

INTERESTING LETTER

QUESTIONS RESPECTING CLASS DISCIPLINE

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL:—

Some of us desire your further advice on two points:

(1) What attitude should we take toward brethren who hold little meetings not authorized or appointed by the Class with which they are connected?

(2) We note your recommendation concerning testimony meetings and their helpfulness in character-development. What should we do in a case where elders oppose such meetings, but where the Class desire to have them?

THE EDITOR'S REPLY

We think it rather unwise for a brother claiming to be a member of the class to entirely ignore that class in the matter of holding meetings. For him to inaugurate meetings, advertise them, hold them during the regular hours of the meetings of the class, etc., would seem to be in the nature of ignoring the class; and to hold meetings at the same hour might be considered an opposition. However, even though all this were done, it would not constitute a cause of offense or of excommunication. The class should rejoice to know that the Gospel of the kingdom is being preached, even though it were preached in a strifeful and contentious manner, as St. Paul suggests. (Phil. 1:15-18) A class would have no more right to think or speak evil of such a brother and of his effort than to think or speak evil of any Christian minister of any denomination and of his effort.

If, however, a brother were invited to give a little talk in a private or a semi-private manner to a few, not as a regular class, nor as an opposition meeting, nor at a conflicting hour, there would seem to be no ground whatever for reproof. On the contrary, we should all commend his love and zeal and, thanking the Lord for the brother's privileges, seek as good for ourselves.

We are to keep strictly in mind that the Lord has not given any of us a right to supervise His work nor to forbid another to preach the Gospel. The disciples of old did this on one occasion and Jesus rebuked them, saying, "Forbid him not; for there is no man that shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me." (Mark 9:38-40) Again he said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20) He did not say that the two or three must be authorized, commissioned, or in any manner privileged of men. Hence, whatever there is of co-operation in the church should be merely of love, of wisdom, of estimation of the divine will and the oneness of the church.

We are surprised to learn that there are any in opposition to the weekly testimony meetings which we have so strongly urged. In our experience this class of meeting is one of the most spiritually helpful. In many places if it were necessary to have but one meeting, the classes undoubtedly would hold on to the weekly testimony meeting as the best and most helpful of all. We commend Wednesday night as being a most suitable occasion for this kind of meeting. We have already recommended that the weekly topic be the Manna text of the preceding Thursday. Observing this rule, the Lord's people all over the world can study and think much along the same lines and, looking for experiences in the same direction, obtain corresponding blessings.

We recommend a trial of this method to all of the classes everywhere. They will have plenty to testify about if once they acquire the habit of looking for the Lord's providences in the affairs of life, noting experiences and lessons and comparing them with the instructions of the divine Word. Those who are following this course are often surprised to note how much more every day is worth to them than formerly.

With many, life is a business routine or a dream. As new creatures we desire to have every day full of Christian experiences and intelligent thought directed and moulded by the divine Word. This blessed condition is attained largely by the method we have indicated. Our growth in grace depends not so much on the number of chapters or verses which we read, as upon the exercise of our minds, hearts and wills in connection with what we already know and what we daily learn of the will of God.

It is not for the elders, but for the class to determine what meetings it wishes to hold. When the class decides, the elders, of course, still have their privilege of resigning. Indeed, it would certainly be advantageous, both for the elder and the class, to have such elders resign as desire to rule the Lord's household, instead of desiring to serve it.

However, our experience teaches that frequently supposed oppositions are merely misunderstandings. We advise a careful study afresh of *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES*, Vol. VI. Indeed, we remind the dear friends how leaky are all our memories, and of the wisdom, therefore, of the course being followed by a great many—the reading of the entire six volumes of *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES* every year—twelve pages or more every day. Those who are following this course report great blessing and give evidence of great clearness in the truth.

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EVIL SPEAKING AND EVIL SURMISING

Many are the peculiar subterfuges which the fallen nature uses in its attempt to stifle the voice of Conscience. We have known people who took cognizance of the Scriptural injunction against slander, evil speaking and evil surmising, and yet who were so confused on the subject and so unaccustomed to scrutinizing their own conduct that they would utter slander in the very breath in which they expressed their strong disapproval of evil speaking. In order to avoid such a condition of confusion it is well to have in mind a clear definition of these terms.

SLANDER A FACTOR IN ANARCHY

A slander is anything uttered with the intention of injury to another, whether the statement be true or false. Both the Law of God and the laws of men agree that such injury is wrong. True, many slanderers are never prosecuted; true that even newspapers have times without number escaped heavy damages for libelous slander, on the plea that they published the defamation as news which properly belonged to the people. Public men consider it good policy to let ordinary slander go unnoticed, realizing that many of the false statements made by the opposition press will properly be credited as falsehood.

The effect of public slander is very injurious, and brings about a gradual growth of slander among the people. This condition is sure to work evil to themselves and to their institutions. Government officials and other men thus slandered lose their influence for good over the lower classes, who are thus being helped along day by day to greater lawlessness, and are being thus prepared for the period of anarchy which the Scriptures tell us is near.

EVIL SPEAKING INDICATIVE OF UNGODLINESS

Evil speaking includes all defamatory or injurious remarks against others—words of hatred, malice, envy or strife—everything which would injure another to any degree. Even an uncomplimentary remark respecting another, injuring his reputa-

tion, is evil speaking, although the uncomplimentary statement be true.

All of our words are taken by the Lord as an index of the heart. If our words are flippant, frivolous, unkind, unthankful, rebellious or disloyal. He judges the heart accordingly, on the principle that "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." (Matt. 12:34) Thus in all the varied circumstances of daily life, our words are continually bearing testimony before God of the condition of our hearts.

Godlikeness certainly cannot include any harmful gossip, any unclean or unholy conversation, any disloyal or rebellious words. Let all such things be put far away from those who name the name of Christ in sincerity and in truth.

The tongue is the most powerful member of the human body. As the Scriptures say, with it we may praise God or injure men. Not only may we injure those within reach of our tongue, but our words might extend their influence throughout the world and from generation to generation. Our tongues are the most wonderful power that God has given us. It has been said that all of life's experiences deepen when presented in language. When uttered, thoughts impress themselves deeply upon the mind. We should certainly take heed to our tongues.—James 3:9, 10.

EVIL SURMISING INDICATIVE OF AN IMPURE HEART

Evil surmising consists in imagining evil motives to be behind the words and the acts of others. Proceeding out of the heart not fully consecrated, evil surmising will attribute some selfish or evil motive to every good deed. This form of sin is ranked by the Apostle Paul as contrary to the words of our Lord Jesus, opposed to godliness, and of the same spirit as envy and strife—works of the flesh and of the devil.—1 Tim. 6:3-5; Gal. 5:19-21.

Those who have cultivated that spirit of love which "thinketh no evil" have developed their characters and have become

of "quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." (Isa. 11:3) They will be cautious where there is even the appearance of evil, while at the same time they will avoid the imputation of evil intentions until forced to concede them by indisputable evidence. It is far better to take some slight risks and to suffer some trifling losses than to accuse even one innocent person. The Lord, who has directed our course in matters of this kind, is abundantly able to compensate us for any losses experienced in following his counsel.

TO IMPUTE GOOD MOTIVES IS CHARITABLE

The true Christian will cultivate the disposition to think charitably of the words and actions of others, and to suppose that their intentions are good, until he has positive evidence to the contrary. Even then he will go to the offender alone, according to Matt. 18:15, and if occasion require, will take the subsequent steps, as directed by the Lord.—Matt. 18:15-17.

From their high standard of the appreciation of the divine law, advanced Christians see that in the Lord's sight hatred is murder, slander is assassination, and the destruction of a neighbor's good name is robbery. Any of these things done in the church among the professed people of God is doubly evil—the robbery or the murder of a brother.—1 John 3:15.

Verily, with force do the Scriptures declare that the natural heart is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." (Jer. 17:9) Those who practice evil speaking and evil surmising and who attempt to justify their conduct have either never entered the school of Christ or else are only in the infant class, for they seem not to know that theirs is not the spirit of brotherly love.

DIFFERENT WAYS OF MISREPRESENTING OTHERS

False witness applies not only to the utterance of falsehood, but also to any form of misrepresentation, whether by direct statement or by such indirect statement that a wrong inference may be drawn. One may bear false witness by a nod of the head, by a shrug of the shoulder or even by silence when he should speak.

One of the hardest lessons, apparently, for Christians to learn thoroughly is the Master's command that if they have anything unpleasant to say respecting a brother or a sister, any criticism to offer concerning the private life of another, they should go to the person alone. (Matt. 18:15-17) Perhaps in no other way does the adversary succeed so well in planting roots of bitterness, producing misunderstandings, anger, malice, hatred, strife, and other works of the flesh and the devil, as in deterring the Lord's people from obedience to this command. Let us permit love to do her perfect work in our relationship to others.

LOVE A PREVENTIVE OF EVIL THOUGHTS

The law of love forbids the Lord's people to follow the pernicious example of the world. That law commands silence to all who acknowledge the great Law Giver, saying, "Speak evil of no man." (Titus 3:2) Further than this, it declares against evil thoughts, evil suspicions and evil surmisings: Love "thinketh no evil." (1 Cor. 13:5) Love filling our hearts will not only hinder evil conduct and injurious words, but will prevent evil thoughts.

Indeed, to impress the importance of this subject, the Great Teacher declares to the pupils in his school, "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." (Matt. 7:2) Again he instructs them to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." (Matt. 6:12, 14, 15) Again he declares, "If ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses, so likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you." (Matt. 18:35) If at heart we treasure up resentment against others, the Heavenly Father will not forgive us.

PURITY OF HEART AN ADVANCED STAGE OF DISCIPLESHIP

Those Christians who are elders in the school of Christ and who are therefore qualified to teach others, are not only outwardly clean, but inwardly also. They are washed by the water of the Word from the meanness, the filthiness of the flesh. No longer the slaves of sin, they are not controlled by the desires and the weaknesses of the fallen flesh and the spirit of the world. They do not bear the fruits of unrighteousness—anger, malice, hatred, strife, slander, evil speaking, evil surmising.—2 Cor. 7:1.

A pure heart signifies purity of will, of intention, or purpose, which like the needle to the pole, always turns toward righteousness. Though some sudden or strong temptation may for an instant, through the weakness of the flesh, draw it to the right or to the left, yet it quickly recovers its normal position, which is loyalty to truth and righteousness. A pure heart loves righteousness and hates iniquity. It loves purity and despises impurity and unrighteousness. It loves cleanliness of person, of clothing, of language and of habits. It delights in

the society of the pure and shuns all others, knowing that "Evil communications corrupt good manners."—1 Cor. 15:33.

We should distinguish sharply between purity of heart, will, intention, and absolute purity of every act, word and thought; for while the former is possible, the latter is impossible so long as we have our mortal bodies and are surrounded by our present unfavorable conditions. The standard set before us is, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48) By this standard we are to measure ourselves continually, and not by one another; and to this standard we are to seek to bring all the conduct of our lives as well as the meditations of our hearts.—2 Cor. 10:12; Psa. 19:14.

But only our wills (hearts) have yet been transformed and renewed. Our imperfect earthen vessels in which we have this treasure will not be "changed" until our resurrection. Not until then shall we be perfected in the divine likeness. But now, nothing short of purity of heart, will, intention, can be acceptable to God and bring us a blessing.—2 Cor. 4:7; 1 Cor. 15:52.

HOW TO MAINTAIN PURITY OF HEART

Those who have made a full consecration of heart to the Lord constitute the pure in heart under the law of love. But notwithstanding the purity of their hearts, their intentions, their wills, to fulfil the royal law of love, these have a battle to wage. The law of their members, depraved through inherited sin, is the strong law of selfishness, in opposition to the new Law to which they have pledged themselves—the law of love.—Rom. 13:10; James 2:8.

Yet their inability to live up to the requirements of that new law must be through no lack of will, no lack of intention of the pure, loyal heart. Whatever failure they make, however short they may come at times of obtaining the victory, it must be solely because of weakness of the flesh and the besetments of the adversary, which their pure hearts failed to resist.

Here the Lord's promises are helpful, assuring them that he knows their weaknesses and frailties, as well as the wiles of the devil and the influence of the spirit of the world, which are contrary to the spirit of love. He tells them that they may go freely to the throne of heavenly grace, there to obtain mercy in respect to their failures to live up to the high standard which their hearts acknowledge and to which they strive to conform. He also assures them that they may find grace to help in every time of need.—Heb. 4:16; Eph. 6:12.

Availing themselves of these mercies and privileges provided through our Great High Priest they are enabled to fight a good fight against sin, to repulse its attacks upon their hearts, and to drive it off, if it has succeeded in invading their flesh.

Thus, and only thus, may the Christian keep himself pure in heart and maintain his stand as a fighter of the good fight, one of the overcomers of the world and its spirit.

SELF-DECEPTION OF THE IMPURE HEART

The mind of the flesh will seek to enter into partnership with the new mind, and will be very ready to accept love as the rule of life, under certain conditions. The mind of the flesh would prefer to recognize love in words, in profession, in manners only—a form of godliness without its power.—2 Tim. 3:5.

Gentle manners, such as love would manifest, may be exercised by a selfish heart, deceiving itself and seeking to deceive others. On the lip may be the smile, the word of praise, of kindness, of gentleness, while in the heart may be feelings of selfishness, of grudge, of bitterness, of animosity. Under favorable conditions these hidden motions of sin in the flesh may manifest themselves in more or less carefully worded slander or back-biting or reproach. Or these, continuing to rankle in the heart, may when opportunity affords bring forth anger, hatred, malice, strife and other wicked works of the flesh and the devil, wholly contrary to the course of a pure heart and at variance with the commandment of the law of the new creation—love.—2 Tim. 3:13; Rom. 7:5; Gal. 5:19-21.

We are to have clearly before our minds the fact that the ultimate object of all the divine dealings with us and for us, and the ultimate signification of all the divine promises made to us, is the development of love, which in godlikeness, for God is love. That this love may be developed in us in the sense and to the degree intended by the Lord, it must come from a pure heart, in full accord with the Lord and his law of love, but wholly antagonistic to the adversary and his law of unholy pride, jealousy and selfishness.—1 Tim. 1:5.

LOVE DEVELOPED BY THE PRINCIPLES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

To have this kind of love in its proper development there must be a good conscience, well regulated by the Scriptures; therefore the study of God's Word is very important. Meditation upon God's law is also necessary. We must recognize the fact that there are divine commands with principles behind

them and that these principles are to be incorporated into our characters. In other words, we are to have the mind of Christ. (1 Cor. 2:16) As the Apostle says, "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."—Gal. 5:16.

This admonition means that we should guard all the actions of life, as well as all our words; for these are a source of either blessing or ill to others and to ourselves. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Prov. 23:7) Some may deceive others

for a time, but the Lord knows whether we are seeking to please him.

We are to endeavor to please the Lord in all things and to watch the outward conduct so that our walk in life may be circumspect. Even though we know that the world will take our very best thoughts and endeavors for hypocrisy, nevertheless, our way is clearly marked out—the way of the Lord—the way of wisdom.

THE KINDNESS, HUMILITY AND PATIENCE OF LOVE

"God is Love."—1 John 4:8.

In the Scriptures the word love is used to express the complete whole of the grand and glorious qualities which make up the perfection of Jehovah. God is the personification of love. To whatever extent any one possesses this quality of love to that extent he has character-likeness to God. Whoever is fully in God's likeness may be said to be love; for love is the great principle which represents most fully the divine character.

"God is love," our Lord Jesus is love; and when the church is perfect, each member of the body will also be love. This great principle will have full control of all that we do and say, even as now it has control in the hearts of the Lord's people, despite the weaknesses of the flesh, which prevent its full expression. When all the imperfection is taken away, those who attain the prize of our glorious high calling will have the image of God, the image of the Lord. The hope of attaining the likeness of the divine character is the great ambition which inspires us to faithfulness of endeavor.

Incidentally, it may be remarked that faith, hope and love are fruits of the holy Spirit. Although every good and perfect gift comes from the Father (James 1:17), nevertheless, there is a difference between a "gift" and a "fruit." Possession of a gift may be acquired immediately, but a fruit requires time in which to develop. So with the fruits of the holy Spirit.

Here we see displayed the wisdom of God. Development is a gradual work. With those who have that earnest desire and determined zeal for righteousness which God wishes them to have, every word and every act has something to do with the development of this quality of love. Our Heavenly Father does not expect us to acquire perfection of love in the flesh, for its weaknesses and imperfections will not permit us to do so; but he expects to find in those who will be members of the body of Christ that earnestness of spirit and faithful endeavor which demonstrate that if they had perfect bodies they would always manifest love.

In order to reach this degree of development of character, we must not live after the flesh, the old creature, but must train our minds to desire only those things which are true, pure, loving and good. In this sense of the word we are to be copies of our Lord Jesus Christ.

KINDNESS NOT ALWAYS LOVE

The followers of Christ have consecrated their own wills and have been begotten of the holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of Love; for it is the Spirit of God, who is love. Therefore their sentiment toward one another must be one of loving interest. Perhaps they are not always wise in knowing how to exercise loving-kindness; sometimes their fallen nature may lead them to think that a certain course of action would be the loving one, when it is the very reverse—the wrong course. Hence we need to be on the alert to perceive to what extent we are using the spirit of a sound mind in our conduct and in our dealings with one another.

A person might manifest kindness in word and act without having the right motive. Sometimes kindness is prompted by motives other than love. It might be for selfish reasons, or for the purpose of entrapping another to his disadvantage. This form of fraud has become so common as to cause no particular comment.

The Christian's experience is a continual schooling. Daily we are learning more and more about ourselves and about the wisdom and justice of God. As we learn these lessons day by day, we are learning more to reprobate and correct in ourselves. In thus discovering our own imperfections, we should learn, as a matter of course, not to expect perfection in others; and we should give them credit for doing their best to exemplify the highest ideals which they have in respect to the unity and perfection required for membership in the body of Christ.

Love is always kind; love cannot wilfully injure another. The parent who loves his child will not do anything to harm that child. He might sometimes make a mistake and punish the child unjustly, but the motive behind a loving parent's action will always be kind and true.

Love might sometimes be regarded as unkind, for the prin-

ciples governing the actions of the individual might be misunderstood. When our Heavenly Father forbade Adam and Eve to partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, he had a wise reason for so doing. No doubt he would have eventually permitted them to partake of that fruit; but it was kindness on his part to keep them in ignorance of that fact. Thinking God to be unkind, ungenerous toward them, Eve thought to obtain her rights. So with us. If our Heavenly Father's kindness is not always understood, we may not be surprised if we have a similar experience. Although our spirit, or motive, may be right, yet we may not always have the ability to manifest it; and so we must make due allowance when others misunderstand us.

THE POWER OF INDWELLING LOVE

Man was originally made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26, 27); but by reason of the fall of Adam, his balance of mind has been destroyed. Those who have the mind, or will of Christ are able to overcome some of the inequalities of their natural disposition and to think soberly of their own knowledge and ignorance and of that of others. This ability to appreciate the true state of affairs is the secret of much of our blessing in the Lord.

When we see others who have a smaller appreciation of justice than we have and who do things contrary to the principles of righteousness, we rejoice that we know better and are able to do better than they. The spirit of a sound mind shows us that we have more ability along some lines than have some others, and that others have more ability along some lines than we. Because of the fall of man, all are weak in one direction or another. The knowledge of the imperfect condition of humanity should humble us rather than puff us up.

Humility of mind comes only after the attainment of considerable knowledge of Christ. Knowledge puffs up because of selfishness of heart, because we are more likely to be conscious of our own good qualities than of those of others. Hence those born with less selfishness have less to contend with, and those born with more of it have more to contend with; and in proportion as we have the Spirit of Christ, we are able to overcome the tendency to be puffed up with what little knowledge we possess. Indwelling love has the power to build up, to strengthen character, and to counteract the wrong effect of the fallen human nature.

PROPER AND IMPROPER CAUSES OF PROVOCATION

The whole world has a tendency to recognize the principles of justice. Even those whose conduct toward others is far from just, seem to crave an opportunity to fight against injustice, provided that the case is not one with which they are identified. This inclination often manifests itself in acts of violence, as when mobs vent their anger against some poor sinner who has done something to provoke their wrath. The least virulent amongst them have perhaps done wrong also, yet they seize the opportunity to show their indignation against wrongdoing and seem to take delight in punishing the offender.

The Lord's people should not possess this spirit of intolerance. We should have patience, sympathy and endurance when things go wrong, and should make due allowance for those who are transgressors. The more we possess of the spirit of patience, the more we have of the spirit of forbearance and the more difficult it is to arouse us to anger. Whenever the spirit of love prevails, its possessor is not easily moved to do or say anything unkind or unjust. Love makes us very patient with those with whom we are associated; it is anxious to throw the mantle of charity over everything that seems to be wrong.

Love would have us remember that while another may be in error, it does not follow that he is at fault. He may not have understood a matter correctly or his judgment may not have been the best, owing to inherited weakness over which he has no control. Before condemning any one we should make sure that he is at fault. Justice demands that we do no less than investigate before we condemn. Love urges us to be as merciful in the case as is possible.

God is the very personification of love, yet the Scriptures

tell us that he has been provoked at different times. While passing through the wilderness, the children of Israel aroused his indignation repeatedly. (Psa. 78:40, 56; 95:7-11) The idolatrous tendencies of that nation brought divine wrath upon them and sent them into captivity to Babylon. (Jer. 7:17-20) Finally, their rejection and crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ brought upon them "wrath to the uttermost" and caused their dispersion into all parts of the earth.

RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION A PROPER FEELING

The Lord's people are not to be of that immovable kind that cannot feel any resentment of injustice. Lack of ability to have just indignation would imply lack of morals and of harmony with God. Of our Lord Jesus it is written that when he beheld the unrighteous condition of the rulers of his people, and saw the injustice of their conduct, he "looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." (Mark 3:5) Like him, we should be wholly out of sympathy with everything not in harmony with God.

We are to love righteousness and hate iniquity. This word iniquity, which means the very opposite of love, is a strong expression. A person who is indifferent to matters of right and wrong is indifferent to the character of God, who is in opposition to all forms of iniquity. Of our Lord, the Scriptures say, "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness; therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (Psa. 45:7) All who are cultivating character pleasing to God, all who are endeavoring to become exact copies of his dear Son, should put away every impurity, everything not right. Whatever is wrong should always be opposed by our new minds.

On the other hand, if we have love as the Lord has it, we shall hate the wrong, but not the individual who does wrong. In proportion as love controls our minds and hearts, we shall feel sympathy for those who are in iniquity, for we remember that the race of mankind are fallen from their original perfection. We should think that to do evil is not their intention, their will, but that they are suffering from an iniquitous disease. Love is patient and tries to find extenuating circumstances and conditions. It seeks to help the evil-doer and is not easily provoked to anger.

But the word "provoke" signifies to incite to; in another place the Apostle says, "Provoke one another to love and good works." (Heb. 10:24) "Love should say and do those things that will incite to loving words rather than stir up bitterness, which leads to anger, wrath, malice, strife and evil-speaking." (Eph. 4:31, 32) In other words, it is much better to be a peacemaker than a strife-maker. Yet we are not to have peace at any price; rather we should have peace, if possible, where principle is not involved. We should stir up strife only where some good is sure to result.

The degree of love, the strength of love, may be determined by the ease with which it may be swerved and aroused to opposition or to impatience and anger. We have already seen that there may be times when patience might stand in the way of the real interests of the case and where love would take steps to correct what seemed to be an apparent evil; but we must remember that balance of mind, or judgment, is not ours by nature. Perfection of decision is a quality belonging only to our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Let patience have her perfect work." (James 1:4) The Father would not be provoked to anger with anything trivial. With us, however, our balance of judgment is so poor that generally we are too hasty. Very few of us take in the full circumstances surrounding ourselves and those with whom we have to do; therefore growth in grace and growth in knowledge will have to do with the degree of love exhibited by each one.

GENEROSITY AND SYMPATHY TO BE CULTIVATED

We are in the school of Christ, the Great Teacher. We have the words of the Heavenly Father, of our Lord Jesus and of the apostles recorded in the Bible; therefore we should know the difference between right and wrong. On the other hand, we see that sin exists in the world. Mankind are imperfect in mind and morals. This condition is hereditary—the result of Adam's transgression, more than six thousand years ago. Yet with all

our advantages of knowledge, we "cannot do the things that we would"; consequently, we feel a measure of sympathy for ourselves, and we should extend the same measure to others. Indeed, we should be more critical of ourselves than of others, although the Lord's Word says that we are not to judge either ourselves or others. We cannot read the hearts of those around us and therefore are not competent to decide what motives prompt their actions nor what degree of punishment should be meted out to them.

Nevertheless, we are to observe right and wrong conduct among our neighbors. We may know that they have, figuratively speaking, a bad tree and therefore bring forth bad fruit; and we should consider why they have a tree that produces such fruitage. Perhaps they were less favorably born than we. Perhaps they have never been in the school of Christ and have never heard the Great Teacher or the apostles. If so, our sympathy should go out to them and our attitude of mind toward them should be such that we will not be provoked by their shortcomings, but should manifest generosity of heart toward them.

To attain this sympathy and generosity is a part of our instruction in the school of Christ, but we do not learn all pertaining to the subject in a day or a week. We get "here a little, there a little" (Isa. 28:10); and if we are following on to know the Lord, our mental discernment will become clearer and our minds will broaden in sympathy for others. Thus we shall become more like our Father in Heaven, for he is kind to the unthankful and just to the unjust, as our Lord pointed out.—Matt. 5:44-48.

PRIDE A CAUSE OF MUCH IRRITABILITY

Undoubtedly the causes for irritability and for being provoked vary in different persons. With some, it is because of a nervous condition of health, which renders them less easily able to control themselves according to the standards which they themselves recognize. With others, the cause of irritability is pride. In fact, pride is connected with nearly everything that is injurious to the people of God. Wherever pride exists, the person is susceptible to evil influences from every quarter.

Pride manifests itself in various ways. Sometimes it exhibits itself as self-esteem, leading one to think too highly of himself and too lightly of others, even to the extent of imagining himself to be their superior. At other times, pride manifests itself as approbateness: anything that conflicts with the desire to appear well before others touches a tender spot.

We are not to be indifferent to these things. If we have pride or approbateness, we are to seek to control it with the spirit of love and sympathy for others, instead of letting the wrong spirit control us. The best way to do this is to practise generosity and to provoke others to love and good works instead of to anger. Let us remember that humility is one of the great lessons to be learned in the school of Christ; obedience to the instructions of the Teacher along this line has very much to do with our ever getting into the kingdom.

One of the best aids to the learning of this important lesson is to learn to judge ourselves—to scrutinize our own motives. If we find that we have acted unjustly toward another, we should go and make amends to the best of our ability; we should properly scourge our own minds, and seek to make matters right with the one we have wronged. For a person who is proud or who is sensitive to the good opinion of others, it is very difficult to apologize; but the best thing to do is to set the matter right as speedily as possible, and repeatedly, if necessary. Thus we may have help along the line where we should have it, by overcoming our pride and vanity.

The members of the body of Christ are all to be copies of God's dear Son. This does not mean that God's dear people will be able always to control their looks and actions and words, but that the heart must recognize this standard and strive to attain it. Every time a person who has some weakness along this line of pride or vanity will apologize for a wrong done he will by that act show both God and man that his heart recognizes the right principle. A great blessing will come to him because of his following very strictly the divine Word; thus he will gradually overcome his weakness and strengthen his character.

ST. PAUL'S GREAT MISSION

"For Christ sent me . . . to preach the Gospel."—1 Cor. 1:17.

Learning has always been very properly held in high esteem, and those who have it usually appreciate this fact as well as do those who have it not. There is, therefore, on the part of the learned, or those who appear to be so, a tendency to do or say things or to discuss subjects that would make them shine before others.

St. Paul had a good education. He had much advantage

every way; consequently he had the greater temptation to display his knowledge. In his Epistle to the Corinthians, he was addressing a people who were familiar with Greek philosophy and who knew that the world valued this philosophy so highly that a person who did not manifest acquaintance with Greek learning was considered an ignoramus.

The Apostle realized that his great mission was not that of

making himself shine, but of preaching the Gospel—the “good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” (Luke 2:10) As an ambassador of Christ, he had been given the privilege of becoming a sharer in his sufferings in the present age and in the glories to follow in Christ’s kingdom. He saw clearly that his commission transcended anything and everything else in the world, and that from the divine point of view all other philosophies are foolishness. He had wisely concluded that he would neither detract from his own mission to discuss these theories of man, nor would he quarrel with those who accepted them.

Since those who would be blessed by hearing the Gospel would be those whom the Lord wished to gather, St. Paul determined to preach nothing but Christ. He would not mix the doctrines of Christ with those of Plato, although he knew that if he were to mention Plato and then to present Christ as a great philosopher, he would win the attention of the Greeks, who would say, “Here is another teacher of immortality and kindred themes,” and then listen to St. Paul’s discourse.

St. Paul was well aware that the teaching of Christ is the very reverse of Plato’s theory—that man has inherent immortality, that when he seems to die, he then really begins to live. Man has nothing that will commend him to God or give him everlasting life. But if he can come to a condition of harmony with God, he will have the blessing of everlasting life and happiness. The Apostle knew that while no fallen man can obtain this for himself, God has made provision for all, both through the redemption price laid down at Calvary and also through the restoration of all things by the Redeemer.—Acts 3:19-21.

How wise St. Paul was! How sad that the early church did not profit by his course! Long years after the apostles fell asleep, the mixture of the Platonic philosophy and the Gospel of Christ wrought havoc in Christian faith, and built up the great anti-Christian system Scripturally called “Babylon.” St. Paul was wise in that he would not discuss the topics usually taught by the Greek philosophers, but gave his whole time to the presentation of the philosophy of the plan of the ages. He preached Christ, able now to save “to the uttermost” all who come to the Father by him (Heb. 7:25), all who have the appreciative ear, and able in his kingdom to bring all mankind to a knowledge of God’s goodness by opening their deaf ears to receive the truth. He showed that the whole work of sin and of devastation through death, as it has been accomplished in the human family, will ultimately be undone.

THE WEAK POINT IN MODERN PREACHING

Many of St. Paul’s hearers would have been glad to learn about Christ as the great Jewish Teacher and to admit that his philosophy was good. They would have been willing to hear that Christ will some day reign and uplift humanity. A great obstacle, however, stood in the way. This One who was being preached had not borne a good reputation. According to the testimony of his own nation, he had been crucified as a malefactor.

A weaker man than St. Paul might have followed the policy of covering up the fact of the crucifixion of Christ. He might have said that the Jews did not appreciate what Christ was doing, that Christ was the Son of God, the mighty Logos; and

then he might have glossed over the death of Christ on the cross. Thus the Gentiles might have regarded our Lord as a great Teacher and never have learned of the manner of his death until some Jew should tell them that their great Teacher had been a malefactor, so wicked that he was not fit to live. Should they then have asked St. Paul whether this was true, he could have explained that it was a fact, but that the great mass of the Jewish people had not consented to this act of their rulers and therefore were not a party to it.

This glossing over of truth is what is done today in all of the great pulpits of Christendom. If our Lord’s death is mentioned at all, it is done in an apologetic manner. But St. Paul preached that Christ’s death was necessary to redeem the human race, and that under the terms of the Law Covenant, he must die on the cross in order to redeem Israel from the curse of the law.—Gal. 3:13.

Thus the Apostle did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God in the strongest form. (Acts 20:27) Crucifixion was the only way in which our Lord’s death would be of full value and accomplish the purpose intended. Had he not died, the “just for the unjust,” he could not have been the Redeemer of the whole world. This message was so great, so different from anything else in the world, that the Apostle concluded that he had no time for the discussion of any other topic.

There might have been occasions when St. Paul could have discussed something else. Although he might have had the opportunity to say that he did not believe in the Platonic philosophy at all, yet he did not intend to display what he knew about worldly philosophies. So it is with us. We are to discuss the truth rather than the error. If we should have occasion to mention the error, it should be only as a side-light to illuminate the truth by contrast.

There are many subjects in which there is a measure of truth—geology, astronomy, etc.—but to preach these would be to neglect, not only to set forth the great central message that man is a sinner and can have no reconciliation with God except through the death of Christ, but to show what constitutes discipleship, what is to be its reward and what the result of the glorification of the church with Christ. This message of the Gospel is not preached today. On the contrary, much foolishness is set forth in the name of Christ and in churches dedicated to the service of the Lord. We are not to imitate this course and to strive for popularity in preaching. We are to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and his disciples.

Observation has taught us that those consecrated ones who have permitted other themes than “this Gospel” to engross time and attention are in great danger of being led astray. We advise such to be very jealous in husbanding time and talent for the ministry of the Gospel. Let us leave all other subjects, no matter how interesting, to others. In the future, when all knowledge shall be ours, we can discuss them. Those who from any avoidable cause turn aside from the ministry of the true and only Gospel are quickly turned out of the way, or else are greatly hindered in their course toward “the prize of the high calling.”—Phil. 3:14.

GOD’S WILL CONCERNING THE CHURCH

“This is the will of God [concerning you], even your sanctification.”—1 Thess. 4:3.

In our text the expression, “This is the will of God,” is in the nature of advice rather than command. Considering the class to whom this advice is given, we find them to be those who desire to draw near to God and to have him draw near to them. God had promised a great reward for submission to his will in every particular; and the Apostle Paul is stating what the will of God is concerning those who desire to live in nearness to him. He tells them that it is God’s will that they be fully set apart to his service; that they lay down their lives in his work; that in all the affairs of life their hearts should be set to know and to do his will.

In words of loving entreaty the Apostle elsewhere addresses this class, saying, “I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” (Rom. 12:1) The phrase, “Present your bodies,” includes not only the primary presentation, but the continuation of the living sacrifice to the completion of the work. In other words, the Gospel age is the acceptable time when God is willing to receive those who come unto him through Christ. It is the time for his drawing, calling, those who are to become members of the Elect Church.

God’s will for his believing people, justified by faith in the ransom and consecrated to his service, has always been the same as the Apostle stated, namely, “This is the will of God [concerning you], even your sanctification.” To produce this sanc-

tification in believers God has given unto us “exceeding great and precious promises,” and declares that the truth of his Word will produce the sanctification of character acceptable to him—conformity to the image of his dear Son, our Redeemer.

Sanctification does not mean human perfection. It is the consecration, or devotion of the will, which through Christ is accepted of the Father as perfect; it is a consecration of the body to sacrifice—even unto death. As we have seen, that body is not made actually perfect through justification by faith, but merely reckoned perfect, according to our will, our heart, our intention. The new will should seek to bring every power, every talent, every endowment of its body, into full accord with the Lord, and should seek to exercise an influence in the same direction upon all with whom it comes in contact.

This does not mean, however, that in the few short years of the present life it will be able to bring its poor, imperfect body to perfection. On the contrary, the Apostle assures us in connection with the church, that in death it is sown in corruption, sown in weakness, sown in dishonor, sown a [an imperfect] natural body (1 Cor. 15:42-44); and that not until in the resurrection we are given new bodies, strong, perfect, glorious, immortal, shall we have attained the perfection which we seek and which the Lord promises shall be ours eventually, if in the present time of weakness and imperfection we manifest to him the loyalty of our hearts.

Our text, as well as many other portions of the Scriptures, teaches us that the great work which God asks of us is not for others, but is a work in ourselves, subduing, conquering, ruling self. Everything else, therefore, our doing service to the household of faith, our doing good unto all men, by home or foreign missions, etc., is subservient to this most important work within. For, as the Apostle by inspiration declares, though we should preach the Gospel eloquently to others, and though we should give all our goods to feed the poor, or become martyrs for a good cause, we should be nothing from the divine viewpoint, without love—the Spirit of Christ and of the Father—developed in us as the ruling principle of life. (1 Cor. 13:3) But before we can “put on love—the bond of perfection”—and have its rule established, we have many enemies to put out.

OUR THREE GREAT FOES

The heart is the battleground on which the holy Spirit helps us to wage warfare against the enemies which since the Adamic fall have taken possession of the human mind. Our battle is to be against Sin, the great taskmaster, which captured our race more than six thousand years ago. Satan, the great master or general of Sin, is our enemy, and has largely to do with the various influences against which we must contend. We are not, however, to battle directly with Satan, though we are to “resist” him; that is, we are to resist his influence, his deceptions, and his endeavors to lead us into error and into sin. We should be powerless against this great enemy were it not that our Lord Jesus has conquered Sin, and he is on our part, so that we can confidently say, Greater is he that is on our part than all they that be against us.

Again, our battle is with the world. By this we do not mean with our fellow-creatures; for, blinded by the adversary, they are little, if at all, accountable for their course. We are to do battle with “the spirit of the world” and its influences. The disposition of the world, the mind of the world, the motives which actuate the world, the ambitions of the world, the pride of life and the deceitfulness of riches—the wrong views of matters as seen from the worldly standpoint—we are to resist, to fight against. And it is a daily battle.

Finally, our battle is with the flesh—our flesh. Ever since Sin captured our race, its slavery has been conducive to mental, moral and physical degradation. Its every tendency has been toward evil, and that continually; and although our Lord Jesus had compassion on us and redeemed us from slavery to Sin, with his own precious blood, yet we have in our bodies the motions, the tendencies toward sin.

So, although we are now free, and are with the mind serving the Law of Christ, and although we have covenanted to battle for righteousness, truth, goodness and purity, we find our new selves harassed by the old, perverted tastes and inclinations of our own flesh toward the service of the old taskmaster. Not the least of our battles, therefore, is against these perverted tendencies of our flesh; and the battle with these is also a daily battle. With the great Apostle Paul we should be able to say, “I keep my body [my flesh and its desires] under”—in subjection to my new will, the new creature.

From the moment we make a full consecration of ourselves unto death in the service of the Lord, he reckons our flesh as dead, and begets us as new creatures. Our new minds are alive toward God with a newness of life. Hence those motions of sin which we are seeking to bring into absolute subjection to the will of God in Christ are not recognized by the Lord as the will or the motions of the new creature enlisted in his service, but merely as a part of the general enemy, Sin, pursuing after and battling with us. These we are pledged to resist, and to war against; and to overcome these he promises sufficient grace.

These enemies in our own flesh cause us the greatest difficulties. To these Satan appeals; these he seeks to encourage in the warfare against the new spirit of our minds; through these the spirit of the world gains closest approach to us, and seeks to capture us and lead us back as captives to Sin. So to speak, the “new creature in Christ” is beset, surrounded on every hand with enemies seeking its disaster and re-enslavement. We must battle for ourselves, for our own liberty, for victory over our own weaknesses; we must battle against the spirit of the world, against delusions and snares of the adversary by which he would make evil things appear good, and right to appear undesirable. No wonder that the child of God is urged to be contin-

ually watchful; that he is urged to “put on the whole armor of God”; that he is cautioned in respect to his various wily foes and especially against those of his own flesh; that he is urged to faithfulness and loyalty of heart!

Heart-loyalty to the Lord means continual effort to bring all the conduct of our lives, yea, the very thoughts and intents of our hearts, into subjection to the divine will. (2 Cor. 10:4, 5) This is our first duty, our continual duty, and will be the end of our duty; for “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” “Be ye holy; for I [the Lord] am holy.”—1 Peter 1:16.

Absolute holiness is to be the standard which our minds can gladly and fully indorse and live up to, but to which we can never attain actually and physically so long as we are subject to the frailties of our fallen natures and the besetments of the world and the adversary. But day by day we are taught of God; and as we come to a fuller knowledge of his glorious character, and as the appreciation of it more and more fills our hearts, the new mind will more and more gain influence, strength, power, over the weaknesses of the flesh, whatever they may be—and these weaknesses vary with the different members of the body.

If we be sanctified to God by the truth, if our wills be dead and the Lord’s will be fully accepted as ours, in thought, word and deed, then we have attained the will of God, and shall win the prize as “overcomers” even if we have never had opportunity to preach, to give to the poor, or to suffer as martyrs for the truth’s sake. Let us all note well this point: “This is the Lord’s will [concerning you], even your sanctification.” Let nothing becloud or obscure this truth; but let it dominate our course in life. Then if God’s will is really our will, we have a clearly marked pathway before us.

But without doubt, before all such God will open opportunities to serve the truth to others, to let their light shine to the glory of the Father and the blessing of fellow creatures; for this is his command to us, and we may be sure he gives us no commands impossible to be obeyed. If you have been seeking opportunities of service and have found none, there must be something wrong; you may have been seeking some special service of your own preference (your old will meddling with your newly adopted will—the Lord’s).

Possibly the great Teacher sees in you pride, which you would have been prompt to crush had you recognized it, but which hid itself from you under the cloak of “self-respect.” Possibly the great Teacher by his providence and his Word is saying to you, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” (Eccl. 9:10) Possibly he sees that you would be spoiled were he to give you a more important service for others, before you have learned the lesson of humility—all important in God’s sight. Act quickly, therefore; the time is short.

SANCTIFICATION THE RESULT OF LOVE OF GOD

True sanctification of the heart to the Lord means diligence in his service; a declaration of the good tidings to others; the building up of one another in the most holy faith. It also means that we do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially unto the household of faith; that in these various ways our lives, consecrated to the Lord, shall be laid down for the brethren day by day, opportunity by opportunity, as they shall come to us; that our love for the Lord, for the brethren, for our families and sympathetically for the world of mankind, will increasingly fill our hearts as we grow in grace, knowledge and obedience to the divine Word and example.—Gal. 6:10; 1 John 3:16.

Nevertheless, all this exercising of our energies for others is merely one of the many ways in which by the Lord’s providence our own sanctification may be accomplished. As iron sharpeneth iron, so our energies in behalf of others bring blessings to ourselves. Additionally, while we should more and more come to the condition of loving our neighbors as ourselves—especially the household of faith—yet the mainspring back of all this should be our supreme love for our Creator and Redeemer, and our desire to be and to do what would please him. Our sanctification, therefore, must be primarily toward God and first affect our own hearts and wills and, as a result of such devotion to God, find its exercise in the interest of the brethren and of all men.

CALMNESS OF TRUTH

All truth is calm,
Refuge and Rock and Tower;
The more of truth the more of calm,
Its calmness is its power.
Truth is not strife,
Nor is to strife allied;

It is the error that is bred
Of storm, by rage and pride.
Calmness is truth.
And truth is calmness still;
Truth lifts its forehead to the storm,
Like some eternal hill. —H. Bonar.

THE TWO PARTS OF THE WORK OF REDEMPTION

The statement of the law is very positive—"The man that doeth these things shall live by them." Whoever keeps God's commands will live in them and will receive everlasting life as a reward for keeping them. (Lev. 18:5; Rom. 10:5) In making the promise of life to the Jews, God did not tell them in what manner he would arrange for its fulfilment. As a matter of fact, although the Jews did not understand the types of the Law Covenant, God had showed how the keeping of that covenant would give everlasting life; namely, through sacrifice.

In his great plan of the ages God had already provided a Redeemer. (Eph. 1:4) It was therefore in view of this provision of divine grace that the promise of life through keeping the law could be made. But in giving the Law Covenant, God did not omit the great Atonement sacrifice, which was the type of the work of Redemption.

That our Lord had some understanding with the Heavenly Father before he was made flesh is self-evident; for his change of nature is represented as a voluntary act on his part. (Phil. 2:8) He took not upon himself the nature of angels, but that of the seed of Abraham. (Heb. 2:16) He had an object in taking upon himself the nature of Abraham's descendants. He did so "for the joy that was set before him." (Heb. 12:2) This expression implies that he had some knowledge of the nature of the work which he had come to accomplish.

This knowledge which our Lord possessed in his pre-human condition did not include the understanding of all the various types of which he was to be the antitype, but evidently he knew that this stooping from the heavenly to the earthly nature was a means to an end, which was to be accomplished when he became a man. In order to take this great step, it was necessary for him to have absolute confidence that the Father would not wish him to do anything which would be to his injury, but to the contrary, something which would do him good. So great was his faith in the Father that he wished to do the Father's will at any cost.

The first step toward the achievement of the Father's will was the taking of a nature lower than any on the spirit plane—the human. Then, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself unto death, even the death of the cross. (Phil. 2:8) He did not humble himself before he became a man, but afterwards. As a boy he inquired of the Doctors of the Law what time would be appropriate for him to enter upon his ministry. Evidently satisfied by his investigation that there was nothing to be done at that time, he returned to his home with his mother and her husband, and was subject to them until he was thirty years old.—Luke 2:51.

At thirty years of age, Jesus offered himself at Jordan where he went for no other purpose than to make his consecration. He knew that he had come into the world to be man's Redeemer; that God's will concerning his work of redemption was written in the types and shadows of the Scriptures, and

that this will was altogether outside of the moral part of the law, for it was not obligatory on one who would keep the law. He also knew that to do this work of redemption he must present himself in sacrifice. (Psa. 50:5) Gladly he offered himself, saying, "Lo, I come . . . to do thy will, O my God."

ONLY ONE PART OF THE REDEMPTION WORK YET ACCOMPLISHED

In the Atonement day offering, our Lord's consecration is pictured by the High Priest when he smote the bullock and killed it. Here we have in the type a picture of our Lord, who was represented by both bullock and priest. The new mind, the new will, the new creature, offered up the flesh. It was not that he offered up himself as man's Redeemer, he presented himself a sacrifice—not to mankind, not to Satan, not to the world, but unto God. He was so loyal that he was ready to sacrifice to the Father everything which he possessed; he was permitted to prove his loyalty and faithfulness even unto death.

As a result of his obedience unto death, even the shameful death of the cross, our Lord was raised from the dead and given the very highest nature—the divine. In due time he will be permitted to offer the merit of his sacrifice as a ransom-price for the sins of the whole world, and thus he will become the world's Redeemer.

This word Redeemer is quite broad. It signifies one who obtains control of something and brings it back to a former condition in a legal and satisfactory manner. Our Lord began to do this work. He has accomplished the first part, which in due time will become a satisfactory price for the sins of the world. He has already been highly exalted and thus qualified for the great office of Mediator between God and men. He is waiting merely until the members of his body be joined to him and made participators of his glory, and then the work of restitution for mankind will begin.

Our Lord will be a thousand years in doing the second part of this work of redeeming. At the close of the thousand years the work will have been finished. Now he is the Redeemer, the Restorer, not because he has done the work, but because he has the power and authority to do it. At the close of the thousand years he will be the one who will have accomplished this work of restitution, and the name Redeemer will be his forever, even though the work of redeeming will be in the past.

Nothing in the Scriptures indicates how clearly our Lord understood the terms and conditions upon which he would please the Father after coming into the world. We are, therefore, not to dogmatize on the subject. But it is probable that he did not know all the experiences through which he would pass while in the flesh, and that some of these were afterwards revealed to him, as we read that when after his baptism he came up out of the water, the heavens—the higher things, the spiritual—were opened to him. (Matt. 3:16) Thenceforth he was able to appreciate the deeper features of God's plan.

ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE

MARK 9:14-29.—DECEMBER 1.

"And Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe; all things are possible to him that believeth."—Mark 9:23.

When Jesus and the three favored apostles came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, where they had been enjoying the vision of coming glory, they found the other nine apostles at the foot of the mountain surrounded by a multitude. They had made several inefficacious attempts to cast out a demon from a boy whose father had brought him for the purpose.

So it is with some of the Lord's people; occasionally by faith they go up into the mountain, into the kingdom; by faith they see the glory of the Lord revealed, and hear afresh that they must suffer with the Lord if they would enter into his glory. Then, coming down from the exalted heights of contemplation of things glorious, they face the realities of the present time—the adversary is in possession of the world still; many are his slaves and dupes; no earthly power seems sufficient to cast him out; they are back with the remainder of the church. But if the Master be with them, victory will ultimately be achieved.

This case was one of occasional obsession by an evil spirit, whereas many of the others were continuous. The evil spirit came into this boy at times, causing him to have a fit, to froth at the mouth, to wallow in the mire, sometimes striving to throw him into the fire or into the water, or otherwise destroy him. The parents had brought the child to Jesus for a cure; in his absence they sought the nine apostles remaining, but their endeavors were fruitless; they could not cast out this spirit.

The unsuccessful disciples were perplexed; never before had the Master's name failed to be respected by the demons. The

Scribes also were harassing them with questions, when Jesus and the other three appeared coming down the mountain. The multitude hailed Jesus and flocked to him, but he came promptly to the relief of the apostles and inquired the nature of their trouble. The father interposed and explained: "I have brought my son, who is possessed of a dumb spirit; and whenever it takes hold upon him it dashes him down and he foameth and grindeth his teeth and pineth away; and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast it out, and they were not able."

And Jesus answered, "O faithless generation! How long shall I be with you? How long shall I hear with you? Bring the boy to me." And they brought him, and immediately the spirit caused him to fall to the ground, wallowing and foaming. Jesus questioned how long he had been thus. The father answered, "From a child," and that often the spirit attempted to cast the boy into the fire or into the water to destroy him; "But if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

"TO HIM THAT BELIEVETH"

Jesus replied, "If thou canst believe; all things are possible to him that believeth." How great stress the Lord lays everywhere upon the exercise of faith in the divine power! "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Those who cannot exercise the faith cannot have the blessing which others may have who do exercise faith; and our blessings increase in proportion as we will exercise our faith. Thus the Lord puts a premium upon this element of character, and makes it essential to his favor.

This does not imply that people who cannot now exercise faith will never get any blessing. On the contrary, while the Lord has given certain exceeding great and precious promises to those who can believe and who do believe, and who follow their belief with obedience to the extent of their ability, he has also promised that by and by, during Messiah's kingdom, the way of faith and obedience will be made so plain, so simple, that all will be able to follow it and to gain a reward—but a lesser reward than that now extended to those who can and do exercise faith and obedience.

The reason for this is manifest. God is now seeking a special class of specially faithful and obedient children, to be heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus in His glorious Messianic kingdom. He is now selecting the class which by and by he will use in bestowing his blessing world-wide; and he desires that in this class shall be only such as can exercise absolute faith in him. Hence, now, God's rule for dealing with the church is, "According to thy faith be it unto thee."

And in this and other miracles the Lord required faith seemingly as the condition of the healing. He thus manifested forth his coming glory and the power of his kingdom. During the kingdom reign there will be such manifestations of divine power, and such assistance given to those willing to exercise faith, that all may profit thereby and experience the healings of their flesh and the casting out of every power of Satan and sin.

The poor father realized from Jesus' words that the difficulty rested with him, that he must exercise faith else his son could not be recovered. With tears he cried out, "Lord, I do believe; Help thou mine unbelief!" His faith got its reward. Jesus commanded the evil spirit to come out of the boy, and enter no more into him. This last was the special point of this cure. The evil spirit had frequently left the boy, but only to return. The Lord's command was that he should leave and never return.

It may be wondered why the Master permitted the evil spirit to tear the boy and cause him pain, etc., in leaving him. If he had power to cast him out, he also undoubtedly had power to control the manner of his coming out. We can only surmise therefore that Jesus, on this and other occasions, allowed the evil spirit a measure of liberty in the method of leaving the victims, and that this was for the very purpose of demonstrating how malicious and evil the spirit was which had control;

and thus the miracle was the more clearly seen, and thus the more would the Lord be praised by those interested.

"MANY SAID, 'HE IS DEAD' "

The boy was left in an apparently dead condition, but Jesus took him by the hand and raised him up. The lesson for us in this is that it is not only that the adversary and his power be cast out of humanity and from control, which the poor world needs, but they need divine aid, the hand of divine power, for their uplift out of the mire of sin and death. According to the Scriptures, we are near the time when Satan will be bound, when all the influences of evil amongst humanity will be restrained. According to the Scriptures, also, this binding of Satan will be accomplished in a great "time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation," and humanity will be left in an almost dead condition. The pride, the hopes, the ambition of men will perish in that awful trouble time, but the Master will be present in kingdom power to uplift them.

Messiah's kingdom will not only bind the adversary and forbid him to re-enter humanity and interfere with their affairs, but the power of the kingdom will for a thousand years do an uplifting work amongst the fallen and degraded members of our race, lifting them up, up, up, until they will be fully up to the divine standard, as represented in Father Adam—from which condition he originally fell through disobedience, and return to which condition has been secured for all through the merit of Jesus' sacrifice accomplished at Calvary.

The disciples asked Jesus why they could not cast out this demon. And so God's people many a time have asked themselves, Why cannot we do more than we are doing in the way of opposing Satan and sin, and their reign of evil? The answer of Jesus is applicable here as well as there: "This kind cometh not out save by fasting and prayer." Undoubtedly God's people could accomplish much more in their own conflicts with sin and Satan, and in helping others to get free from the power of sin, if we would always exercise full faith in the Lord, and if we would continually live more in the spirit and less according to the flesh. This would mean fasting, or self-denial, and prayer, or fellowship with God. To him who believeth, every blessing belongs which God has promised to his faithful ones, but we have the conditions expressed elsewhere by Jesus: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

"QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT"

1 THESS. 5:19.

In the Scriptures light is used as a symbol of the illuminating power of the holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is symbolized, not only by the oil with which the priests were anointed and which represented the indwelling power of the Spirit, but also by the light of the golden candlestick which stood in the Holy. After we had been favored with the knowledge of the Truth and had consecrated ourselves, the Lord accepted our consecration and gave us the holy Spirit, which became the illuminating power of our hearts. All down the Gospel age the church has been the light of the world. This our Lord intimated would be true when he said to his disciples on one occasion, "Ye are the light of the world."—Matt. 5:14.

As there are various ways by which a light may be extinguished, so there are different means by which this light of the holy Spirit may be quenched in us. A light will go out if the supply of oil or gas which feeds it be cut off, or if the oxygen of the air be shut off from it, whether because the supply is exhausted or because something is placed over the light to extinguish it. So it is with us. The light of the Spirit may be permitted to die out for want of replenishing, or it may be quenched by contact with some outside force.

In order to have the holy Spirit in large measure, we must keep near to the Lord; for if we get away from him, the light will go out. If we neglect the privilege of prayer or of study of the Scriptures or of fellowship with the Lord through failure to think of him, the illumination of the Spirit will grow dim. On the other hand, it will become brighter in proportion to our realization of our own imperfections and to the degree of our consecration to the Lord. This we manifest by the zeal with which we study his will as expressed in his Word, and with which we practice that will in the affairs of life. These are the means by which we may supply the oil to keep our light burning brightly. But while we are endeavoring to do this, we must see to it that we do not come into contact with anything which will tend to extinguish the flame of sacred love in our hearts.

The world, the flesh and the devil are all in opposition to the light of the holy Spirit. To whatever extent they are brought into contact with the light, to that extent they smother

it. If the spirit of worldliness come into our hearts, it will extinguish the light of the holy Spirit. If the spirit of selfishness or thoughtlessness enter our hearts, it will cause the light to grow dim and finally to die out. Weariness in well-doing will produce the same result. If we indulge in pleasures of the flesh, these will tend to quench the Spirit. Sinful pleasures should, of course, be shunned by everybody. But there are pleasures which are not sinful and which are proper enough for the natural man. Yet to whatever extent the consecrated indulge in these and thus gratify the longings of the flesh, proportionately the new nature will suffer.

Christian fellowship is thought to be one of the very best aids to maintaining the light of the Spirit. Yet even in this there is a danger-line which is not always recognized and which, if crossed, will produce the opposite effect. A visit to the seashore and a bath in the ocean may in some cases be very profitable; but in others it may be carried to such an extent that it becomes dangerous to the new nature. Those who become weary in well-doing are usually those who have found something attractive in another direction to take their attention away from the things of the Spirit.

ACCURATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE PLAN MOST ESSENTIAL

Amongst the various arrangements which God has made for the new creatures in Christ is the assembling of themselves together in order to maintain their light and let it shine. The Apostle Paul exhorts the church not to forget the assembling together wherever it is possible to do so. (Heb. 10:25) Where the assembling is not possible, the Lord makes up for the lack in some other way; and so we sometimes find a dear brother or sister who has not had the opportunity to meet with others in the truth, but who seems to be very clear and to have a deep appreciation of the Lord's plan. Not having the privilege of fellowship with others, such a one has done so much the more reading and studying.

Those who have this opportunity for fellowship and who do not appreciate it, seem to be in a very unsatisfactory condition. In such cases, the oil is not burning brightly, else that one would delight to be with fellow-pilgrims in the same way,

marching toward the same goal. We should be as careful of our spiritual condition as of our physical. If we have a bad taste in our mouth and no appetite, we conclude that we are not well; and if we do not care to go to meetings, we may know that we are not in good spiritual health. When we find that we have not the desire to meet with others of "like precious faith," it is an indication that we should go to the Great Physician, that he may help us.

In some cases, however, the individual would do better not to go to meeting at first, but to read and study for awhile. Many have been hindered in their spiritual growth by getting a smattering of the truth and then attending meetings. Such become stumbling-stones to themselves and to others. If they have not the time to read as well as to attend meetings, it would be better to read until they have become established, and then to assemble with others of like precious faith.

Many, even of those who are leading classes, are not so clear in the truth as would be desirable. Some of these seem not to know what they are talking about, although they think that they do. There are various means by which one may redeem the time for study. One may take a book with him and read while on the car, going to and from his daily task. We know a dear brother who read the entire six volumes in this way.

The right course is to exercise the spirit of a sound mind on this subject, as well as on others. Our first thought should be for the glory of God; our second, for our own profit; our

third, for the benefit of others. In this matter we owe it to ourselves to put ourselves first; for if we fit ourselves for service, we then have larger opportunity for helping others. Here self comes first, by divine command—"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness"; "This is the will of God [concerning you], even your sanctification."—Matt. 6:33; 1 Thess. 4:3.

As each one comes to know for himself after receiving the holy Spirit, he is authorized to teach what he has learned for himself. So we may all be taught of God and be used in teaching others, in proportion as we learn the lessons and apply them to our own hearts. Each one's conscience should decide for him what is to the glory of God in respect to attending meetings.

A flame might be revived, even after having been wholly extinguished. Many of us have seen a candle extinguished, and yet there was a bright, warm core which a quick breath of air might rekindle. So with us. There might be something in our lives to extinguish the flame, but the light would not go entirely out; the breath of the Lord might rekindle it. We have seen people who apparently had been zealous for the Lord, but who seemed to lose their love and zeal; but later it has been rekindled. In other cases, the light has seemed to die out altogether. We should ever be on guard lest we allow anything to dim or to extinguish our love for the Lord, for the truth or for holiness and Christ-likeness.

GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM

MATTHEW 18:1-14.—DECEMBER 8.

"In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father."—V. 10.

Perhaps it was the fact that Peter, James and John had been favored more than the others on several occasions that led to the query which opens today's study: "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" They knew, of course, as St. Paul declares, that the Heavenly Father is above all, and that next to Him is our Lord Jesus Christ. "To us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." What the disciples wished to know was, which of them would be greatest, most influential, in Messiah's kingdom, next to himself.

Jesus, calling to him a little child, set him in the midst of them and said, "Verily I say unto you, except ye turn [from this spirit of self-seeking which your question implies] and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven"—you will have no part in it, you will not be fit. Whoever would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven should therefore become as humble as this little child.

A little child, unsophisticated, is ready to acknowledge its lack of wisdom. It asks questions, a thousand a day, perhaps as many as that in an hour; it seeks instruction; it does not profess and boast wisdom or knowledge—it is candid, it is truthful. It is in later years that it learns from its parents and others, untruthfulness, pride, bombast and various qualities which it did not possess at first. It may have possessed the disposition to pride and arrogance and haughtiness, etc., by heredity, but at first it was guileless, and "as a little child."

The Master's lesson is that whoever would become a child of God and be taught of God, and be eventually developed as a child of God, for the glorious position in the kingdom to which we were called, must become childlike—must turn away from all pride, from selfish ambitions and hypocrisies and pretensions. They must confess their littleness and ignorance, and go humbly to the Lord for the necessary instruction.

Any who refuse to adopt this proper, childlike spirit will thus be refused the opportunities of the kingdom, for God will have none others—none others can be taught of God, they will not learn the lessons necessary, under the arrangements of this present time. Here then is the standard of simplicity and artlessness which the Lord's people should adopt and should continue to allow to control them, regardless of their years and experiences. "Now we know in part": we are dependent upon our Father and his instructions. We have entered the School of Christ, our Elder Brother; he is our Instructor; we must learn of him, and to learn we must be in this proper, childlike attitude of mind.

"ONE SUCH LITTLE CHILD"

We are not to understand that little children, however guileless, are members of Christ's kingdom class, nor that the dear little ones dying in infancy will be members thereof. The Lord is seeking for mature men and women, who have a childlikeness of mind, a readiness to receive the Heavenly Father's message, and who in gladness and simplicity of heart accept it.

"Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me"; whoever are my disciples are privileged to be God's little children, and thus to be my younger brothers; whoever will receive one such will be receiving me. "Whosoever shall offend," or injure, "one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him if a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were sunk in the depths of the sea."

If some one were thus drowned in the sea, it would indeed terminate his present life, but it would not at all endanger or influence his future life. A future life, by a Restitution awakening, is assured to Adam and every member of his race. Neither drowning nor any other form of death could possibly interfere with it. But he who would injure one of the Lord's little ones would thereby come under such a measure of divine displeasure that it would affect his future interests beyond the grave, beyond his awakening. He would be held responsible for his deeds, even in the next life, in proportion as he realized what he was doing when he injured the Lord's saints.

The Lord declares that his faithful ones are as precious to him as the apple of his eye, and that all their interests are subject to divine supervision. He will allow nothing to happen to these; troubles permitted to come upon them will be only such as the Lord has foreseen and is able to make work out of some blessing in connection with their preparation for the kingdom. But even this fact will not excuse wilfulness on the part of those who do evil to the members of the body of Jesus.

We remember the persecution of the saints by Saul of Tarsus. We remember Jesus said to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He answered, "Who art thou, Lord?" And Jesus replied, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." In persecuting the saints Saul of Tarsus had been persecuting Jesus, but because he did it ignorantly God had mercy upon him. Doubtless many saints from Jesus' day down have been persecuted ignorantly, and the Lord will have mercy upon those persecutors; but some of the persecutors have had such light, such knowledge, as to make them responsible; and it is of this class that our lesson speaks. Our Lord added a warning: "Woe unto the world because of offenses! It must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh."

CUT OFF HAND OR FOOT

Here the Master brought in a saying which has perplexed many. "If thy foot cause thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee; it is better to enter life maimed, or halt, than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; it is better to enter into life with one eye, than that having two eyes thou be cast into Gehenna fire."

Those who fail to remember that Jesus spake to the people in parables, and never without a parable, will be liable to stumble over these words of his. His teaching is this: If you have anything in your make-up dear to you as a right hand or a foot of an eye, that is likely to cause you to stumble and fail to enter the kingdom, you would better cut off that ten-