

“INVENTORY”??

By G. M. Rayl, Th.D.

(TEXT: “Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.”—Lamentations 3:40.)

As we look back over the past year and begin to take inventory we wonder, as the song writer said, “Have I stood the test? Have I done my best? Is He satisfied with me?” Soon the Husbandmen of the Great Christian Vineyard will come and require the fruit due Him.

John the Baptist said, “And now the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” Matthew 3:10. (Speaking in the natural to reveal a spiritual truth). That is tragic, isn't it? Yet we know there are not enough demons to prevent us from bearing fruit for the Master if we follow His formula, the Holy Word of God.

It was the fruitless fig tree that Jesus condemned and caused to wither away one morning when He and His Disciples were walking into Jerusalem. Matthew 21:19. It was the servant that buried his talent, that lost his last chance, Luke 19:24.

Often we hear ministers of our Association say, “I haven't preached a sermon in so many months”, or, “I am not preaching anywhere now.” And some have resorted to bickering and fault-finding, sowing seed of discord among the brethren. “These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood. An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief. A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.” Proverbs 6:16-19.

“Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: . . . There is no fear of God before their eyes.” Romans 3:13, 14, 18.

“But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” Matthew 12:36-37. No Minister or Christian Worker can take up the sword of slander and escape the consequences. “. . . for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” Matthew 26:52. So spake Jesus, and history has repeatedly borne testimony to the truthfulness of His warning. Men who have slandered others have been ruined by slander themselves or have been judged by God with death. And it makes no difference whatever, be it borne in mind, whether the slander is true or false—that results are the same.

Judgment is God's prerogative, not man's, His Word is, “. . . Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.” Psalm 105:15. The statement made may be absolutely true, but since no

mere man may capably judge, God's servants are accountable to Him and to Him alone. And woe betide the man who dares to set himself up as a judge, and publicly slander his fellow workers! God will not let it pass. Let us take inventory of ourselves, are we guilty?

“Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. . . . But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. . . . Let us not therefore judge one another any more: . . .” Romans 14:4, 10, 13. Oh, that we might make this our New Year's resolution! In the face of the words of our Lord, how can we do otherwise? For the things of which we accuse others, in all probability we are guilty, and more so, though we know it not.

“Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.” Matthew 7:1-5.

Remember this, my friend: he who slanders is working with the Devil. Satan is a slanderer. He is continually accusing us before God. That is his biggest job and his most destructive work. So, are we going to do the Devil's work? Are we letting him use us as one of his slanderers? God help us! What carnality! Oh, what a tragedy! The Devil's agent!

I would rather be bitten by a rattlesnake than speak a reckless word against any servant of Christ, or idly repeat the slanderous darts of judging slander that we hear hurling on others, to the hurt of their own souls and bodies.

You may often wonder, perhaps, why your sickness is not healed, your spirit not filled with the joy of the Holy Ghost, or your life not blessed and prosperous. It may be that some gossip dart which you have flung with angry voice, or in an idle hour of thoughtless slander, is pursuing you on its way as it makes the circle and returns to the source from which it came. Every shaft of bitterness, and every idle and evil word will have to be answered for. Let us remember that when we persecute and hurt the children of God, we are but persecuting Him, and hurting ourselves far more.

One of the greatest evils that afflicts the church and ministry today is that of gossiping and talebearing. You find it everywhere you go. The tongue of the gossipier has destroyed empires

and has cast down many mighty men. Ruined lives, blighted homes, broken hearts, and sundered friendships have been caused by the talebearer and through the chatter of idle tongues. Too late, sometimes, people learn what harm has been wrought by giving too ready an ear to rumours and too ready a tongue to pass them on. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! The Apostle wrote, Nothing is more needed in this world today than the manifestation of the Spirit of Christ, that will scorn to speak evil of another when no good purpose can possibly be accomplished.

May God help us always to live, think, act, and speak in the light of eternity! Then instead of getting our eyes on man and judging him, watching for either his virtues or his faults, we will keep our eyes fixed on Christ, and see no man save Jesus and Him only. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." James 1:26.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh (carnality), but after the Spirit." Romans 8:1. Are we walking after the carnal man, or after the Spiritual man? It would be good if we would take inventory of ourselves and see just how carnal, or how Spiritual we really are. Let us examine ourselves individually as if in the immediate presence of God.

Do we ever feel "A secret sense of pride;" an exalted feeling in view of our success or our position; because of our good training and appearance; because of our natural gifts and abilities; an important independent spirit; stiffness and preciseness? Do we ever feel "Love of human praise"; a secret fondness to be noticed; love of supremacy; drawing attention to self in conversation; a swelling out of self when we have had a free time preaching or praying? Do we ever feel "the stirring of anger", or impatience—but worst of all we call it nervousness or holy indignation; a touchy, sensitive spirit; a disposition to resent and retaliate when reproved or contradicted; sharp, heated flings at another, just because they might not do just as you want them to?

Do we ever feel "Self-will", a stubborn, unteachable spirit; an arguing, talkative spirit; harsh, sarcastic expressions; an unyielding, headstrong attitude; a driving, commanding spirit; a disposition that loves to be coaxed and humored? Do we ever feel "Carnal fear", a man-fearing spirit; a shrinking from reproach and duty; reasoning around the cross; a shrinking from doing our whole duty by those of wealth or position; a fearfulness that someone will get out of the Spirit and thus offend and drive some prominent person away; a compromising, holding-back tendency?

Do we ever feel "A jealous disposition"; a secret spirit of envy shut up in our heart; an unpleasant sensation in view of the great prosperity and success of another; a disposition to speak of the faults and failings rather than the gifts and

virtues of those more talented and appreciated than ourselves? Do we ever feel "Lustful stirrings"; unholy actions, a carnal learning; undue affection and familiarity toward those of the opposite sex; wandering eyes; something in you that could not be trusted if sufficient opportunity presented itself? Do we ever feel "A dishonest deceitful disposition"; evading and covering the truth; covering up our real faults; leaving a better impression of ourselves than is strictly true; false humility; exaggeration; straining the truth?

Do we ever feel "Unbelief"; a spirit of discouragement in times of pressure and opposition; lack of quietness and confidence in God! lack of faith and trust in God; a disposition to worry and complain in the midst of pain, poverty, or at the dispensations of Divine Providence; an over-anxious feeling whether everything will come out all right? Do we ever feel "Formality and deadness"; lack of concern for lost souls; dryness and indifference; lack of power with God? Selfishness, love of ease; love of money, etc.? Do we ever feel "Stinginess"; being over-exacting about trifles; falling out with others over a few apples, chickens or pigs; giving just enough to ease our conscience, and less than a man on Old Age Pension, does for the furtherance of the Gospel at home and aboard; big meals when away from home, but cheap ones for wife and children who seldom get out?

Do we ever feel "Sectarianism"; being narrow and bigoted in favor of my little crowd; cool and unlovely toward others who differ from me; ready to argue and take the contrary side instead of studiously avoiding those things that might break sweet fellowship; pulling to get members even though I steal them from another congregation; sitting back with a critical and over-wise air and failing to cooperate with others for the salvation of souls?

Do I become provoked and jerk my car, or kick the cat or dog, or slap the children (in the wrong spirit), or speak snappish to a loved one? Do I get provoked over the car when it won't start, or the fire that won't burn, or the neighbor's dog that barks, or the birds that eat up my flower seed, or my stove that won't bake? If my car, or cat, or dog, or stove could testify for me at cauren, would I welcome their testimony?

Do I go up the miff tree when slighted, imposed upon, or rebuked? When I cannot have my own way? When others do better than I? When taken to task by one in authority? When not put first? When not appreciated? When others are advanced over me? Do I ever have the pouts? The sulks?

Is the praise of man sweet to my taste? Do I love to have my name head the list? Do I enjoy being flattered? Being at the head of things? Am I gentle toward all men? Down in the depths of my heart (though I may not say a word) do I feel the stirrings of anger? Of envy? Of jealousy? Of revenge? Of bitterness? Do I enjoy having the best chair, the best apple in the dish, the best pie

on the plate—when others have what is left? Do I seek the easiest and most congenial tasks?

These are some of the traits which generally indicates a carnal heart. If one principal is lurking there, you can depend on it, they are ALL there. By prayer and fasting, by holding your heart open to the searching light of God until you see the groundwork thereof. The Holy Ghost will enable you, by confession and faith, to bring your "OLD MAN" to the death, "CRUCIFY HIM". "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed (not suppressed), that henceforth we should not serve sin." Romans 6:6. Do not patch over, but go to the bottom, it will pay. Hallelujah! Don't try to put new wine in old bottles, it won't work. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Romans 8:9.

The most damaging thing to the cause of Christ is a minister or a church member with an unlovely disposition. Many are the unsaved who are kept out of the Kingdom of God by an unlovely character. Sulkiness, poutiness, and touchiness are the ingredients of a dark and loveless soul embittering life. One in such a mood can only bring misery to themselves and others. This sin of disposition will sap the energy of those with whom they live.

For a want of kindness, a want of patience, a want of generosity, a want of courtesy, a want of unselfishness, we must go to the source, and change the inmost nature. Souls are made sweet by a Great LOVE. A new Spirit of Christ, sweetness, purifies, transforms ALL. The proof of Christianity is LOVE. To be filled with the Holy Ghost means to be filled with love and Power to show that great love.

When we allow Christ to have His way with us, and fully trust Him, His first business is to destroy the works of the devil in our hearts. His supreme purpose is to work in us the Christ character, to "love one another as I have loved you". Our Lord ever lived in utter devotion to the will and work of His Father. We are called out of sin to be a peculiar (purchased) people.

Christ's life manifested in us is, have and enjoy the exquisite delight of being moved by the love of God toward others. A Holy character. Christ within us. The Spirit makes this a reality in our consciousness. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly (unbecomingly), seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil." I Corinthians 13:4-5. "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity (LOVE), I am NOTHING." I Corinthians 13:2.

Withholding of love is proof that we never knew Him. Because of our Lord's great love for us, He tells us, "Finally, be ye all of one mind,

having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." I Peter 3:8.

What a building up of God's Kingdom there would have been if every professed Christian could have earnestly and sincerely said from the depths of his heart, "To me to live is Christ". Dark hours come to all of us. Learn to trust in Him who can make and keep a "great calm" within the soul. Let nothing come to you which you shall not instantly hand over to Him. Dear friend, does your life ring true? "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." Lamentations 3:40.

How sad but nevertheless how pitifully true—we are read (instead of the Bible) by many who do not know our blessed Lord, before whom the nations of the world shall be gathered to judgment. Does your life glorify God? Many a soul has looked upon the life of an unpossessed church member or preacher and drifted on to a Christless grave, in disgust saying, "If this is Salvation, I don't want it". Oh, may God help every unsaved soul to lift their eyes above the lukewarm church members, the unpossessed church members, and the hypocrites to a lovely compassionate Lord—'This is an individual matter between you and your God. You find hypocrites everywhere. One of the Twelve Apostles was the very prince of hypocrites, but he didn't get to heaven.

If you don't want to spend an endless eternity with hypocrites, look up and trust in God. If there is anything wrong in your life, make it right. What we need is men and women today that will let their light so shine, that the world may see, that Christianity is not a sham but a reality. Then we shall be able to make an impression upon the world, bringing lost souls out of darkness into God's marvelous light. As truly as the sun was made to lighten the world, God's children are meant to be the light of those who know not God. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:16. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Galatians 6:7.

If Jesus said almost two thousand years ago "... lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." John 4:35. What is it like now? Down in the end of the world when the rivers of sin are overflowing their banks, weapons are already prepared that could annihilate the human race in a few short hours, forcing Hell to overflow with souls you and I have failed to lead into the fold of Christ, because we failed to be fruit-bearing Christians.

Satan has tried to imitate many of the Christian graces, but he cannot imitate the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit as recorded in Galatians 5:22, 23. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law."

We that make up the body of the Church, let us so live that we might fulfill the great mission of the Church. The mission of the Church is to save the souls of men. That is its true mission. It

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is the only mission of the Church. That should be its only thought. The moment that any Church admits a singer that does not sing to save souls; the moment a Church calls a pastor who does not preach to save souls; the moment a Church elects a deacon who does not work to save souls; the moment a Church gives a supper or entertainment of any kind not for the purpose of saving souls, it ceases in so much to be a Church and to fulfill the great mission God gave it. Every concert, every Church service, every pressing service, every choir service, every Lord's Supper, every agency that is used in the Church must have the great mission plainly before its eyes. We are to save souls of dying sinners, we are here for no other purpose, and the mission of the Church being so clear, that is the only true test of a real Church. Is your Church a soul-winning Church? Are our Association Churches doing everything they can to get souls saved?

What a wonderful ministerial Association we would have if all of our Ministers and Christian workers would measure up to this standard. The Word tells us, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." I John 1:7. We have gone far with our Association work this part year, and we have made great gains. But there is still much to be done and so little time to do it. Let's give the Master our best in these last few days of confusion and strife, by saying with the Psalmist, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10. Amen.
