

The Importance of Truth

"And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

- Matthew xv,14

Genesis ii,8-17

Matthew xv,1-14

Psalm 146

New Book of Worship, Psalm 146, p.88

These words were spoken to the Pharisees. The Lord called them blind leaders of the blind. They were supposed to teach the Word, to call the attention of the people to the necessity of looking to the Lord as the source of all light and truth, whose authority ought ever to be regarded as supreme. But they falsified the Word, making it of none effect by their traditions, and under the guise of humility and sanctity sought their own glory and gain. This is the literal meaning of the story.

There is, however, a deeper meaning, one which applies to everyone today. While the letter of the Word treats of persons, the internal sense treats of principles which are universally applicable to all men without distinction or exception. The text admonishes us to look within ourselves, to examine our principles. The faculties, will and understanding, when unenlightened and un-governed by the Lord's Divine truth, are the blind and the leaders of the blind.

The human will, considered in itself, is in its very nature blind. It is simply an impulsive faculty: it loves, desires, prompts, but has no power of discernment. It cannot even see the character of its own desires nor direct them to proper objects. So the Creator has bestowed upon us another faculty, which serves as eyes to the otherwise blind will. This faculty is the understanding. The understanding is the eye of the mind, and in Scripture is frequently mentioned under that name.

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Truth is the light of the mind, and ignorance, error, and falsity the darkness. Prophecies in the Old Testament speak of the Lord's coming to open the eyes of the blind, and the Lord, when on earth, repeatedly restored sight to the blind to represent that greater work of opening the understanding to the perception of truth.

In the Scriptures blindness is not always mentioned as a sign of sin: "Neither did this man sin nor his parents, that he was born blind." Ignorance is this simplest innocent form of mental blindness, but even this ignorance is a calamity, because it leaves the faculty of understanding uninstructed, and as

a consequence leaves the will unimproved and its impulses undirected. When we speak of ignorance, we think of it as a relative state. There is, except in abnormal cases, no state of complete ignorance in anyone except in infancy. As one advances in life, truths are learned, external ones at first, which serve to keep the will from breaking out into open disorders and evils. So, too, the ignorance of adult years is only partial. Yet it may be such as to disqualify the mind for seeing the real distinction between the true and the false, between right and wrong.

There is, however, a blindness more serious and more injurious than blindness from ignorance. It comes from believing what is false. Falsity cannot produce good; it is never harmless. Every false principle is a negation of truth. The Pharisees destroyed the law by falsifying it. It should be noted that all who are in falsity or error are not always in evil. Many simple good people believed what the Pharisees said. Many today hold false ideas of the Lord. Many believe that we are saved by faith alone who do not carry out this principle in life but seek to learn and keep the commandments.

Another and still greater degree of blindness also comes from this falsification of truth. We cannot do anything good from ourselves, but when this is interpreted to mean that man can do nothing toward his salvation, this truth is turned into falsity instead of directing the mind to the attainment of goodness. To this state the Lord alludes when He says, "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Falsification turns truth into something opposite to itself, and induces a greater darkness of mind than that caused by false principles.

Lastly we come to consider a blindness of a different kind, different in nature and in degree. We have been speaking of different degrees of blindness of the understanding; now we come to a blindness whose source is in the will.

Evils have a double origin. They may originate in the understanding or in the will: in our thoughts or in our affections. Those principles which have their beginning in the thoughts of the understanding may be said to be from without, being imbibed from parents and teachers. So long as these are confined to the thoughts, they do not defile a man; but if they are afterward confirmed and come forth into evils of life, then they defile the man. They have passed from the understanding into the heart, and have become man's own, and continue with him until removed by repentance and reformation. The evil which comes from the love of self causes this greater blindness because the love of self is directly opposed to love to the Lord and the neighbor. Even though the understanding may have knowledges of good and truth, it is then interiorly false, for evil blinds the understanding to the perception of truth. Then the eye of the understanding is full of darkness. Such a one may conform to the general usages of

society for the sake of his own security and advancement, but his thoughts are only for self. This is willful blindness from opposition to truth. It is what is meant by the blind leading the blind.

The Scriptures contain many warnings, but they are for our good. They teach us the necessity of looking into ourselves. The Lord has declared that the heart is not only desperately wicked, but that it is also above all things deceitful. It may not only deceive others, it may deceive us. The Lord does not want us to be misled and governed by the blind impulses of our unregenerated affections. So He has given us an understanding by which we may learn truths from the Word and form a new will. As we go to the Lord as He has revealed Himself in His Word and keep His precepts, He builds up within us a habitation for Himself, and establishes within us the kingdom of His own goodness and truth.

Throughout the writings the importance of truth is emphasized. We read, "Nothing can be received from the Lord and from heaven by anyone who is not in truths." In the beginning, we are informed, men had perception of truth, but as they declined this perception was lost and finally all knowledge of God, so that He had to come on earth to reveal Himself to mankind.

It is good to read the stories of this beginning in the letter of the Word, that our minds may be enlightened to see clearly our dependence upon the Lord. In the story of Eden we are told of a river dividing into four streams to water the garden. There would be no growth or life without water, and in the closing chapters of Revelation we are again told of a river of water of life. The river in Eden dividing into four heads pictures the reception of truth into the different planes of the mind, without which it would be unfruitful. The four streams were named Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel, and Euphrates. Pison means intelligence, the power of seeing into things. It comes from the land of Havilah where there is gold to teach us that it has its source in the Divine love, which is the life of man. The true life of man is from the Divine Life, and from its reception comes all intelligence and perception of spiritual things. The second river is knowledge. It went down into Egypt. No real knowledge comes except from the river of water of life. Without knowledge of God and of His purposes the most that one can say is, "Who knows?" He in whom this second river flows does know. The third river Hiddekel went down into Syria. Syria is reason, the rationality that real knowledge and intelligence produce. And the fourth river Euphrates, whose name means fruitfulness, represents the understanding on the plane of the sensuous, which makes that plane fruitful in good.

As we live from the truths represented by these streams, the Lord will increasingly give intelligence, rationality, understanding, and knowledge, filling the whole mind with His light and glory and conjoining it to Him. By truth the affections and thoughts are guided, leading us out of evil and error into goodness and truth. So we are enabled to escape the stumbling blocks with which evil besets our path and avoid the snares and pits into which self-intelligence would cast us.

Amen