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REWARDS OF OBEDIENCE

—NOVEMBER 22.—PROV. 3:1-17.—

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”—Prov. 3:6.

IN this lesson Wisdom personified stands as an instructor and offers good counsel to such as have an ear to hear and a desire to obey her.

(1) “Wisdom is justified of her children.” They show their parentage, and reflect their mother’s likeness. But to this end Wisdom’s laws and commandments must be carefully heeded. Wisdom’s laws are divine laws, expressed not only in the Scriptures, but also in the laws of nature. “The children of the light” should walk in the light in reference to physical as well as spiritual matters—health, food, cleanliness, clothing, etc.

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(2) No one of ordinary perception can fail to note that a wise and moderate course in life in obedience to the divine laws is beneficial with respect to the life which now is, and also that which is to come. True, many in the prime of life and health do not give heed to Wisdom’s voice; true, many who do give heed are such as are already greatly impaired, having either inherited weaknesses and frailties from the un-wisdom of their parents (beginning with Adam and Eve) or having neglected the voice of Wisdom until retribution overtook them. But even for the impaired the counsel of Wisdom is profitable, as many have proved, and brings with it more of peace than can be found in any other way.

(3) How grand the counsel of this verse! How wise, and how necessary to a large development of heart, are the graces here mentioned—mercy and truth! No one is truly great who is mean, spiteful, vindictive. Mercy towards others, implying consideration for their failings and sufferings, is an ennobling grace, a part of the image of God, too largely lost by many. Truth here stands for sincerity, pureness and uprightness of dealing in all our affairs. Who could be a true nobleman without this quality? Much more is it necessary to every true Christian.

“Bind them about thy neck” signifies that these are to be esteemed as jewels and ornaments of character carefully guarded from loss and always in sight,—delightful things. And not only

should they be manifest to all as outward graces, but they should be written or engraven in our hearts. Nobility of character, God-likeness, was a part of man's original endowment, and was written in his very heart, nature, constitution; but Adamic sin and its resultant separation from God, and now six thousand years of degradation, have well nigh obliterated this original divine law from the heart of humanity. So to fallen man in general, the evil and selfish and resentful suggestions present themselves, instead of mercy and sincerity. But the child of God, the child of Wisdom, is to retrace and engrave again upon the tablets of the heart (that is, in his very character) these graces so generally obliterated. This work is at the present time being followed only by those who are in the school of Christ,—the "little flock." But by and by the school of Christ will be enlarged; and these who are now pupils will be associated with the great Master as teachers and instructors of the Word; and then the whole world will be called upon to rewrite in their hearts the original law of righteousness. And all who appreciate the opportunity will be assisted in so doing by the Lord and his servants; as it is written.—Jer. 31:33,34.

(4) Such characters are sure to be pleasing in the sight of God, and are acknowledged even by such persons as are children of darkness and hate the light, and would say all manner of evil falsely against the children of the light.

(5) Every matured child of God must learn well and appreciate the sentiment of this verse. Experience has taught him the imperfection of his own judgment in many things, and the fallibility of all human counsel; and he has learned and is still learning to trust the Lord implicitly. In order thus to trust the Lord, a knowledge of his Word and the plan of salvation which it reveals are very important; they inspire trust and confidence, not only in the ability and wisdom of God, but also in his justice and love.

(6) It is not only proper that God's children should trust him in their hearts, but also that they should confess and acknowledge him as their Lord and Master in all of their affairs. Such as are careful thus to acknowledge the Lord have the assurance that he will direct their paths. Their paths will not be directed in ways most congenial to the fallen nature: nor do they wish for this; for, as already seen, they are desiring and seeking mercy and truth, as outward charms, and also as deeply graven inward principles.

(7) Nothing is more dangerous to the child of God than self-conceit: it blocks the way to true progress and reformation of heart, and hinders true usefulness to others, and especially usefulness in God's service; for his Word declares, "God resisteth the proud, but showeth his favor unto the humble."

Instead of self confidence, Wisdom dictates a distrustfulness of self, remembering its weaknesses

and imperfections, and correspondingly the greater reverence for God and reliance upon him, which more than anything else will strengthen and enable us to depart from the evil of our fallen estate.

(8) "Health [or vigor] to thy muscles and marrow to thy bones," as a figurative expression, would seem to signify general vitality, vigor of mind and body, which certainly are among the blessed results of that proper reverence for the Lord which leads us to depart from sin in thought, word and deed.

(9) Whatever we possess should be made to contribute its part in God's service. Whether our substance consists of a rich endowment of talent, or education, or influence, its first fruits, its results, should go to the service of our gracious heavenly Father, as our Lord said: "Seek ye first [chiefly, to serve] the Kingdom of heaven."

(10) Whatever our substance, if faithful in its use and in consecrating its best to the cause of God, a blessing will result to us. During the Jewish age God's covenant with that people was to the effect that faithfulness to him and his laws would bring them temporal

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prosperity; and the same rule will be in force during

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the Millennial age; as it is written, "In his days [the Millennial age] shall the righteous flourish," but "evil doers shall be cut off." (Psa. 72:7; 37:9.) This rule does not apply during this Gospel age, however: the meek do not now inherit the earth, nor the righteous in general. Now the proud are prosperous, "Yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." (Mal. 3:15.) Not only our Lord Jesus and the apostles, who honored God with the first-fruits of their being, but also many of the household of faith since, have not had overflowing barns and wine presses. Chiefly they have been "the poor of this world, rich in faith;" yet, nevertheless, they have had the finest of the wheat, the purest of the oil and the best of the wine, as represented in their spiritual nourishment and enrichment.

(11,12) The trials and difficulties of this present life are not to be esteemed as marks of divine disfavor, if we have become children of God, children of Wisdom, under the provided conditions of the New Covenant. We are to remember the promise of our Father, that "All things work together for good to them that love God, to the called ones according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28.) Reproofs, trials, disciplines should be reminders to us that we are not perfect, that we still have

need of the mercy of God in Christ, even with our best efforts; and should lead us to greater diligence in “perfecting holiness in the fear [reverence] of the Lord.”—2 Cor. 7:1.

(13-17) Wisdom and understanding are not exactly synonymous terms. Wisdom describes more particularly the perception of right and wrong principles and their results and the propriety of following these. Knowledge or understanding relates more particularly to the information and building up of judgment and character, as the result of obedience to the voice of Wisdom.

It is a great blessing and privilege indeed to *find* Wisdom, for few there be that find her in this present time. Wisdom is the light which cometh from above. She is the truth. Her grand exemplification among men was “the man Christ Jesus,” our Lord, “the true Light.” Light from above, Wisdom, is still in the world, as represented in the divine Word; but to the majority it is unseen, unknown; as it is written, “The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not.” Thank God for the assurance that in due time all the blind eyes shall be opened, and that then the true light, the true wisdom from above, shall lighten every man! Then all will see the truth, and all will hear the voice of Wisdom, the voice of God, the voice of Christ, the voice of the Church, and be privileged to drink at the fountain of Wisdom and knowledge, and, if they will be obedient, to obtain the full measure of divine favor and blessing as represented in the offer of everlasting life.—See Rev. 22:17.

But, alas! although but few find Wisdom now, still fewer heed her voice and purchase the true knowledge and its precious blessings as she directs. Nothing else that can be bought is so valuable. Under Wisdom’s direction now not only the silver of truth may be obtained, but the divine nature, as symbolized by gold, and graces of character, as symbolized in precious stones. All these may now be secured by obedience to her voice—and more; for “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man the things that God has in reservation for them that love him,”—including everlasting life, heavenly riches, honor, joy and peace.

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— November 1, 1896 —



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