful and contemptible

conditions last – until the reformation of the individual or, that failing, until his destruction in the Second Death.

## **FEAR NOT PERSECUTIONS**

Jesus intimated that honesty of life would bring His followers persecution from the hypocrites; but that they should not fear, even though the persecution resulted in their death. The present life is but ephemeral, at best. The life that is worth considering is the everlasting one which God has provided for all the willing and obedient, and which may eventually be attained through the merit of Jesus' sacrifice. Those who thus believe should have no fear of what man can do to them, but rather should be fearful of anything that would separate them from God and His gracious provisions of a future life.

"Fear Him who after He hath killed hath power to cast into Hell." The word Hell here is Gehenna in the Greek. Primarily, this is the name of the valley outside of Jerusalem, into which the offal of the city was cast for utter destruction, and into which the vilest criminals were cast after execution – not to torment them, but to imply symbolically that there was no future for the wicked. Jesus used Gehenna as a type of the Second Death, which will be the portion of all who wilfully, intelligently, deliberately, sin against light and knowledge.

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and a reverential fear is always proper. But as God's people become intimately acquainted with Him, learning of His Justice, Wisdom, Love and Power, and realize that He is the Friend of all who love righteousness, they come to love God; and, as the Apostle declares, "Perfect love casteth out fear [dread to offend]," which signifies rest. The Lord's disciples were to realize their Heavenly Father's care for them and His Wisdom – that as He forgets not the sparrows, so He will not forget them; and that not even a hair of their heads could be injured without his knowledge and

permission; that everything that He permits to come to His people, to His children, He assures them, will work out for them some blessing.

## **CONFESS ME BEFORE MEN**

Whoever would be in accord with God must confess Him and must confess Jesus, His Representative, whom He sent into the world. Whoever confesses Jesus, confesses the Father who sent Him. And all such will be in the Lord's favor, and ultimately be acknowledged in the resurrection by the Father and the holy angels, as members of the Bride of Christ. But those who, after becoming disciples of Christ, deny Him, He will not acknowledge as disciples in glory.

Jesus' words were addressed to the disciples, not to the masses. Whoever would confess Christ would become His disciple. None could deny Him who had never acknowledged Him. He is to be confessed, not merely by baptism, nor by any outward form. He is to be confessed in the life, in the conduct, in the words, of His followers. They are to have His Spirit and to "show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light." Whoever makes a profession of being a disciple, and then ignores the Master's teachings, misrepresents Him, slanders Him, denies Him, and will not share in the glorious presentation of the Bride, in the end of this Age.

The masses, of course, were in doubt, and did not become disciples at all. Some even derided Jesus, saying that He had a devil and was mad. The Master declared that such misunderstanding of Him and such slanders were quite forgivable, if done ignorantly. But when some went beyond this, and declared that His good works of the Holy Spirit were accomplished through the power of Satan, Beelzebub, they were committing inexcusable sins which would not be passed over.

Such sin must be wilful; for their accusations had no basis whatever. The Master's teachings were purity itself. His conduct, His sayings and His miracles were all good works. Only a wilful perversity could attribute these to Satan. The fact that they would never be forgiven does not signify, however, that the vilifiers were hopelessly lost. They would suffer punishment proportionate to the degree of their wilfulness. If the punishment would bring reformation, well and good; but if not, it would eventuate in utter destruction – the Second Death. **[R5391 : page 29]**

Few subjects are less understood than this one – the sin against the Holy Spirit. The word spirit in such a case as this stands for power, or influence. For instance, the spirit of Satan would be the power, or influence, adverse to God and to righteousness. The spirit of error would be the power, or influence, of falsehood. Contrariwise, the spirit of Truth, the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, represents Divine influence and power, wherever recognized. The responsibility of each individual is proportionate to his enlightenment. The mentally and morally blind have comparatively little responsibility, because they do not appreciate clearly the distinction between the spirit of Truth and the spirit of error, the Spirit of God and the spirit of Satan.

Man was not created in this condition of inability to discern right and wrong, good and evil. He was created perfect, in the image and likeness of God. Sin has wrought death, not merely to man's body, but also to his mind, his conscience. The ability to discern between right and wrong varies, therefore. Additionally, some have opportunities for instruction more than others, and thus their responsibility is increased. The world in general knows not God, and hence could not sin against the Holy Spirit in that full sense or degree which would be punished with the Second Death. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not." – 2 Corinthians 4:4.

Some knowledge is necessary to bring us to an appreciation of Christ as the Sent of God. Then if we accept Him and become His consecrated disciples, or followers, we receive the begetting of the Holy Spirit. This brings us to a vantage point where our eyes of understanding open more and more widely, in proportion as we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Our responsibility increases with our joy in the Lord and our preparation for the Heavenly glories to which we have been called. It is these advanced disciples of Jesus that are in danger of grieving the Holy Spirit whereby they were sealed – of quenching the Spirit of holiness in their hearts. (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19.) While the quenching and the grieving are not instantaneous works, they are the paths which lead to the Second Death. Every Christian, therefore, should press on toward perfection of holiness – the filling with the Spirit.

The Apostle presents this thought in Hebrews 6:4-6, declaring that those who have tasted of the good Word of God and the powers of the Age to come, and who have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, cannot be renewed unto repentance, if they with full wilfulness and deliberation reject Christ and righteousness, and turn to sin. Again, later on, he says (Hebrews 10:26,27), "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received a knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for our sins, but a certain fearful looking for a decision and a fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries" – of God. The Apostle mentions especially the rejection of the atoning work of Christ, saying that such count the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified a common thing, and do despite to the Spirit of favor which has brought them thus far.

Those who quench the Spirit of holiness, or "grieve the Spirit," are described by St. James (5:14) as spiritually sick. Cut off from fellowship with God, they have one last resort; viz., to request the assistance of sanctified elders of the Church to pray for them and to anoint them with oil, symbolic of the Holy Spirit. The

prayer of faith shall save these spiritually sick; and the Lord will raise them up; and though they have committed sins, these shall be forgiven them.

### **"THE HOLY SPIRIT SHALL TEACH"**

The Lord's faithful followers were to expect that amongst their tribulations would be false accusations which would bring them before magistrates. For the most part the disciples were unlearned, and would feel great trepidation in the presence of educated officials. They were to know, however, that the Lord's blessing would be upon them; and that they would have wisdom superior to that which was naturally theirs. They need not anxiously premeditate what their answers would be, but commit all to the Lord, expecting Divine assistance.

Nothing in this implies that the ministers of Christ either in the pulpit or in the class meeting should attempt to represent the Lord without studying their subject. On the contrary, each should accept to himself St. Paul's words to Timothy: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth." (2 Timothy 2:15.) There is a difference between standing before a congregation of God's people as a mouthpiece of His Word and being called before magistrates.

