

THE ROYAL LAW OF LOVE

**"We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification; for even Christ pleased not Himself."
– Romans 15:1-3.**

AS CHILDREN of God each one of us should use care that others are not injured by our liberty in Christ; for this would be condemned by the Law of Love. The Apostle clearly emphasizes this thought in this Epistle to the Church at Rome. He points out that all the Lord's children are not alike "strong in the faith." Some, weak in the faith, can see that Jesus is our Redeemer, but cannot realize as yet the liberty which we as sons have in Christ. One realizes that he is at liberty to eat whatever agrees with him; while another, who is weak, eats vegetables only, lest he violate some law under which he thinks himself. Some Christians condemn their brethren who eat meat, seeming to forget that our Lord ate flesh. We should learn to grant each other full liberty of conscience; the stronger should not despise the weaker, nor should the weaker judge others by himself. It should be sufficient for each of us to know that God accepts the others as well as ourselves, and manifests His acceptance by blessing them in His service.

It is the same with reference to observance of days. One esteems one day above another, as the Apostle says; while another esteems every day alike. Let each carry out fully the conviction of his own mind – whatever he [R5556 : page 309] believes to be the will of God for himself. When St. Paul urges that each "be fully persuaded in his own mind," he does not mean that each should make up his mind what is the will of God for all His children, and then stick to his opinion, whether right or wrong, and be unwilling to listen to or consider the thought of any others of the brethren on the subject. On the contrary, he urges growth into the full liberty

of Christ, counseling patience and consideration on the part of the stronger for the weaker. He approves the stronger, and plainly states that the brother who thinks himself under bondage regarding the eating of meat, the observance of Sabbath, etc., is the *weak* brother.

LOVE AND CONSIDERATION FOR THE WEAKER

The Apostle, however, counsels that if the weak brother observes such a bondage, not as an attempt to "keep the Law," and to justify himself thus before God, ignoring Christ's redemption-sacrifice, but because he thinks that our Redeemer wishes him to be bound by such ordinances and observances, than the stronger ones should not rail at his conscientious weakness, or make light of it, but should receive him as a brother, trusting that discipline, experience and growth in grace and knowledge will gradually bring him to the liberty which others of the brethren reach more quickly.

Those strong ones who enter fully into the spirit of the Apostle's statement, "It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak," and deny themselves what their consciences permit, have the greater blessing. They can realize in an additional degree that they are following in the Master's steps; "for even Christ pleased not Himself." But if the stronger brethren by sarcasm and influence should try to force the weaker ones to use a liberty which they do not realize, it would be forcing them into sin. Therefore the weaker brethren should be left to the liberty of *their own consciences*. The influences of love and truth alone should be brought to bear upon them, in the hope of gradually educating them to an appreciation of their full privileges as free men in Christ.

Thus the Body of Christ may be full of charity and unity, each member carrying out the convictions of his own mind as to the Lord's will, and each seeking to grow in grace and in knowledge,

out of childhood's weakness into manhood's strength, as rapidly as possible, being developed as he feeds upon God's Word.

The Apostle refers especially to the observance of *days* as a lack of development, saying (Galatians 4:10,11), "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am anxious on your behalf, lest my labor for you has been in vain." He here addresses those who had once known the liberty of sons of God, but who were now going again into bondage through false teaching. He recognized in them an evidence that they were not growing into the liberty of sons of God, but going backward toward the servant condition; and he was fearful that this weakness and failure to maintain the liberty of sonship might lead [R5556 : page 310] them even to reject the Gospel – that Christ gave Himself for our sins – and accept as a gospel a hopeless substitute – that Christ would save them if they *kept the Law*.

But glorious is the liberty of the sons of God! Let us stand fast in it, as the Lord enables us to grasp it in its fulness, yet at the same time extending sympathy and love to those who have not yet reached the high vantage-ground where they can get a broad, comprehensive view of our blessed standing in Christ. Thus we bear the infirmities of the weak brethren, our companions in the Way, and thus we are in harmony with the Law of Love.

THE BEAUTY OF SELF-ABNEGATION

The Apostle appears to be drawing to our attention the thought that *selfishness* is the predominating principle of the world. People are seeking generally to please themselves – often unjustly, sometimes justly, but simply ignoring others. He is pointing out that the Christian is to take a different course. We are enlisted under the banner of Christ, which is the banner of Love. We are to look well to the rules which belong to this new order of things of which we have become members. The followers of Christ, instead of seeking their own selfish interests, are to consider the interests

of others. Instead of seeking their own pleasure, they are to seek the pleasure of others, where this will not conflict with their vow of consecration.

This does not mean that the disciples of Christ are to seek their own misery. But they are to give their thought and time to pleasing others rather than themselves. The Apostle tells us that this is the example set before us by our Leader, our Pattern – "For even Christ pleased not Himself." He was not in the world to seek to do the things pleasing to His own flesh. Quite to the contrary, He renounced His own fleshly interests and gratification for the benefit of mankind. So we covenant to do when we essay to walk in His steps. The denial of self, the taking up of the cross, means the renouncing of self-will and the leading of an unselfish life, in accord with the Divine Pattern and the Divine Plan.

OUR BRETHREN OUR NEIGHBORS IN CLOSEST SENSE

With this light upon the Apostle's words, our thought is that the primary meaning of the word *neighbors* as used by St. Paul is, those closest to us. That is to say, in the Church of Christ, our brethren are our neighbors; they are the ones nearest, closest to our hearts. All the children of God are our brethren; they are particularly our neighbors because they are on our own plane. We should especially seek to please these to their edification. This does not mean that we should necessarily please them according to the flesh; for this would, in many cases be quite the reverse of their edification. If we please the brethren rightly, we shall rather "stir up their pure minds," their spiritual minds, to love and faith and zeal, to good works. This implies that the word *please* is used here in a limited sense.

It is not possible for us to please all people. The direction of our energies should be for their good as we have opportunity. Even though they be not saints, we should "provoke" them – rouse them

– "to *love* and *good* works" as far as possible, and not to *anger* or *malice* or *sin* or anything unworthy. We may not always be successful in pleasing people to their edification. There may be times when even the brethren will feel aggrieved rather than pleased at our efforts to serve them. We think, however, that if we *seek* to please them to edification, striving to exercise the spirit of a sound mind, our course will have the Lord's approval and blessing, whether it has the approval of others – even the brethren – or not.

So let every one of us endeavor to "please his neighbor for his good to edification." This matter of neighborhood, the condition of nearness, extends, next to the Church, to our own families. Of course, as relates to earthly obligations and temporal needs our family would have the *first* claim, and would be our neighbors, very near, according to the flesh. We should seek to please them for *their* edification – should seek to do them good, as here suggested. The same principle would extend, as we can readily see, to the butcher, the baker, the ice-man, etc. We are not to please any of these to their injury, or in any way that would not be for their edification. We are not to descend to the world's methods. If they wish to tell stories that are not good, not pure, we are not to join in with them. If we cannot please them by that which is good, we are to avoid unnecessary contact. We are to do good and to edify only.

THE WORLD RECOGNIZES THE GOOD

We should endeavor to be as pleasing as possible to all of our neighbors. If we rebuke in a rude way, it would not be pleasing to them, nor would it be likely to edify them. There is a way in which we can give proper reproof even to very worldly people. The world has a higher standard morally and religiously than they would be willing to acknowledge. Even if they sneer outwardly, in their hearts they recognize that which is good. We often find people who are impure in their own lives who like the society of the pure. They

have some appreciation of the good, even though, being defiled themselves, they are likely to defile whatever they touch.

It would not be proper for us to expect that we can do a great deal of good to worldly people – at least that much fruitage will generally be manifested – at present. Our aim should always be to please as far as possible, as far as loyalty to God and the Truth will permit. We should not be of that "grouchy" sort, always going through the world with a quarrel. Rather we should let our light shine, that they may see our good works, and thus "glorify God in the Day of their visitation." A sweet, kindly spirit is the very best recommendation we can give the world now of the power of the Truth. The Lord's people should be kindly disposed toward all men – in the Church especially, but also toward all with whom we come in contact.

A WORD OF WARNING

Let us here say that we fear that some of the Lord's children who have a husband or a wife not in harmony with the Truth, or perhaps more or less in harmony, but not fully consecrated to the Lord, make a mistake and perhaps by their example prevent the development of further interest in the companion. If, for instance, a husband is fully consecrated and his wife is not, the husband should exercise great care that his zeal for the Truth does not lead him to neglect his duty in helping to lift the burdens of household care, etc., which are pressing upon the wife. Volunteer work, meetings, etc., should not so fill his spare time as to cause him to overlook the fact that he owes a very special duty to his wife in ministering to her real needs or comforts.

We fear that some have been embittered and hindered from a full acceptance of the Truth or led to opposition by such lack of loving, thoughtful consideration on the part of the companion who professes entire consecration to the Lord. If we really are fully the Lord's, our home is the first place where this should be

demonstrated. No amount of zeal for the service of the Truth outside of our homes will excuse us from the *duties* which we owe to our families and which they have a *right to expect*. To fulfil our obligations is a real service for the Truth, and often a most effectual one. If there is water or coal or wood to carry, or other real services which a husband may and should render to his wife, these should not be neglected [R5557 : page 311] for any other service. If she is willing to attend some of the meetings, let him show an appreciation of her company and a pleasure to have her go.

The same rule applies to the consecrated wife. Some time and personal service are just requirements of the husband; and the wife should exercise the spirit of justice, love and of a sound mind along this line, and not give her companion just cause to feel that he is forgotten, unloved and uncared for because of the wife's new interests. The husband is the rightful head of the home. There are duties which are *obligations* to every child of God, and to neglect or ignore these may be the cause of incalculable harm. The real duties of a husband or wife or parent or child are never abrogated when we give ourselves to the Lord. Each consecrated saint should seek by prayer and by the study of the Word and of Divine providences in our lives to discern the will of the Lord concerning us, that we may be "living epistles" which shall glorify our God, and not bring a reproach upon His cause or upon our own Christian profession.

SACRIFICE OUR SPECIAL MISSION

Each member of the Royal Priesthood is to remember that the special mission of our office, our vocation, our calling, in the present time is to sacrifice. One form of service frequently not discerned by the Lord's people is the opportunity of renouncing our own desires or plans, our own methods or preferences, and in the interests of peace accepting instead the plans, the desires, the preferences of others – where it is merely a matter of personal

preference. Where we believe the Lord will be as well pleased to have the matter the one way or the other, a yielding of our own wishes often proves a blessing, both to the one yielding and to the one receiving the kindness and consideration. This is the spirit of love, the spirit of the Master.

In the Body of Christ the different members have their various inherited weaknesses against which they must wage a lifelong warfare; and these weaknesses are sometimes of such a nature as to interfere to some extent with the rights and comforts of others as well as of themselves. And just here the Apostle offers the word of counsel, "We, then, that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." This does not imply that we should not expostulate with such a one and endeavor to help him to get rid of his infirmity. This we should do, in the spirit of meekness and kindness, while we humbly endure the trial of our patience. It is his good that we are to seek, not chiefly our own greater enjoyment of physical or mental comfort. We are to please him for *his edification*, not by simply ignoring his fault, as though we considered it right, but, if there be suitable opportunity, by kindly urging him to strive against it, still humbly and patiently submitting to the discomfort it brings to us.

If this spirit prevails, the Apostle further shows (1 Corinthians 12:24-26), there need be no schism in the Body; for the members all have a mutual care and a mutual love one for another – a care which seeks to encourage and strengthen all that is good and to discourage, by our example and sometimes by a kindly word, all that is unbecoming, and a love that throws its mantle over a deformity and endeavors to conceal a fault rather than to expose the weaker brother or sister to the reproach of the other brethren. Thus, in the true Church of Christ, which is knit together in love, if one member suffer, all the members suffer with him; or if one member be honored, all the members rejoice with him, and to some degree share the honor, just as in an earthly family, when one

member rises to an honorable distinction, all the members of the family partake of that honor and joy.

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE!

For such self-sacrificing love how necessary is the spirit of humility, gentleness, patience and faith! The Master's words along this line are very forceful – "Except ye be converted [from the spirit of the world to the Spirit of Christ] and become as little children [in meekness and teachableness], ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." This blessed Law of Christ, the Law of Love, should rule in all who have taken by consecration the name of Christ. Its hallowed influence should radiate from us, not only among the brethren, but also out upon the world, as a powerful witness to the effect of the grace of God in the heart. Thus we shall demonstrate to them that the love of God received into a life brings peace and harmony and happiness; that it makes noble, devoted, faithful husbands; more kind, loyal and tender wives; more obedient, loving children; more kind, good neighbors; and that it pours "oil on the troubled waters" of all our experiences, bringing blessing wherever it reaches.

