Proverbs - Commentaries by William John Hocking, Editor

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S.— Please explain, “Have salt in yourselves” (Mark 9:50). Two well-known properties of salt are alluded to in scripture, viz., its (1) seasoning and (2) preserving properties. Both are applied to the believer in a figurative manner, referring to the inward workings of grace, flavoring even the conversation (Col. 4:6) and preserving it from any corrupt word or sentiment (Eph. 4:29). The saints therefore as the repositories of grace check the spread of evil in the earth, and in this sense are its salt (Matt. 5:13). Here we are enjoined to have salt in ourselves, individually and collectively as saints. For evil is as likely to corrupt here as in the world; hence the need for the preservative principle of grace in us that we may be at peace with one another.

“Salted with fire” alludes to judgment, for salt has also a destructive character (Deut. 29:23; Jer. 17:6; Ezek. 47:11).

G.— In what way was Christ David’s son and David’s Lord? The Lord Jesus as man was of the house and lineage of David, and so son of David (Matt. 1:1). Joseph was also so called (Matt. 1:20; Luke 2:4). Hence the genealogy of Matthew 1. But the Lord Jesus was God (John 1:1), and so David’s Lord as well.

S.— Explain 1 Corinthians 15:28. Read from verse 24, and you will see that the time referred to is “the end,” not the end of this age but the end of time. For it is said to be after the kingdom, i.e., the millennium, when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom, every one of His enemies being destroyed. The last enemy will be death, which will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14). Thus will all things absolutely have been put in subjection to the Second Man, the Lord from heaven, according to the prophecy (Psa. 8:6). Then in the new heavens and new earth (Rev. 21:1-8) the Son of man will deliver back all things vested in Him to God from Whom He received them, perfect as when He received them. Every other failed and dishonored God in everything entrusted to him; the Son alone glorified Him in all. But in the eternal state the Son of man as Man will Himself be subject to God, that God (Father, Son, and Spirit) may be all in all.

S.— What is the meaning of “Buy the truth and sell it not” (Prov. 23:23)? The meaning is that the truth is so precious that any price, however great, is not too dear to give for it; but any price though ten-thousand fold greater is too small to take for it. It does not at all refer to salvation which you can neither buy nor sell. But the enjoyment of the truths of scripture is not realized without the sacrifice of self and worldly advantage. For instance, you, may see the price Paul paid for his sense of the excellency of Christ (Phil. 3:4-8). Ask him if he would sell the truth he had gained, supposing he could have his money back. He tells you with scorn it is dross and dung compared with the preciousness of Christ. On the other hand Demas sold his testimony to the truth for some worldly profit (2 Tim. 4:10).

H.— Christ sprinkling His blood. Be assured there was no intention of implying that Christ did so de facto, but rather of referring to the truth which this figure foreshadowed of the blood of Christ meeting every claim of God.

M.E.E.K.— Will you please explain John 12:25? The context brings out the momentous fact that before the Lord gets His place as the glorified Son of man, the Blesser of the ends of the earth, Gentiles, as well as Jews, He must be rejected of men and die. He says, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” Then He intimates the similarity of the character of the path of His disciples through this world. The result of association with Christ must be separation from the very essence of the world and its ways. This is the general meaning of the text concerning which you inquire. “He that loveth his life [soul], shall lose it; and he that hateth his life [soul] in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” Hating one’s life in this world implies a total disregard of self-ease and of self-interest in order to serve Christ and do God’s will. There are examples of this in the apostles and others (Acts 15:26; 20:24; Phil. 2:30; 1 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 12:11). But while martyrdom is an extreme form of the carrying out of this principle, every act of self-denial and suffering for Christ’s sake we endure is covered by its terms. The self-seeking, self-loving professor whatever may be gained in this world will know no felicity in the next.

W.T.— Does 1 John 1:9 apply to those who are born of God? Certainly. When the apostle says “we,” he refers to what is true of the whole family of God; except, of course, where the reference (as in 1:4; 2:28; 4:6) is to the apostles as the givers of the truth. But there is never the confusion between converted and unconverted that some modern preachers of the gospel make. It is not after the apostolic models for the evangelist to say, “We ought to repent; we should believe the gospel; let us all flee from the wrath to come.” The apostles used to say, “Repent every one of you; be it known unto you; through this man is preached unto you.” But by the language of many a nineteenth century man you are left quite in doubt whether or no he has tried himself what he urges on others.

If so, please explain 1 John 3:9; verse 18. John gives the absolute character of the divine life possessed by the family of God. Hence this general truth stamped upon every child of God. “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit [practice] sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not.” It does not imply that the Christian never sins at all, but that he does not sin as a practice. How could that which is born of God sin? The believer however may be “overtaken in a fault.” Such slips are provided for in the verse first referred to, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” This is a necessary provision because we have what is born of the flesh as well as what is born of God.

W.T.— What is meant by “life more abundantly” (John 10:10)? It was the fuller measure of life that souls received after the Lord’s death and resurrection. Life Old Testament saints possessed, but “life more abundantly” the Lord bestowed upon the New Testament saints—the same life, but in a higher character.

T.H.— Is baptism by water in the name of the Trinity essential to a child of God? Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is enjoined by the Lord Himself (Matt. 28:19,20). It is a mode of confessing the discipleship of Christ. The doctrinal truth of which it

is a figure is given in Romans 6 The point for you to consider is whether you have confessed the Lord publicly or not. Compare B.M.M., vol. 2, pp. 41,72.

N.M.— Is it the order for a hymn to follow directly after the breaking of bread? The Spirit of God is bound by no rules save those of His own making. If He guides to a hymn after the breaking of the bread, it is well; but if it be the result of following mere routine, it will not be harmony but discord. The hymn sung by the Lord and His disciples (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26) was in connection with the paschal supper and not with His own supper then instituted. Sisters starting hymns. Exceptional circumstances may excuse such a thing, but never unless done in that modest and retiring spirit which is, perhaps, woman's chief adornment.

The Believer's Monthly Magazine: Volume 3, Talebearing.

THE word of God gives a very plain testimony against talebearing or whispering.

"Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people" (Lev. 19:16).

"A talebearer revealeth secrets; but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" (Prov. 11:13).

"A whisperer separateth chief friends" (Prov. 16:28).

"The words of a talebearer are as wounds" (Prov. 18:8).

"He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets" (Prov. 20:19).

"Where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth" (Prov. 26:20).

"Not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not" (1 Tim. 5:13).

In connection with the above passages we commend the following to the attention of our readers.

If we exhibit a man's vices only, and conceal the proportion which those vices bear to his virtues, we calumniate him quite as effectually as if we ascribe to him a vice he does not possess. A man may have a defective feature or features, and yet the general proportion of his person may be so good, and the general cast of his countenance so pleasing, that the ill effect of the features which are awry is either modified, or entirely carried off. It is an untrue representation of that man to say merely that he has too prominent an eye, or too thick or coarse a lip; that may be the case, but it is not a fair, because it is not a complete description of his personal appearance. And, similarly, if my neighbor has been overtaken (perhaps by surprise) in a grievous fault, and if I, for want of better matter to entertain my company withal, blaze abroad this fault of his, but am wholly silent as to his good character up to that time, and as to the prayers and struggles against that particular sin which he may have made, my witness against him becomes as certainly false in the general impression created by it, and therefore as mischievously injurious, as if I stated of him what was not matter of fact.

In a word, if fair account of a man's faults and sins is to be given in conversation, the common rule of justice must be attended to, that evidence shall be heard for the defendant; which if it were done, a true verdict might be arrived at by the company. But such evidence never is alleged, nor does any party appear in the interests of the defendant, so that the verdict never can escape being false, and the evidence by which it is arrived at is to all intents and purposes false witness.

This consideration evidently makes it exceedingly difficult for us, and practically all but impossible, to say anything to our neighbor's disadvantage in common conversation, which shall not be more or less false in its general effect on the minds of the hearers. If they gathered no other conclusion from our words, than that the allegation were true as an isolated fact, it might be all well and good. But this we know from our own experience they never do. With the speed of lightning we all of us proceed from adverse facts to a general unfavorable judgment on a man's character, and the devil being in the ear of the company as well as in the tongue of the accuser, the thought rises up instantaneously in their minds, "Has such a man indeed done this or that? Then what a villain he must be! how must all confidence in him be at an end!" Extracted.

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