

Godliness with Contentment

"Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"—Eph. 4:32

WHAT wonderful words of wisdom, divine wisdom, the apostle Paul has left on record for us in his letters to Timothy! Words that we do well to pause and ponder over and give our most serious thought and consideration unto.

The more we read these letters of the apostle, the more beautiful they appear unto us. Therefore, the advice from Paul the elder unto "my son Timothy in the Faith" (which same advice is very much applicable unto each and everyone of us), is to keep these things near and dear unto us—very close to us—within our reach and grasp; lest at any time we let them slip and get away from us.

In 2 Tim. 1:2 the apostle says to Timothy —

"My dearly beloved son."

Not his own literal son in the flesh, but as in 1 Tim. 1:2—

"Timothy, my own son in the Faith."

From Paul's writings we learn that Timothy was very beloved of him. Often he accompanied the apostle and they laboured together in the "Lord's Vineyard." So it should be among ourselves, laboring together in mutual affection. We are all sons and daughters of the Almighty God and we must perform our duties as such, showing greater friendship and love to one another than to natural blood relations. The command given unto us is quite clear (Gal. 6:10)—

"Do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the Household of Faith."

We are all very familiar with Jesus' words (Luke 8:20)—

"And it was told him by certain which said,

"Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee.

"And he answered and said unto them,

"My mother and my brethren are these which hear the Word of God and DO it."

Let us take careful note of his definition of relationship to him: Jesus' "brethren" are only those who "hear the Word and DO it" — a continual, lifelong obedience.

Anything short of this is not well-pleasing unto Yahweh, in which event we shall be cast into outer darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This is the same "Word" by which Paul instructed Timothy, seeking to stir him to greater activity, as in 2 Tim. 1:5-6—

"I call to remembrance the unfeigned (real, sincere) faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice: and, I am persuaded, in thee also.

"Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands."

Paul stresses the need for holding fast to the sound foundation laid by faithful pioneers (2 Tim. 3:14-15)—

"Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and has been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Thus, we say, young brother or sister, take heed! Are you prepared to carry on the good work, to keep that glorious light shining and never let it go out?

Not that the young are to be singled out any more than the elders, but the older ones will not always be with us. We must each in our turn, while the Master remains away, go the way of all flesh, unto the dust from whence we came. And so the word of Solomon goes forth—

"Remember now thy Creator **in the days of thy youth.**"

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THERE is much more the apostle has recorded, many more comforting, strengthening, guiding, warning words, filling out the solemn but joyful and glorious picture our title gives:

"Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6).

These things do not exist in this wicked, evil, untoward generation in which we dwell as strangers and pilgrims. There is no godliness, but rather great (and ever-increasing) ungodliness; neither is there contentment.

What of us, who are of that "One Body" as it is in Christ Jesus? Do WE have godliness and contentment? Are we, the professed children of God, satisfied with simple food and raiment, and content with spiritual peace and in lifelong service to God—our thoughts ever on things above, and not on things on earth?

Or do we, like the rest of the foolish world, desire and strive and labor for the passing things of this vain and so brief life?

If we truly have godliness (which is the direct opposite of worldliness—James 4:4), being established strong, firm, solid, well-rooted and grounded in the Faith with peaceful, joyful, patient, confident contentment—surely it is great gain! Yea, the greatest gain that one can ever attain to, the greatest gift that a loving Father has offered to sinful, mortal man—even the life more abundant, now and eternally.

The apostle continues to point out the foolishness of wasting our precious, God-given, preparation time in seeking the things of the present, because of our such brief possession of them at best, and the pitiful shortness of this sad mortal life compared to the endless, sorrowless one for which we should devote every moment in preparing (1 Tim. 6:7)—

"We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out."

Man is like unto the flower of the field; his days are numbered. Today he is here, and tomorrow he is not. What good then unto him are all his riches?

"HAVING FOOD AND RAIMENT, LET US THEREWITH BE CONTENT."

Brethren and sisters of the lowly Jesus, we must each let these words penetrate and sink in deeply.

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THIS whole chapter is a beautiful one—beautiful in its solemn warnings and glorious promises, as in v. 10—

"For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the Faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Let us shun, avoid, forsake, turn our back on, all worldly possessions, goods, and money. There is only one way that the Deity will have us be rich, and that is "rich in faith." Consider the prophets, apostles, disciples of Christ, even the Master himself, who had "nowhere to lay his head."

We read of them as keepers of sheep of the flock, herdsmen, tillers of the soil, fishermen, tent-makers. Of Jesus they said:

"Is not this the carpenter's son?"

He was meek, lowly, humble, and had nothing. God's Own Son was born in a stable. And, at his birth, for her cleansing, Mary offered the offering of the poorest of the poor (Luke 2:24)—

"A pair of turtledoves."

What did Peter say to the lame man who was seeking alms at the Temple gate? (Acts 3:6):

"Silver and gold have I none."

We do well to follow in the footsteps of these faithful worthies of old —

"The disciple is not above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master" (Matt. 10:24-25).

Do we seek more of this world's goods and possessions than our Master himself sought? Let us search our hearts, and our way of life.

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WE return to 1 Tim. 6:11 to hear the conclusion of the whole matter—

"But thou, O man of God, FLEE THESE THINGS; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life."

Paul's final instruction to his son Timothy in this first epistle was (v. 20)—

"O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust!—avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called."

Surely there was never a time in all the long history of the Faith when this commission and this warning called for more diligent, vigilant attention than in these last dark Gentile times!

May we be given the wisdom and courage to keep that simple Faith committed to our trust, and to keep clear of the trackless jungle of "scientific" babblings that is the "wisdom of the world" today.

— F. P.