

"THESE THINGS" THAT WE MUST DO

"If ye do these things, ye shall never fall." – 2 Peter 1:10.

THE CONTEXT preceding the words of the above text shows us that the Apostle has been urging the development of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in the heart, and so far as possible in the life – in the words, the deeds, the thoughts. He sums up his argument by saying that those who, following his advice in this matter, add one after another of these qualities and so build up their Christian character, will "never fall." The implication is that there would be some tendency to fall, some testings; and that this development of character would be necessary in order that the individual might be able to stand these tests. So the Apostle's assurance is that those who do not fall, who stand all the tests, will be granted an abundant entrance "into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" – the very thing that all of the Lord's people are invited to share.

We whose eyes of understanding have been enlightened can realize the strength and reasonableness of the Apostle's argument; yet these things have not been much taught in a logical way. Errors of the Dark Ages have hindered and made void the teachings of the Apostles. The thought given out by the creeds of the past is that only a mere handful would be saved, and that the rest of the world would be banished to an eternity of torture and woe unspeakable. Many of the world have taken this in a light way, have been incredulous – declaring that they would stand their chance, etc. Others, who were of the Lord's people, have been frantic in their efforts to save as many as possible from the threatened eternal torture. Some had it that unless they belonged to a certain class, or cult, or had a certain kind of baptism, or turned away from sin and joined some church, they were sure of never-ending and unspeakable suffering beyond this life.

With these ideas in their minds, it is not strange that they were too busy to study the Word of God with sufficient care to see what it really teaches, and that therefore they adopted plans of their own for saving the world. These deluded ones seem to be quite active in what they term soul-saving work. We cannot but admire their courage and zeal, even though it be not according to knowledge. If their premise were correct, then every Christian should be rushing around as though demented, in his endeavors to save the world.

Suppose that a great fire broke out but a few doors from us, that there were no fire department accessible and that hundreds were in imminent danger of being burned to death, though we were ourselves safe from the fire. Suppose that then some one would say to us, "Come, let us have a Bible Study." We would be sure to answer quickly, "No indeed! There are many people in that building who will be burned to death unless they are quickly rescued!" We would be in such haste and such eagerness to save the lives of the endangered ones that we would stop for nothing else.

DOCTRINAL CONFUSION OF MANY CHRISTIANS

So the great Adversary has filled the minds of many Christian people with the vagary that the world is in imminent danger, not of being burned to *death*, but of being precipitated into a lake of burning brimstone or into an abyss of unimaginable horror and woe, there to be preserved in torture throughout unending ages! He has thus engaged Christians in an imaginary assault upon the Devil, to rescue souls from this eternity of torment. Not until our eyes are opened and we see that there is no such provision for the heathen, or for anybody, can we begin to exercise the spirit of a sound mind. When we come to understand God's arrangement, everything changes before our mind's eye. We then see that God has made full provision for the heathen and for all men, and we realize that

"Faith can firmly trust Him,
Come what may."

We see that our work as Christians is to co-operate with God in the salvation of the Church class – not a salvation from eternal torture, but from death, and to a glorious inheritance with Christ in His coming Kingdom. We see that this great work has been progressing during the Gospel Age, and in an orderly manner.

This blessed union with Christ which God has arranged for the Church is to be soon consummated by a marriage feast; and then, in the Kingdom to be established under the whole heavens, she as His Bride will with Him have the blessed opportunity of uplifting and delivering fallen humanity, the entire race of Adam, of restoring men, "whosoever will," to the glorious estate which was lost by Adam and redeemed by Christ Jesus the Lord through the blood of His cross. How wonderful it is to realize how all-embracing is God's marvelous Plan of salvation – that it includes in its gracious provision not only those now living, but also all who have gone down into the tomb! With the eyes of our understanding thus enlightened, the delusions are taken away from our minds, and we begin to use our reason and to see the beautiful, wonderful things which God planned from before the foundation of the world.

DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION LOST TO MAJORITY

As we reason, we see that the primary consideration with *us* is our *sanctification*. "This is the will of God [concerning *you*], even *your* sanctification." When we thought that the salvation of the world was dependent upon our feeble efforts here in the flesh, we had little time to study the Bible or to think particularly about our sanctification. Indeed, the thought of sanctification faded away from the minds of the majority of professing Christians; and for a Christian to press the importance of this doctrine was to brand himself as a religious fanatic. The general thought has seemed to

be that those who were really thus set apart were surely so small a number that sanctification could not be God's Plan for the Church. So the many drifted apart from the Scriptures, and thought that only those guilty of most heinous crimes would be punished with eternal torment, and that all others would be some means get into Heaven. People have thought, and this thought seems to prevail today to an increasing extent, that unless one dies a murderer or a lawless, disreputable character, he will somehow be saved.

"If a person can squeeze into Heaven without any sanctification, so much the better," is the thought. "Do not try to get up too high. Do not try to get one of the chief seats in Heaven. Take a lowly place" – crawl in under the gates, perhaps! And thus many have tried to believe that they and their friends would go to Heaven. Our Catholic friends have been taught that they must go to Purgatory for awhile. But nearly all others have hoped that they would get to Heaven at once. This idea of sanctification, of being holy as our Lord was holy, of walking in the footsteps of Jesus, is not the Bible view at all, according to their thought. They did not consider it the Bible view because they did not know the Bible teachings, and because they did not wish to conform themselves to so narrow a way – the broader, easier way [R5677 : page 134] was much more pleasant to the flesh. They could not believe that God would be intent upon roasting nearly everybody – surely He would be content to roast the most degraded heathen and the worst characters of Christendom.

OUR "REASONABLE SERVICE"

So these have accepted what seemed to them to be a reasonable moral standard, instead of endeavoring to find out what the Bible calls our "reasonable service." The great Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Church at Rome (Romans 12:1), says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is

your [R5678 : page 134] reasonable service." When we get rid of these erroneous thoughts and ideas and get the spirit of a sound mind, we begin to see more of God's wonderful Plan – of His Justice, Wisdom, Love, Power, of His purpose for His children now, and His arrangement for the world by and by.

When light begins to break in upon the mind, and a glimpse is seen of God's gracious Plan of salvation, there is a danger that those whose hearts are selfish and lacking in gratitude will lapse into even greater worldliness, that they will pay very little attention to Bible study for the development of the fruits of the Spirit, feeling that it will be well with them in the future in any event, and they will delve into business, money-making, pleasure, etc. Others, on the contrary, feel an earnest desire to render thanks to the Lord for His great mercy and love as manifested in His glorious Plan of the Ages; they seek to know what is the Lord's will for them that they may do it, and say, "The fact that God is not such a demon as to torture eternally any of His creatures, but has so marvelous and loving a Plan for all, makes me want to serve Him all the more." As the Apostle Paul said, the Truth is "to the one the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life," and reveals the real sentiment of the heart. – 2 Cor. 2:16.

THE CHRISTIAN'S NEED IN THIS "EVIL DAY"

Thus those who receive the Truth in the love of it become students of the Bible. As they study, they learn more and more how each one of the true Church is to be sanctified by the Truth, that each may be "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." They realize that the Church is now being called out to be saints of God, to be separated from the world, and to have a share with the Lord Jesus in blessing and uplifting the whole world in the Age to follow this, the Millennial Age – now so near at hand. To such the exhortation of the Apostle is, "Add to your faith virtue [fortitude]; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance [self-

control, self-restraint]; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love [a broad, generous love, taking in the whole world, even our enemies]. – 2 Peter 1:5-7.

The Apostle then adds, "If these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren [inactive, idle] nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." At this juncture the Apostle shows the contrary effect of the spirit of the world upon those who profess to be children of God – the result of a neglect to study and to assimilate the Word. He says, "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." Then he counsels all, "Wherefore, the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." – Vs. 8-11.

NEED OF "THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD"

By seeking to know God's will in order to do it, the Lord's people are preparing themselves for the glorious inheritance of the faithful. Fortified by development of character, these will not fall, no matter what the trial that the Lord may permit to come upon them. The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Church at Ephesus, speaks of some who will be able to stand in the "evil day," and implies that a great many at that time will not be able to stand. He declares that those who hope to stand will need to put on "the whole armor of God." The various pieces of the Christian's armor will then be indispensable, and he intimates that only those fully armored would be ready for the onslaughts of that Day.

The Lord did not reveal to the Apostles when the "evil day" would come. They knew that it was then future, but how far into the future they did not know. They did not expect it before their

death; for some of them said that they expected to put off the present body, to die, and to awake in the First Resurrection, and that they believed the Second Coming of Christ to be some little time distant. Evidently it was a part of God's Plan to keep His people uninformed concerning the exact time of the Day of the Lord, until due; but He provided for them that they would be able to stand when the "evil day" arrived, if they would diligently put on the armor.

And now we have come to this "evil day"; and the urgent message to us is: "Put on the whole armor of God!" – prepare yourselves for the great testing that will come, that you may be able to stand! Get ready! Each piece of the armor, each fruit of the Spirit, is a part of the necessary preparation for this "evil day," this "hour of temptation," now present. So these should all be added with great care. Read Ephesians 6:13-18; 2 Peter 1:4-11; Galatians 5:19-26.

WHY THOUSANDS ARE FALLING

This is the time long foretold, when "a thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand." Why will all these fall? Because they have neglected this necessary development of character; because they have failed to put on the whole armor of God; because under the delusions of the Adversary and the spirit of the world and of Babylon they have become twisted in their minds. They have tried to raise money for the heathen or for building fine church edifices; they have gotten up church fairs and entertainments, etc.; not appreciating the fact that it is necessary to build up their own characters, that character, built up after the instruction of the Word of God, is absolutely necessary to an entrance into the Kingdom of Christ. And so these are falling all around us.

If the whole armor of God was important in the Apostle's day, it is still more important today. We need all that is represented in

the breastplate of righteousness, in the shield of faith, in the helmet of salvation, the covering of protection for the intellect, in the sandals of Gospel preparation, in the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. We need that our loins be girt up with Truth. Thus shall we be enabled to preserve our vital relationship with the Lord and His House and to daily grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"In the last days," said the Apostle, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Therefore we need to be *fully* established in the faith, and able to *fully trust the Lord*. Let us keep the Sword of the Spirit sharpened and well in hand, that we may be ready for service in the protection of others and in the defense of ourselves. We need to be continually on the alert respecting **[R5678 : page 135]** our own fleshly weaknesses and besetments, that we may war a successful warfare, and prove faithful to the end of our course, and thus share with our Lord His Kingdom and crown.

"As I near the Time of Trouble,
Bid my faith in Thee increase;
While the thousands round are falling,
Keep me, keep in perfect peace.
Refuge! Fortress! Thou hast set Thy love on me!"

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