

October 8

Be not deceived...he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Galatians 6:7,8

WE sow to the flesh every time we allow the fleshly, selfish, unjust, unrighteous desires of the flesh to have sway in our hearts and lives, and each sowing makes

R4828 Titled "SOWING AND REAPING..."

Comparatively few realize to what extent we form our own characters, to what extent our minds, our affections, are gardens in which we may plant either the thorns and thistles of sin, or the merely moral and practical qualities corresponding to the useful vegetables, or those seeds which produce the fragrant and beautiful flowers and fruits which more particularly represent the heavenly and spiritual graces. Whatsoever a man soweth he shall also reap, whether he sow to the flesh or to the *spirit*...

What a blessed privilege has been granted us, of being transformed... God has set before us the grandest reward imaginable for the doing of that which is merely our duty and our reasonable service -- the doing of that which would bring us the largest measure of

easier the additional sowing and makes more sure the end of that way which is death--Second Death. On the contrary, each sowing to the Spirit, each resistance to the desires of the flesh toward selfishness, etc., and each exercise of the new mind, of the new will, in spiritual directions toward the things that are pure, the things that are noble, the things that are good, the things that

joy and peace, aside from a future reward...

WE NEED CONSTANTLY TO
PLANT GOOD SEEDS AND
WEED OUT THE EVIL

There is for all mankind a natural attraction toward earthly things; even though, during this reign of evil, the earthly things are blemished and in many respects distasteful to those who have learned to love righteousness and hate iniquity... The Christian, therefore, who would keep his heart in the love of God, must not only keep planting good seeds, keep setting his affections on heavenly things, but he must keep rooting out the weeds of earthly desire and attraction...

PUTTING OFF AND PUTTING ON

Putting away of all the following: anger, wrath, malice, evil-speaking, impurity of language and falsehood in its every form...

are true, is a sowing to the Spirit, which will bring forth additional fruits of the Spirit, graces of the Spirit, and which, if persevered in, will ultimately bring us in accord with the Lord's gracious promises and arrangements--everlasting life and the Kingdom. Z.'04-57 R323:5

How many there are who have named the name of Christ, but who have malicious or, at least, unkind thoughts respecting others, and who harbor these, permitting them at times to influence their conduct!...

Apostle urges... putting on... *Compassionate sentiments*; a disposition of largeness and generosity of heart toward everybody...toward our friends and relatives, toward our enemies...patient endurance with the faults and weaknesses of others...

Each resistance of the desires of the flesh toward selfishness, etc., and each exercise of the new mind, of the new will, toward the things that are pure, the things that are noble, the things that are good... is a sowing to the Spirit, which, if persevered in, will ultimately bring the attainment of the Lord's gracious promises..."

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SOWING TO THE FLESH--THE RESULT DEATH

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."--Galatians 6:7

IN THIS text the Apostle seems to be emphasizing the fact that it is not enough that we make a consecration of ourselves to God, but we need to show by the earnestness of our conduct that we have received a transforming power into our lives. If we say that we are New Creatures and make a change merely in our *profession*, while still sowing to the flesh, the result will be not according to our profession, but according to our *doing*; and we shall reap the reward--*corruption*. Others may be deceived, and we may be *deceived ourselves*; but God will not be deceived. If we, on the contrary, to the best of our ability to understand the Lord's will, lay down our lives, sowing to the Spirit, then shall we reap everlasting life.

The Apostle is addressing the saints, the consecrated people of God, those who have presented their bodies living sacrifices, and whose sacrifices have been made acceptable through the merit of Christ. Being made New Creatures by the begetting of the Holy Spirit, these are to go on to reach perfection on the spirit plane.

If we, then, who are of this class, live after the flesh-- according to the desires of the flesh--we shall *die*. This does not mean that if any of God's people should have some earthly desire or some wrong sentiment spring up in their minds they would die instantly, or that they would instantly be cut off from any hope of future life on the spirit plane. The thought is that if we *live* after the flesh --pursue the desires of the flesh, follow that course in life --the end will be death. And every seed thus sown tends *toward* death. If we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption.

CERTAIN CARE FOR THE BODY NECESSARY

It would not be necessarily true in such sowing that we would *wish* to sow to the flesh. The Apostle intimates that the class he is addressing do *not* wish to sow to the flesh, but wish to do otherwise. But if we do sow to the flesh--to sensuality or to any earthly desires contrary to the new nature--the crop will come by and by. We might like to have better clothes and delicious food; we might desire to live on a good street and in a fine house; and these would not necessarily be sinful things. All these things are of the flesh, but they are not what the Apostle has especially in mind here. He is thinking of things of the fallen flesh, which are always contrary to the Spirit.

If we practice those things which our understanding of God's Word teaches us He would not approve, seeds are thus sown to the flesh. *Every inch that we yield*-- whether in thought, word or action-- means so much *decrease* of spiritual power; and the New Creature grows weaker. This might be done as respects our food and clothing, our home, our time, etc.; and this would be sowing to the flesh in such instances. If in accordance with our judgment of the Lord's will, we follow a course with a view to keeping our body in condition for best service, and if then our body, our flesh, has a craving

for certain things that would not be for our spiritual welfare, the New Creature is to say, "No, you cannot have it"; or "These things are too expensive for *you*."

There are not many who have made a sacrifice of their flesh; but it is to those who have done this that the Apostle is speaking. I, as the New Creature, say to the Old Creature--the body--"I shall give you what I think is for your *good*. I do not understand that the Lord wishes me to kill you at once, for I need your service; but the Lord wishes me to have some practice in self-denial. You shall not have your desire now, because you do not really need it. I may, however, give it to you some time again, if I think that then you *need* it and if you are good."

THE BLACKSMITH AND THE DONKEY

If the New Creature gives a free rein to the old creature about what he shall read, or eat, how long he shall sleep, at what time he shall get up, where he shall go and how long he shall stay, etc., the New Creature will have his hands full--will he not? The Spirit of the Lord is to actuate the New Creature in thought, word and action and decide what he is to do, what he shall eat, where he shall go--is to control everything. If we sow to the Spirit, if we walk after the Spirit, we shall be overcomers, we shall reap life-everlasting. We must *not yield* to the old creature. By yielding we are sowing seed to the flesh, and by and by the old creature will say, "You have been in the habit of giving that to me, and you *must* let me have it"; and the result is likely to be disastrous to the New Creature.

The matter reminds us of one of AEsop's fables which many of us have read. On a cold, frosty morning, a donkey pushed his nose in at the door of a blacksmith shop, where it was warm from a glowing fire. The blacksmith said to the donkey, "Get out!" The donkey replied, "You are stingy! I am only getting my nose warm." Presently the blacksmith looked around and perceived that the donkey had his whole head in. The blacksmith said, "Now get out, will you?" But the donkey pleaded that he was only getting a little breath of warm air, that his head surely would not trouble the blacksmith. After awhile the blacksmith looked again and saw that the donkey was half-way into the shop. Then he shouted, "Get out! get out!" But the donkey still insisted that he was only getting a little warm. So the blacksmith yielded. By and by he looked again and saw that the donkey was altogether in the shop. Then he sprang forward shouting excitedly, "Get out!" But the donkey said triumphantly, "Which of us will get out?" And thereupon he turned around and began to kick at the blacksmith. The donkey was in full *control*.

"THE END OF THAT WAY IS DEATH"

So it will be with us if we begin a course of yielding little by little to the desires of the fleshly mind. The end of the way which the

flesh craves, the Apostle teaches us, is death. St. Paul does not say that the *beginning* of that way is death; but that the beginning of that way *leads toward* death. If the old creature has gained a leeway, every step that is taken must be retraced, or the case is hopeless. The New Creature is to say to the old creature, "*You are not to be my master!*" The old creature is to be *made to know* that the *New Creature* is the Master. The New Creature develops at the expense of the old creature, the old nature, which must be put to death.

These things are not true of the world now, but will be true of them as respects their *sinful* flesh, by and by. If any during the Millennium shall yield to the fallen flesh, gradually becoming more and more alienated from the Lord, the end of that way will be death. But

they will have every assistance in their efforts to resist sin and to develop righteousness. To the Church of Christ our text is applicable *now* and in the fullest sense. Let those of us now on trial for life or death eternal, watch and pray!

"Thou seest our weakness, Lord!
Our hearts are known to Thee;
O, strengthen Thou the weary hand,
Confirm the feeble knee!
Let us in life--till death--
Thy steadfast Truth declare,
And publish with our latest breath
Thy love and guardian care."

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"BEHOLD THE GOODNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD"

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Be not deceived."--1 Cor. 6:9,10

GOD'S SEVERITY consists in his insistence upon absolute righteousness--his refusal to approve sin in any sense or degree. The very first statement of the divine law is that death, destruction, must be the wage or penalty for transgression against his righteous regulations. For six thousand years the Lord has maintained this original position --has refused to sanction sin or permit sinners to live. Such an unchangeable attitude at first seems severe, especially when we consider that we were born in sin and shapen in iniquity, infested by weaknesses and surrounded by evil influences. It seems severe on God's part to insist upon perfection, when all of our experiences teach us that it is impossible for fallen humanity to attain absolute righteousness in word and deed and thought. Indeed the Scriptures confirm our experiences, declaring, "There is none righteous, no, not one."--Rom. 3:10.

The goodness of God is not seen in the severity, but, wholly separated, it stands side by side with it. God's goodness, his generosity, his mercy, kindness, love, which are not manifested in the sentence and in the execution of its penalties, are manifested in the great gift of his love--the Lord Jesus and the Redeemer provided in him--a redemption coextensive with the fall and with the condemnation. The Apostle expresses the matter pointedly in the words, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." (I John 4:9.) God's love was not previously manifested; for over four thousand years only the severity, the justice of the divine character was manifested, though a hint was given to Abraham and subsequently through the prophets, that God had kind sentiments toward the fallen and tainted race, which in due time would bring blessings to all the families of the earth.

THE GOSPEL AGE A PARENTHESIS

The period between the first advent of our Lord and his second advent is in some respects a parenthesis in the divine plan, during which the Church is specially dealt with, as we shall see later. The redemption of the world and its reconciliation with God, based upon divine goodness expressed in the death of the Redeemer, wait for its further expression to the world until the end of the Gospel age and the opening of the Millennial age--"the world to come." When the morning of that new day shall dawn, the goodness of God will be seen more distinctly than ever by mankind. Indeed it may be said that the world as yet has seen nothing of the goodness of God; it has merely seen his severity, his justice, executed against the entire human family for the last six thousand years. A comparatively small proportion of humanity has ever heard of the grace of God in Christ, the "only name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." And even those who have heard to some extent have been measurably deceived by the great Adversary in respect to the nature of the penalty for sin and the fullness and wideness of the mercy extended to men in the person of the Redeemer.

In that new dispensation the facts will all be made clear. The blessings then coming to the world --peace, righteous government, helpful influences, the restraint of evil, the knowledge of the Lord and understanding of his gracious arrangements and purposes -- these will all be most convincing proofs to mankind of God's sympathy and mercy in Christ. The Adversary who now deceives mankind will then be bound, that he should not deceive the nations any more until the thousand years be finished, and the Word of God, which is in general now a sealed book to the world, will then be opened, and as a result the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth as the waters cover the great deep.

Nevertheless, we are not to understand that this triumph of God's mercy and goodness then displayed will in any wise imply a change of his character or of his attitude towards sin. God never

changes; "He is the same yesterday, today and forever." (Heb. 13:8.) When we come to understand the matter thoroughly, this unchangeableness on God's part is a guarantee that the blessings to be bestowed under his arrangements will be everlasting, unending blessings.

The goodness and severity of God will be displayed side by side throughout the Millennial age to every creature. All must learn the lesson that God is kind, generous and full of blessing to all those who are in harmony with him and his principles of righteousness, but that he is and always will be like a consuming fire to all who are not in accord with righteousness.

REDEMPTION ONLY THE FIRST STEP TOWARD SALVATION

The redemption of the world by the sacrifice of our Lord merely entitled humanity to a reawakening from the sleep of death, to be granted an opportunity of full reconciliation to the Father. Not a reconciliation in sin, however, but a reconciliation in righteousness. It is manifest that no change takes place in the character of any during the sleep of death: the awakening must be to the same conditions of heart and mind that went down into death. The awakened ones will, therefore, find themselves at first in the same attitude of rebellion against God and the principles of righteousness that they were in when they went into death. But there will be this difference-- that when awakened under the Kingdom conditions they will find their surroundings totally different from those of the present life: themselves the same, all things surrounding them will be changed. The powers of evil to tempt their fallen tendencies will be absent; temptations to selfishness, covetousness, etc., seen in the dominion of the prince of this world, shall find no part in the dominion of the prince of light, in the world to come--in the new dispensation. Indeed the awakened ones will find love and righteousness and kindness the laws in general force throughout the world.

And if their fallen tendencies shall still grasp after the selfish things as before, they will steadily learn the lesson that under the changed arrangements selfishness will not be advantageous to them but disadvantageous, bringing to them shame and contempt. Gradually they will learn the rules of the Kingdom, the laws of righteousness based upon justice and love. Gradually they may come into accord with these if they learn the lessons of experience during that golden age under the great Teacher, the Christ, Head and body, and under the immediate supervision of the earthly ones appointed to be their instructors and helpers in the good way and their correctors in respect to their fall. Instead of the rule which now prevails in the Church, namely, that "whosoever will live godly will suffer persecution," etc., they will find, instead, that whoever will live godly shall prosper and have increasing evidences of divine favor. In that day the ungodly shall suffer "stripes," "corrections in righteousness," "judgments," a prompt and just recompense of reward for every good and every evil deed.

THE FATHER HATH COMMITTED ALL JUDGMENT TO THE SON

The world then will be entirely in the hands of Christ, in whom the Father has centered all his mercy and all his provisions of grace. Only those who will then come into accord with the Son, the glorified Christ, and continue in accord with the laws of the Millennial Kingdom--and none others--will be prepared by the close of the Millennial age to be delivered over directly to the Heavenly Father and the operations of his absolute law of justice without mercy. This is the period spoken of by the Apostle in I Cor. 15:24-28, when Immanuel shall have put down all sin, all unrighteousness, all insubordination to God; when he shall have raised up as many of the redeemed human family as would hear his voice, as would obey him--

raised them up, up, up, to the very top notch of human perfection--to all that was lost in Adam, with, additionally, the large stores of knowledge gained through the fall, the redemption and the uplifting processes.

Nor need we fear the fact that the world will then be turned over to the Father's judgment and law of justice without mercy, because having reached perfection they will need no mercy. God's laws are not impossible to the perfect, but only to the imperfect, and by that time all the imperfections of all the willing and obedient will have been removed--all the blights and marks of sin in mind and in body will have been "blotted out."--Acts 3:19.

The angels who kept their first estate in obedience and perfection needed not an exercise of clemency toward them, needed no mercy, because they were not transgressors of the divine law. The law of the Lord is just and perfect and good, and every way desirable to and for those who are perfect. The difficulty of mankind under that perfect law, and their need for a Mediator and for clemency, all rest on the fact that as an entire race we are sold under sin through disobedience, and that we are all imperfect and prone to sin because of imperfection.

Thus seen God's law and exhortation to mankind in due time will be, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous; he who committeth sin is of the devil," the Adversary, and opposed to the divine being by being opposed to the divine regulations and arrangements of righteousness. God's attitude toward all wilful sinners during the Millennial age and at its close will be in full accord with the same severity which has always marked his attitude toward sin--a destructive severity --not a torturing severity, delighting in the anguish of the victim, but a just severity which has decreed, and will never alter the decree, that only those who love righteousness and hate iniquity shall have everlasting life on any plane.

THE OPERATION OF GOD'S GOODNESS AND SEVERITY TOWARD THE CHURCH DURING THIS GOSPEL AGE

Having traced the operation of God's plan toward the world, as he instructs us it will be carried out during the Millennial age, we now return to the still more important matter respecting the operation of God's goodness and severity toward ourselves--toward the Church during the present time. Why the Lord should make a difference between his dealings with the Church in this Gospel age and the world during the Millennial age can only be appreciated by those who accept the Scriptural declaration that during the present time God is making special selection of a special class, possessed of special characteristics and for a special service both now and hereafter. It is because of all these special features that the Church has a different experience from that which the world will have by and by.

All will agree that the reasonable, fair test that could justly be applied to mankind is the one which will be applied during the Millennial age to all the human family--a test under fair conditions, as favorable to righteousness as to sin, and more so, a test as to loyalty to principles of righteousness. But in the present time God makes a test which might be considered a severer one than would be fair, and hence this testing is not a general or world-wide test, but is confined to a limited number, who are assured in the Scriptures that in being granted this extra severe testing God is showing them a great favor. The favor belongs mainly to the future, and hence, as the Lord and the apostles everywhere pointed out, the inspiring incentive presented to this favored and specially called class is a hope, a future hope of glory, honor and immortality, joint-heirship with our Lord in the Kingdom privileges and blessings of the Millennial age and subsequently to all eternity.

"THINK IT NOT STRANGE CONCERNING THE FIERY TRIALS WHICH SHALL TRY YOU"

To this class are given fiery trials, temptations, etc., more than justice, equity, would call for. It is required of this class in its call that they not only love righteousness and hate iniquity, but that they shall do so at the cost of the sacrifice not only of the pleasures of sin but also at the cost of many reasonable pleasures, comforts, joys, etc., which are not of themselves unrighteous. This class are called to be sacrificers, and are distinctly told that if they would come up to the requirements of their call they must be prepared not only to resist sin and weaknesses of their own flesh and temptations from others, but additionally to suffer for their well-doing, to suffer for godliness, for righteousness--to be evil-spoken of falsely for the Lord's cause' sake. They are even informed that unless they suffer chastisements, trials, persecutions, oppositions of some kind in the present time, they lack the evidences of adoption into God's family as new creatures: "For what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? If ye be without chastisement then are ye bastards and not sons"--not new creatures. Heb. 12:8.

It is with this class that our text especially deals; for while the

whole world is blind to the precious things of the Word of God, nevertheless, when the new dispensation shall have been fully ushered in and the Sun of righteousness shall have shed forth his beams and scattered all the night of darkness, evidently the Lord's Word, which is now our lamp, will not be the only instructor and guide of the world--having been supplanted by the full light. That which is perfect having come, that which is in part will be esteemed only as a precious friend, whose testimony will be in full accord with all the gracious manifestations of divine love, wisdom and power then resulting.

The Apostle is addressing the Church when he speaks of the goodness and severity of God, and it is highly important that we apply his words correctly. The Church has perceived the severity of divine justice, and has also been granted the opening of the eyes of understanding to discern the Goodness of God in the provision of the Savior and the blessings which flow to us through him. The Church has tasted of the good Word of God and been made partaker of his holy Spirit, has come to some knowledge of the powers of the age to come and the blessings then to be actually conferred. Now she rejoices in all these things by faith--faith in God, faith in Christ, faith in the grand outcome as delineated in the Scriptures. The words of our text are specially applicable to this very class in this very time, as we have just seen. They will also be applicable to the world in its trial-time in the coming age.

Now, the Lord speaks to the New Creation, saying, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived." At first we are inclined to stand amazed and say, God has made no provision for our attaining actual perfection, all the provisions for such restitution belonging to the next age! How then can he require righteousness of us, who still have the blemished bodies, imperfect judgments, etc., resulting from the fall? After telling us that there is none righteous, no, not one, how shall we understand the declaration that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God--not be joint-heirs with Christ in the Kingdom--not inherit the glorious things which we have hoped for by the Lord's grace? The answer is that God has made special provision for the Church of this Gospel age. Instead of making us perfect in the flesh, and then requiring absolute perfection in word, deed and thought, as will be required of the world at the close of the next age, the Lord deals with us in an *imputed* manner. To those who exercise the requisite faith he imputes righteousness, which offsets the unrighteousness or natural blemishes of their flesh. But only to those who exercise the faith is there such an imputation of Christ's righteousness; those who cannot exercise the faith are still in their sins, aliens from God until the coming of the new dispensation, when the blotting out of sins will begin in an actual way. But to those who do believe and to whom the righteousness of Christ is imputed because of faith, there is still a testing of the heart.

It would be useless for the Lord to offer the prize of joint-heirship in the Kingdom to anyone perfect in the flesh when there are none such--our Lord Jesus being the only one, and he because he was not of the Adamic stock. God's provision, therefore, is that the justified by faith shall be counted perfect, counted righteous so long as their hearts, their wills, their best endeavors, are for righteousness. How simple and yet how sublime this arrangement, how it adapts itself to all the circumstances and conditions of the Lord's people! It is respecting this justification *by faith*, this "righteousness of God by faith," that the Apostle, says, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"--being justified freely from all things.--Rom. 5:1.

SEE THAT YE RECEIVE NOT THE GRACE OF GOD IN VAIN

There is danger, however, here: some are disposed to take advantage of God's grace and kindness and mercy, and while willingly, knowingly indulging in sin, to hope for justification *in* sin instead of *from* sin. The Apostle is bringing this matter to our attention, and implies that there is great need of care. He says, "Be not deceived." God knoweth the heart: we might deceive ourselves but we cannot deceive the Lord. It behooves us, therefore, to be on our guard respecting righteousness, justice, to see that the sentiments of our hearts are continually in opposition to unrighteousness, to sin, to all in-equity. The Apostle proceeds to point out that faith in Christ, and the acceptance of the divine law as our regulation principle in life, mean more than faith in the Lord Jesus. They mean our very best endeavors to speak and act and think in accord with the divine will--namely, in accord with righteousness.

THE "MARK" MUST BE ATTAINED, ELSE THE PRIZE WILL NOT BE OURS

There is no standstill for the New Creature. He must go on and reach a certain standard of perfection, else he cannot be counted in

as one of the Kingdom class. The Apostle does indeed speak of the New Creatures as at first being babes in Christ, but the Kingdom will not be made up of babes in Christ, but of overcomers, and the overcoming is not, as we know, a matter of age or physical stature, but a matter of spiritual development, of growth in grace and knowledge and love. ⁽¹⁾We are to grow in love, and love is the principle thing, but before we can make much development in the cultivation of love, we must learn to be just, right, righteous. It is a proper presentation of the matter that is given in the proverb, that a man should be just before he is generous.

It behooves the Lord's people, therefore, the New Creation, that they study this subject of justice continually, and daily put into practice the lessons inculcated in the divine Word. All of the saints must be the foes of sin. Wherever sin is they must wage a warfare against it, and see to it that in their hearts at least they are free from sin, that in their hearts they do not countenance sin but oppose it, that sin finds no harboring place or sympathizing weakness in their hearts. This will make them radical as respects the words of their mouths, the conduct of life and the meditations of their hearts, that all of these shall be in absolute accord with the divine Word and its spirit of righteousness, holiness, truth, etc. ⁽²⁾Such as get this proper foundation of character before they begin to build love will find that they are making progress properly. All love that is founded upon injustice or wrong ideas of righteousness is delusive, is not the love which the Lord will require as the test of discipleship.

"BE NOT DECEIVED"

The Apostle's words in our text, "Be not deceived," imply just what we see all about us: that many profess to be the Lord's people, profess to love him, profess the golden rule as their guide in life, and yet are blind to justice (righteousness) in many of the affairs of life. They exercise too much mercy in dealing with their own shortcomings and too little when examining the faults and weaknesses of others.

The Apostle proceeds to specify some of the unrighteous, unjust things to which the Lord's people should find themselves opposed. As these are examined individually they are all found to contain a weakness in favor of self at the expense of others; they all imply an injustice to others for the pleasure or advantage of self. Some of these unrighteous things specified are very gross, and one might suppose would be recognized as unrighteous even by worldly people; yet the Apostle intimates that some who profess to be the Lord's people have such lax ideas of justice that they do not perceive how abominable these unrighteous matters are--fornication, adultery, thievery, drunkenness, etc. Those who find themselves in any degree of sympathy with these evil qualities, these unrighteous acts, are deceived if they think themselves to be the Lord's people. "God is not mocked: he that doeth righteousness is righteous."--Gal. 6:7.

In other words, it is in vain that we profess to be the Lord's people, profess to be the servants of righteousness and truth, and love these principles, if our conduct clearly demonstrates that we love unrighteousness. For such persons to profess to be the Lord's people is to mock God by assuming that he cannot read the heart, and that what may be hidden to some extent from earthly beings is equally hidden from the Almighty with whom we have to do. He that doeth righteousness is not necessarily he only who is perfect, but rather he that doeth righteousness to the extent of his best ability and who is trusting in the Redeemer's merit to compensate unintentional shortcomings--he is righteous in God's sight--he is approved.

VARYING MANIFESTATIONS OF SELFISHNESS, SIN

The Apostle proceeds to specify other unrighteous conduct, not so gross as the sins already enumerated, but nevertheless wholly inconsistent with membership in the Kingdom class. These are specified as covetousness, revilings, extortioners, etc. Those who have made any advancement in the Christian way, we may surely trust, are far from having sympathy with the gross evils; and they may therefore have special need to examine themselves carefully in regard to these other more subtle evil qualities, deleterious to their interests as prospective heirs with Christ in the Kingdom. What is covetousness but selfishness--the desire to have, possess, enjoy something at the expense of another? What is idolatry but selfishness, the idolizing of money or fame or influence or child or self or some other creature, exalted to and receiving the honor due to the Almighty?

What is reviling but an exhibition of selfishness again, which takes this method of doing injury to the feelings or to the reputation of another?--evil speaking is classed by the Apostle in another place

as one of the works of the flesh and of the devil. It is wholly out of harmony with justice and the golden rule,--for who would like to be reviled or evil spoken of?--it is therefore injustice, unrighteousness, and cannot be the disposition of those who are in any degree begotten of the Spirit and growing in grace. What is extortion but selfishness, injustice, unrighteous dealings with others?--accepting from them, either because of ignorance or stress of circumstances, such money or valuables as are not fully, justly, righteously due.

SOWING AND REAPING--TO THE FLESH OR TO THE SPIRIT

The Apostle in another epistle repeats these words, "Be not deceived;" and adds, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap; for he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. 6:7,8.) He is not addressing the world; it is the New Creation that is either sowing to the flesh or sowing to the Spirit, and that either will reap of the flesh or reap of the Spirit. ⁽³⁾We sow to the flesh every time we allow the fleshly, selfish, unjust, unrighteous desires of the flesh to have sway in our hearts and lives, and each sowing makes easier the additional sowing and makes more sure the end of that way which is death--Second Death. On the contrary each sowing to the Spirit, each resistance to the desires of the flesh toward selfishness, etc., and each exercise of the new mind, of the new will, in spiritual directions toward the things that are pure, the things that are noble, the things that are good, the things that are true, is a sowing to the Spirit, which will bring forth additional fruits of the Spirit, graces of the Spirit, and which, persevered in, will ultimately bring us in accord with the Lord's gracious promises and arrangements-- everlasting life and the Kingdom.

"LET NO MAN DECEIVE YOU"

The Apostle John has a word to say also about the danger of being deceived after we have become New Creatures in Christ. His words are, "Let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." (I John 3:7,8.) The Apostle is not speaking here of some one whose heart is loyal to the Lord and who is momentarily overtaken in a fault, for he declares respecting such that there is forgiveness for them because of the weakness or the ignorance which permitted them to be ensnared. He is, however, speaking most distinctly of a willingness of the heart to sin, to do unrighteousness. He indicates a great truth when he suggests that there are but two sides to the question,--that Satan is on the side of sin, and that all who love and with willingness practise sin are on his side. On the other side of the question are the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself as the Redeemer of mankind, that he might destroy Satan and all who sympathize with Satan in their opposition to God and his righteous arrangements.

"LET US EXAMINE OURSELVES"

The Apostle continues, "Whosoever is born [begotten] of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin because he is born [begotten] of God." The thought is that those begotten of the good seed of Truth, begotten of the holy Spirit, cannot, so long as that seed of Truth and the Spirit of the Lord is alive in them, wilfully, deliberately turn to sin to practise it. If such should turn to sin wilfully and deliberately it would be conclusive evidence that the seed, the holy Spirit with which they had been begotten as children of God, had perished.

The Apostle adds, "In this the children of God are manifest from the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God--neither he who loveth not his brother." Here again the question is sharply drawn as between the children of God and the children of the devil. All who are on the side of righteousness are on God's side. These will love justice and oppose selfishness, and sin which is related to selfishness, in every sense and in every degree compatible with their opportunities and commission. But this is not enough: they must do more than love to do what is right; they must have such a love for the truth as would even lead them to sacrifice their rights on behalf of the Lord or any of his "brethren." If we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, is good, we have tasted also that he is just, and in that sense of the word, severe. Let us then, while rejoicing in divine favor, see to it that we walk circumspectly, and that our walk in life is not after the flesh, which leads more or less directly to death, but after the Spirit, after righteousness, after Truth, all of which lead, under the Lord's blessing and guidance, to everlasting life and the Kingdom honors and glories with our dear Redeemer.

⁽¹⁾ ½ Oct 14 Manna, Prov. 21:3

⁽²⁾ ½ Oct. 14 Manna

⁽³⁾ Oct. 8 Manna, Gal. 6:7-8