

Messenger and Visitor

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The Gospel a Rule of Life.

There is one fact with reference to the gospel of Christ which is not wrought into the consciousness of every Christian as thoroughly as it should be, and which a good deal of the preaching that the people get, overlooks. In this we may be greatly mistaken, but so it seems to us. It is this, that the gospel is designed as a rule of life as well as a means of salvation; and that it must be definitely and decidedly accepted as a rule of life by him who would lay hold of its promises and exult in its hopes.

In saying this, we do not wish for one moment to intimate that salvation is, in any degree, the result of keeping the requirements of the gospel (we have not so learned Christ;) but it must not be forgotten that the gospel has its requirements, and that to put it in Scriptural language "if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his." Salvation is the thing that most awakened sinners have their eyes on. Salvation is the grand object with many a Christian. Salvation is the burden of much of our preaching. But those who seek salvation and those who proclaim it, should ever bear in mind that he who would have Christ as a Saviour must also take him as a master. "Ye are my friends," says Christ, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." How often that conjunction is overlooked by both preacher and people.

Perhaps there is not so much technical antinomianism in the churches to-day as in days past. Christ's professed followers do not openly infer their lawlessness from the fact that they are 'a law unto themselves,' and parade this law as a high prerogative of discipleship; yet if we are not greatly mistaken there are church members, not a few, who understand by Christ's being 'the end of the law,' not merely that He has satisfied its requirements in the believer's behalf—freed him from the penalty attached to its violation, and emancipated him from its servile constraint; but that he has been freed from all moral obligations whatever. Christ is the end of the law with a vengeance to them—not only as one who sets aside the ceremonial requirements of the old dispensation, but one who frees them from moral restraints which are older than the Ten Commandments, and would be imperative on the human race for all time, if they had never been recorded by the finger of God on tablets of stone. A new era of freedom, of liberty, of go-as-you-please, has been ushered in. They are not under any law—moral or ceremonial—in any sense. They are 'under grace.' They have accepted Christ, and are consequently in a state of salvation. A feeling of satisfaction with the arrangement may lead them to fitful and intermittent effort to lead others to accept it; but no sense of moral responsibility—of rigid accountability as to a Master—presses upon them, developing Christian stability and Christian fortitude. They are saved,—saved; and salvation is the end of their religious existence.

But are they saved? Can Christ be a Saviour to men without being a Master? Can the gospel be a means of salvation and not, at the same time, a rule of life? Have we a right to appropriate all the promises and ignore all the precepts? Will not love for Him who has redeemed him, lead the right-minded Christian to re-impose upon himself, with a deeper meaning, the moral law which Jesus has satisfied in his behalf? Is not that what the Bible really means where it speaks of being a law unto one's self?

There is but one Scriptural answer to these questions; and accepting that answer, a reform is imperative in a good deal of our religious thinking, a good deal of our church life—and perhaps, in some of our preaching. Brethren, let us make the gospel a rule of life. Let us square our conduct by its principles—its precepts!

Like Father, Like Son.

There used to be an old adage in vogue that a debt was something to be paid when due, and that a failure to pay was a misfortune or a disgrace, according as the debtor was unable or unwilling to discharge his just obligations. But this notion is rather archaic as a principle of daily life. It is to be numbered, we fear in too many instances, "among the lost arts." Doubtless there is yet a willingness to admit in the abstract, that a creditor is entitled to recover what is due him, if he can do so.

But there is no corresponding sense of obligation to pay on the side of the debtor. A debt sits lightly on the conscience. It is easily and thoughtlessly contracted; and when the hour of payment comes the consideration of convenience weighs far more than that of honor in determining whether or not the debt shall be discharged. If to pay is perfectly convenient, entailing no deprivation of the ordinary pleasures and luxuries of life, well and good,—the idea of practising rigid self-denial, or of changing the accustomed style of living in order to pay—why, that is out of the question. The creditor must wait. The fact that he has a right to his money, or that, should it be withheld from him, he may be compelled to change his style of living, or even go into bankruptcy, is not, in the minds of those neglectful debtors, deemed worthy of a thought. One must keep up and enjoy his wonted luxuries and pastimes, whatever happens to creditors. And thousands of worthy tradesmen are today at their wits' end to carry on their business because of the unpaid accounts lumbering their books, charged against men standing high in church and society in whose integrity they believed they could safely trust. Many a hard working dress-maker has suffered untold hardship because of the guilty carelessness in this respect, of the women for whom they have toiled.

There is no reason to fear that these light and airy notions respecting the payment of debts will exert, unless they are speedily replaced by more scrupulous sentiments, a very bad influence upon the morals of the next generation. The father who neglects to pay his debts need not be surprised if his son develop even looser views of the law of *mine* and *thine*. It will be a sad thing, indeed, if the children of this generation grow up with the feeling that prompt payment of debt, and hard work and rigid self-denial to accomplish payment, are matters of no serious concern. But parents must set the example themselves of thorough honesty in all their dealings, if they wish their sons to become men of sterling integrity and a keen sense of honor.

Editorial Notes.

—F. B. Meyer says there is no sense in always telegraphing to heaven for God to send a cargo of blessings, unless we are at the wharf to unload the vessel when it comes.

—One of the officers under the command of the Iron Duke upon being charged with a difficult duty at great hazard, lingered for a moment, as if in doubt, and then said, "Give me one clasp of your all-conquering hand, before I go, and then, I can do it." Let every Christian seek the clasp of Christ's hand before every bit of work, every hard task, every battle, every good deed. Bow your hearts to him at the morning hour, ere you go forth to meet the day's duties and perils, and wait for his hand of blessing to be on your heads as you wait before him. Thus you may be assured that "As thy day is thy strength shall be."

—Dr. Day the chancellor of the University of Syracuse in an address to the Methodist ministers of New York, among other informing things, in speaking of various sources of trouble in churches said 'a heresy minister is a stumbling-block, a kid ministry is the bane of the church, and about the worst thing in the world is a 'sissy' minister. The Dr.'s remarks were forceful and pungent, if not convincing. Not the least good thing that can be said of them, is that they were refreshing and stimulating.

—It is a truism that the more men and the more money we can furnish for foreign mission fields and the more

we do for the heathen, the more God will prosper our work at home. Since the day of Carey, the founder of the great foreign mission enterprise, who began his work in India just a little more than a century ago, there have been more converts to Christianity than there had been for a thousand years before. Our churches must never wait until all their current expenses are met, church debts provided for, and before they can even think about the conversion of the heathen, not to say anything about doing something to give them the gospel. What blindness, nay what strange perversity! How can they act so wickedly!

—It is said that the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention last year employed 674 missionaries, who reported 8 150 additions by experience and baptism, and 9 051 by letter, a total of 17 201. They organized, or assisted in the organization of, 231 churches and built and repaired, or helped to do so, 398 houses of worship, and organized 674 Sunday schools. They also distributed 27,499 Bibles and Testaments and 2 084 355 tracts and papers. The total amount received by the Board was \$1,045,929. This speaks well for our Southern Baptist brethren. They are doing a good work for God and their fellows. It is not generally known that in the Southern States of America are to be found three-fifths of the Baptists of the world, and over a million and a half are white.

—Max Muller said, "Six religions have gained pre-eminence in the world. Three are anti-missionary, viz., Judaism, Brahmanism and Confucianism, and they are dead or dying; and three missionary, viz., Christianity, Buddhism and Mohammedanism, and they are contending with each other for the world's mastery." A light-house is only useful as it gives light and so saves life. When the best course to drive the life-blood to the extremities of the body it is dead. A church is useful in proportion as it is aggressively engaged in the evangelization of the world. How is it with your church brother pastor, active or passive?

—Some one has said—'Our safety hangs upon Christ's work for us; our assurance upon God's word to us; our enjoyment upon our not grieving the Holy Spirit in us'—These are words well chosen and weighty. Our only safety is in Christ's work for us on the cross. And if we want the assurance of faith, where can we go to obtain it, but to the word of God which lives and abides? and as for comfort? He only gives that who takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us.—This is one mission of the Paraclete to, and in, the church.

—Said the great Apostle, 'For me to live is Christ. Suppose this great truth were dominant in the hearts of the membership of our churches, what might we expect? The possibilities are simply enormous, though one such church had only 120 members, and the members were poor as to this world's goods, yet like that little band of the same number in apostolic days, they would simply be invincible before every foe, and the lines of their influence and power would not be converging, but expanding lines, going out in all directions, conquering and to conquer the lost for Jesus, such a church would be a city set on a hill that cannot be hid.'

—The mission of a church—What is it? To point the unsaved to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, and to build up the saved in the word and work of Christ. It is one great work with two sides to it,—evangelization and edification, these constitute the mission of a church, of Jesus Christ. This is her first, her second, her third, her last, her only mission. For this the churches were brought into being by their Divine Founder, and for this He leaves them for a season here on the earth. All things are to be read in the light of this one sublime mission. All thinking, planning, toiling, hoping, praying, living, is to this one end. A great mission surely—Would that all our members were fully alive to its meaning!

—In the exposition of the Sunday School lesson for March 1st. as found in The Standard, the expositor says: "The incident has its modern parallels, but not of the sort alleged by a certain class of persons who forget or almost deny that the Holy Spirit is present in regeneration. These persons hold that there are a multitude of Christians, regenerated, indeed, but without the gift of the Spirit; that by prayer and a unique act of surrender and faith they ought to seek an infusing of divine power which shall be absolutely new and unique—the coming of the Spirit. There is indeed a real 'second blessing' which all the disciples need, but it is not unique, and in our weak human nature needs to be supplemented again and again by a third blessing and a fourth and many more. The fact that this eccentric and ill-balanced doctrine is preached ought not to deter Christian teachers from insisting on the reality of that part of spiritual experience which sometimes begins at conversion, but often not until after—ard—the conscious realization of the indwelling Spirit as the controlling power in the life." We hope the story of this S. S. lesson will help many to a clearer vision of the work by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers.