

Children of the Day

***“Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”
—I Thessalonians 5:5,6***

THESE WORDS OF ADMONITION are given in connection with Paul's prophecy pertaining to events due to take place at the end of the age—the period which he designates “the day of the Lord.” In chapter 5, verses 1 and 2 he explains that during this day of the Lord, the “brethren” would not be in darkness concerning the meaning of events occurring around them. The reason is that they are “the children of light, and the children of the day.”

The children of darkness are those who are unenlightened by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and therefore still under the blinding and darkening influences of the god of this world. Concerning these, Paul wrote, “The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the

image of God, should shine unto them.” (II Cor. 4:4) The children of the day are not thus blinded by the Adversary. Concerning these, the apostle wrote, “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”—vs. 6

It has been important for the brethren in every part of the age to be awake and alert with respect to their relationship with God. In this sense of the word, the faithful of the entire church class have been watchful, taking careful notice of all the directions which the Lord has given concerning the manner in which they could render acceptable service to him. Now that we are living at the end of the age, and thus in the day of the Lord, it is even more important that we watch ourselves, striving to walk as nearly as possible in the footsteps of our great High Priest, our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

We are not only to “watch,” but we are also to be “sober.” This is the opposite of spiritual intoxication, which is a very unhealthy condition for New Creatures in Christ Jesus. We need to be on the alert that we do not become intoxicated with the spirit of the world, or with the love of pleasure, or of money. Especially do we need to be on guard lest we become intoxicated with the love of self. If we are truly awake to our privileges as Christians, and to the times in which we are living, we will realize how very unwise it is to permit earthly pleasures and advantages of any kind to stand in our way of full obedience to the divine will.

The day of the Lord is the time of the Master’s Second Presence, and the fulfillment of many signs

given in the Scriptures indicates that we are now living in this period of the divine plan. We are witnessing the portentous events which will ultimately result in the passing away of this present evil world. Our affections should, more than ever, be set upon the things of God which pertain to the new world, the “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Peter wrote, “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.”—II Pet. 3:11-13

If we are fully living up to our privileges as children of the day, we will be ordering our lives as though we were actually living in the time when the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal. 4:2), shall have scattered all the mists of satanic darkness, and the laws of the new kingdom are in operation. Admonishing us along this line, Paul wrote that we should walk “as in the day.” (Rom. 13:13) This is a very high standard of conduct set before us.

To be sober, in keeping with Paul’s admonition, means to have the spirit “of a sound mind.” (II Tim. 1:7) This, in turn, means to be guided by God’s Spirit as it reveals the divine will through the written Word. To be guided and controlled by the Spirit of the Lord means that we will be meek and gentle, and that we will have love for God, for our brethren, for all in the world, and even for our enemies. If we are truly watchful and sober, we will have an earnest appreciation of present opportunities and privileges in connection with the Lord’s service. We will not be thoughtlessly negligent, letting opportunities and privileges slip through our hands, afterward to be regretted.

PROVOKING ONE ANOTHER

Proper watchfulness on the part of the consecrated also involves being on the alert to serve the brethren by encouraging them to greater faithfulness and steadfastness or, as Paul states it, provoking them “unto love and to good works.” (Heb. 10:24) Watchfulness along this line is particularly appropriate in the day of the Lord, as is indicated by Paul’s suggestion that we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, and “so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”—vs. 25

It is not difficult to discern why the Lord’s people should be especially watchful of their relationship to the Lord during the time of his Second Presence. The present time is spoken of in the Scriptures as “the evil day” (Eph. 6:13; 5:16), even as we see beyond the clouds the dawning rays of light of the coming new day. The evils of today are manifested in many ways. It is a time when strong delusions of false doctrines are being put forth on every hand, even among those professing to be footstep followers of the Master. It is a time when the importance of discerning between the true teachings of the Bible as opposed to the traditions of the past, as well as the falsely-claimed “new light” of the present, is crucial. Never was there a time when a “thus saith the Lord” was more indispensable to the faith structure and guidance of the children of the day than now. Many are the subtle influences today which tend to lead away from the pure truth of God’s Word.

The greatly accelerated tempo of following world events resulting from electronic communication media, has done much to increase the stresses of

business and daily life in general, and has inflicted man with an unprecedented pressure to keep abreast of the times. This has brought a correspondingly greater danger to the Lord's people of being "choked" with the cares of this world, as pointed out in the parable of the sower. (Matt. 13:22) While few of the Lord's people may be in danger of intoxication from the actual possession of riches, yet "the deceitfulness of riches," leading to undue efforts to secure them, is an intoxicating influence in the hearts and lives of all who are not on guard against this worldly allurements.

Perhaps never before has the mere matter of making a living been such a strenuous one. It is a time when we especially need the counteracting influence of the Spirit of God in our lives to offset the pressures of the world and its cares. One of the best means of obtaining and retaining God's Spirit is through association with the Lord's people—the children of the day. We need this communion with one another, and also with the Lord. What rich blessings are received when, by meeting together, we exhort and encourage one another to steadfastness along the lines of the instructions laid down in his Word.

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

In Ephesians 5:18,19, the Apostle Paul again explains the advantages of meeting together with the Lord's people for mutual encouragement. In this passage, he contrasts the blessings thus received with the unrighteous condition of being "drunk with wine," that is, with false doctrines, and selfish, ambitious practices. As an antidote for such a

condition, Paul says, “Be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

Jesus agrees with Paul on the necessity of spiritual soberness and watchfulness on the part of the children of the day. He said, “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”—Luke 21:34-36

Among the things coming to pass during the day of the Lord is the destruction of man’s social order, including the false creeds, traditions, dogmas of men, and denominationalism which is based upon these false teachings. The symbolic fire of the day of the Lord not only destroys man-made opinions and institutions built upon them, but also reveals that which is in harmony with God and that which is opposed to his precepts.

Paul’s lesson on how a Christian should build upon the proper foundation, Christ Jesus, shows that in the day of the Lord it shall be revealed just how one has built. Those who have built with the wood, hay, and stubble of human tradition will have their works destroyed. Those who have built with gold, silver, and precious stones of the divine Word will see their works abide. (I Cor. 3:11-16) These are the ones who will “stand before the Son of man.”—Luke 21:36

The children of the light who are faithfully taking heed to their own standing before the Lord, and also watching the prophecies pertaining to the events at the end of the age, are not in darkness pertaining to the fact of Christ's Second Presence and associated developments. They are not, therefore, blindly and complacently saying, "peace, peace" (Jer. 6:14), so far as man's social order is concerned. For this reason, the destruction that comes upon the whole world is not a surprise to them. These understand the significance of what is occurring, and the necessity for it. As the children of the light, they are sympathetic to the groaning creation, but they do not question the troubles of the world, not even the incidental inconveniences and sufferings that world conditions bring upon them. Instead, and in harmony with Jesus' instructions, they joyfully look up, and lift up their heads, knowing that their deliverance "draweth nigh."—Luke 21:28

THE ARMOR OF GOD

Paul indicates that the matter of being sober includes the necessity of putting on "the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." (I Thess. 5:8) This is in keeping with what he writes as recorded in Ephesians 6:11-18: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." And again: "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done [overcome, *Marginal Translation*] all, to stand." (vs. 13) Putting on the whole armor of God implies a proper use of all aspects of

the truth, in its every relationship to the Christian life.

Certainly we need the whole armor of truth as a protection against the many defiling errors and other evil influences of the present time. We need the truth as “an helmet” of salvation; that is, we need to understand the doctrines, and how they apply to us as Christians. We need to know God, and to be assured that he is caring for us, and causing all our experiences to work together for our good. Without this knowledge, we might well become discouraged and give ear to one or another of Satan’s sophistries designed to lure us away from the light of God’s Word, and into the darkness of human traditions.

We need “the breastplate of righteousness”—the heart application of the Truth as it is centered in Christ Jesus and his blood by which we are justified. How wonderful it is to know that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin, and that our imperfect works are, through Christ, acceptable to the Heavenly Father.

We need also “the shield of faith.” “This is the victory that overcometh the world,” writes John, “even our faith.” (I John 5:4) We also need the girdle of truth, which symbolizes our consecration to the service of the Lord, the Truth, and the brethren. All the other parts of the armor fail of their purpose if we do not serve the Truth.

We are also to have our feet shod with “the preparation of the gospel of peace.” This indicates that our walk in life as children of the day should be in keeping with our most holy faith. Walking thus, we are promoters of peace and goodwill, rather than of strife and hate.

“The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,” is also a very essential part of our armor as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. Possessing the sword of the Spirit suggests a faithful use of the Truth. Not only should we wield it as an influence for good among others, but also in cutting down the evil imaginations, or reasonings (margin), of our own hearts.—II Cor. 10:5

We should ever remember that having on the whole armor of God includes more than possessing a mere head knowledge of the Truth, as represented by the helmet of salvation. This knowledge is important, and we should seek to know the Truth in as much detail as possible. However, this knowledge alone will not protect us against the wiles of the Adversary in this evil day. In addition to knowing the Truth, we need a heart reliance and appreciation of the message, and a realization of the righteousness of God as it is represented in the Truth.

THE LIFE-GIVER

Jesus speaks of himself as being “the light of the world.” (John 8:12) He is that “true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” John wrote. (chap. 1:9) The light of truth, emanating from the Heavenly Father himself, is reflected through Jesus, the living Word of God. By means of this light, the knowledge of God’s glory will soon fill the whole earth as the waters cover the sea. (Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14) To be children of the day means that we are followers of Jesus. As Jesus reflected the light of the Heavenly Father, and because of this was the light of the world, so his

followers, who radiate the light shining from him, are said by Jesus to be the “light of the world.”—Matt. 5:14

This should mean more to us than a mere theory. It should mean an earnest, intelligent effort on our part to learn the Truth and obey it, and also to copy the characteristic qualities of the great Light-giver. This means that as the children of the light we will be faithful in bearing witness to the light, which is the glorious Gospel of the kingdom.

As true followers of the light as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, we will endeavor as far as possible to be like him. We will strive to be like him in meekness, in patience, in gentleness, in forbearance, and in love. Jesus was a servant of all, and we will also endeavor to be faithful in our service of our Heavenly Father, of the brethren, and of all with whom we come into contact.

The true standard of soberness, from the spiritual standpoint, is represented in the Master. We see it in his temperance and moderation in all things, and in his complete devotion to his Father. As children of the day, we will endeavor to walk as faithfully as possible in the footsteps of the Day Star who, in this time of his Second Presence, has arisen in the hearts of the faithful watchers.—II Pet. 1:19

PROPHECIES AND EVENTS

It is also important to watch the developments of God’s plan, as we see them taking place through the fulfillment of prophecy. It is through our watching the fulfillment of prophecy in the events of the world and the church that we are able to know that

the day of the Lord is at hand. Failure to watch along this line might well make the difference between our being the children of the day and the children of the darkness.

To know that we are living in the days of the presence of the Son of man is in itself inspiring knowledge. What great joy has been brought into the hearts of thousands in learning of the Bridegroom's presence, realizing that he has come and has been conducting the harvest work foretold to be done at the end of the age. This knowledge, however, is intended to be more than an inspiration. It is given to the consecrated children of the day as a guide to the manner in which they are to serve the Lord.

To know that Christ is present, and that the harvest continues to progress, reveals the privilege of the consecrated to join in that work. It means that in their service of the Lord they are cooperating with him intelligently, showing themselves approved by him because of their faithfulness in "rightly dividing the word of truth."—II Tim. 2:15

Faithfulness as watchers, however, does not imply the necessity of seeing in advance all the details of those things which are to happen with regard to the religious, economic, social, and political systems of this present evil world. The increasing light of the new day does not reveal the exact details in advance as to just how these systems are to fall. However, we know that the prophecies of God's Word contain all the information along this line which we need to enable us to be faithful children of the day. We know also that as these

prophecies continue to be fulfilled we can discern more details of their meaning. This is God's loving provision for the daily renewal of our full assurance of faith and of hope—so let us continue to be faithful watchers.

It would not be an evidence of soberness on our part should we attempt to change our role in the plan of God from watchers to prophets. We believe that the Master is present. We believe that the Gentile “kings have had their day.” We see the deterioration of Satan's evil order continuing to take place. We see natural Israel re-established as a nation in its own land. We recognize the futility of all human efforts to straighten out the tangled affairs of a dying world. These things we believe, in accord with the evidences of the fulfillment of Bible prophecy as seen through the events of this harvest period of the Gospel Age. May the understanding of them continue to stimulate us to even greater watchfulness and diligence as children of the day.

We know also that it is true now as never before that the time is short in which to make our calling and election sure. The night is indeed far spent, and the new day is at hand. Thus it behooves us more than ever to be on the alert as watchmen. Faithfulness in this is the only way we can be assured of soberness, and of being safeguarded against all the intoxicating influences of this evil day. Let us then be truly faithful, and watch and pray that we may stand before the Son of man, and in due time be exalted to reign with him for the blessing of all the families of the earth. ■