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RETURNING TO BUSINESS

SOME of our dear readers very commendably arranged their affairs some time ago so as to give their entire time to the Harvest work, not anticipating the prolongation of the Harvest – the gleaning work, the burning of the tares, the threshing of the wheat, etc. Moreover, many of them used in the Harvest work nearly all of their surplus of this world's goods – striving to lay up treasure in Heaven. Some of these dear Brethren and Sisters have nearly or quite gone to the limit of their possibilities, as far as present arrangements are concerned. They are, properly, looking about them to see the leadings of the Lord's providence in respect to their future operations. Will they plunge into business so deeply as to have little time for spiritual things? Will they become identified with some kind of speculation, and, perhaps, get others involved in what ultimately would be a loss? Or will they look for something to do in a quiet way that will enable them to meet expenses, possibly being able to continue to some degree in the gleaning work of the Harvest? The latter is our expectation and, we believe, in accord with the Spirit of the Lord – the spirit of a sound mind. – 2 Timothy 1:7. [R5670 : page 126]

Let us call to mind the great disappointment of the Apostles in connection with the Redeemer's death. Up to within one day of His crucifixion they had thought that His remarks respecting death, crucifixion, etc., were figurative language, and that in reality He was about to be exalted to power and great glory. The experiences of that time must have been a severe test upon them in every way. Our Lord's resurrection the third day revived their hopes, although His appearances in miraculous manner indicated some wonderful change which they could not understand; but afterwards they learned that it was because He was no longer a man, but a perfected New Creature of the Divine nature.

Then came the long interval between appearances – for weeks at a time they saw nothing of Him, heard nothing from Him. Anxious, disappointing days! – their faith and patience weakened. Finally, utterly discouraged, St. Peter took the lead in announcing his determination to give up all thoughts of further preaching and to return to the fishing business. He announced, "I go a fishing." Promptly his former partners responded, "We also go with thee." (John 21:3.) Here were seven principal disciples, abandoning the great work to which they had been invited of the Lord – but doing so in their perplexity, with hearts as loyal as ever.

Evidently this was the occasion Jesus had waited for. We know of no other reason why He should remain forty days before ascending to the Father. He allowed the disciples to go back to their former business and to meet with discouragement. The very first night "they toiled all night and caught nothing!" Poor men! They must have felt as though everything was going against them. However, Jesus was watching over them all the while and purposely permitting them to come to this crisis, so that He might teach them a great lesson – and us through them. The lesson was that He was able to overrule all of their affairs, and that they should firmly trust Him, come what might, so long as they were loyal and following His directions.

Discouraged as to confidence in their own abilities as business men, they were ready in the morning to see Jesus on the shore and to accept His invitation to breakfast with Him from fish already cooked on the fire – from whence came the fish and the fire they knew not. These things were provided by miraculous power, as was the body of Jesus in which He appeared to them and the clothing He wore on it. Jesus said little to them, except to St. Peter – "Feed My sheep, feed My lambs, if thou lovest Me." The Apostles took the lesson and returned again to the preaching of the Gospel as the main business of life. The Lord's blessing was with them. He provided for them according to their needs, although it

was sometimes in prison; sometimes in fasting and hunger, nakedness and peril. He gave them of His best for their development as New Creatures.

We do not wish to draw a parallel here and suggest that all the Brethren should abandon earthly affairs, as did the Apostles. We are not Apostles. There were only The Twelve. We are not to expect that we would have as important a work to do, nor that the Lord's providences would be so markedly exercised on our behalf. We are, however, to remember the Master's statement, "One is your Master, even Christ; all ye are Brethren!" While the Apostles were more important Brethren than we, still we are Brethren; and One is our Lord, or Head, and we have all one Father. The Divine promises assure us that all things shall work together for good to us, because we love God and have been called according to His purpose and are seeking to make our calling and election sure.

The lesson we do suggest is that the Divine Plan has not changed. The Harvest surely is not ended. The great Time of Trouble has already begun. Although it is necessary for us to provide things decent and honest in the sight of all men, we are not to forget that our chief business is that of ambassadors for God – representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ – proclaimers of the Good Tidings of great joy which eventually shall be to all people. We are never to forget that we are to seek first, chiefly, the Kingdom of God and the righteousness which it stands for and inculcates.

This is to be our chief work, the chief aim of life for us. Everything else is to be secondary. We are to expect that the Lord will give us necessary wisdom and grace if we seek it, whereby we may serve Him with acceptance and still provide the things necessary for our bodily comfort, without entirely leaving the work. This would mean that we should watch and pray – asking the Lord's direction and then waiting to see which way His providences seem to direct our course. We should watch, also,

against the wiles of the Adversary, who would seek to ensnare us in business or pleasure or whatever.

Our advice is that all of the Lord's people put the Kingdom and its interests first, in word, in thought, in deed – giving merely what time is absolutely necessary for the procurement of the things needful for our earthly comforts and the comfort of those dependent on us. Assuredly thus we would be following the example of the Master, pleasing to the Father and helpful to each other. Thus we would be examples to our neighbors, as well as be preparing ourselves for the Kingdom.

