To Be Fleshly-Minded Is Death

The World's Wickedness: Our Call to Holiness

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, for the fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much"—James 5:16

WHY are we gathered here? Is it for enjoyment? No. The purpose of our life is not enjoyment, but accomplishment, development, growth, preparation. In the mercy of God, enjoyment is the result of godly activity, but it is not the purpose.

To be real and worthwhile, life must have a far deeper motive than enjoyment, or the satisfying of any desire. The motivating force in our lives must be the love of God, for its own sake alone.

Only this could make both Moses and Paul—two men so different and yet so much alike—sincerely and unaffectedly willing to be blotted out of God's purpose if it would help their brethren.

True love is entirely selfless. It is far too large and irradiating to be conformed to self-interest.

We are here to help and be helped. These addresses themselves are but a small part of the purpose of our gathering together. The real part is contact, fellowship, encouragement, mutual interest—better understanding, sympathy, drawing closer together.

God in His mercy has given us fellow-workers on the road to life. They are not perfect, as we ourselves are not perfect, but we are united in a striving for perfection, and earnest realization of the great beauty and desirability of perfection. That is the glorious bond that unites us here in one heart and spirit.

We are not here to congratulate one another because we fast twice in the week, and give tithes of all we possess, and are so much better than other men. This can creep into our attitude if we are not careful.

We are separated from other groups, not because we think we are better, but because we realize more dearly the dangers and weaknesses inherent in the flesh—our own flesh included—and are more concerned about them in the Light of God's Word. We are not here to criticize and condemn others. We are here in recognition of our own weakness and need.

We are united in a glorious endeavor—the only worthwhile and satisfying endeavor in the whole earth—but the magnitude of its scope and gloriousness makes us keenly conscious of our utter natural unworthiness.

It is God's will that it should create this feeling within us. God is infinite and omnipotent. We are perishing creatures of such limited understanding and ability.

This overwhelming sense of unworthiness should teach us kindness and compassion and mercy—a great hesitancy to judge, knowing that with what measure we judge we shall be judged, and we all need such mercy ourselves.

This realization of unworthiness is designed to create in us a vast gratitude that One so great and perfect can look down in patient compassion upon those so weak and erring.

And gratitude, if it is real and deep and fills the heart, will be irresistibly moved to express itself in ACTION.

And God in His wisdom has prescribed such a beautiful, self-blessing way of giving vent to this overpowering thankfulness (1 John 4:19-21; 3:14)—

"We love because He first loved us, and this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

This is the heart of our subject—the heart of holiness. We remember that Jesus said that even sinners—ordinary people living according to the flesh—reciprocate kindness among themselves. There is no particular virtue in being good in return for good.

But it takes saints—holy ones—children of God—to be kind to the unthankful and evil, hoping to demonstrate the power and superiority of goodness, and, like God, by love to create love.

WE are here to learn to grow, to get a fuller picture of the meaning and purpose of life.

Are we really pursuing a real PURPOSE in our lives?

Nothing worthwhile is ever accomplished without single-minded devotion and effort to which all else is subordinated.

The parables of Jesus contain the deepest and most searching

lessons of godliness. The depth is measured only by how far we allow them to penetrate our hearts and motivate our lives. We have recently read together again the parable of the unjust steward, which Jesus sums up in these tragic words—

"The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

What tremendous efforts, what self-sacrifice, what complete dedication the children of this world will put into their endeavors!

Nothing is too hard for a man who is striving toward some coveted goal in this life—long hours of labor, loss of sleep, foregoing of pleasure and comfort—how often have we seen this as a man drives himself steadily ahead toward some corruptible crown which he can only, at best, wear but a few short troubled years.

Do we expect eternity on cheaper terms? How much actual EFFORT and SACRIFICE are we putting into our seeking the Kingdom of God?

"The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

Hundreds of millions live and have lived upon the earth. If Christ should ask us at the Judgment Seat—

"Why you, And not them? What distinguishes you from the great perishing mass?—what should we answer?

"We believed the Truth."

Will not he reply, "The devils also believe, and tremble?"

We were in the Truth 20-30-40-50-60 years."

"That is not a credit. That is a liability—something given to you to DO something with. What have you to SHOW for all these years of opportunity?"

Another parable comes to our minds: the Parable of the Talents. That is us. Our talents are health, strength, ability, a certain amount of material goods, time, facilities for studying God's Word, and a mind capable of infinitely more accomplishment for good than any of us ever approach to.

The purpose of this gathering—of all exhortation—is to press us with the URGENCY of the situation. We cannot be drifting. We must be actively pursuing a purpose in life and keeping it always before our mind, conforming all plans to it. Any other course is helpless.

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God—not all the material things the people of the world seek. This does not mean, Get into the Truth first, and get your salvation taken care of, and then turn your attention to getting the things of the world.

"Seek ye first" means that that must be first all the time all our life—a lifetime of seeking the Kingdom first.

Another parable speaks of four classes of soil on which the seed of the Kingdom was sown: three failures, tragedies; one success. For most of us, the danger of the first two failures has past, for they happen early in the race, but the third is far more subtle and dangerous—

"The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of present possessions choke the Word, and he becometh unfruitful."

This is a very pressing, urgent question for us all: Are we allowing the things of the present—the pressures of modern life—to choke the Word? Rob us of the crown of our life—all unsuspectedly to rob us of eternity?

We live in a luxury unknown to all previous generations. To what extent are we justified in allowing ourselves to be swept up in this modern treadmill? Let us pray for enlightenment and guidance in this matter, that we do not find to our sorrow that the cares of this life have won their bitter victory in the end.

"I will pull down my barns and build bigger"—how deep does this folly go? Would Christ find it in our hearts too? Have we found it "necessary" to build a bigger barn?

For example, and this is only an example, for it applies in so many ways: we may be quite justified in spending God's money for an automobile, and God's time and strength in getting that money (for all we have is God's), for under modern conditions an automobile can contribute effectively to the overall usefulness of our lives in God's service (and that is the ONLY justification for anything)—

BUT—can we justify spending God's money for a better one than 3/4 of our worldly neighbors find quite adequate?

The same with our houses. Whose money are we spending?

And what is our real purpose in life? For everything we do must be in harmony with one purpose, if we sincerely seek salvation. Are we princes, or pilgrims? We cannot be both.

These questions are for each to consider and decide. If we will face their implications, we shall find that they apply to every aspect of our lives. Are the cares of this life—those so pleasant, self-chosen, self-gratifying cares—choking out the fruit, cutting into time and effort that belong to the work of God? What are the implications of the command—

"Having food and raiment be therewith content." "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God."

"THE World's Wickedness." Is the world, as such, wicked? Truly there is a lot of wickedness in the world, a lot of crime, a lot of evil, a lot of violence—but is not the world as a whole itself very strongly against this element? Can we today say, "The whole world lieth in wickedness?" Can we fairly call it "This present evil world?"

This blanket condemnation of the whole human race, except a handful of Christadelphians, is a serious problem to many.

Is there not much goodness, kindness, friendliness, mutual help, striving and planning for better things for the general welfare? Who are we, to condemn them all alike?

It is not we who condemn the world. Of ourselves we would not dare. It is the Word of God, and if any are willing to humbly study that Word, they will see quite clearly that the whole world DOES live in wickedness, just as the spirit through the apostle John declares—a wickedness of which we ourselves, together with all mankind, are in our natural state a part.

The question for us is: Have we really come out? Have we really separated ourselves from the wickedness of which the Scripture speaks? They are not talking about the criminal element. They are not talking about the things the world itself considers wicked. They go much deeper into it than that.

They are talking about the basic characteristics of all human hearts. Naturally, by its own standards the world is not wicked. But the only true standard of measurement is God's standard, and we must go to God's Word and ask—

What is wickedness and what is righteousness?

What is right; what is wrong?

What is sound, and true, and everlasting; and what is false, and corrupt, and passing?

We must begin at the right place. We must begin with God, and work out from there, taking nothing for granted.

God is the foundation and center of everything. There are no standards of anything apart from Him. Right and wrong, good and bad, mean nothing apart from Him.

He alone is stable and fixed and unchangeable in the universe.

He is eternal and perfect in beauty, wisdom, goodness and love. Everything is to be measured according as it is in harmony or disharmony with Him. All that is out of harmony with God is wickedness, foolishness, unhappiness, corruption, and death (1 Jn. 3:4)—

"Sin is transgression of the law."

The Scriptures put the same truth into a broader and more sweeping form when they say—

"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23).

That is, everything—every human activity—outside of an intelligent comprehension and acceptance of God's law, is SIN. Everything that is not done within the framework of a conscious enlightened effort to be in harmony with God, is SIN, either ignorant or presumptuous.

Why is the definition of sin so broad? Why is everything weighted against us? Why can we not just as likely be right as wrong?

If we think about it, we shall see that it could be no other way. If God has commanded us to consciously frame our whole life in obedience to Him, then ANY independent action which is done in ignorance, thoughtlessness, or disregard of this command, is sin even though in itself the act is not specifically forbidden.

It is the self-will, the self-leasing, the ignoring of God's command and sovereign supremacy—that is sin.

BUT there is a stronger factor still that makes all action sin that is not done in conscious submission and obedience to God. It is expressed in these statements—

"The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

"To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6-7).

"The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other" (Gal 5:17).

To be carnally-minded is to be just a natural, ordinary person of the world, acting according to natural, ordinary desires. This natural way is contrary to God's will and holiness. Paul sums it up thus—

"In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing."

"I see a law in my members...bringing me into captivity to the law of sin in my members" (Rom. 7:23).

This is why "Everything that is not of faith is sin." This is why "The whole world lieth in wickedness."

LET us not stand back abstracted and detached, as if the world and its wickedness were something entirely separate from ourselves. The main issue is inward—the examination and judgment of self.

Of others, let God be the Judge. Our duty to others is to help, persuade, exhort, yea, plead and warn, but not to judge and condemn.

It is so easy and self-gratifying to judge, condemn, criticize and ridicule. In so doing we condemn ourselves, for the very act of condemning is a manifestation of the diabolos—

"Who art thou, O man, that judgest another?"

The message of the Scriptures is that (Rom. 3:23)—

"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

All stand alike in need of infinite mercy and infinite help.

THE "world" of which the Scriptures speak is the natural society of man—living according to the mind of the flesh, in ignorance and darkness as regards true spiritual principles.

In relation to God, all who are just natural parts of the world are aliens, strangers, living a mere animal existence, outside of the divine family and of God's covenants and promises of life.

About this "world" of natural mankind, the Scriptures say many things, some of which appear on the surface to be directly contradictory. On the one hand we have these broad, general statements of great power and beauty—

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

"He is the mercy-seat for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

"I came not to judge the world but to save it" (John 12:47).

On the other hand we have these very plain statements and commands:

"I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:9-16).

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this...to keep unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

"Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:15-16).

The apparent contradiction disappears when we re-examine the first class of passages and realize that they all clearly emphasize—yea, they are mainly concerned with—the world's lost, alienated condition and need for reconciliation and salvation from sin.

These passages manifest—not any blurring of the essential distinction and separation between God's sons and the world—but rather the great compassion of God toward the sinful world, and His merciful desire that as many as possible be saved FROM their alienated and hopeless position.

This is the key to our relationship to the world—sharp, clear separation: but infinite kindness and compassion and patience.

When we desire, in any form or degree, to "call down fire from heaven" against any in the world (usually it is someone who has hurt or annoyed us personally)—when we nurse and soothe our anger with the comforting thought that God will pay them back in full measure—we are manifesting the diabolos and not the Spirit of God. We are being small and cramped and self-centered.

We are pitying ourselves instead of rising to the largeness of heart and mind manifested by the Master in our readings a few days ago Luke 3:34)—

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

"Our Call to Holiness"—what thoughts does the word "call" suggest?

First of all we are reminded that salvation begins with action and interest on God's part. Jesus said—

"No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44).

God has called us—invited us to fellowship—offered us a position of honor and power and glory and responsibility higher than anything mankind has ever dreamed of—asked us to set aside all less-important, passing things, and diligently prepare ourselves for intimate, eternal association with Him.

To what extent do we really realize the implications of the call? If we really did fully realize its magnitude—would not our minds ALWAYS be filled with the thrill and expectation and wonder of it?

Would we not ALWAYS be zealously engaged in intensive preparation, impatient of anything that distracted or diverted our attention from these efforts?

How real is our professed zeal? How deep is our professed faith? How strong is our professed hope? How true and undivided is our professed love?

Surely it would seem that if we really possessed these things in their fullness our characters and our activities would be so much different from what they are—and so much different from all the rest of natural, animal humanity!

Where is the pure, gentle, gracious transformation to a heavenly, Christlike holiness of which the Scriptures constantly speak as the ONLY way of life—the being "changed into the same divine image from glory to glory"?

"Our Call to Holiness." On the front of the headdress of the Mosaic High Priest, there was attached a plate of pure gold, and on it was engraved the inscription, "Holiness to the Lord." That was the central theme of the Law of Moses: "Holiness to the Lord"; man is weak and unclean; God is great and holy—

"Be ye holy, even as I the Lord am holy."

Under the Law, everything to do with natural man, from birth to death, was defiled, impure, unclean. Over and over the lesson is emphasized: cleansing, purifying, purging, washing—sacrifice, atonement, reconciliation, redemption—

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"

What is holiness? The Hebrew original is kodesh, meaning "SET APART, separated, sacred, dedicated, devoted in worship and service."

Arising from this comes its secondary meaning of "PURE, undefiled, godly."

Holiness is separation—separateness. What is involved in the conception of separateness, as regards the world of mankind in general? What associations and relationships are forbidden, and what are required as part of our testifying for God?

We know that the interpretation of separateness that would have us live in seclusion as monks or hermits—severing all contact with the world—is unscriptural, a deformed travesty of the Truth. Jesus' prayer to the Father was—

"Not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.'

Jesus' words and Jesus' own life and example are the key to this question. He mingled freely with harlots and sinners, those who were morally the lowest and least respected classes of society, but he never for a moment took part in their activities, their worldly and fleshly interests. Though in intimate association with them, he was always separate.

Wherever he was, whoever he was with, he was wholly devoted to his Father's business—working for God—manifesting God—showing how beautiful and desirable and satisfying and more excellent is the way of godliness and holiness and love.

Without difficulty, with incongruity, without any violation of holiness, we can imagine Jesus going anywhere and associating with anyone.

But when we visualize what he would be doing, what he would be saying, how he would be comporting himself—we can never picture him stepping even for a moment outside of the narrow and exalted path of holiness, graciousness, complete and single-minded dedication to the service of God. We can never picture him allowing the issue of separation from the world to be obscured or confused, though associating with them in the most intimate way.

The principle of separateness must go much deeper than the juvenile conception of not having physical contact with the world—that is shallow and superficial, a childish running away from reality and duty. It does not come to grips with the state of the heart and mind.

We might never actually have any contact with the people of the world, but if our hearts are in their worldly activities, their amusements and entertainments, their foolish, small-minded, gossip about trivialities which makes up most of their conversation and what they consider news, we are not holy and separate.

We could sit at home all our lives and never see a soul, but if we fill our hearts and minds and interests with these things through newspapers, magazines, radio and television, we are just as much a part of the world of the ungodly as if we were bodily and actively in the front lines of every one of their activities.

The separateness must enter right into our hearts, or it is just a vain form—just a self-righteous, ritualistic, superficial fulfillment of uncomprehended regulations.

And it must go even deeper than just separation from the interests of the world. We could be totally uninterested in anything the world did, and still we could be just as much a part of the world and its wickedness as anyone.

How? Here are very fertile grounds for hypocrisy and Pharisaism, for while we are condemning others for outward and obvious worldliness, we may ourselves be far more seriously guilty of the more deceptive and dangerous inward worldliness—harshness, unkindness, bad temper, selfishness, lack of self-control, pride, inconsideration, the universal tendency of the flesh to bully and domineer when it is a position of advantage, unfair criticism, gossip, back-biting, indulging our own ugly fleshly desires and lusts in many ways.

All these things come from within, and defile a man—make him unholy—make a mockery of his professed separation—make him a part of this present evil world.

How rare and precious is consistency. The better we discern our own weaknesses, the slower we will be to criticize the weaknesses of others. Jesus said—

"I have overcome the world."

What did he mean? What was the world which he had over-come? Did not the world overcome and kill him? John defines the world as—

"The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."

To the extent that we are motivated by the flesh in any way, to that extent we are part of the world and overcome by the world. To the extent we overcome lust and pride, to that extent we overcome the world, and are separate from it.

HERE is another aspect of the subject—godly holiness and separateness is not a negative quality—not just a refraining, not a sterilized vacuum of self-centered isolation.

It is a positive, complete, wholehearted absorption and dedication to spiritual ACTIVITY—a filling of the life and heart and interests with work for God. We can't be holy by just lying in bed, if we have the power to get up and do something for God.

We must clearly realize that this is an essential aspect of holiness. In true holiness, there is just no room or time for worldliness. True holiness will fill the life completely with godly activity and will crowd everything else out. It is the only thing that has the power to crowd it out and keep it out.

Holiness is not fulfilled in passive standing aside, no matter how complete that standing aside may be.

The parable of the talents clearly teaches us that true, living holiness is not a self-satisfied sitting back from all the world's activities and enjoying ourselves indolently in our own little isolated world, which—being to the gratification of the flesh—is just as worldly as the world itself.

Holiness is work, effort, activity, service, self-sacrifice, devotion to a purpose and a goal.

The slothful, unfaithful servant who buried his talent in the earth certainly kept it separate from the world. He faithfully fulfilled the negative part of the command. But he was no example of true living holiness.

HOLINESS is a manifestation of God—

"Be ye holy, even as I am holy."

"Let your light so shine that men may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in heaven."

The shining of the light to the glory of the Father is the manifestation of love. benevolence, sympathy, compassion. gentleness: and earnest effort and prayer for the well-being of others.

We must guard against the Pharisain conception that separateness and holiness imply coldness, antagonism, self-centeredness, and a vindictive eagerness to see sin punished and the wicked suffer.

God does not desire the death of the sinner. God punishes reluctantly and sorrowfully. Let us take to heart the great lesson of Jonah - the "sign of the prophet Jonas"—

"Doest thou well to be angry?"

Nineveh was a cruel, vicious, evil persecutor of God's people, but God sharply chided Jonah for resenting His mercy toward them. God would have all men come to repentance. All, even the worst, are "His offspring."

We need not fret with selfish resentment when the wicked appear to prosper. No one can fight against God. No one who is not sincerely trying to live in harmony with God is ever really happy, though all are so frantically pursuing happiness.

We can relax in the assurance that there is no real happiness in sin and selfishness, even at present; and that all sin, no matter how apparently "successful," is self-destructive at last.

To be upset and annoyed because injustice in any form appears to triumph is merely a measure of lack of faith and discernment. Let us stop and get our bearings and keep the overall picture in mind.

God is in full control. He will see that justice is done—far deeper, wiser, more perfect justice than we can conceive of. Was it justice to tolerate the terrible persecutions done by Paul before his enlightenment? Let us not be afraid that God is missing anything—not a sparrow falls without His knowing.

All we have to be concerned about is that WE ourselves are right with God, and a very large part of our being right with God is our attitude toward others in seeking their good, and deeply pitying all who are unredeemed slaves to the terrible master Sin whose only wages is sorrow and death.

Christ prayed for those who murdered him, and so did Stephen. In the latter case, the apostle Paul was among them. Is it not far more glorious to intercede than to condemn? Suppose our forgiving prayers save our enemies from death, and make them eternally our brethren. Are we not then "workers together with God" in bringing good out of evil, and life out of death?

Let us exercise this marvelous, soul-enlarging privilege of intercession and compassion to the uttermost, and leave the condemning to Him Whose right it is alone.

What more thankful, faithful, self-sacrificing servant ever lived than Paul, the persuaded persecutor?

OUR duties of practical holiness and godliness toward others apply in intensive degree to the Brotherhood. Here above all else it is essential that all things be done in love.

How long must it be before we will learn that love is sufficient for all things?—that NO circumstance ever justifies the setting aside or violating of this basic characteristic of godliness?

True, indeed, we must be faithful to the Truth, we must be firm, we must testify against error, we must speak out clearly against wrong doing, we must stand aside when faithfulness demands.

But all these things must be done in love, and sorrow, and compassion, and never-despairing hope—never in bitterness, condemnation, anger or self-righteousness—

"God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." "He that loveth not his brother dwelleth in death."

John says further—

"Herein is love, that we keep His commandments."

And Jesus said—

"This is my commandment that ye love one another."

There are two common misapplications of these teachings and we must avoid both of them. One is the cold conception that all that matters is technical obedience, and that this constitutes what the Scriptures call "love." If we will meditate with open heart upon all the Scriptures say about love, we shall realize more and more how shallow this view is.

The other is the flabby, sentimental notion that all that matters is "love," and that making an issue over specific obedience is being "righteous overmuch."

Both LOVE—the power of holiness, and painstaking OBEDIENCE—the divinely-prescribed shape and framework of holiness, are essential and inseparable.

Love is a gentle, sympathetic, humble, kindly way and spirit of doing what obedience requires to be done. In our weak mortal fleshly nature it is perhaps the most pressing issue before us—our most serious problem and concern.

Soon we must stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and let us clearly realize that we shall come face to face with the basic divine truth that—

"He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

—and that this essential love is a far greater and transforming thing than most of us realize. And it does not just mean love when love is easy. John says —

"Hereby perceive we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

If we are not willing to do this, we have not the living Truth that Jesus and the apostles preached.

And if we are willing to do it, we WILL do it, because there are many ways in which we CAN do it. If we do not give our whole lives for the brethren, it is because we are not willing to do it. We have not caught the transforming spirit of this command.

The Spirit tells us that—

"Love is patient and kind—never rude—does not become angry—bears everything—hopes everything—endures everything."

If we have not got this, we have not got the Truth at all, for he plainly says that without this, everything else is vain.

When will we learn that love is sufficient for all things, and that there is NEVER any justification for bitterness or harshness or rudeness or unkindness?

How do we expect to teach the beauty of gentleness and kindness and self-control by manifesting bitterness, harshness, sourness and anger?

These things are out-and-out evil manifestations of the flesh, and if we allow the natural irritable bullying tendency of the diabolos to deceive us into thinking they are essential to firmness and discipline and plain-speaking, then we are pitifully self-deceived indeed.

If we do not first discipline OURSELVES—searchingly examine ourselves by the light of God's Word—discern the evil, proud, antagonistic motions of the flesh for what they truly are, how can we presume to guide and instruct others in the Way of Life?

How can harshness breed anything but coarseness and harshness, and antagonism in return? Firmness is far more effective when it is gentle and courteous, for then it has the power of godliness.

Of those from whom it is necessary to stand aside in fellowship, Paul says—

"Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."

The word for "admonish" is a gentle, friendly one. Paul uses the same word when he exhorts the Colossians (3:16) to—

"Admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Perhaps our minds go to the words of Christ concerning disfellowship (Matt. 18:17)—

"Let him be unto thee as a heathen and a publican."

Is there a discrepancy in the spirit of these teachings? These words of Christ truly and seriously emphasize the importance of a clear, sharp distinction and spiritual separation, but—how did Jesus treat "heathen men and publicans"?

True, we cannot picture him taking part in their activities, or allowing himself to be identified with them in any way, but was he cold and rude to them? Did he avoid contact with them?—refuse to speak with them?—condemn them?

Did he not rather seek always to do them good, to treat them kindly, to be friendly and courteous to them, to show them a more excellent way, mingling freely with them as individuals in an effort to persuade and win them to the way of Truth?

ON this matter of holiness, let us remember one thing: our main problem is within ourselves, our own heart, the "law of sin within our members." Let us extend to others the charitableness we give ourselves.

We can find so many excuses for our own shortcomings. We fail many times a day. We know we fail. We put it down to the weakness of the flesh and pray for forgiveness and go right ahead good friends with ourselves—not too much concerned about these so easily self-excused manifestations of the diabolos. Perhaps we even admire ourselves a little for our sincere repentance and determination to press on again.

Why cannot we be at least as charitable toward the weakness of others? Why do we judge them with so much stricter a rule than ourselves?

Can we not believe that they too realize that it is the flesh, and that they too are striving against it just as we are?

There is a well-known passage in the book of James—

"The fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

But do we know the rest of the verse? Do we know what comes just before this, and is part of the same thought?

It is a very important aspect. It would solve many problems, remove many misunderstandings, heal many wounds, draw us as a Body far closer together, strengthen and comfort us all in the struggle for life. It is this—

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another."

The Catholic Church has made an ugly travesty of this beautiful first principle of godliness which has tended to obscure its value and importance, but it is a precept of great wisdom and power. Much estrangement, much bitterness, much coldness between brethren is due to a failure to realize that others are fighting the same hard battle against the same diabolos as we are—struggling hard though they often appear to fail.

They know they fail and recognize and deplore their failure, and are striving to overcome. But these things are all too often locked up in our hearts. We are too isolated and reserved. We just can not bring ourselves to the point of laying them out in the open. There is a barrier pride can't surmount.

And so we lose one of the greatest beauties of true fellowship. We judge and are judged according to the public outward manifestations of our mutual enemy the diabolos, rather than by the sincere and agonizing secret inward efforts to overcome it.

How often we regret a word or action, and would so much like to blot it out and start over! But unless we SAY so, others will judge us by the fleshly action, and not by the spiritual regret, and so estrangement and misunderstanding grow.

We are engaged in a deadly war against the same great Enemy. In this struggle, let us keep our lines of communication open so we can support one another. Let us frankly admit we are having a hard time with diabolos; perhaps we can help each other on to victory together—where alone we each would fail.

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another. The fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Bro. G. V. Growcott