

Walking as in the Day

*“Let as walk
honestly, as in the
day; not in rioting
and drunkenness.”*

—*Romans 13:13*

IN THE VERSE PRECEDING

our text, the apostle says. “The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.” Here Paul is using the literal nighttime in contrast with the daytime to illustrate the long, dark period of sin and death in contrast with the coming new morning of divine blessing, when the “Sun of righteousness” arises with healing in his wings.—Ps. 30:5; Mal. 4:2

In today’s world, the daytime is, literally speaking, as much used for the perpetration of evil deeds as are the nighttime hours. However, the illustrations of the Bible must be viewed in the light of the circumstances then existing. At that time, apparently, the darkness of the night afforded a much more suitable occasion for evil deeds and practices than was possible in broad daylight. Presumably the light of day rendered it more or less incumbent upon all to walk honestly, or at least give the appearance

of doing so. Thus, Apostle Paul uses these circumstances as an illustration in his admonition to the church at Rome, and to us, to walk circumspectly. We should walk at all times, he declares, “as in the day.”

Paul, however, made the application of his illustration to include much more than the thought merely of the literal day and night. He speaks of the entire period from our first parents’ fall into sin down to the setting up of God’s kingdom, as one long period of darkness. Then he alludes to the new kingdom period as being the new day. In that day, God assures us, “Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet.” (Isa. 28:17) Nothing will be permitted to “hurt nor destroy” in all that holy kingdom, we are further promised. (Isa. 11:9) It will be a day in which, through the bright shining of the Master’s presence, all the works of evil, hypocrisy and deception will be exposed. None will be permitted to live and enjoy the blessings of the kingdom except as they bring themselves into full heart sympathy and harmony with the laws of that new day.

What a heart-searching lesson the apostle thus gives us! He says that we are to walk honestly as in the day. That is to say, we should endeavor to walk now even as all will learn to walk when the laws of the new kingdom are put into operation. Surely this brings before us a wonderfully high standard of Christian conduct.

In that new kingdom day, any evil deeds will be immediately punished, so that no one is hurt or deceived. Similarly, good deeds will be at once rewarded. Thus the people will be continually reminded of the vital relationship that exists between

them and the righteous agencies and lawgivers of that kingdom.

It is different at the present time with the Christian. We walk by faith and not by sight. (II Cor. 5:7) This is illustrated in the fact that we are not always immediately reprov'd for our misdeeds, nor are we always rewarded at once for our good deeds. Apart from our conviction of faith, it would be easy under such circumstances to become careless and indifferent and to feel that, after all, it does not matter so much. While we have entered into a covenant relationship with the Heavenly Father, yet we do not see him. If we become slack along this, that or the other line, apparently nothing happens, so what great difference does it make?

This is but the reasoning of the fallen flesh, aided and abetted by suggestions from the Adversary and the influences of the world. Faith is the "victory" [Greek: means of success] that overcomes. (I John 5:4) If our faith is strong, we will view the matter of obedience to the Lord as being equally as vital in our lives as it will be in the lives of those who will be dealt with during the kingdom period. It means that we will view our consecration vow as being just as genuine as though we had talked with God face to face, and had personally affixed our signature beside his upon the legal document of our covenant of sacrifice.—Eccles. 5:4; Ps. 50:5

WALK HONESTLY

We are to walk honestly before the Lord and before all people. Evidently the apostle would have us understand that he is using this term in a much more refined sense than is implied in the

commandment given to Israel which says only, "Thou shalt not steal." (Exod. 20:15) Honesty with the Christian goes further. It means sincerity—the lack of hypocrisy or pretense. In this respect our lesson is a very heart-searching one. It needs to be applied in our every thought and word and deed. We should examine ourselves carefully to determine if we are actually walking sincerely before God. Are we, to the best of our ability, living up to the profession of our faith? Are we also dealing sincerely with others, or are we professing one thing before them, while in our hearts something else is taking place?

The spirit of insincerity and misrepresentation is running rampant in the world today, so much so that the Christian may find it difficult to keep himself entirely aloof therefrom. It is not necessary, for example, to say that black is white in order to be guilty of falsifying. It is frequently quite possible for those who are adept in the use of language, to give an impression that is entirely out of harmony with the real facts, and yet not be actually guilty of misstatements. This sin of misrepresentation and insincerity is especially reprehensible in the sight of God. It not only is dishonest, but it is a dishonesty which, by deception, is calculated to harm others even more than the open declaration of untruths. This form of dishonesty will not for a moment be tolerated in the new day. Hence, if we are endeavoring to walk honestly as in the day, we will avoid any form of misrepresentation in our association with others.

This refined and more or less subtle form of dishonesty, which even Christians may be tempted to practice, like all forms of wrongdoing in the

Christian life, might apparently go unpunished for a while. However, if not made right, it is sure to finally lead to disastrous results. Apostle Paul makes a suggestion which seems to indicate that the punishment for this astute form of dishonesty is comparable to the nature of the sin itself. He says that God will send "strong delusion" to those who "received not the love of the truth." (II Thess. 2:10,11) This would seem to indicate that if one is dishonest in the use of the Word of Truth, and by words or actions knowingly causes another to stumble, such conduct will be a "strong delusion." If not immediately corrected, the one perpetrating such sin is likely to be judged severely by divine law.

By contrast, how wonderful it is to associate with those whom we feel are wholly sincere, entirely honest. It means that we never need to be on guard lest something is said or done which will harm us. It means that every statement is a bona fide one upon which we can depend. In our association with such, we do not need to feel that there is a hidden meaning behind that which is said. Where honesty and sincerity of faith and of purpose prevail, there is a blessed fellowship of kindred minds which is like to that above. Where it is lacking there is no sense of security in our associations, hence no real sweetness in fellowship.

"NOT IN RIOTING AND DRUNKENNESS"

The thought of rioting is that of disorderly, unbalanced conduct or revelry. It is a condition quite in contrast with that which is described by the apostle as emanating from a "sound mind." (II Tim. 1:7) It is a condition in the Christian life in

which the will of God is set aside in preference to our own imperfect judgments. Our judgments, often influenced by the selfish desires of the fallen flesh, are liable to run to wild extremes of one sort or another which, if not brought into subjection, sooner or later will inevitably make shipwreck of our Christian lives. The preventive antidote for this is an earnest, prayerful study to know and to do the Father's will. (II Tim. 2:15) Thus we may have our own conduct regulated by the instructions of God's Word. This is the requirement that will be imposed upon all in the new day, and it is one which we, who are now by faith the children of the day, must voluntarily take upon ourselves.

The term drunkenness as used in our text, is apparently intended by the apostle to describe a condition of intoxication other than that which results from the use of various liquors. One might become intoxicated with the spirit of the world, the spirit of pleasure, the spirit of revelry, or other time-killing side issues. These, while not always harmful in themselves, nevertheless detract from that which should be the real issue in the Christian's life.

A very harmful form of intoxication is when one becomes inebriated by the importance of his own ideas. It sometimes happens that an otherwise faithful and loyal Christian develops a pet theory which becomes more or less a hobby, perhaps assuming such great importance in the individual's mind that little else is studied. Intoxication over the idea is manifested when the endeavor is made to force the theory upon others. Even worse than this is when the intoxication leads such an individual to

consider those who do not accept his theory as being out of favor with God.

Here again the only proper antidote is the Word of God. In the Scriptures we are all counseled not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. (Rom. 12:3) What a beautiful grace is that of meekness and humility. How humble we should all feel in the presence of the Almighty. Surely he has highly favored us in permitting us to know the secrets of his plan of salvation. Let us be sure that this knowledge given us by God's grace never causes any of us to feel that we are such profound students of the Bible that we can take therefrom ideas and theories of our own which we believe to be so important as to be a test of Christian discipleship for others of the brotherhood.

Doubtless, at times, all of us have witnessed the confusion and disorder that result from the presence of an intoxicated person in a group of people who are endeavoring to conduct themselves in an orderly way. Frequently in such cases the intoxicated person becomes the center of attraction. This, in itself, may seem very flattering to the individual. Yet it produces no wholesome or beneficial result, and is highly unflattering to those thus brought into subjection to such behavior. Here again, in our fellowship with the Lord's people, we must not be guilty of such spiritual intoxication nor even a party to it. Rather than doing anything which would cause such a disorderly condition within our fellowship, let us follow Paul's admonition, "Let all things be done decently and in order."—I Cor. 14:40

As individuals we cannot, of course, control the attitude of others. This is not particularly our

business, although we should be willing to help, through admonition and by example, whenever and wherever possible, and always with humility and meekness. (Gal. 6:1; II Tim. 2:25) On the other hand, it is our specific business to see that we do not ourselves become intoxicated in any way, and thus become a trial or stumbling block among those with whom we are associated in the body of Christ. This requires that we examine our hearts carefully to make sure that we are not being overcome by any such spirit of drunkenness. "Examine yourselves," and "prove your own selves," Paul admonishes. (II Cor. 13:5) The poet has likewise beautifully expressed the proper thought in the words:

"I want the first approach to feel
Of pride or fond desire;
To catch the wandering of my will,
And quench the kindling fire."

Another form of intoxication which some of the Lord's dear people may need to guard against in this day is that pertaining to the political, social, national, and international controversies now gripping the world. "Our citizenship is in heaven," and we are as "sojourners and pilgrims" on the earth. (Phil. 3:20; I Pet. 2:11, *American Standard Version*) We should always realize that so far as the kingdoms of this world are concerned, they are all to pass away. It is our business to pray for the new kingdom, and while doing so to have our hopes and interests wholly centered therein.—I John 2:17; Rev. 21:1; Matt. 6:10

This does not mean that we have no interest in or sympathy for the poor groaning creation. Neither

does it mean that we can see nothing of good in the sincere efforts that are made by some to better the world conditions. It does mean that while we see and appreciate all the good that is in the world, yet we recognize also that the best efforts of man fall short. Such being the case, the Lord is determined that he will set aside all of these kingdoms, associations, and institutions and in their place establish his kingdom of righteousness. (Ps. 72:1-4; 96:10-13; Isa. 32:1) It is his kingdom that will bring in the new day, that glorious day when God's laws of truth and righteousness will become operative in the affairs of mankind. In this kingdom our real interest centers, and for these interests all our efforts should be made.—Matt. 6:33

While waiting and longing for the new day, we will not busy ourselves in attempting to set straight the crooked ways of this depraved and passing world. Rather, we will bear witness to the message concerning the "gospel of the kingdom," soon to be established, to all who will listen. (Matt. 24:14) Thus, in our sympathy for the groaning creation, we will, in a practical way, be enabled to spread a little comfort and hope here and there by proclaiming the glad tidings of great joy which yet shall be known and appreciated by all mankind.—Luke 2:10,11

The entire matter of walking honestly and without rioting and drunkenness depends upon our faith in the message of God's Word which we have professed to accept. If by faith this glorious plan of God becomes a reality in our lives, we will, at all times, enthusiastically endeavor to bring our lives fully into harmony therewith. If our faith is weak, and we only half-heartedly believe what we profess,

our conduct will, correspondingly, be half-heartedly in harmony with our professions. This means that we will be lax along almost all lines. Our covenant of sacrifice will not seem as binding upon us as it should be. If our faith is strong, however, so strong that the Word of Truth will be to us exactly that which we profess it to be, we will be lifted up above the spirit of the world in all the daily affairs and activities of our life.

The apostle said, "Without faith it is impossible to please [God]," and Jesus declared, "According to your faith be it unto you." (Heb. 11:6; Matt. 9:29) It is faith, therefore, that lays hold upon the promises of God and transforms them into reality. It is faith that looks forward into the kingdom period and visualizes the reign of righteousness then in operation. It is faith that makes the spirit of that new age the guide for our own Christian lives even now. As we see the many evidences of the near approach of that new day, and as we witness the crumbling thrones of earth, let us strive more diligently than ever to walk before God and the brethren in true holiness and love. ■