

BIBLE LESSON XIV.

John 13:1

GOOD IN SACRIFICE

When one proposes to make sacrifice of himself in any way he must be sure to ask himself the question, "What good am I doing by this action?" For unless there is some actual good to be attained or achieved by doing menial or servile tasks it is the misuse of talent to put it to doing what others are better adapted to doing. Talent along any line should exercise itself to its highest expansion along that line and not intrude itself upon the domain of another without righteous cause.

Out of the action of Jesus Christ in washing the feet of His companions, a religious ceremony of washing feet has come to pass among a certain sect. But if He meant by His action simply to teach a state of mind and not a ceremonial to be observed, we had better understand the mental lesson rather than the best method of washing our neighbor's feet.

Some people think that if we keep up the ordinance of the "Lord's Supper" we ought to keep up the ceremonial of washing feet. Some think that if we believe in the literal bodily healings of Jesus we ought to believe in the fastings He practiced as duties incumbent.

In any case if we have made up our mind that this Teacher was exactly right in

everything He did, we ought to find out how much indeed of the letter of His life it is our duty and privilege to perform. If He meant that it is possible to get into a state of mind which will be a healing potency to others; and into a state of mind where though of royal heritage we are willing to do the most servile services for our neighbors; and into a state of mind where spiritual ecstasy is wisdom and takes the place of eating; and that these states of mind are the desideratum of life, why we are one and all eager to attain unto them.

They intimate powers and immunities which are the *summum bonum* of human hopes. Was it the fasting, was it the eating, was it the washing, which He was teaching? Or was it mental status?

He said Himself that the flesh (or material performance) counted as nothing. ("Profiteth nothing.") I.e., that it is sure to be right if the animus is right. There has been a great criticism of the idea that the motive is the justification of the action, as much as to say that a man with a very good motive might be loose in his conduct. No. That is exactly what he could not be. Right motive makes right action.

The right motive is the conviction in the heart that right is right. And this conviction of right has never been secured till it demonstrates right actions. "Conviction is not, properly speaking, conviction till it develops itself into action." One says that this law of righteous motive will not work in daily affairs. Would the righteous choose to have a set of china fired without breaking, keep the

china pieces from breaking if there were air bubbles under the glazing?

Most certainly. You would become so intuitive by the idea steadily held that you must do every thing well which you attempt to do, that you would discover a process of firing imperfect china safely and another process of perfecting imperfect china.

There is a law of right in itself which conducts to right actions. It is metaphysical to think only of the right itself. It is the highest schoolmaster.

Joshua did not know the first thing about that law of a body resounding when its keynote is struck. But Joshua was so sure he was in the right that he thought out a quick way to sound the keynote to the walls of Jericho till they tumbled down.

The missionaries on the desolate island were so sure of being in the right and were so confident in the power of goodness of their God that they flung the American flag to the breeze when the natives were about to slay them. This reminded the natives what a nation backed the missionaries. They never thought of the flag till they had prayed to God. Joshua never thought of the rams' horns till he prayed to the same God.

This God unto whom they prayed for such assistance will help us in the simplest matters. Nothing is too low or ignoble for God to be the worker. "Who sweeps a room as to his God makes all the act divine."

Joseph Cook said that Lionel Beale was wishing somebody would get back into the

secret of natural law and upset what seems to have so much power against. The secret is understanding of God. The feet symbolize understanding. We must keep our understanding clear and speak such words as will wash or clear the understanding of our neighbors.

There are certain words which the mind can use that have the effect of clarifying it. The judgment can be trained to be exactly reliable by these thoughts. Jesus Christ taught the ideas that act so powerfully with the judgment.

Judas Iscariot had had an idea put into his mind that dulled or hid his judgment. This idea was that a sum of money in hand is more worthwhile than a steadfast kindness of heart.

The principle of evil is the devil sometimes, and sometimes it is many small devils. Then again, it is the vicious temper or the false idea. The whole claim might just as well be met by us now and faced up with the question, How much profit is there in it? How much power? How much satisfaction? Jesus Christ called the whole claim nothing. "A lie," He said. There is nothing to the whole of it.

The high church dignitaries were greatly afraid that the young man who made such stupendous affirmation of Himself and the fishermen would upset everything. And so He would. They would soon find out that there was a greater among them, and no lesser. They would soon find out that there were no Romans, and no Jews, no high priests and no lepers.

All these were a lie of belief in a partial God. There is in reality no such being. A menial task like washing the feet is no lower than the blowing of Gabriel's trumpet. "There is one Lord (Law) and His name One."

Jesus preached this boldly and lived it just as boldly. He ate with publicans and sinners. He touched the lepers. He blessed sick women. He washed men's feet. Having proclaimed the principle that all are one He must act it out.

He told the commonest kind of mixed audiences to have the faith of God. How could they have the faith of God? In order to have a faith equal to God's faith they must certainly have the courage to affirm omnipotence, omniscience.

Somewhere there was a teaching then, dropping around into whatever soil would receive it, to the effect that the mind is as great as it has courage to affirm and demonstrates its greatness to the extent it has confidence in its affirmations.

Knowing this truth, you see, Jesus could not ask them to affirm any less of themselves than He knew they had a right to. He was not perceiving their flesh. He was not examining their intellect. He was recognizing their divinity.

Napoleon walked over the French generals by affirming his power to do so and handled them like chessmen because he had the self-conviction he could do it. How high have you affirmed of yourself. How much courage in affirmation have you sprung to?

You have the teachings of Jesus to the effect that there is no substance to you except Spirit. And Spirit is God. Whatever you give voice to you may be sure you will expand to its stature. Would you not like to forget all things except your omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence? Then do forget all things in the affirmations of your spirit.

Now there is a law of the effect of a truth told which makes it seem as if you had to face up evil appearances after you have spoken very highly of yourself with your mind. Grief, anger, disappointment, failure appear just like these natural consequences of Jesus and Judas and the high priests meeting with such different affirmations. You must make a firm soil of character by a declaration of faith, after which the most servile duties will be ennobled by your doing them.

In the midst of your anger, or grief or disappointment utter this idea intensely, "I do believe that my God is now working with me, through me and by me and for me to make me omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient."

Directly your mind will take a new base. The experience will be exactly like the precipitating of camphor when water is dropped into the alcohol holding it in solution. Your mind now fixes its faith. After your faith is grounded your words will bring to pass wonderfully.

You remember Jesus Christ did not say, according to your denials, or according to you affirmations, but according to your faith.

Here at this point of the knowledge of His greatness, the faith in His greatness, He was

as meek as a slave of the Orient, faithful as a mother to her baby; He washed their feet. The greater the sweep of His affirmation, the lower His condescension of love.

You often see that in great and able men there is less ostentation than in those pretending to be great and not believing in their greatness. Von Moltke attended a peasant baby like a good brother while its sister who had it in charge went to see the king and the great General pass by. When she was disappointed at not seeing Von Moltke in the crowd he invited her to the hotel, where he appeared in full uniform.

A small officer would not have done it unless he had believed in his own greatness of spirit. Then if the small officer had so believed in greatness of spirit he would soon be taking the honors of Moltke. It is such a glorious knowledge to enter into: that we are as great as we have courage to expand into (or affirm of ourselves) and can demonstrate as much greatness as we believe in.

He who taught us of our inheritance of power, our kingly heirship, taught us meekness and docility. Fidelity to any task is the exhibition of God. The understanding of Peter needed washing or clarifying. His pledge to the ministry was already being well carried out (hands) so Jesus did not wash his hands and head. Once he recognized the Messiah he had not to recognize Him over again, but only to understand His teachings.

Here are the cleansing waters for your understanding: "In my good there is no mix-

ture of evil. On my spirit there is no burden. There is no absence of life, substance, or intelligence." There is nothing to hate. "There is no sin, sickness, death in my idea of good."

Now you may make the highest affirmation your courage will spring to. You are already it. Have faith in yourself. Do the loyal service of true greatness. Right in that lot where you are called to serve is the chance to exercise your talent. What lies nearest at hand, do bravely. An artist may be sending the glory of living pictures into the imagination of some bed-bound child while she tends the baking in her country home.

No genius is lost to the world because its fame is not yet emblazoned. The high preparation time is thinking your highest while doing lowest tasks. Tasks which require no thought give time for the noblest thoughts. See how the doctrine of this Servant of men comes quickening our hopes today. As great as you have courage to mentally proclaim yourself and sure to demonstrate as well as your faith in your greatness, decides! Therefore have faith in God. Have the faith of God. There is no self-sacrifice. "I am myself now and I know myself. My highest idea: I am it!"

So is every heart that knows the right,

And choosing it, rejoices

That what it thinks is true.

"Itself is that."

October 18th, 1891.