

SALT.

Jesus said to his disciples, *"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men."* And doubtless what he said of another saying is true of this: *"What I say unto you I say unto all."* Savourless salt is certainly a very useless kind of article to put on the table, and salt without savour is not a thing unknown, literally or metaphorically. We may know the truth and profess the truth, and not taste of it. This is a sore evil for all parties concerned. If our salt is without taste to the eater, the eater is not likely to give us a place at his table. We see this illustrated even now. We have to eat each other in a sense, for we cannot mingle together and talk with each other, and have transactions with each other, without in some degree partaking of each other. The real taste of the individual is felt in these familiar relations of life. What a nauseating disappointment it is to find utter tastelessness in the man who comes to you labelled as the finest salt! There are some in whom you feel no taste of the salt as you eat them. Some just barely taste of it. Others are nicely seasoned. It is a treat to get hold of them. Their name is not legion, but they are on the increase.

There is no secret about the salting process. Those who are salt are so for one reason only, and that which makes them salt will make others salt also. They are salt because they steep in the salt. The continual reading of the word saturates their minds with the spirit of the word, and changes the insipid, purposeless old man of the flesh into a new man, full of interest and noble qualities. Jesus says his people are the salt. They are constituted so by the truth, which is the great salting influence, but, says he, if the salt becomes savourless, it will not be accepted. It will not be used on the King's table, but will be cast out as unworthy of any higher purpose than being strewn on the highway, to prepare a way whereon others may walk. Let us give earnest heed then, to the salting process, *"as new born babes desiring the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby."* Jesus says further to his disciples, *"Ye are the light of the world,"* and he says, *"Men do not light a candle to put it under a table or under a bushel."* The very object of lighting it is that people may see by means of the light. Now all who have heard or learned the truth by the word of the apostles, are so many candles lit by Jesus, for the apostles laboured as for Christ. Now, saith he, *"Let your light shine before men."*

The meaning of this is free from doubt. Without giving it a specific application, we may take it to refer to every means by which the indwelling of the truth is evident in a man's life, and therefore as including what a man says and what he does. In speech and action, then, we are to let the truth be manifest. Some do and some do not this. Some have a bushel, and keep their light under it nearly all the time. Business, perhaps, is their bushel, and a very big bushel it is, and thick on the sides, so that the light cannot struggle through. There need not be a business bushel. Business is legitimate if kept in due subordination. There is a danger, however, of its weakening, if not destroying, the truth in the mind. It is liable so to absorb in either care or worldly zest, as to dim the sense of relationship to Christ, and secularise the mind and make us feel as citizens of the world and brethren of the cigar-puffing fraternity, who carry themselves with such odious pride and imagine themselves the important people of the earth, when they are nothing but a gang of heartless snobs, rousing heaven and earth to fill their unholy coffers with cankering gold; whose end is to lie down with the beasts of the valley and to perish.

The truth does not shine from a man who is at home in that herd. Neither in his talk nor his doings is it manifest. His general life belies the good profession. You would not know but that he was a citizen of the world. You would certainly never imagine his citizenship was in heaven, or that he was acting as a steward of Jesus Christ. He is all bushel; his candle, if lit at all, is a "light within," and gives no ray to guide the wanderer's feet to life eternal. But other things may act as a bushel quite as much as business. Domestic life may do it: there is nothing more likely to snuff out the light of heaven than the cares of house and family, if we do not resist them by continually remembering that here we have no continuing city; that this life is only truly useful when made the means of gaining the life to come; and that, therefore, true wisdom consists in using all things as pilgrims use them, for present necessity, and not for entertainment, deferring the pleasures of life till the time when we shall drink of them without danger and without the admixture of alloy. There is scarcely anything to which we are related as mortal men in the present state of existence, but what, if we are not on our guard, will completely hide the light from view, both doctrinally and practically. Jesus would have us to be on our guard. Jesus would have us exhibit the light that is in us, and that too not in one particular way, but in all ways.

Let there, of course, be doctrinal light. No good can be done without this. A thorough knowledge of the truth is indispensable to give a man a good start in spiritual matters. At the same time, let us not deal exclusively with the light in that particular form, because it ought equally to be seen in a man's action. It ought to be seen that he is influenced by the truth; that he is a different man from what he was before; that his schemes are different; that the whole order of his life is shaped to a different pattern; that all his actions and general manifestations of his character have been moulded and influenced by the knowledge of the Gospel. We ought in every sense to exhibit the light as he who was the light of the world did. He is our example—the first-born among many brethren—the forerunner—the chief. Whenever we want to test ourselves, or determine the particular line of conduct to pursue in reference to any matter, we cannot do better than look at him—the author and finisher of our faith, and ask ourselves what he would have done under similar circumstances. Our answer will always be ready to hand, for his life is detailed with very great minuteness in the four Gospels; all we have to do is to become familiar with these details. The real source of the spiritual weakness is non-acquaintance with these. Let the word of Christ dwell richly, and there is power to overcome. And it is because people do not keep the company of the truth, that it fails to dwell richly. Let them keep its company, and they will by and by see and feel its reality.

In plain English, let them give the study of God's book that place in the economy of their lives which they are commanded to do in those words of the Spirit by Solomon, which pronounce a blessing on the man who standeth daily at wisdom's gates, and waiteth at the posts of her doors; who meditates, as David hath it, day and night on the law of the Lord, and whose delight is therein. Those who do not give the Word this place in their lives sin against themselves. They neglect that which is for their own benefit, for a man loses a great deal, even as regards the present experiences of life, who allows himself to omit the study of the Word from his daily programme. The study of the Word acts like oil upon the fretted waters. It soothes the nerves and imparts a healthy tone to the mind. The man who is not subject to its influence falls victim to those gnawing cares that beset life in every form as at present constituted. His mind falls a prey to worldly fever; the moral fluids (if we may use such an expression) become dried tip; *"vanity and vexation of spirit"* is his bitter verdict on existence. The word of God cures all this; it gives us a tranquillity and coolness of mind and clearness of understanding which helps us to keep the devils off, and to walk through this evil time

comparatively unmolested. This enables us to emulate Christ, who showed the light doctrinally and practically, being holy, harmless, undefiled—without sin.

The aspect in which we are especially called together to consider him, may be called the dark side of his great history. We are not so much to think of him as he will be revealed when he appears as the world's Conqueror and the believer's Redeemer, though that feature is not entirely absent from the symbols before us; we are more particularly to go back to the time when he was despised and rejected of men—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. It is good to go back to that time. We get both comfort and courage from the picture we see. Jesus as he now is—the Lord the Spirit, clothed with the ineffable glory of the Father—is high above us. We cannot reach to him in ready sympathy. We feel something of the awe felt by Abraham in the presence of the Elohim when he besought the Lord not to be angry at dust and ashes presuming to interrogate the Deity. But when we look upon him as he sojourned in the flesh, tempted in all points like as we are, and familiar in some degree with the weakness which bows us to the earth, we realize something of the sentiment expressed by Paul, when he says, *"We have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities."* We are comforted; and our comfort is complete when we listen to the invitation: *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith"* (Heb. 10:22).

We rejoice at the invitation, and only mourn that our weakness hinders that ready response which the enlightened heart yearns to make. *"All things are possible to them that believe,"* said Jesus to the man who asked him to have compassion on his child. We feel like the man who *"straightway cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."* The picture of our Lord's humiliation also inspires courage, for if we are unfashionable and poor, and subject to divers kinds of deprivations on account of our making the ancient Gospel and the ancient hope our object, we know that we are only having our turn of the very experience that embittered the earthly days of the Captain of our salvation; and to take part in such a fellowship makes us bold. Do we not feel like Peter? *"Lord, I am ready to go with thee unto prison and unto death."* Peter failed in the first trial; but afterwards, he went both to prison and to death for Christ's sake, and was of those who *"rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."* So must we, even should we quail at the first shock of battle, overcome at the last, and be found among those who earn the victor's crown, setting all foes and all consequences at defiance in our determination to walk in that path of faith and obedience that alone leadeth unto life.

And if we gain comfort and courage from that eventful thirty-three years and a half that our Lord lived in the flesh, do we not gain light and wisdom for our present goings? He *"left us an example that we should follow his steps."* What did he do? How did he spend his time? To what did he devote his life? These are questions for us to consider. He went about doing good. He was an object of attraction even then. The people crowded to him wherever he went. We cannot hope to draw people as he drew them, but in a measure we can follow in his steps. We can take the lesson he gives us, and become *"servants of all."* We can make it our business to minister, instead of to be ministered unto. We can seek to *"do good";* to be *"ready unto every good work,"* in our little way. It is not agreeable work except from the dutiful point of view, but patiently continued in we shall have a full reward. Fellowshiping the sufferings of Christ we shall be invited into his joy. And oh, what joy! Christ was an attraction in the day of his humiliation, but much more will he be an attraction in the day of his glory. He will be the blessing of God upon earth, and we shall be a blessing with him if he count us worthy of so great a fellowship.

Well, then, the contemplation of this picture, as a whole, is held up in the bread and wine. It is a beautiful picture, which we ought to study well. It ought to be photographed on our minds. Let Christ dwell in our hearts by faith; let him become the highest idea and the strongest power in our mind. Let us rise to the position of Paul, who could say, *"For me to live is Christ."* This is a position all-glorious. There is nothing else worth living for; all that we may achieve on our own account is not our own when done, because we have to die and leave it, whereas anything we achieve in Christ is eternal, because he is for ever. All things belong to Christ, and if we belong to him, then, as Paul says, all things are ours. Throw in then with Christ; loosen your grasp on the present. *"Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not."* *"Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."* Only one thing we are permitted to seek with all our hearts at present, and, that is, the kingdom of God. Of the other things, Christ says, *"Take no thought for them; your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of them."* *"Having food and raiment, be content."* *"They that will be rich,"* says Paul, *"fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."* The only safe rule of Christadelphian conduct, is Christ first and last.

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