

TEXAS AGRICULTURAL FRIENDS TAKE NOTICE

A brother in the truth in the Nursery business at Post Oak, Texas, finds himself financially embarrassed and asks our aid in disposing of his large stock of fruit trees which he describes as of excellent quality one and two years old and 4 to 6 feet high. He has a descriptive catalogue which we will forward to all interested. He says the prices are right. He offers the Tract Fund one half the receipts from this forced sale: but as we do no advertising we turn this advantage

over to the friends, who can thus secure good trees for Texas climate at HALF PRICE: packed free and delivered at Express Office. No orders received for less than \$2. Drop postal card for free catalogue to us.

The catalogue at hand besides the fruit trees includes grape and other vines and shade and ornamental trees. The prices seem reasonable and the goods at half price should be a bargain. This notice is quite a digression from our rule.

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No. 5

RE-ENLISTED VOLUNTEERS! TO ARMS!

The new lot of "*Bible vs. Evolution*" ammunition is not yet ready, but by March 15 to April 1 we will have plenty of the new ammunition for use where the *Bible vs. Evolution* has already been distributed. You will like it, we assure you this in advance. It will consist of "Which is the True Gospel?" and "What Say the Scriptures about Hell?" in the shape of a

double number of the WATCH TOWER. Get your several squads together and let us have your orders stating (1) the number of white Protestant churches in the district; (2) the average attendance at service which the church members chiefly attend; (3) the number of Volunteers in your squad; (4) to what address would you prefer to have the ammunition sent.

"MARK THE PERFECT MAN! BEHOLD THE UPRIGHT!"

MATT. 4:25-5:12.—APRIL 1.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

What characteristics are essential to our attainment of the most blessed conditions God has to bestow? What must we be in order to inherit the kingdom, be filled with righteousness, obtain divine mercy and everlasting comfort, be called the sons of God, and be permitted to see his face, obtaining a great reward in heaven? What question, what topic, what Bible lesson, could be more interesting to us or a more profitable study than this one? The great Teacher made it the topic, the text, of one of his principal discourses at his first advent, and caused the gist of his argument to be recorded for the admonition of his true followers throughout this Gospel age.

While the character of our Lord, which we as his followers are to copy, is one; and the attainment of that one character or disposition means the attainment of all the blessings God has to bestow; nevertheless, in order to present the matter the more distinctly to our minds the Lord divides this one character or disposition into different sections, giving us a view of each particular part; just as a photographer would take a front view, right-side view, left-side view, rear view and angling views, of any interesting subject, so that all the details of construction might be clearly discernible.

THE FIRST ESSENTIAL

The first character-picture which our Lord presents we may reasonably assume was in some respects at least most important: It is humility. "Blessed are the humble-minded (poor in spirit) for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." We do not understand this to signify that humility is the only essential grace, and that whoever is humble will therefore attain the kingdom; but rather that to the attainment of the kingdom humility is a prerequisite of first importance. In other words, while all humble people will not attain the kingdom, the kingdom cannot be attained by anyone who is not humble: the kingdom is theirs, in the sense that it is possible for this class to accept the terms and to attain to the honors and blessings, while all of a different attitude of mind—the proud, the haughty, the self-conceited, are absolutely debarred from any possibility of attaining the kingdom so long as these contrary conditions lie at the foundation of their characters.

O that all of the Lord's people might see this point clearly and distinctly, and realize once and forever that "The Lord resisteth the proud and showeth his favors to the humble" exclusively! How this thought should put a guard upon every one of the Lord's little ones who is seeking to be conformed to the image of God's dear Son. How jealously they would watch and foster the development of this spirit of humility in their own hearts, and how it would be more and more discernible to others in their daily course of life, and what a blessing and what an influence for good, especially upon the "brethren," would result!

Growing out of this first essential quality or characteristic, as a tree of many branches out of the root, come the other graces of the spirit, which the Lord has declared blessed—divinely approved. How different our Lord's teachings in this respect from all human teachings! Earthly wisdom would say, on the contrary: Hold up your head; think well of yourself, if you would have other people think well of you; be high-spirited, instead of poor in spirit, a little haughty, rather than of humble demeanor; it will have a greater influence in many respects, for no one will think more highly of you than you think of yourself, nor give you credit for more than you claim; hence, think highly

of yourself, and claim much, carrying a high head, and having a lofty and self-important look.

No doubt there is worldly wisdom in the worldly counsel; no doubt there is some truth in the worldly suggestion, so far as success in earthly matters in the present time is concerned. But here as in other instances, the Lord shows us that his ways are not as man's ways, but higher, as the heavens are higher than the earth. He assures us that he that humbleth himself shall be exalted in due time, while he who exalts himself shall be brought low, in due time. (Matt. 23:12) In the Scriptures he points us to our dear Redeemer as the illustration of the humble and obedient one, whom he has now exalted to the right hand of divine power; and our attention is also called to the great adversary, who, taking a reverse course, sought to exalt himself, and has been abased, and is ultimately to be destroyed.—Phil. 2:9; Heb. 2:14.

A sharp distinction should be noted between being poor in spirit and being poor in pocket, or in intellectual gifts and attainments. We have all seen people who were poor in these earthly senses, yet proud in spirit. The point to be noticed is that whatever our financial or intellectual gifts and conditions, the thing acceptable in the divine sight is humility of spirit. Such a disposition is essential to those who would receive the wisdom which cometh from above—they must have a humble appreciation of their own deficiencies and lack of wisdom, else they cannot receive freely, heartily, the wisdom which God is pleased to grant in the present time, only to those who are in the attitude of heart to receive it. And it will be seen also that this humility of mind is essential as a basis for the spirit of a sound mind—for who is in a proper condition to think justly, reasonably, impartially, except first of all he have a humble disposition? Hence we must agree that humility is a primary element in the disposition or mind of Christ.

CONSOLATIONS THE REWARD OF SYMPATHY

The second beatitude or blessed condition mentioned by our Lord stands closely related to the first—"Blessed are they that mourn." Mourning of itself is not a grace, but it betokens an attitude of mind which is acceptable in the Lord's sight. Nor should we think of a mournful spirit, without consolation or joys, as being a Christian spirit. We cannot suppose that our Heavenly Father and the holy angels are continual mourners, as they would certainly be if mourning possessed any merit of itself. The thought rather is, Blessed are ye that mourn now—to whom present earthly conditions are not entirely satisfactory and happyfying—who are not blind to the difficulties and trials through which the human family as a whole is passing—sin and sickness, pain and trouble, dying and crying: blessed are those who have sympathy of heart under present conditions, and to whom they are not satisfactory; for the time is coming when, under God's providence, a better order of things shall be instituted, and their dissatisfaction with present conditions will but bring them into closer sympathy and fellowship with those better things for which the divine plan is preparing. When God's kingdom shall come and his will be done on earth as it is done in heaven, all cause for mourning and for sorrow and for tears will be done away: that will be a time for consolation, for satisfaction, to this class.

Indeed, a good measure of comfort comes to the Lord's people even in the present age—through faith built upon the

exceeding great and precious promises of the divine Word. The fact that they are able to discern the wrongs, the inequities, the distresses of the present time, creates in this class that very condition of heart to which divine promises appeal, whereas others not so touched at heart with sympathy for the groaning creation, are unable to so thoroughly appreciate the hopes set before us in the gospel. Hence it is by a natural law that such are drawn to the Lord's Word, and are enabled to draw therefrom consolation which speaks peace to their hearts, and gives them an inner joy which the less sympathetic cannot know under present conditions. Blessed are the sympathetic!

As we can cultivate the first of these graces, humility of mind, and by cultivation develop more and more of this first and essential characteristic, so we can cultivate also the second grace, the sympathetic spirit. To do this we should frequently think of others—their interests, their trials, their difficulties, and should seek to enter into these as though they were all our own, and should seek to lend a helping hand and to "do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially to the household of faith"—Gal 6:10.

HOW THE GENTLE INHERIT

The third of these graces which the Lord declares blessed is meekness, or, as we should say, gentleness. Webster's Dictionary defines meekness to be, "Submission to the divine will; patience and gentleness from moral and religious motives." It will be perceived that there is quite a difference between this patient, gentle submission to the divine will, and the ordinary gentleness and patience which may frequently be exercised simply for the gratification of selfish desires. Patient submission to the divine will is impossible to those who have not the first grace in the list, a humble mind: the proud and self-willed find it impossible to be submissive to divine conditions; self rises up, perverts their judgments, and misleads their consciences to such an extent that they cannot have full confidence in divine providence, but feel that they must put forth their hand and steady the ark.

Moreover, patient submission can be developed only in those who mourn, in the sense of having large sympathies, and who have been comforted by the blessed promises of God, through which the holy Spirit comforteth his people. Realizing the evils of our time, and that they are permitted of God for the present for a wise purpose, these not only sympathize with the groaning creation, but this sympathy and the comfort received as its reward tend to make them patient, submissive to the divine will. Remembering that all things are working together for good to them that love God, they are prepared to recognize divine providence in whatever may befall them, and prepared also to look for the lessons of those providences, as blessings which will be helpful to them and to others, in preparing for the future and eternal joys.

This third grace—patient submission to the divine will—which can be noted by those with whom we come in contact, might be said to be the outer manifestation of the second grace, which is inward, of the heart, and which might not be outwardly discerned by our fellow-creatures. The grace of sympathy manifests itself in our patient submissiveness in all the affairs of life, realizing that to those who are in Christ all matters are under divine supervision, and this patience in respect to God's providences in our own circumstances and affairs leads also naturally and properly to patience with others in their weaknesses and failures and ignorance, and leads properly to helpfulness toward them as we have opportunity.

These "meek," patiently submissive to the divine will, shall inherit the earth. The Lord did not mean, nor is it true, that the patient and submissive to the divine will inherit the earth at the present time, quite to the contrary, the arrogant, the impatient, the aggressive, the selfish, succeed in grasping the chief things of power, of influence and of wealth now; and the patiently submissive have comparatively a poor chance. The reward of this grace, therefore, like the others, is future: following on under the divine leading, these shall be heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ; and the earth is a part of that great inheritance, which in turn, by divine arrangement, they shall bestow at the close of the Millennial age, upon the world of mankind who then survive—those proved worthy of eternal life by the Millennial tests.

Nevertheless, as there is a sense in which the Lord's people are comforted now, so there is also a sense in which they now inherit the earth—a figurative sense, by faith. The Apostle speaks of this when he says, "All things are yours—things present or things to come." (1 Cor. 3:21-23) Those who have the proper humble attitude of mind and are patiently submissive to the divine will, get more of blessing out of the things of the present time than do their actual owners, because

their hearts are in the attitude in which it is possible to receive blessing. The world, full of selfish craving, is never satisfied, never contented; the child of God, patiently submissive to the divine will, is always satisfied—

"Content whatever lot I see,

Since 'tis God's hand that leadeth me."

FILLED WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS

The fourth blessing is that of hunger and thirst after righteousness. No one can have this hunger and thirst unless he previously have to a considerable extent the previous characteristics. If he have not humility of mind he will be satisfied with his attainments of righteousness, being unable to see beyond his own low plane, unable to discern the heights and grandeurs of the divine perfection. He cannot hunger and thirst after that which he does not in some measure comprehend. Unless he have the spirit of sympathy, which discerns the wrongs, the inequities of our present time (which in great measure mankind is unable to counteract and overcome—by which some of the human family, very deficient in the virtues, have an overplus of wealth and influence and authority, while some possessing superior virtues have scarcely the necessities of life) he cannot yearn for the better condition of things which the Scriptures declare can only be introduced by the establishment of Messiah's Millennial kingdom. It is a blessed indication then, if we find in our hearts a hungering and a thirsting for justice, for righteousness, for truth—an antipathy to untruth in every form, and to all injustice, in equity—an antipathy, nevertheless, modified, influenced, controlled, by the third grace of this list, viz., by patient submission to the divine will. The control of this last quality is what the Apostle refers to when he says, "Let your moderation be known unto all men." It is this quality which stepping in hinders our hunger and thirst after righteousness, and our zeal for it, (both as respects truth and practice) from making us anarchistic or extremists in any sense of the word. This quality of hunger and thirst after righteousness, uncontrolled by the other of these graces of the spirit, has led many worldly people, as reformers, into wild excesses: whereas the child of God although having this same hunger and thirst in a larger degree than others, yet, under the control of the spirit of a sound mind, instructed from the Lord's Word, rests in his promises and waits for their fulfillment, patiently submissive, and assured of the victory of righteousness in God's due time, which he adopts as his time also.

Those who have and cultivate this blessed hunger and thirst shall be satisfied, abundantly satisfied, by and by, when God's kingdom shall be established, and when as a result of its reign all evil and all sin, all inequities (iniquities) shall be suppressed, and God's holy will shall "be done on earth even as it is done in heaven." Our hunger and thirst after righteousness is not to be destroyed, but, as our Lord promised, it is to be satisfied. The appetite for truth and righteousness will still be there, but the prevalence of truth and righteousness shall be its satisfaction.

In this grace, as in the others, there is a sense in which by faith we already attain some measure of the fulfillment to come—although it is but a foretaste. Those who have the hunger and thirst for righteousness, in line with the other graces of the spirit, find in the gracious promises of the Lord that comfort and consolation which already, even in this present life, can be assimilated by faith, and which proves to be "meat in due season for the household of faith," sustaining, strengthening, resting and at least partially satisfying the hunger and the thirst, as they realize the divine provision for everlasting righteousness is exceeding and abundant, more than all that they could have thought or have requested.

HOW TO OBTAIN MERCY

The fifth blessed condition is that of mercifulness. Mercy is the outward expression that man can discern, resulting from an appreciation of righteousness and a hunger and thirst for it in the renewed heart. After we have taken the preceding steps, and have learned to appreciate the inequities of the present time, and our own imperfections (unrighteousness) and those of other men; and after we have learned that God alone is able to right these matters in the full and complete sense, and that he has made provision for the righting of every wrong, and for the restoration to his favor of all who will accept his grace in Christ, to be made known to all in due time—it is then we begin to feel merciful, benevolent, kind, toward others, to an extent and degree that we could not feel these sentiments previously. Worldly people, who have not traveled on the pathway marked by these blessings of character and growths in grace, cannot to the same degree sympathize with nor feel merciful toward others.

The Lord lays great stress upon this quality of mercy, declaring that whatever else may be our attainments of knowl-

edge or of grace, if we have not this one we can never be acceptable to him—if we do not have mercy upon others neither will our Heavenly Father have mercy upon us. And to insure that we do not consider this mercy to be merely an outward form, an expression of forgiveness and benevolence, our Lord expounds the matter, saying, "If ye do not from the heart forgive one another, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you." It must be a genuine mercy, and not a feigned one; it must cover from sight, and so far as possible blot from memory, the failings and weaknesses of others, else it cannot hope for forgiveness and blotting out of its own short-comings which its hunger and thirst for righteousness has clearly revealed to it. Only the merciful shall obtain mercy: and if we have not mercy at the hands of the Lord all is lost; for by nature we were children of wrath, even as others, and under just condemnation.

The exercise of mercy, benevolence, forgiveness, is a blessing, not merely because it is essential to our own forgiveness; and hence to our salvation, but also because this condition of heart which sympathizes with others in their failures and imperfections helps to rid our hearts of certain of the works of the flesh and of the devil, which incline to cling to the Lord's people long after they have been justified by faith, and even after they have made full consecration of themselves to the Lord and are seeking to "walk, not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

The Apostle includes amongst the works of the flesh which require putting away, after we are fully the Lord's, the following—anger, malice, hatred, envy, strife. All of these qualities of selfishness are antagonized by mercy, and by it largely they are driven from their secret hidings and entrenched positions in our hearts. The blessed character of mercy is closely related to love, for it is in proportion as we obtain the Lord's spirit of love that we manifest toward others mercy, even as he has manifested his love toward us in the mercy extended to us in Christ. Love and mercy, consideration for others, has much to do with driving out envy. How can we envy those whom we love sincerely? How can we have malice toward those who are our enemies, if we love them and have mercy, compassion, upon them, and forgive them from our hearts? How can we have hatred toward them, if we have mercy upon them, and feel toward them only a forgiving spirit? And how can we be strifeful, if we have a merciful, a forgiving spirit ready to forgive trespasses against us, as we hope for forgiveness of our trespasses against the divine law?

"Mercy rejoiceth against justice," the Apostle explains. (Jas. 2:13) Divine mercy satisfied divine justice, and thus prepared the way for the rescue of our race from the sentence of justice, and so those who have become partakers of the divine Spirit, and in whom it has reached a reasonable development, will permit their mercy to triumph over their conceptions of justice (for they have no law of justice over their fellows which needs to be satisfied).

While justice may not be blind in the Lord's people, while they may discern the faults of others most clearly, and while they may seek to let justice rule in respect to all of their own words, and thoughts, and actions, nevertheless they are to let mercy triumph in their hearts over justice as respects those who trespass against them, and they are not to hold resentments against those who have done them injury, nor to seek to avenge themselves and to inflict justice upon their opponents. Rather, they are to say, It is for God to be just; it is for me, who am a transgressor also against perfect justice, through the weaknesses which I have inherited, to have compassion upon my fellow-creature, who has inherited similar yet different weaknesses: it is for me to exercise accordingly the divine command, the blessed characteristic of mercy, compassion, forgiveness. And those who do so not only get rid of the evil works and sentiments of the world the flesh and the devil, but increasingly become filled more and more with the spirit of love and gentleness and patient submission to the divine will, and thus the merciful are blessed even in the present time.

"WITHOUT HOLINESS NO MAN SHALL SEE THE LORD"

The sixth step of blessedness is purity of heart—purity of motive, purity of intention, purity of effort, purity of will; purity, in the sense of sincerity, of transparency, of truthfulness. In other words, Blessed are the honest-hearted, those who have absolutely right intentions. True, there are worldly people who to some extent might claim honesty of heart, purpose, intention, but until they have come along the way of divine appointment in Christ, until they have become his followers through faith and consecration to him, and until they have taken the preceding steps of blessedness, we could not recognize them as being of the class here specified.

Many have misunderstood this statement, "pure in heart,"

and have thought of it as signifying absolute perfection—not only outward but inward; not only of words and of deeds, but also of thoughts. This view of the matter has tended to discourage some who honestly said to themselves, I am not perfect in deed nor in word nor in thought; how then can I claim to be blessed under this provision as one of the pure in heart? We answer that this is a misconception. The Lord knows as well and better than we do, that in our flesh dwells no perfection; that by reason of the fall all of Adam's children have their teeth set on edge by the sour grape of sin, so that sometimes we cannot do the things that we would do, and through ignorance we no doubt frequently leave undone the things which we ought to do.—Jer. 31:29, 30; Rom. 7:16-18.

The Lord taught a great lesson during the Jewish age by the giving of the law to that people, with a promise of life attached to it, but the Apostle assures us that God foreknew, even when he gave that law to the Israelites, that "by the deeds of the law should no flesh be justified in his sight"—that on the contrary the clearer the law would be discerned the more clear would be the knowledge of sin—of imperfection. God's provision in Christ is that he will forgive those imperfections which are due, not to personal wilfulness, but to the original sin, and the weaknesses and imperfections which have resulted from it—he will extend his mercy toward us as respects those defections which are not wilful. That our Lord Jesus was not ignoring human imperfection is evident from the statement he makes in reference to the fifth of these blessed characteristics, viz., that the merciful "shall obtain mercy"—an implication of our need of mercy. Having assured us that we may obtain mercy, he is not in this sixth beatitude declaring that we must be absolutely perfect in thought, word and deed; for if we were so, or could attain to such a condition, it would be wholly unnecessary for God to provide us mercy and forgiveness of sins through Christ's sacrifice.

The thought of "pure in heart" is not perfection of conduct nor of word, nor of thought, but perfection of intention as respects all of these. Our desire and effort must be for perfection—in thought, word and deed. The standard before us, to which our hearts, our wills, must give assent, is the divine standard. "Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48) God has set no lower standard than this absolute perfection, but he has provided for us grace, mercy and peace through Christ, if we will walk in his footsteps,—this purity of heart being one of the essential steps in the narrow way.

Only the pure in heart have the promise of seeing God. They continue faithfully to the end of the pilgrimage, not only attaining the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ in the present life (Rom. 8:29) in their purity of heart, purity of intention, sincerity of their efforts toward God and men, but eventually according to the Lord's promise, they shall, by the power of the first resurrection, be changed from earthly to heavenly, spiritual conditions. Then, as the Apostle declares, "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." And when we have thus become changed to be like the glorious Son of God, who is "the express image of the Father's person," we shall be able also unquestionably to see the Heavenly Father himself, and shall be introduced to him by our dear Redeemer—"complete in him," "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing."—1 John 3:2; Heb. 1:3; Eph. 5:27; Col. 2:10.

In this, as in the other blessings, a portion, a foretaste, comes in the present life. There is such a thing as having the eyes of our understanding opened, that we may be enabled to "comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ" (Eph. 3:18) But not all have this opening of the mental eye; not all are privileged to see the glories of Jehovah's character in symmetrical harmony, divine justice, wisdom, love and power co-ordinated and co-operating in unison for the blessing of every creature, according to the purpose which God purposed in himself before the world was.

But who may enjoy this blessing, this clearer vision, and who may, by seeing it, be enabled more and more to grow in likeness of that glorious perfection? Only "the pure in heart," only the sincere, the honest-hearted. Those who have a double mind, a double will, are Scripturally said to have a double vision, a double eye. They see spiritual things cross-eyed, see things double, and proportionately indistinctly. Many of God's people have failed thus far to grow up into Christ in all things, see thus doubly and confusedly—they see something of the heavenly things, and something of the earthly, they see but dimly and indistinctly the lines of the divine character, and proportionately they lack ability to copy it. Let all who have named the name of Christ seek more and more to have

but the one Master, and an eye single to his glory and service—a pure, a sincere, a faithful heart.

THE SONS OF GOD ALL PEACEMAKERS

The seventh beatitude is an outward manifestation of the sixth. The purity of heart toward God, which others cannot discern, will manifest itself in this seventh characteristic of blessedness and growth—namely, in peaceable desires and efforts to promote peace in others. For beyond question no one will be a peacemaker from this divine standpoint unless he have already become sincere, pure in heart toward God; and unless he have also the preceding developments of grace in his heart: (1) humility, (2) sympathy, (3) patient submission, (4) hunger and thirst for righteousness (which includes trust), (5) a love or mercifulness toward others, (6) sincerity of heart. And one who has developed these characteristics to any particular degree can surely be nothing else than peaceably disposed himself, and a peacemaker with others.

Very evidently but a small number of the Lord's people have progressed so far as to have this grace markedly developed and exemplified in their lives. The great majority, even of those who have named the name of Christ, seem to pursue a reverse course, which indicates that even if their hearts are pure and their sympathies large, they have still much to learn in the school of Christ; for instead of being peace promoters they are strife promoters. Yet this is not of evil intent, but rather of habit, and of ignorance and of failure to discern the wide difference between the divine course of love, and the opposite course of selfishness which prevails in the world. Strife-making is chiefly stirred up with the tongue though it may be aroused by a gesture or by a glance. Likewise, peacemaking is chiefly done with the tongue though it also may operate through the eye. How many Christian people we all know who have tongues which are continually stirring up strife! The adversary controls many in this manner long after they have escaped from his control in many other respects, and this is largely because they do not detect that in this they are doing Satan service—do not even detect that they are stirring up of strife, hatred, envy, malice, and planters of roots of bitterness by which many are defiled.

When will Christians learn the length and breadth and depth of the injunctions "Speak evil of no man," and "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good, to the use of edifying" (Titus 3:2; Eph. 4:29). How long will it take some of God's true children to learn that in uttering an evil thing (even if they were positive of its truth), they may be doing a world of evil? How long will it take them to learn that it is not always necessary to speak the truth, nor even proper to do so except when it would be for the edifying of others? How many lessons, line upon line, must they have to convince them that they are not only to avoid gossip about other people's business, and fault-finding, and cynicism, but that all these are evidences of their deficiency in love—of their deficiency in the likeness of Christ, and their lack of the qualities of the peacemaker; and that these lacks need to be striven against earnestly, if they would make their calling and election sure to a place in the heavenly kingdom?

Oh, that all would learn by heart, and continually seek to exemplify in life, the words of the Apostle, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Those who are thinking on the true and lovely and good and beautiful things will speak to each other of the same; hence the importance of having our hearts filled with good things, in order that out of the abundance of the good things of our hearts our mouths may speak continually good things, that the Lord would approve, and that would minister blessing to those who hear—Phil. 4:8; Luke 6:45.

Such have a very precious promise, well worthy of their effort—"They shall be called the children of God"—they have God's spirit, the likeness of his dear Son has been traced in their hearts, they have been sanctified with the truth, they shall ultimately be "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." Only such at heart will the Lord ever recognize as his sons and joint-heirs with his great Son, our Lord, in the kingdom. Moreover, this is a test which we may well recognize for ourselves particularly, and to some extent for each other, as evidencing the degree of our growth as children of God—our peaceable dispositions, and our carefulness to pursue such a course in life as will tend toward peace.

Some of the Lord's people find in themselves naturally considerable of a spirit of combativeness, unfavorable to peace. Indeed, it requires something of the spirit of combativeness to fight a good fight against the world, the flesh and the adversary, and to "contend earnestly for the faith;" so that those who have combativeness naturally find themselves in antagonism with others along some line continually. However, they should not be discouraged by this, but should remember that combativeness is a valuable servant and soldier, if turned and exercised in the right direction. Its exercise toward fellow creatures must be modified by mercy, by a realization of our own imperfections and the imperfections of all. Combativeness must be trained to fight along the lines of love and mercy—to fight for the truth and for all the servants and agencies of the truth, and against the error,—but not against the blinded and ignorant servants of the error. Combativeness must be given plenty to do in fighting against the imperfections and weaknesses of our own natures, and being thus busily engaged in this good work, it will find comparatively little time for assaulting others; and realizing the difficulties connected with the conquering of self it will have the greater compassion for the weaknesses of others.

ATTAINING GREAT REWARD IN HEAVEN

The blessing that comes through persecution is the eighth beatitude. It is not until the Lord's people have experienced some of these preceding blessings of his grace that they reach the point where they can "glory in tribulations also," as did the Apostle Paul. But our Lord carefully distinguishes as between different kinds of persecution, marking out the blessed kind as distinct from all other sorts. We are not to invite persecution by fault-finding and general cantankerousness and combative opposition to everybody and everything; nor are we to invite persecution by fanaticism. Rather, we are to cultivate the "spirit of a sound mind," and to learn gradually what the sound mind of the Lord is, as revealed in the Scriptures. Even then, no doubt we will be falsely accused by the world of "fanaticism," because the wisdom of God is oft esteemed foolishness with men, as often the wisdom of men is foolishness from the divine standpoint.

Whenever a course of action would appear to be fanatical and unreasonable, we are to hesitate to do it until we have first made sure that we find the same spirit, teaching and example in our Lord and in the apostles; then we may safely follow, regardless of what the world may say or think respecting our course. For instance, from the divine standpoint it is insanity for a man to labor day and night to amass millions, for his children to fight over at his death, but from the human standpoint this is the reasonable course. From the divine standpoint it was wise for the apostles to spend their lives in the service of the truth, sacrificing earthly interests and prospects, name and fame, to obtain eventually a better resurrection, and eternal glory, honor and immortality, but this, from the world's standpoint was foolishness, fanaticism.

If persecution comes to us as a result of our following the Lord, and the apostles,—their teachings and example, and if it is because of our faithfulness to the vows of consecration to his service that all manner of evil is said against us, falsely then indeed we may rejoice; for so were the prophets persecuted, so was our Lord persecuted, so were the apostles and all the faithful ones since persecuted. Being thus in good company in our experiences, it becomes a witness or testimony to us that we shall be in like good company in that day when the Lord shall make up his jewels.

All who have such experiences may well rejoice, and if as the Lord's words intimate, the more of such experiences we have the more will be our reward in heaven, then the more we may rejoice in these experiences. And if we be without any such experiences it behooves us to look well to ourselves, lest peradventure it mean that we are not faithfully walking in the "narrow way" of self-sacrifice,—or are not doing with our might what our hands find to do, but are holding back our sacrifice. Should such be the reflection of any let him not be discouraged, but, in the language of the Prophet, let him "bind the sacrifice to the altar," with fresh cords of love and of zeal, praying the Lord to accept the sacrifice, and to furnish opportunities for being and doing and suffering for His cause, and for the Lord's and the truth's sake.—Psa. 118:27.

The prismatic sum of all these graces is—love; and those who have them are lovable and shall by and by be made gloriously lovely, with and like him who is "altogether lovely." Our call is to attain these blessed conditions in the kingdom.

Lead us in holiness, the road
Which we must keep to dwell with God,
Lead us in Christ, the living way,
Nor let us from his pastures stray

Teach us in watchfulness and prayer
To wait for thine appointed hour,
And fit us by thy grace to share
The triumphs of thy conqu'ring power.

THE ROYAL LAW—THE GOLDEN RULE

MATT. 7:1-14.—APRIL 8.

"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

In this lesson we have another leaf from our Lord's great Sermon on the Mount. This is not a sermon to sinners but to the Lord's consecrated people; and although there were multitudes within the hearing of our Lord's voice, all of whom belonged to the typically consecrated nation, yet our Lord addressed himself specially to his twelve chosen disciples, who were being particularly and fully instructed, that they, under the spirit dispensation soon to be inaugurated, might become the twelve foundations of the heavenly kingdom, represented symbolically in the New Jerusalem of Revelation.—Rev. 21:14.

True, many of the features of this royal law were then and still are sound advice for all who can receive them; but the fact remains that comparatively few are blessed with the opening of eyes and unstopping of ears to permit their appreciation of these holy pearls of truth; and assuredly they were addressed to and intended for only those who could receive them. Thank God for the good hope that ere long, the kingdom being established, all the blind eyes shall be opened, all the deaf ears shall be unstopped, and that in God's "due time" these precepts of the Golden Rule of love will be appreciated by all and be applicable to all—whether they respond to them or reject them.

Following our Lord's example and injunction, we are endeavoring to set meat in due season. "things new and old," before the household of faith, the children of the kingdom, and not before "dogs"—those who are still outside of divine favor, who have not yet received the grace of God and been adopted into his family and constituted sons. These precious truths are pearls of great price—of great value—to those who have the hearing ear and the understanding and appreciative heart—those who have been begotten of the spirit and are "new creatures in Christ Jesus," and seeking to live the new life. We do not attempt to present these matters to the brutish, the swinish, knowing that they would not appreciate them; but would merely feel a disappointment and resent our good intentions to our injury. Our Lord points this out later on in the discourse (verse 6), and his words are in full accord with those of Solomon. "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee."—Prov. 9:7, 8.

It is to the household of faith, then, that the Lord says, "Judge not that ye be not judged." It is useless that we give this advice to others than the pupils in the school of Christ, for not having put themselves under the instruction of the great Teacher it gives evidence that his instructions are not appreciated by them. But all true disciples (learners, pupils) should give earnest heed to this injunction, and should understand that it contains a very important lesson, which unlearned will render them unready for the great examination, unready for graduation, unready for the kingdom; because in their examination this will be one of the tests. If they have been fault-finding, cynical, hypercritical, etc., judging others harshly and uncharitably, it will be a clear token that they have not developed the spirit of Christ, the spirit of love,—which is full of kindness and consideration: hence such would be judged or condemned as unfit for the kingdom, for according to our way of judging others we will be judged—since nothing else will better demonstrate our true spiritual condition,—the presence or absence of love.

Whatever measure of mercy and generosity we mete out to others will be the measure of divine mercy that will be extended to us. If all the Lord's people could have well impressed upon their hearts this lesson from the great Teacher's lips, how wonderfully it would affect their attitude toward others, in thought as well as in deed; how generous, how forgiving, how sympathetic for the weaknesses of others they would become; how the spirit of love would grow in their hearts and manifest itself in their words and deeds!

RAFTERS IN THEIR EYES

Emphasizing this lesson, our Lord suggests that those who are always finding fault with the "brethren" who, like themselves are seeking to walk in the narrow way—who can never see the noble efforts of the "brethren" to copy the Master, but are continually picking at them, are the very ones who have the greatest of faults in themselves,—lovelessness. The exaggeration of our Lord's words of reproof to this class seems to imply a vein of sarcasm, for literally he says, Why do you stare so at your fellow who is troubled with a grain of sawdust in his eye, while you have a whole rafter in your own eye? All the "brethren" are more or less troubled with difficulties of one kind or another, weaknesses of the flesh,—because all have the treasure of the new nature in imperfect earthen vessels—marred by original sin. "There is none righteous no, not one" absolutely perfect. Yet the brethren

whose hearts are full of love, even though they have sawdust in their eye of faith, or intellectual discernment or spiritual discernment, and perhaps also splinters in their hands, which affect all the deeds of life, and render their work imperfect, and though many of them have splinters in their feet also, so that their walk is by no means perfect, as they would desire it to be—yet if they have the spirit of faith and of love and of sympathy, the spirit of Christ, they are his, and far more acceptable to him than any could possibly be who are devoid of the spirit of love and sympathy, and who therefore in this parable are represented as wholly perverted in their judgment of others, because possessing so little of the Lord's spirit and so much of the spirit of the adversary—the great "accuser of the brethren."

This loveless, fault-finding, brethren-accusing class the Lord denominates hypocrites. Why? Because in finding fault with others they are evidently wishing to give the inference that they are not afflicted with the same malady of sin themselves; they evidently wish to give the impression that they are holy, and since they know in their own hearts that this is untrue, and that they have many failings, many imperfections—therefore their course is hypocritical, false, deceptive, displeasing to God. Their claim that their fault-finding is prompted by love for the erring and a hatred of sin is deceptive and hypocritical as our Lord's words clearly show. Otherwise they would find plenty to do in hating and condemning and battling with their own sins and weaknesses;—casting out their own rafter of self-conceit and hypocrisy. The experiences thus gained would make them very tender and merciful and loving in their assistance of others.

All of the "brethren" should carefully view this picture which our Lord portrayed, and should note well to see whether or not they have any of the evil disposition of heart—fault-finding, nagging, harsh criticism and denunciation—different degrees of the same fault. If they find any trace of such a "beam" of lovelessness and self-conceit in their spiritual eye, they should go at once to the great Physician and have it thoroughly eradicated, that they thus may speedily become gentle, sympathetic assistants to the "brethren," and be prepared as successful surgeons and physicians for the great work of the Millennial age—the kindly and sympathetic opening of the blind eyes of humanity and the healing of all the wounds of sin.

TYING GRAPE CLUSTERS TO THORN BUSHES

But while we are not to judge our "brother," who with us professes to be endeavoring to walk in the footsteps of our Master, and who gives any evidences at all of sincerity in the matter, we nevertheless are to do a certain kind of judging as respects mankind in general. Elsewhere the Lord intimates that "by their fruits" we are to "know" gravevines from thorn-bushes, and figs from thistles. And in this sermon he intimates that we are to judge or discern as between the brethren and "dogs" and "swine"—the selfish, the sensual, who mind earthly things and who have never been begotten of the spirit of God. We may know these by outward evidences, for "If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his;" and if he is none of his, not a branch of the Vine, we are not to waste our time in trying to tie onto him bunches of the fruits of the vine. We are not to attempt to deceive others or ourselves by helping to counterfeit the true holy spirit in the selfish, unregenerate world. We are not to expect that this class, whose appreciation is only for earthly things, to appreciate holy, heavenly things, any more than we would expect that dogs would appreciate the difference between meat from the butchershop and the holy, consecrated meat eaten only by the priesthood. We are not to expect that the swinish and groveling, who think only of money and the things of this life, would appreciate the pearls of truth which are so precious in the sight of the brethren, begotten of the spirit.

This does not mean that we should never bring holy things to the attention of those who are not the Lord's consecrated people; but it does mean that a mere presentation of the first principles of righteousness and truth should quickly manifest to us those who have an ear for the truth, and those who have not,—that finding the hearing ear we might give diligence to serve it, and finding the ear closed we might cease to waste our time, knowing that the effort would be fruitless as respects the calling of this Gospel age—to saintship, to the divine nature, to joint-heirship in the kingdom. The Millennial age will soon be ushered in, and that will be God's time for breaking the hard hearts, for opening the blind eyes, and unstopping the deaf ears.

Indeed, in some respects the efforts which have been expended upon the "dogs" and the "swine"—the thorn-bushes and the thistles, endeavoring to tie to these various imitations of the fruits of the spirit of Christ, and to make the meat of the household palatable to them, have been positively injurious to the Lord's cause. The "brethren" have been neglected in the endeavor to feed the "dog" class; the making ready of the bride for the bridegroom, and adorning her with the pearls of truth, has been neglected in the endeavor to interest the "swine" in the pearls. The real value of the true vine, in producing good fruit, and the wide difference of nature between it and a bramble bush, has been greatly obscured by the appropriation of the vine's natural fruitage to the bramble. Let us not be wise above what is written; let us attend in the present time to the work which God has appointed for this age, and leave to his appointed time the general work for the world of mankind.

HOW TO OVERCOME LOVELESS SELF-CONCEIT

Returning to the lessons which the "brethren" must learn, and possibly having specially in mind the correction of the tendency to judge one another, our Lord gives instructions how these wrong qualities may be eradicated. We are to ask of the Lord the needed measure of love and sympathy which will hinder us from judging others, and which will help us in correcting our own defects. If we ask sincerely, truly, we will receive his grace and help in this direction. And while asking, it is our duty to be seeking the things which we lack, the holy spirit of love to fill our hearts; and if we seek it we shall find it. We are to knock upon the Lord's store-house of grace and blessing by continued efforts, as well as prayer without ceasing, and as a result it will surely be opened to us. The asking, the seeking, the knocking, will all imply faith in the Lord, which will be pleasing in his sight, and it will also imply faithfulness on our part and a desire to be conformed fully to the Lord's will. And these good desires of our hearts shall be gratified, because, as an earthly parent would respond to his child's request for earthly food, so will the Lord respond and supply grace in every time of need to his children. He will not deceive us nor give us evil things, when we desire the good, but will do for us exceedingly abundantly more than we could ask or think, for is not our heavenly Father much better than any imperfect human father could possibly be?

Luke's reference to this discourse (11:13) declares that the good thing that God will be pleased to give these asking, seeking, knocking ones, is his holy spirit. And this is exactly what is needed, as an offset to the unholy, unloving, selfish, judging and fault-finding spirit of the flesh, which must be cast out. The antidote for the poison is that we should be filled with the holy spirit, the spirit of love, for "love worketh no ill to his neighbor;" love "suffereth long and is kind;" love "is not puffed up" to see the faults of others and to be blind to its own; it "vaunteth not itself" to be a general critic, fault-finder and "accuser of the brethren." Love is sympathetic, helpful, the spirit of God—1 Cor. 13:4; Rom. 13:10.

"WORKING IN YOU THAT WHICH IS WELLPLEASING IN HIS SIGHT"—Heb. 13:21

"Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them." The word "therefore" shows the connection between this and the preceding features of the lesson, it signifies that this will be a test or rule by which we may discern when and to what extent we are misjudging the motives of others, and officially endeavoring to perform the very delicate operation of removing their splinters. This verse is therefore known as the "Golden Rule,"—the rule which God would have his people use in respect to all the affairs of life—especially in their relationship and dealings with the "brethren." When disposed to find a fault, or pick a flaw, when disposed to condemn another or to criticize another's faults, or to hold him up to odium, we can generally know of the propriety or impropriety of so doing or

thinking by asking ourselves the question: Would I wish the brother to do, to say or to think thus respecting me, if I were he and he were I?

This rule, closely followed, will very generally be a guide, and yet we have known instances in which the Lord's people seemed so anxious for an excuse for slander, for evil speaking, for gossip, that they found some kind of a way of excusing themselves for the violation of the Golden Rule, even when they remembered it and at heart wished to obey it. Let us be very careful, dear brethren, how we handle the Lord's rule—that we do not handle the Word of God deceitfully—that we do not blind and deceive ourselves respecting its true importance—that we do not thus vitiate and impair our consciences—that we do not thus thwart our prayers for the holy Spirit. For the holy Spirit can flow into our hearts only as the channel is open; and the channel can be kept open only by keeping this Golden Rule continually at work at its full gauge. This Golden Rule and all these lessons, that seem so new because presented by the great Teacher in a clearer and sharper light than ever before, were nevertheless the gist, or essence of the Mosaic Law, and of the Lord's teachings through the prophets.

NARROW IS THE WAY

Our Lord intimates that such a life of carefulness respecting not only our actions but also our words and even our very thoughts (which are the springs from whence proceed our words and actions) will be a very "narrow way"—a difficult way. And yet it is the only way by which we can hope to enter into the life and kingdom of joys which are now set before us in the Gospel call. The broad way, the easy way, the selfish way, the worldly way, does not lead to the kingdom; on the contrary, it leads to death—to the second death, to utter destruction. The many are going in that way now, and only the few find and enter into the strait gate and narrow way to the kingdom and its glory, honor and immortality.

This does not, however, either say or imply that the present age is the only one in which any opportunity will be given to escape the destruction toward which the broad way and the world tend; though it is the only way now open. The Word of the Lord elsewhere points out to us that after the select little flock, the elect church, the bride, the body of Christ shall have been selected from amongst mankind—composed of those who seek and walk in the narrow way—after these shall have been glorified with the Redeemer, will come a time when, in the Lord's providence, a grand highway of holiness shall be opened to the world of mankind, during the Millennial age. While it will be an upward way and not a downward one, so that it will require effort to walk thereon and to attain to the full restitution, the prize at its further end, nevertheless it will be very different from the narrow, the difficult way now open before the elect church, God's peculiar people. It will be a way of righteousness, but not a way of sacrifice, as is the present narrow way, which thus selects the "royal priesthood," each one of whom must present his body a living sacrifice, in order to make his calling and election sure.

No lions shall be in that grand Millennial highway; nothing to hurt or destroy or intimidate from well-doing; nothing to seduce or to devour as a prey those who seek to walk righteously and to come back into harmony with the Lord; whereas all these besetments are now about us, because Satan, the prince of this world, is still unbound. (Isa. 35:8, 9; Rev. 20:2) All who now enter the "narrow way" are compelled to fight a good fight, to contend earnestly for the faith, to resist the devil, if they would secure the greater "prize" of our high calling. We must not only contend with the weakness of the flesh, which we have inherited, but we must also wrestle with wicked spirits in exalted places (Eph. 6:12), but the Lord giveth us the more grace, that thereby we may come off conquerors through him who loved us and bought us with his own precious blood.—1 Tim. 6:12; Jude 3; Jas. 4:7; Rom. 8:37.

JESUS SAID UNTO HIM, FOLLOW ME

MARK 2:13-22—MARCH 18.

Capernaum, where our Lord had been teaching and healing, was situated on the sea of Galilee or, as we today should say, the Lake of Galilee. It was a city of considerable commercial importance, especially for the fish business, and undoubtedly the lake-shore in that vicinity was quite populous. The tense of the Greek would seem to indicate that our Lord kept going by the sea-shore stopping here and there to discourse to the people, multitudes of whom flocked to hear him. It was during this journey that he passed Matthew,

formerly known as Levi, a custom-house agent of the Roman government—a revenue collector, who was attending to his business, and whom our Lord addressed, saying, "Follow me," and who obeyed the call to discipleship.

Many get a false thought from the brevity of the narrative, and infer that Levi (Matthew) had never heard of Jesus before, and that our Lord, as he passed him, cast upon him some kind of a spell which led him to instantly drop his business, as though bereft of his senses. On the contrary,

we are to remember that the Lord and his disciples were well known in that vicinity for years, and that probably Matthew had not only knowledge of our Lord, but also faith in him, as the Messiah. Not until now, however, had Jesus invited him to become one of His immediate disciples; not until now, therefore, could Matthew essay to become such. There evidently were many who heard the Lord discourse time and again, and who were to be reckoned as amongst his friends, but who were by no means invited to become special followers, companions and associates in the ministry of the Gospel, as were the twelve.

Nor are we to suppose that Matthew left his money-drawer open, and his accounts with the Roman government unsettled, to immediately follow the Master. Rather, we may assume that it may have taken days, or possibly weeks, to straighten his affairs and to enable him to respond to the Lord's call to apostleship. We should remember that the history of several years, and many discourses, conversations and incidents, are crowded in the Gospel narrative into very brief space.

It would seem probable that as Simon's name was changed by the Lord to Peter, so Levi's name was changed to Matthew, which signifies "the gift of God." He was a publican—a person who farmed the taxes and the public revenue. The name "publican" and the profession were both extremely odious to the Jews, who very reluctantly submitted themselves to the tax regulations of the Romans. Publicans were counted unpatriotic disloyal to their own nation, in that they accepted the service of an alien government, and made use of their knowledge of their country and people in assisting to collect revenues deemed unjust. The office, as will be readily seen, offered many opportunities for dishonesty and extortion, bribery, etc., but we cannot for a moment suppose that Levi was one of these dishonest publicans, for had he been so we may be sure he would not have been called to the apostleship and would not have responded to the call, for we are not to forget that it is written, "No man can come to me except the Father which sent me draw him"—John 6:44.

THE CONSECRATED HOME HONORED

Matthew was a man of influence, and as soon as he accepted the Lord's call, and responded by consecrating himself and his all, he set about to use his influence in drawing others to the Saviour. He would announce his own devotion to the cause in such a manner and under such favorable circumstances as if possible would win some. To these ends he arranged a banquet for the Lord and his disciples at his house, and invited many of his friends and business associates. These in our lesson are called "Many publicans and sinners."

We have seen why the publicans were ostracised by the scribes and Pharisees—not because they were wicked, but because their business was disesteemed; and being thus cut off socially from the ultra-religious, the publicans were forced to have most of their social intercourse with the non-religious, by way of contrast called "sinners." By the term sinners we are not necessarily to understand vile persons and evildoers, but rather persons who did not profess nor attempt the holiness claimed by the Pharisees—persons who did not claim to be absolute keepers of the divine law—who did not profess to make the outside of the cup or platter absolutely clean, tho perhaps in many instances the inside was as clean or more clean than were the hearts of the Pharisees, who professed perfect holiness. This our Lord intimated on several occasions. When, therefore, we read that our Lord was the friend of publicans and sinners we are not to understand that he made companions of the rowdies or moral lepers of his time. We are rather to understand that in the usage of that time one class of Jews was designated the holy people (Pharisees), and another class designated as not professing absolute holiness (sinners).

Matthew's endeavor to bring his friends and associates into contact with the Master and his teachings is certainly commendable, and is a good illustration of what each one who enters the Lord's flock should do. Each should seek to exert his influence where it is greatest, amongst those with whom he is acquainted and who are acquainted with him, and upon whom either his past honesty and good character should have an influence, or else those to whom his radical change of life would be the most manifest. Another lesson for us is the propriety of using hospitality as a channel for the advancement of the truth—the homes of those who have consecrated themselves to the Lord should be consecrated homes, in which the first consideration should be the service of the Master; and its influence should be to draw out friends to the Lord, that they might be taught of him. Too frequently the consecration of the home is overlooked and antagonistic influences are permitted to dominate, with the result that neither

the Lord nor the Lord's people are entertained, nor his cause served in them. Such a house and home loses a great blessing, and the head of such a house has serious reason to question whether or not he is overcoming, and therefore an "overcomer," to whom only the prize is promised.—or whether he is being overcome by adverse influences.

The Lord desires a courageous people, a people so full of faith, and love to him and his, that they will conquer adverse influences in the interest of righteousness. What would we think of Matthew if he had said to the Lord: Master, I would much like to have a banquet at my home, and to invite there some of my friends, that I might introduce you to them, and that thus a favorable influence might be exerted on behalf of the truth; but I have no liberty in my own home—my wife would not hear of it for a moment.—or, my children are unruly, have no respect for me as a parent, and would create a great disturbance if I were to mention such a thing as a banquet in your honor, so greatly are they offended that I am giving up my lucrative business, and so fearful are they that they will not have the same social standing as before, or the same privileges of extravagance?

We would consider him a most unfit man to be an apostle, or to occupy even the position of elder or deacon in the church, according to the terms laid down by the Apostle Paul. (1 Tim. 3:4, 5) We would esteem such an one unworthy of any responsible position in the church, and so deficient in the qualities of an "overcomer" that he would be in great danger of losing the prize, unless he promptly instituted a reform of his character. It is only what we should expect, to find Matthew's case very different from this—to find that he had a strong character. Nor can we expect that the Master would have said to him, "Follow me," unless he had such character that would permit him to follow in the Master's footsteps, for surely our Lord Jesus, while gentle, kind and loving, was never weak or characterless.

And what would we have thought of Matthew's wife and family, had they objected to the banquet? We would have considered them rather hopeless as respects saintship, and that his wife had not learned even the first element of wifehood;—that she was a hinderer instead of a helping mate. As it was we may be assured that with the Lord came a special blessing to that home.

SPIRITUAL FOOD AT THE BANQUET

It would seem from other narratives of this same banquet (which was probably several weeks after Matthew's call) that a large number of people were gathered at Matthew's house, aside from those who partook of the banquet (Luke 5:29), and from the connection of the narrative it is supposed that it was on one of the regular fast days of the Pharisees. These facts led to the two questions:

(1) Why does your Teacher associate with these people, who do not profess sanctification? The objection was not that our Lord should not teach the publicans and sinners, but that he should not eat with them, which implied a social equality, and the Pharisees evidently recognized that our Lord and his apostles were professing and living lives of entire consecration to God.

In answer to this query our Lord said, "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick;" the implication being that the physician had a right to go to and mingle with those whom he sought to relieve, and might mingle with them in whatever manner he saw to be expedient for their cure. This language does not imply that the Pharisees were not sick, and that they did not need our Lord's ministry, tho the fact was that not admitting that they were sick they were not disposed to receive his good medicine of doctrine. The same thought is otherwise expressed by our Lord in the same connection, saying, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Anyone who considered himself to be righteous would be beyond the call of repentance. His first lesson would be to learn that he was not righteous, not perfect, hence our Lord went chiefly to those who admitted that they were not righteous, and whose hearts therefore were better soil for the truth than others. Our Lord intimated this in his parable of the publican's and the Pharisee's prayers, assuring us that in God's sight the publican had the better standing, because of his acknowledgment of imperfections and his petition for mercy.

Another of the Evangelists adds others of our Lord's words—"Go ye and learn what that meaneth: I will have mercy and not sacrifice" (Matt. 9:13). Our Lord here evidently quoted from Hosea 6:6. The lesson the Pharisees should have learned from this was that in their particularity respecting sacrifices, self-denials, tithing of mint, anise, cummin, etc., the very things in which they boasted as evidences of their holiness were things which God did not appreciate

nearly so much as he would have appreciated mercy. They should have had compassionate feelings toward their fellow Jews, the yearning compassion which would have delighted to have lifted them out of sin and brought them nearer to the Lord and nearer to righteous influences. Instead of having this spirit of mercy, which would have been very pleasing in God's sight, and would have prepared them to be recipients of his mercy, they had instead a loveless sentiment which despised others and boasted of self—a self-satisfied and complacent condition of mind and heart, very reprehensible to the Lord—a condition of heart unready to be blessed with divine mercy.

FASTING AND FEASTING—TYPICAL AND ANTITYPICAL.

(2) The next question was: Why is it that your Master and all who abide with him are banqueting and feasting and *rejoicing* while we Pharisees fast twice in the week, and the followers of John's teachings also fast? Is not this a sign that you and your Master are not so devout as we?—Luke 18:12.

The Lord's answer is very comprehensive and far-reaching, and requires considerable study to be appreciated. He explained—

(a) That it would be inappropriate for his followers to be in sadness and mourning at a time when they were receiving such wonderful blessings—at a time when the Bridegroom himself was present, cheering their hearts, refreshing and strengthening them, opening the eyes of their understanding, and giving them hearing ears to appreciate the divine favor that was coming unto them. Such would not be an appropriate time for fasting and mourning. By and by, when the Bridegroom would be away, there would be an abundance of perplexity and sorrow and then fasting would be in order. And so surely it has been: the Lord's people throughout the Gospel age have frequently felt called upon in times of darkness and adversity to seek a very close approach to the Lord by the humbling of the flesh, and have found fasting a valuable means to this end.

But fasting has a typical significance—it means self-denial. So long as the Master was with his people, and especially so long as he was honored by the multitudes, it required comparatively little self-denial to be one of his followers—it was in many respects an honor to be called to follow him, and an honor to sacrifice something of earthly interests to be a follower; and this made his kind of self-denial or fasting really a feast of pleasure. But later on trials came, when the Master got into the toils of his enemies, when his cause was unpopular, and the multitudes clamored for his death—then it required self-denial (antitypical fasting) to confess him and follow him; and so it has been all through the Gospel age—none can be a follower of the Lamb without self-denial, fasting, refusing the desires and appetites of the flesh—sacrificing some and mortifying others in the interest of the new creature and its spiritual development.

Now, in the Lord's second Presence, we might say that the feast has begun again—that from a spiritual standpoint there are so many and so great blessings, so much and so dainty spiritual food, that to those who are invited into the Lord's banqueting house and whom he causes to sit down to meat, and to whom he brings forth things new and old, newly and refreshingly served, it almost appears as tho the fasting time has passed, and that the feasting and "joys of the Lord" have begun. Not that there are no trials and difficulties according to the flesh, but that as new creatures his people are so refreshed and exhilarated with the meat in due season that the trials and difficulties and self-denials (fasting) incidental to the way may now be esteemed so lightly as not to be worthy to be compared with the spiritual refreshments enjoyed; tho these be but foretastes of the great marriage feast soon to be enjoyed.

(b) In addition to the fact that our Lord's presence with his disciples would antidote sorrow, was another fact which the Pharisees did not comprehend, viz., that our Lord's work was not like that of John the Baptist—was not a work of reformation seeking to patch up the Jewish system and arrangement. John had been commissioned to do that if he could, and had failed and been beheaded; and the work which Jesus was doing was a new work altogether: he was not attempting to patch and reform Judaism with his doctrines, but was making an entirely new institution, gathering out a church, which would not be a Jewish church nor a Reformed Jewish church, but a wholly different institution—a Christian church. This was the reason he was not attempting to discuss with the Pharisees the proprieties and improprieties of their methods, and to straighten them out. He would let alone the old garment, already worn out and ready to be laid aside, he would provide as a new garment, not the impossible righteousness required by the law, but an imputed righteousness according to faith, based upon the merits of his own sacrifice for sins.

Had he attempted to combine Christianity with Judaism the result would have been disastrous to both, for they are opposites—the one demanding absoluteness of righteousness, which was impossible to sinners; the other demanding that the impossibility of personal righteousness should be acknowledged, and that faith should be the only condition of forgiveness and mercy.

(c) The same lesson was illustrated by the custom of that time in the use of skins of animals as instead of the barrels and bottles of today—indeed, such skins are used to the present time in various parts of the world, and called bottles. New wine put into such skins in fermenting would stretch them to almost bursting point, and such skins could never be used again for new wine, because the elasticity having gone out of them the new wine in fermenting would surely burst them. The lesson which our Lord taught here is that Judaism having had its day, had accomplished its purpose, and that it was not the divine intention that it should be reformed, as his hearers expected. The system had become effete, and to have attempted to put into Judaism the new doctrines, the new wine of the Gospel, would have meant that not only the Jewish nation would have been convulsed and wrecked by the spirit of the new teachings, but also that the doctrines themselves would have gone down with the wreck of the nation. Consequently it was the divine plan that a new Israel should be started, "a holy nation, a peculiar people," and that it should be the receptacle of the new grace and truth then due.

Similarly now in the end of the Gospel age we perceive the impossibility of putting the new wine which the Master is now providing into the old wine skins of sectarianism, and all sectarians realize this too—they realize that to receive what is now being presented as present truth into their denominations would unquestionably mean the utter wreck of the denominations. God is therefore now, as in the end of the Jewish age, calling out of the whole system such as are Israelites indeed, that they may receive at his hands the wine (doctrine) of the new dispensation just at hand. As for the old institutions, they have served a purpose, partly good and partly bad. Their work, so far as the divine plan is concerned, is at an end. "The voice of the Bridegroom and of the bride shall no more be heard" in Babylon at all. (Rev. 18:23) Babylon will not permit them to be heard. The voice, the teaching of present truth is consequently outside her walls; and whoever has an ear for the truth, whoever desires to be filled with present truth, must come outside of sectarianism before he can thus be filled and blessed and used as a vessel in bearing the blessing to others.—Rev. 18:4, 23.

THE MEMORIAL SUPPER

Our usual custom of celebrating our dear Redeemer's death on its anniversary will be followed this year by a larger number we believe, than ever before. The date will be the evening of April 12th after 6 p. m.—that date corresponding to "the fourteenth day of the first month" Jewish time.

Our Lord, as the antitype of the Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7), was crucified the day before the "Feast of Passover" began; and "on the same night in which he was betrayed" he took bread, representing his flesh, and "fruit of the vine," representing his blood, and with these instituted a new memorial by which the spiritual Israelites were to celebrate their greater antitypical Passover, secured by his "blood of sprinkling" applied by faith, and his flesh, eaten by faith, "meat indeed."—John 6:55.

Our celebration has nothing in common with that of the Jews: indeed what they celebrate is the "Feast" week; while we celebrate on the day preceding their Feast the death of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. The day we celebrate represents the entire Gospel age, in which the entire church—the body of Christ Jesus, the Head—must suffer with him as voluntary sacrifices. The Feast week to us typifies the glory and joy soon to be introduced,—in the Millennium.

"Our Lord's words respecting this Memorial are, "This do ye in remembrance of me." And the Apostle adds, "As oft as ye do *this* ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come"—till he in his kingdom shall have come in power and shall have gathered you unto himself. Many Christian people