

"KEEP THY HEART WITH ALL DILIGENCE"

Life is centered in the heart, physically and spiritually. Physically the heart is a self-acting pump—a fountain of vital force from which all activities are derived.

It is the most essential organ of the body as it is the source of life and motion in all forms of organized living creatures.

Little wonder then that the Hebrews wrote of it figuratively and poetically, as the spring of all our actions and purposes, the seat of the affections, the sensibilities, the passions and the emotions, such as love, joy, grief, pleasure, hatred, rage and fear. They considered it as the seat of moral life and character and also of the intellectual faculties—the mind and the understanding.

Therefore, we read of strong hearts, of froward, perverse and wicked hearts; while the better and lovelier aspects of character are spoken of as a broken and contrite heart, a pure heart and a perfect heart.

For this reason, the various impressions made upon the mind by the idiosyncratic thoughts, whether they be good or evil are said to proceed out of the heart, although the brain, served by the nervous system is really the centre of all perception and sensation, and the actual seat of intellect.

Nevertheless, the brain is wholly dependent upon the heart for all efficient and vital action. The heart ministers the vital force which enables the mind to live and function.

The various faculties of the human brain are both inborn and cultivated, and are really marvelous in their natural functions, as well as in their culture, power and activity. Many theories have been hazarded to explain these marvels of our being, but the theories for the most part need explanation themselves.

We must however accept the palpable facts which force themselves upon our recognition by experience, and marking well the unity of our constitution, exclaim with the Psalmist

"I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made, marvelous are thy works".

We all know by experience the effect the emotions have upon the heart, and the connection that exists between the impulses and the various faculties.

We have all observed how by nursing a temporary pain we enhance and perhaps exaggerate it, by specially directing our thoughts to it; whereas, a brief interval of exciting vital activity in another channel may wholly banish it.

This shows the influence of thought upon the vital functions.

The impulses of the flesh are in themselves formless, but if they remain uncontrolled, and are accordingly permitted to impress the mind, they find shape, expression and determination in the eyes, mouth, lips and the entire periphery, as well as in other functional activities of the body that are controlled by the heart; and these become, in a figure, mirrors of the heart or mind.

Therefore, thought or meditation is to the brain what gastric juice is to the stomach, a solvent to reduce whatever it receives to a condition easily and readily assimilated. Thought solves difficulties between opposing forces: discriminates and distinguishes between right and wrong, impresses the mind and thus forms character.

Consequently the character of the fountain determines that of the stream. An evil heart causes a polluted stream; while the pure in heart keeping their thoughts on

"Whatsoever things are true . . . honest . . . just . . . pure . . . lovely . . . and of good report"—(Phil. iv. 8),

from them outflow "rivers of living waters", clear and sweet.

There are many who confuse the natural impulses of the flesh—the propensities, with "thought". The former are the results of that infixed principle of sin in the flesh, otherwise styled the diabolos. The latter is a faculty that denotes capacity for an exercise of mental discernment—the highest intellectual function. It is the faculty of attention, meditation, study and comparison, and is quite separate and distinct from the impulse of the flesh.

It is coupled with the ability to retain or reject, which is an organic part of our constitution which has its allotted function to discharge.

The mere faculty of thinking would be worthless, if the mind could not retain the knowledge and experience thus acquired, making the resultant understanding an integral part of itself.

By this faculty the mind is enabled to subdue the most violent impulses of feeling and reject them, as the evil that pollutes the stream of thought and the consequent action. We refuse to harbor the evil thought in the mind: we reject it, declining to contemplate it or to give it any permanence in our thoughts, which would only enhance it and lead on to action conforming and yielding to the impulse of sin in the flesh.

To acquire this power of self-restraint and limitation of the impulses of the flesh, is the most signal triumph that the heart, the symbol of the mind—the laboratory of reason—can possibly gain over its sinful physical connections; even as it is written:—

"He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city"—(Prov. xvi. 32). Therefore, "Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life"—(Prov. iv. 23).

The command of our mental faculties works out for us immeasurable results. By governing our thoughts we obtain that rare virtue of intellect which consists in a mastery over self and our associations; for good thoughts and good company are the very sinews of virtue. Our thoughts impress the mind which in turn forms the character; and a good character is higher and more powerful than mere intellect, wielding an immensely potent and benign influence upon our associates.

But the mind we must remember is not the character. The mind in its genesis is figuratively a blank page, and the character is the writing we put upon it. The mind is the garden and the character is the fruit.

When the good seed of the Kingdom and Name is sown in the garden and well cultivated it brings forth fruit unto righteousness, but if the weeds—the impulses of sin in the flesh—are permitted to grow and occupy the soil, they will "choke the word".

To succeed in cultivating a character fitting to an heir of the Kingdom, the weeds must be kept under control, the impulses must be subdued, after the example of Christ and of Paul. The latter wrote, saying—

"I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me — dwelleth in me." But "I delight in the law of God: after the inward man. So then with the mind, I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin"—(Rom. vii. 20-25).

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other"—(Gal. v. 16, 17).

The impulse is the will of the flesh, styled by Jesus "mine own will", which if uncontrolled by enlightened thought will directly urge the mind to action, in the direction to which the flesh has a natural tendency, by reason of the sin-principle—the diabolos or sin in the flesh.

Moreover, as a thousand thoughts and actions, ten times over and over again, enter into the formation of character, the zealous follower of Christ must gird himself with the Sword of the Spirit, fighting "not as one that beateth the air" but a real conflict, keeping the body in subjection, and

"Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"— (2 Cor. x. 5).

We cannot bring an opposing force into captivity without a struggle, and if we do not contend with the evil suggestions of our own, will, we cannot win the battle.

If we admit the tempter (the impulse of sin in the flesh), we succumb to the seduction. It is our own fault, allowing the will of the flesh to perniciously affect the mind and so influence the character, instead of at once resisting, abhorring and repelling it—keeping it under, after the example of Christ and Paul.

Therefore, men and women, enlightened as to what the truth requires, are the efficient cause of their own choice of character, either

"Walking in the fear of the Lord"—(Acts ix. 31), or " Fulfilling the desires of the flesh"—(Eph. ii. 3).

If this were not so, they would not be free agents, and there would be no responsibility.

Thus as we "reason together" (Is. i. 18) in the light of revelation and experience, questions that appear deep, obscure and bewildering to some, because of the theories and arguments of men who have but one idea and that the wrong one, are by the Spirit's course, translated into sparkling simplicities, in entire harmony with the "law and the testimony", as well as with the knowledge we have gained by trial, test and proof, showing that the ways of the Lord are equal as regards the experience of both Christ, the first-fruits and his brethren, and " unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required".

To our Lord Jesus the Father committed much. His birth was a marvel, and it had a mighty influence and bearing upon the molding of his character. By the overshadowing of the Power of the Highest " the Word was made flesh ", through being " made of a woman "; with the result that while Christ was of the same sinful flesh as his brethren, he was much higher than they, in his mental and spiritual relations to the Deity. He was more sympathetic with God's ways and with all that is good, and he consequently spake as never man spake.

Of John the Baptist it is testified that he was

"Filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb"—(Luke i. 15).

But Jesus was one who was higher than John. He was the Word made flesh—a man of much higher moral and intellectual capacity and energy than even John, of whom it is written he was "more than a prophet"—Matt. xi. 9. Yet John spake of Jesus as

"One mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to
unloose"—(Luke iii. 16).

This "wonderful" man had such a high spiritual mentality, that throughout his life, he was a manifestation of the Father, in character and word, speaking the words of the Father, and doing not his "own will" but that of the Father.

He was therefore God manifested or exhibited in "sinful flesh" for its redemption from the bondage of sin.

The great mental superiority given by the Father to our Lord Jesus was absolutely essential for the accomplishment of the objects in view.

The most ambitious aim and the greatest object of desire for mankind to pursue, and the grandest and most noble achievement possible for human nature (which Jesus was a partaker of) to labor for, is the assimilation of the divine nature by the human.

This glorious consummation has been attained in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ: first, morally; and in the second place, constitutionally as a partaker of the Divine Nature—the Lord—the Spirit, or in other words, "perfected" on "the third day"—(Luke xiii. 32).

God in His great mercy and love through our Lord Jesus, has opened up a living way—the only name under heaven given among men, whereby men and women may become partakers or sharers in the victory won by Christ's achievement.

But while it was essential for the bearer of the Yahweh Name to be spotless in character in order to attain to a resurrection from the dead, it was also expedient that he be of a nature, identical in every respect with the nature he came to redeem. If this were not so, then is not our nature redeemed and the redemption of the body is a myth.

But this redemption of the body is not a myth—it is a blessed reality, because Christ was made in all points like unto his brethren, yet his body did not even see corruption. He had a nature the same as that of his brethren, with the propensities and impulses of sinful flesh, all of which he overcame, and thus redeemed our nature from sin and death.

It was by these impulses moving upon his "own will", that he was "in all points tempted like as we are", but in his case without sin, the impulses being fully and wholly restrained, kept under and completely overcome.

This overcoming is the very essence of the example our Lord has left for his brethren, to follow in his steps—(1 Pet. ii. 21).

Being "of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord", he readily perceived his duty and promptly performed it with the power and strength given him by his paternity.

It was also necessary and positively essential that Christ should be a partaker of the same nature as his brethren, with all the infirmities pertaining thereto, that through his death he might destroy the diabolos, that element in our nature "inciting it to transgression" and having the power of death.

If this were not so then the condemnation of sin in the flesh, or the diabolos, could not have occurred when Christ was crucified, as Paul affirms it did—(Rom. viii. 3; see also Eureka Vol. 1, p. 278).

So while Jesus was made of a woman and thus made of sinful flesh like our own, he was endowed with a mental and spiritual capacity and ability superior to all others of woman born, to reject the evil and choose the good.

But notwithstanding all this what a conflict took place in subduing the impulses of the flesh by his refusal to obey their sensations, constantly seeking the Father's aid, offering up "prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears ", thus learning obedience by the things which he suffered.

The Law of the Lord and His testimonies were his meditation all the day, therefore he kept His precepts.

Let us then emulate his example and may our prayer ever be—

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord my strength and my redeemer"— (Ps. xix. 14).

B.J.D.