

“Consider”

“Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you.”

—I Samuel 12:24

OUR OPENING SCRIPTURE

is but one of many admonitions of the Bible encouraging God’s people to “consider” the many aspects of their relationship with him. To “consider” means to reflect on, contemplate, take into account, ponder, bear in mind, be concerned about. We will refer to some of these terms in the ensuing pages of this article, as we “consider” the many “great things” God has done for us.

The truth of God’s Word is beautiful, reasonable, and wholly in harmony with that which is just and right and loving. It is in every way satisfactory, and will stand up under the closest scrutiny. In order for error and superstition to prosper, research and reason need to be suppressed. All that is in harmony with God, with truth and righteousness, flourishes best under the full light of investigation and reason. Thus viewed, the Scriptures invite the faithful to consider, to search, to prove, saying, “Come now, and let us reason together.”—Isa. 1:18

As we consider the Word of God and his loving plan for the blessing of Christ’s footstep followers,

and eventually the entire world, we come to know the Creator better, and therefore are animated with a desire to serve him faithfully. Every feature of his plan reflects one or more of the glorious attributes of his character and reminds us of the great things he has done, and of all that he will yet do for us and the whole world in due time.

As indicated in our text, the Lord had done many wonderful things for Israel. The Prophet Samuel, reminding them of this, used it as a reason why they, in turn, should express their appreciation to God by being faithful to his law. The same principle holds true with us today. God has richly blessed us by bringing us out of darkness into his marvelous light. (I Pet. 2:9) A proper consideration of this should stimulate us to ever increasing effort, not only to know, but to do his will faithfully.

“CONSIDER THE LILIES”

There are many things which the Christian can consider with profit. It is eminently proper that we contemplate the material things of God’s creation as we come in contact with them in the course of human experience. For example, Jesus said, “Consider the lilies of the field,” and “Consider the ravens.” (Matt. 6:28; Luke 12:24) We are not to consider the lilies and the ravens particularly from the standpoint of their beauty nor of their anatomy but, as Jesus indicates, with a view to learning the lesson of God’s care over all of his creative works.

The fact that the beauty of the lilies comes to them without their toiling and spinning teaches us that God is abundantly able to produce such beautiful works without our aid, and that, if necessary,

he could likewise clothe us miraculously. It teaches also, however, that he has not made provision for our necessities in a miraculous way. Thus, he has seen—as indeed his Word declares—that the experiences involved in the development of our surrounding resources to provide for our temporal needs will be helpful to us.

The beloved David, a man after God's own heart, received great blessing from reflecting on the marvelous creative works of God. He wrote, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers." (Ps. 8:3) David, whose mind was attuned to the things of God, found that the Almighty's creative works declared his glory, stating, "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." (chap. 19:2) By thus considering the material things of God's creation, David gained a great appreciation of his Creator, which helped to assure him of divine protection and care in his many times of need. This appreciation of the divine character, as the prophet saw it revealed in nature, brought him nearer to God in humility, in veneration, and in love.

In a similar fashion, nothing but good can result from our consideration of the lilies, of the sparrows, of the ravens, of the heavens, in the light of God's will for us. These created things of God display his marvelous wisdom and love and power. This exhibition assures us who are members of his New Creation that, being objects of his special care, he is particularly overshadowing us with his love and guiding us by his wisdom. We are also assured that if we continue to follow the leading of his Spirit he will bring us to glory, as joint-heirs with his beloved Son.—Rom. 8:17

CONSIDERING GOD'S PLAN

We should properly consider the material things from which we can learn lessons of divine wisdom and care. Noting how those lessons apply even in the little affairs of our Christian lives should prepare us for the still greater revelation of God's goodness as set forth in his Word. It is in the Word of God that we find contained his divine plan for us and for the world. God's sympathy for humanity in its fallen condition and his willingness to assist in man's recovery from sin and death along lines of justice and love are made clear in his Word. As we consider this plan we note how the love of God is revealed through the gift of his Son. This love should at once commend itself to our hearts, and inspire us with a desire to bring our lives fully into harmony with all the principles of righteousness which we see manifested through the outworking of the Father's plan.

The heart that considers makes progress, grows in grace, in knowledge, and in love. If we fail to consider the things which have to do with the Christian life, and particularly God's hand in our affairs, then we will lose the incentive which enables us to go forward in the narrow way. We lose much in the way of divine grace when we fail properly to consider God and his plan. It means that we are sure to lack appreciation of him and will fail also to appreciate the necessary zeal required to become like him and serve him faithfully, even unto death.

As previously expressed, David was a man after God's own heart and could learn valuable lessons by considering the heavens. He was richly blessed as he endeavored to bring his life into harmony

with the commandments and precepts of the Lord. However, the precious truths of the High Calling as they are revealed to the saints of this Gospel Age were not made known to him. None of his considerations resulted in an understanding of the spiritual phase of the plan of God as we are blessed with it today.

How meaningful to us, therefore, should be the words of the Apostle Paul, when he said, "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." (Heb. 3:1) Millions have considered Jesus from one standpoint or another. They have seen him as a great teacher, a kind person, a man of wisdom and of love, and one whose life and teachings may be considered with profit. Few, however, have considered him as the Apostle and High Priest of a heavenly order of priesthood which is destined, in keeping with God's plan, to be the channel of blessing for all mankind. Yet this is one of the things we are privileged to consider today.

Considering Jesus as our great High Priest, of the heavenly order of priesthood, we see in him one chosen by God to be our special teacher. He is the one who guides and instructs his footstep followers, preparing them to be joint-heirs with him in the glorious future work of the world's blessing and restoration during the "times of restitution of all things."—Acts 3:21

"LEST YE BE WEARY AND FAINT"

In considering Jesus we naturally think of his great faithfulness. We bear in mind his longsuffering. We reflect on his kindness, his sympathy, and his love. The consideration of all these things helps

us to strive more diligently to be like him, to follow his example more and more as the days come and go, being faithful even unto death. Thus we learn to know and to appreciate more of the glorious qualities of his character.

The Apostle Paul calls to our attention particular points in the character of Jesus which should be a great help to us as we take them into account. He said, "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." (Heb. 12:3) How easy it is for us to become weary. The Christian's course is one which runs contrary to the natural cravings of the fallen flesh. It is contrary to the spirit and desire of the world. It is in opposition to the influences of Satan which operate in a sinful world. Thus it requires continual effort not to be "wearied and faint."

The Christian walk is an uphill climb, and demands constant energizing of the mind and will in order that we may not fall by the wayside, or lag behind the Lord's leading and direction. How appropriate, then, it is to consider Jesus, the one who endured such great contradiction of sinners against himself. He walked the uphill road faithfully and continued in the way of sacrifice until the opposition of sinners finally slew him on the cross.

CONSIDER OPPOSITION

Jesus was not persecuted because of his perfection, but because the light of truth radiated from him into the darkness, and the darkness hated the light. The light was not appreciated by those who walked in darkness, so they hated the light-giver.

As we reflect upon this, we realize that to the extent we follow in his steps and let our light shine, we, too, will have opposition. Thus, considering him who endured such great contradiction of sinners against himself will encourage us to press forward, following in the footsteps of Jesus. As we emulate him by letting our light shine out for the blessing of others, it will at times result in hatred, persecution, and at a minimum, general opposition.

As we consider the great contradiction of sinners against Jesus, we realize that he suffered unjustly. His suffering was indeed for righteousness' sake, and not because of evildoing. Considering this will help us to be patient with those who oppose us because of the light which we radiate. It will help us, moreover, to be sympathetic, because we will realize that, unlike Jesus, we are not perfect, and many times we may give cause for complaint because of our imperfections. Although we strive to do the best we can, we come far short of the perfect standard of righteousness which was exemplified in Jesus. It therefore behooves us to be patient and sympathetic even with those who show themselves to be our enemies.

As we consider Jesus from the standpoint of the opposition which he endured because of his faithfulness to divine truth, we are reminded of the apostle's statement that he was made "perfect through sufferings." (Heb. 2:10) Here we learn the great value of trial. By his faithful endurance of trial, Jesus was prepared for the high position which he now occupies in God's plan. Bearing this in mind carefully helps us to realize what the Scriptures declare—that experiences and testings are

necessary for all of the Lord's people, even as they were essential for Jesus. We realize that if we receive these experiences as we should, being rightly exercised thereby, they will work out for us an everlasting blessing which will bring honor and glory to God.

“CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER”

The apostle reminds us of our responsibility toward the brethren, saying, “Consider one another to provoke [incite, inspire] unto love and to good works.” (Heb. 10:24) How much the Lord's people need to remember this injunction to consider one another, if they would have sympathetic forbearance and love toward the brethren. This understanding of one another as we walk together in the narrow way will remind us that our brethren are endeavoring to offer their lives in sacrifice, even as we are offering ours. It will impress upon us the fact that as we are imperfect and need God's mercy through the merit of Jesus' shed blood, they also are imperfect and are being dealt with upon the same basis. Therefore, we should be merciful toward our brethren, even as we desire that they should be merciful toward us.

For the Lord's consecrated people, a proper consideration of one another means thinking kindly and charitably, despite the blemishes which may be evident. We are to consider that their hearts are pleasing to God, and that in their hearts they are striving to do the Lord's will, even as we also are endeavoring to do. We are to encourage them, and be likewise encouraged ourselves, toward “love and . . . good works.”

As we consider our brethren from this standpoint, their unwilling imperfections of the flesh will not cause us to persecute them, to speak evil against them, or to slander them. It will enable us to be more sympathetic, to cover their imperfections, to assist, and to encourage them. We will do all we can for them—even to lay down our lives for them through sacrificing our time and energy on their behalf.

“FREELY YE HAVE RECEIVED”

Another point which we do well to consider in connection with our relationship to God is the abundant manner in which we have received blessings from him. Foremost among these are the blessings of the Truth which have enlightened our hearts. It is the Truth which has revealed to us the glorious attributes of God’s character, and which has pointed us to Jesus as the “bread of life.” They have satisfied our longings as nothing else could do. As we consider these gracious gifts of God to us—gifts that have brought joy and peace and hope into our lives—we are reminded of the Master’s words, “Freely ye have received, freely give.”—Matt. 10:8

We should earnestly reflect on how freely we have received of God’s blessings, looking back to Jesus, our example, to note the manner in which he expressed his love to the Father and his fellow-men. In so doing, we find that he was like his Father in that he continually gave. He gave to his disciples. He gave to all men as he had opportunity. He gave instructions to his followers and to others. He gave material blessings of food and drink, of

physical and mental healing, oftentimes performing miracles to do so. What a wonderful lesson there is for us in Jesus' miracles of feeding the five thousand and the four thousand with such small portions of fish and bread.

As we consider this manifestation of the Master's goodwill toward those of his day who were in need of help, we realize that there is a lesson in it for us at the present time. How often we may feel that the multitude is large, and that the means at our disposal for reaching them with the bread of life are limited. If we would look at this matter as the disciples viewed it when they reported to Jesus the small amount of food on hand, we would be inclined to think that there is no use, with so little, in our trying to bear witness to the Truth. We would feel that our means are too limited, too insignificant, that we are too few in number and of negligible influence to accomplish anything worthwhile in the service of the Lord. Though we may realize that we have the Truth, that we have a wonderful message to tell to the people, human frailty and shortsighted vision may make us feel that there is no way in which it can be adequately given out.

However, the Lord can wonderfully bless the humblest efforts and multiply the effect of the light as it proceeds from the faithful, as it did in the case of Gideon, when there were so few to accomplish so much. As we consider that the Lord has promised to bless our humble efforts, we will do what we can to give forth the Word of truth. It is important in this connection to realize that there are still those, one here and one there, who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and who need this

food which we have to give. We are to consider that in this Gospel Age it is not expected that we shall convert the world, but that only those can be reached who have an ear to hear. Considering this, we are to do the best we can to tell the good tidings, to give to all the glad message of the kingdom in any and every way we can, at every opportunity.

As we consider further, we are reminded that Jesus not only provided temporal food for the multitudes centuries ago, but now, according to his promise, he has invisibly returned in his Second Presence and is dispensing spiritual food—"meat in due season," things "new and old" from the storehouse of truth. (Matt. 24:45; 13:52) Considering this, let us rejoice that we have been so highly favored with the honor of sitting at the Lord's table during this harvest period to partake of the food which he has so abundantly dispensed to the household of faith. Let us also, as we consider, be swift to appropriate its nourishment to our own hearts, and apply it in our lives.

TRUSTING IN THE LORD

While we know that God will oversee our earthly needs, supplying them according to his wisdom, we are to consider that even more important than this is his care over us as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. No matter how fiery the trial, how difficult the way, how heavy the burden, how strong the opposition, or how cruel the persecution, we should learn to cast all our care upon him, knowing that "he careth" for us. (I Pet. 5:7) This does not mean that we are to be listless or indifferent to our experiences. However, when we do the best we can, when we are

faithful in bearing witness to the Truth, when we are seeking to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, when we are endeavoring by his grace to be more like him—whatever results from this course of faithfulness, God will take care of the situation and cause all things to work together for our spiritual good.—Rom. 8:28

As the Lord's people, considering our place in the divine plan and God's wonderful care over us, we should remember that we are not to expect him to guide our efforts according to our own wisdom. We are not to expect him to bless our plans, or ask him to see to it that our wills are done. Proper consideration of God and his will, on the contrary, will lead to a careful scrutiny of his Word, that we may know more and more clearly as the days go by what his will is for us. We must let the Heavenly Father guide us in his way, and help us to do the things which he has asked us to do. Approaching the matter from this standpoint, we can have full confidence that he will care for us by giving us wisdom, discernment, strength, and patience to carry on, because his promise is that "as thy days, so shall thy strength be."—Deut. 33:25

This does not mean that we will be released from trial, or that we will be spared suffering or persecution, and our way strewn with roses. It does mean that regardless of the experiences through which we are required to pass, we can apply to our hearts the blessed balm of consolation made up of the assurances of the Scriptures. These promises guarantee to us sufficient measure of God's wisdom and strength to care for us in every emergency, and in every time of need.

The more we consider, the more aware we become of the wonderful and gracious things the Lord has done for us. His blessings to natural Israel were rich, and it was appropriate that Samuel should call upon the Israelites to respond in appreciation and thanksgiving by a course of wholehearted obedience to God's laws of righteousness. How much more bountiful, however, have been God's gifts to us. How much more responsibility, therefore, is placed upon us. How much more we need to consider these things and appreciate our privilege of responding to God's blessings with all that we are, with all that we have, and with all that we hope to be.

God has blessed us richly! The more we realize what he has done for us, the more we should be determined to give all to him. As we consider the outworkings of God's great plan, we realize that our course of faithfulness in responding with the sacrifice of everything that we have will result finally in still further gifts from God. These will include the gift of the divine nature; the gift of glory, honor, and immortality; the gift of joint heirship with Jesus in his kingdom; the gift of the inestimable privilege of becoming a member of God's own family and enjoying his fellowship. Finally, it will result in the privilege of being with the Heavenly Father throughout eternity and of cooperating with him and with Jesus in all the wonderful works of the ages to come. The more we consider, the more we are inspired with the greatness and the love of God. "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."—Eph. 2:7 ■