

## THE IMPORTANCE OF DAILY SELF-SCRUTINY

**"If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged; but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." – 1 Corinthians 11:31,32.**

IN THESE words the Apostle seems to be saying that if we as Christians should properly criticize ourselves, examine ourselves, correct ourselves, the Lord would not find it necessary to take us in hand and give us judgments, or criticism. But if we fail to do this judging, or criticizing, of ourselves, then it will be necessary for the Lord to do it; for He has taken us into His family, He has made us sons, and we are in the School of His Son, our great Elder Brother, to be trained and instructed. This is our Judgment Day.

The object of this chastening on the part of the Lord is not to vent His displeasure upon us by causing us pain; but it is as the Apostle states, "that we may not be condemned with the world." We judge ourselves when we criticize our own conduct, our own words – our own thoughts, even – and try them by the principles laid down in the Word of God – justice, kindness, mercy, love. As our Master admonishes us, if we find that we have done wrong, we should leave our gift before the altar – we should first go and make apologies to the one whom we have injured or wounded by any word or act of unkindness or rudeness. Then we may come and offer our gift.

Such a course would be forcing one's self, obliging one's self to do the right thing. It is not enough that one should say, "I know that I was wrong; I should not have done as I did; but, then, I am imperfect; I cannot do just what is right in everything." This course would not be in harmony with the spirit of our text. Our text shows that if we do wrong we have a solemn duty to make it right, to the best of our ability. If we have had an *uncharitable thought against*

*another* it is not necessary that we go to the person and tell him this; for we might make the matter worse by so doing. But we should judge ourselves in the matter and give ourselves a thorough setting-down. We ought to give ourselves a good lesson, a lasting one. Thus we would be right in heart, in intention, approved of the Lord.

## **THE PROPER COURSE TOWARD OTHERS**

We understand that it is the Lord's will respecting us that we should carefully scrutinize our thoughts, words and actions. If we find that we have injured another with our tongue or in any manner, we should go to that person, and to any to whom we have spoken, and make it right, make proper apologies, putting a penalty upon ourselves – a penalty that we shall not forget. If the penalty requires considerable humility, so much the better. If we neglect to punish ourselves, this would show that we are not in the proper condition; and the best thing the Lord could do for us would be to give us a severe chastisement. This might not come in the same day or week or month. But we may be sure that if we do not do right in the matter, we shall come to the place where the Lord will take us in hand. If He does so, He will give us some trying experiences. It may be that some one will do something unkind to us or say something evil about us, and the Lord may permit this. Or He may allow us to get into a position that would bring upon us some kind of punishment.

The world will be on judgment, or trial, in the next Age. If we were of the world our special judgment would come then, instead of now. We would be making marks upon our character that would require stripes in the next Dispensation. But so surely as we belong to the Church class, we must receive our judgments and punishments in the present Age. If we fail to give them to ourselves, our Master will give them to us.

There is another Scripture which says that we are to "judge nothing before the time." (1 Corinthians 4:5.) This does not refer to our judging ourselves. We cannot judge ourselves in the sense of passing sentence in our own case; but we should carefully watch our conduct, our words and our thoughts, and deal with ourselves in regard to our own derelictions and our offenses against others. Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." [R5519 : page 248] This means that we are to notice this fruitage of life which we see both in our own case and also in that of others – in our brethren, in our neighbors. In our own minds we are to judge and disapprove of evil actions and words. We should say, Is this right or is it wrong? We should be judging such matters all the time.

### **NOT OUR PROVINCE TO PASS SENTENCE**

Every day we see a great many things in life that are displeasing to the Lord. We hear others use vile language or improper language. We see acts of cruelty or injustice. So we can be judging these things as we go through life and getting lessons out of them. This does not mean that we should judge the people who do these things and decide what punishment they should receive. We are neither authorized nor competent so to do. We are not to sit in judgment as to the condition of the heart, except along lines where the Word of God plainly states that we are to judge. Appearances are very often deceptive, and things are not always what they seem to be.

The Lord tells us that the time will come when we shall be appointed judges of the world, but that this time is not now, and we are not to anticipate our work of the future either in our minds or in our words. Nor should we repeat to others what we may see or hear that would lower another in their eyes, save in a case when to do so would be a matter of duty. If we were to form judgments of others and go around telling what we think of this one or that one, we would have a hard time of it and would do an immense amount of

harm. Thus we would come under the just condemnation of the Lord and surely bring upon ourselves His rebuke.

While we appreciate the truth of the Lord's words that a good tree will bring forth good fruit, and while we can see many times that there is something wrong in the conduct of certain ones, yet we are not able to judge of what would be the proper punishment for such conduct. We may know that the daily fruitage of a life indicates the condition of the heart, but we are not to pass sentence upon any. The Lord will make this decision. In the Master's words, "By their *fruits* ye shall *know* them," He gives us the thought that it is only in regard to that of which we have positive knowledge that we should render a decision in our own minds. We can know that the fruitage of a certain life proves that such a one is out of harmony with God. Yet we would have no right even then to pass sentence in the case. We cannot know what may have led to that unfavorable condition.

### **"I JUDGE NOT MINE OWN SELF"**

In regard to judging in our own case, no one should be so well able as ourselves to know our heart. But St. Paul shows us that we should use a certain amount of leniency in judging even ourselves. He says, "Yea, I judge not mine own self;...but He that judgeth me is the Lord." This is not a contradiction of the words [R5520 : page 248] of our text, but his thought seems to be that when we come to realize how high is God's standard, we might be inclined to judge ourselves too severely, not taking into account that we were shapen in iniquity. We might better think somewhat along this line: I realize that I have failed again today to live fully up to what I had hoped. I feel condemned before the bar of my own judgment because of it. But I hope the Lord will be able to make some allowance for me in this matter. I trust He can make some excuse for me that I do not see for myself. I am not sure how much

allowance should be made; I am not able to judge myself accurately.

We should then go to our Father in earnest prayer, telling Him of our sorrow that we have not succeeded better in glorifying His name. We should plead the merits of the blood of our dear Redeemer, promising the Lord that we will strive to do better, if possible, by His assisting grace.

There are some of the Lord's children who possess only a small amount of self-esteem and who therefore would be inclined to be too severe in their judgments of themselves, and hold themselves to the strictest account for every imperfection. Such should try to judge themselves justly. All judgment should be just, even when we ourselves are the culprits. Justice is the foundation of the Lord's Throne. We should never lose sight of the fact that we have the covering of the robe of our Savior's righteousness and the Mercy-Seat, to which we should go every day for cleansing from every defilement. But it is not only proper, but indeed a duty that we daily scrutinize ourselves, and see that we keep the body in subjection to our new mind. Thus doing, and thus applying daily, nightly, for the application of our Redeemer's merit to cover our unwitting mistakes and faults, we shall be kept in our Father's love and approval, and shall not need so much chastening from the Lord.

This daily taking stock of ourselves, the discernment of our gains and losses as New Creatures in Christ, and of how and where these came to us in our constant warfare with all our spiritual foes within and without, will surely prove profitable to each child of God who takes such account of himself in the fear of the Lord, desiring only to be pleasing to his Father in Heaven, to become all that God would have him to be – a saint indeed.

