

August 4

The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves. 2 Timothy 2:24,25

SOME of the Lord's dear people have

R2953 "The righteous are bold as a lion, as well as gentle as a dove, and meek as a lamb. This peculiar combination should be found in every Christian, and we doubt if it will be found elsewhere." [Pro 28:1; Heb 13:5-6]

(Mat 10:16 KJV) "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

R5978 "The Truth is to be spoken humbly, but fearlessly."

R4524 "St. Paul spoke quite freely of false doctrines and mentioned particularly the names of some of those whose perverse teachings had been injurious to the Cause, "overthrowing the faith of some." Our Lord Jesus criticized the misconduct of some in his day... But neither the Lord nor the Apostles made personal attacks, slandering others. To tell fairly what another believes and to show that it is wrong is far from evil-speaking. It is speaking the Truth, which should always be spoken in love. In many instances it is a duty so to speak. . .

If some who once rejoiced in the light have become more or less blinded to it, that is a cause why we should have sympathy for them--not a sympathy which would lead us to give them encouragement in their wrong course, but a sympathy which would incline us to pity them and to be ready in any possible manner to assist them back to the right way. Even when they misrepresent us we should, so far as possible, attribute this to their blindness and pray for them, rather than smite them in return. "Let no man render evil for evil to any man, but contrariwise--do good to those who evilly entreat you."

Let us remember that the final test of character is love for God and the brethren, yea, and for our enemies -- not in word merely, but in deed and in Truth -- out of a pure heart... Let us remember that we ourselves must be tested by the "fire that shall try every man's work of what sort it is." -- 1 Cor. 3:13.

If the Adversary could stir us up to anger, malice, hatred and strife, even in a good cause -- even against Satan or those whom he is using to some extent as his servants (Rom. 6:16) -- he would thus be poisoning our hearts and separating us proportionately from the Lord and his Spirit. We cannot be too careful along these lines!"

R5979 "PROPER DEMEANOR OF GODS MESSENGERS... It was particularly said of our Master that when he was reviled he reviled not again.

Some might say, 'But did not our Lord, when opposed by the Scribes and Pharisees and Doctors of the Law, use very plain language to them? Did he not call them hypocrites, whited sepulchers and vipers?' This is true; but we are to remember that our Lord Jesus was in a position of authority which we do not occupy. He was perfect, too, 'knew what was in man,' and could make no mistake in respect to the heart-conditions of each of his opponents. This is not true of us. Moreover, when Jesus used this language he addressed a class, and not an individual.

greatly injured their influence in the Truth by display of too large a degree of self-confidence, *self-assurance*, in speaking of the divine plan to others--especially to the learned. Meekness is a jewel wherever found, and is especially desirable as an ad-

When we have presented the message of the Lord faithfully, we are to feel that we have done our duty; and we should leave the result with the Lord of the harvest. The truth itself is a sharp sword, and will do all the cutting necessary. Moreover, it should be the truth itself that causes the opposition wherever it is found, and not any rudeness or unkindness of word or act on our part. All with whom we come in contact should be able to see by our sweetness of spirit, by our patience under provocation, that we have indeed 'been with Jesus' an learned of him. -- Acts 4:13."

R2447 "A few words of love, kindness, helpfulness, -- how often have such changed the entire course of a human life! -- nay; how much they have had to do with moulding the destiny of nations! And how often have evil words, unkind words, slanderous words, done gross injustice, assassinated reputations, etc.! -- or, as the Apostle declares, "set on fire the course of nature" -- awakening passions, strifes, enmities, at first unthought of. No wonder he declares such tongues "set on fire of *Gehenna*" -- the Second Death!

The public servants of the Church are to some extent specially its "*tongues*," and what an influence they wield for good or for evil..."

R2156 "In the choice of leaders for meetings the "tongue" qualification, as here laid down should not be overlooked. The *fiery tongue* should not be chosen, but the meeker, the moderate, who "bridle" their tongues and endeavor carefully to "speak as the oracles of God" only. Such tongues constrain, while others more frequently wound and repel. The Word of the Lord is quick and powerful and *sharp* and cuts "to the heart" without bitter and acrimonious and uncharitable human expletives to enforce it..."

While this lesson is pointed specially toward "teachers," it should be regarded by all. It is an old and true saying that "Kind words can never die," and it would be equally true to say, "Unkind words never die." Indeed, the latter live much the longer in a majority of cases -- in worldly hearts especially. Let us each and all redouble our energy in subjugating our tongues, that they may always bless and "minister grace to the hearers."

(1 Pet 3:15-17 KJV) "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear [margin: reverence]: {16} Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. {17} For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing."

Q469 "To be meek is to be teachable."

R1492 [Mat 5:5,10-11] "The blessed *meek* ones of `verse 5`...are the same class who,

joined and sling for the Truth. Let the Truth be shot forth with all the force it can carry, but always with meekness and humility; and the question form of suggesting Truth will often be found the most forceful. Z.'00-14 R2559:3

according to `verses 10, 11`, are bold and courageous enough to withstand evil and error and to champion righteousness and truth: they are meek in the true sense in submitting themselves fully to the Lord, and bold in defense of his truth and his way, even the endurance of persecution for righteousness' sake."

R2586 "Webster's Dictionary defines meekness to be, 'Submission to the divine will; patience and gentleness from moral and religious motives.'... Patient submission to the divine will is impossible to those who have not the first grace in the list, a humble mind: the proud and self-willed find it impossible to be submissive to divine conditions; self rises up, perverts their judgments, and misleads their consciences to such an extent that they cannot have full confidence in divine providence, but feel that they must put forth their hand and steady the ark."

R2654 "The Apostle exhorts the Elders that so far from in any manner or degree exercising a lordly or authoritative position in the Church, they should rather be "*ensamples* to the flock." They should be examples in the matter of meekness, in the matter of patience, in the matter of brotherly kindness, in the matter of courtesy, so that the more any of the brethren would copy these Elders the more would the spirit of the Lord prevail in the flock, and the fruits and graces of the spirit be manifested. On the contrary, we know that if the Elder or leader of a little company of the Lord's people be self-assertive, dogmatic, imperious in manner, tone or look, the effect upon the company under his influence is to produce bickerings, rivalries, ambitions, strifes as to who is greatest, etc."

F296 "In the case of a capable Elder giving evidence of a dictatorial spirit, or inclining to regard himself as above the Church and of a separate class, or implying a divine right to teach not coming through the *Ecclesia* (Church), it would be a kindness as well as a duty to such an one to drop him to some less prominent part of the service or from all special services for a time, until he shall take this gentle reproof and recover himself from the snare of the Adversary."

R2446 Captures the balance: "The wisdom that is from above is first pure" -- (truthful, honest, sincere, not put on, not used as a garment of light to deceive and to cover up selfishness, malice, hatred, strife; it makes no compromise with sin, impurity, in any shape or form.) It is 'peaceable.' (so far from being a quarrelsome, bickering disposition, the 'new mind' desires peace -- it will contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints, but it will not contend simply from a love of contention, a love of strife; on the contrary, the new mind is peaceably inclined, would prefer, so far as possible, to yield a non-essential point in a controversy; it loves its opponents and sympathizes with their difficulties.) It is 'gentle' (not rude nor coarse, not rough, in action or word or tone; and if the

earthen vessel through which it speaks have these rudenesses by nature ingrained, the 'new nature' regrets them, strives against them, and seeks to conquer them; and where they do injury to others is ready, willing, glad to apologize, and to remove the smart). It is 'easy to be entreated' (easy of approach, not haughty, not disdainful, not hard or cruel; yet it is firm on matters of principle -- principles cannot be bended or modified; they belong to God. But while affirming the principles, this spirit of wisdom points out its own willingness to moderation, by acknowledging any good features in its opponent, and by pointing out the reason why no modification is possible in relation to divine laws and princi-

ple). It is 'full of mercy and good fruits.' (It delights in all things prompted by love and kindness; it takes pleasure in doing for others; it takes pleasure, not only in showing mercy to dumb animals under its care, but it especially delights in mercy in dealing with brethren in respect to their faults. It is merciful also in the family -- not over-exacting, but generous, kind, benevolent. It is generous also with opponents and those who are contentious -- not wishing to push a victory, even for the truth, to such a point as would be injurious, hurtful, unmerciful to the antagonist.) It is 'without partiality.' (It loves the good, the true, where these are found; and opposes the untrue, the impure and the unho-

ly, whether found amongst friends or enemies. Its justice is of the strictest kind, tempered with mercy; it will not approve a fault in a brother, because he is a brother, but would reprove the same with gentleness and meekness, remembering the liability of all to the assaults of the world, the flesh and the devil. It will not fail to see a virtue in an enemy, nor hesitate to acknowledge it. Truth is the standard, not prejudice, not partyism, not sectarianism.) It is 'without hypocrisy.' (It is thoroughly candid; it needs not to feign love, because it is love; it needs not to put on a kindly exterior and to smother feelings of wrath and envy and strife, for it is without envy, without strife."

R5698 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0)

GENTLENESS A CHARACTERISTIC OF THE CHRIST

"The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves."--2 Timothy 2:24,25.

THE words of our text were addressed by the Apostle Paul to Timothy, an Elder of the Church. The Lord's people, all who belong to the Body of Christ, are sons of God; nevertheless, they are all servants--bond-servants of Jesus Christ. Every true son would desire to serve the interests of his father, especially a just, loving father; and every faithful servant would wish to serve the interests of his master or his employer, particularly a noble, worthy employer or master. Our Lord Jesus, who was the special Son of the Heavenly Father, made Himself Servant of all, in order that He might serve the Father's interests, accomplish His will.

Our text is applicable to any servant of God, any member of the Church of Christ, whether he holds office among the brethren or not. It is an injunction which applies to all of the Church. Every spirit-begotten child of God is to teach according to his opportunity and ability, under the limitations of sex, etc., given in the Scriptures. "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me; because the LORD hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." (Isaiah 61:1.) These words of the Prophet apply to every member of The Christ, Head and Body.

PROPER MANNER OF PRESENTING THE TRUTH

But the Message of the Good Tidings that the Lord has given us to proclaim is not one to be forced upon people. To be proper servants of the Lord, and in harmony with His arrangements, we must not strive, must not argue or quarrel. In meekness we are to instruct, not with an air of superiority, or a desire to show how much we know. Our Message is for those who have "an ear to hear." We are not to force ourselves upon people, not to intrude upon them, in order to make them hear. While we are to be ready to sacrifice *our own* interests to proclaim the Message of our faith, yet in so doing we are not to be strifeful, malicious or contentious.

We would not say of those who are inclined to be contentious in presenting the Truth that they are not members of Christ, but evidently they have not learned the better way. They have not sufficiently developed the quality of love; they are lacking in Heavenly wisdom in this respect. On one occasion two of our Lord's disciples came from a city of Samaria, the inhabitants of which would not sell them food, and indignantly asked of Jesus whether they should call fire down from Heaven to destroy them. In reply our Lord said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man came not to *destroy* men's lives, but to *save* them." (Luke 9:55,56.) So there are some today who are ready to quarrel on every occasion. Although this tendency does not prove that they are not children of the Lord, nevertheless, it demonstrates that they are not in the right attitude, that improvement is necessary.

The things pleasing to God are inculcated in the Scriptures. The Lord's followers are to be gentle to all men--not only to the brethren in the Church, but to all others. They are not to be strife-breeders, not always getting into a wrangle, but long-suffering, considerate of the opinions and preferences of others. There may be times when a Christian is put into a position where he will be forced to defend himself; but it is one thing to defend one's self in a reasonable way, and quite another to be strifeful and aggressive.

In endeavoring to carry the Truth to others, we should remember that our faith is not to be presented to everybody. "Cast not your pearls before swine." They will not appreciate your pearls. They will

wish to do you injury because of not appreciating them. But while not strifeful, we are to be on the alert to hold forth the Word of Life. If the Truth is attacked and honest souls are in danger of being stumbled, we must, as the Apostle enjoined, "contend *earnestly* for the faith once delivered to the saints." (Jude 3.) This does not mean, however, that we are to be quarrelsome, or to be disputatious, in the ordinarily accepted use of those terms. We are to be ever ready to proclaim the Truth on every suitable occasion--with moderation, meekness and humility, but with earnestness and zeal; for this is our business. If those to whom we present the Message of Truth are in the proper attitude, they will desire it. It is right, therefore, for us to be ready to lay down our lives in defense of the Truth and its interests.

The more cool, calm and self-possessed we are when opposed, the better we can defend and recommend the Message we bear. The greater the contrast between our spirit and that of our opposer, the stronger will be our argument for the Truth in the minds of others who may hear; and the more likely shall we be to disarm prejudice in the mind of the opposing one, if he be sincere and honest of heart. One who loses his self-control and becomes combative and disputatious defeats his own cause. One should never lose his head. He will be sure to say things that were better left unsaid and to manifest by tone and manner that he is not actuated by the Spirit of the Master. More harm than good might result from such a mistake. We are always to present the Message gently, kindly, forcefully. It may be necessary to be positive in our statements, but the spirit of the presentation is to be gentle, whether in private or in public.

QUALIFICATION OF A TRUE TEACHER

The Apostle says that the servant of the Lord should be "apt to teach." (1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:24.) St. Paul was here especially addressing an Elder in the Ecclesia. To be apt to teach is to have the teaching ability. Not all have the ability, the gift, of making things plain to others. There are some people who the more they say the less they are understood. If there are some who find themselves in this condition, they should use printed matter and then try to learn how to present the Message in a way that will be assimilable to the minds of others --making it clear, plain and logical. In the presentation of the Message to others patience is necessary. Be willing to go over the point again and again, having sympathy with those you are instructing, remembering how difficult you found it when you were trying to emerge from darkness into the light.

Whether presenting the Truth publicly or in private, never assume an air of superiority, never manifest haughtiness. Never allow yourself to become so irritated as to say, "I know more about this in five minutes than you do in a year"; nor even imply this thought in the expression of your face, or in tone or manner. You see, you can express yourself in these four different ways at once; but any one of the four would be sufficient to place a barrier between yourself and those whom you were endeavoring to interest. You are to be meek, lowly of heart, humble.

If some one presents to you an argument or a Scripture that he thinks contradicts your position, say to him, "Well, brother, let us see whether that is in harmony with the teachings of the Bible. We must accept as Truth only that which will harmonize all the statements of the Word of God. Let us prove the matter." Have a meek, teachable manner, one which shows that you are willing to learn from another if he can teach you something from the sure Word of

the Lord. Thus your opponent will be more willing to hear what you have to say, if he is disposed to be at all reasonable.

Undoubtedly the Lord's people are learning more and more the lesson inculcated in our text--"the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all." It is a lesson that all must learn, Elders and Deacons and every member of the Body of Christ. It is necessary to our own character-building, and necessary in order that we may do more effective service for the Master. When at first we buckled on the armor and took up the Sword of the Spirit, we proba-

bly did some flourishing, and perhaps often did more harm than good. We felt that we had something that no one could argue down. But we have been learning to be more gentle, more wise, more patient, more loving; and thus we have become better qualified to be instructors of others. We have seen how we may injure the Cause of the Lord by a wrong presentation of the Truth, and how by proper presentation we may become more successful in doing the Lord's work, in reaching hungry hearts, and more pleasing to our great King, whom we all love and long to serve.

R2558 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0)

"JESUS INCREASED IN WISDOM AND STATURE"

--JAN. 14.--LUKE 2:41-52.--

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

MUCH peculiar speculation has been indulged in respecting the childhood, boyhood and young manhood of our Lord Jesus, with which we have no sympathy whatever. The Bible student should confine himself to the Bible record, and not give loose rein to imagination and speculation more likely to be untrue than correct. Had the Lord foreseen necessity for information respecting this period of our Savior's career he undoubtedly would have provided for it in the inspired record. This does not imply that there was nothing noteworthy or commendable in our Lord's earlier life, but rather that by comparatively ignoring this the Lord would point us more particularly to the three and a half years of public ministry following his baptism, in Jordan, and by the holy spirit. In a word, the Lord thus points out that it was not the *man* Jesus whose words and acts were valuable to us and lessons for our emulation, but the words and acts of *Christ* Jesus, the *Anointed* Jesus-- Jesus after he had been anointed with the holy spirit without measure. Nevertheless, keeping strictly within the lines of the little that is written in the Scriptures we may draw some valuable and helpful lessons from the boyhood and young manhood of our Master.

Nothing is known respecting the first twelve years of our Lord's life, except that under divine direction his mother and foster-father took him down into Egypt, out of the reach of Herod, where they remained with him for a few months until after Herod's death, returning then to their home city, Nazareth in Galilee. It will be remembered that the occasion of the flight into Egypt was Herod's fear that a king should arise in the family of David, in harmony with the Jewish traditions, and that thus Herod's own family would be ousted from the kingly position. Herod was not of the family of David, nor a Jew at all--he was of the family of Esau, Jacob's brother. The story of the wise men coming from the East seeking a new-born king of the Jews will be remembered, and now Herod, learning of their mission, urged that when they had found the infant they sought they should inform him, Herod feigning that he also desired to do homage to the new king. But the wise men, under divine direction, ignored Herod's request. Subsequently, learning some of the particulars respecting the birth at Bethlehem, Herod caused the death of the male-children of that city of two years old and under--thus endeavoring to insure the death of the newborn king. It is not at all probable that the number of babes slaughtered under this decree was great; as the population of Bethlehem was small the number of male children of such an age would necessarily be few.

The Golden Text informs us that Jesus grew like any other boy--that his development was gradual, both as respects physical and intellectual stature. We are not, therefore, to think of Jesus in boyhood's days as a sage a teacher, a healer, etc., as we find him subsequent to his anointing with the holy spirit. Nevertheless, we may properly suppose that the *perfect* boy would in many respects be keener and brighter than the average boy who inherits sundry imperfections from the fall.*

The testimony respecting Mary and Joseph leaves no doubt that they were pious people, and this is confirmed by the first verse of this lesson, which informs us that it was their custom to go every year to the Feast of the Passover: this requirement of the Law was observed by the most devout Jews only. It is as unnecessary as it is improper for us to go beyond the Scriptural declarations on this subject, and to assume, as some do, that Mary herself was miraculously conceived and born free from sin. Indeed, if we had no record testifying to Mary's piety the fact that she was honored by the Lord above all other women, in that she was chosen to be the mother of Jesus according to the flesh, would prove her nobility of character and purity of heart;--for it is not even supposable that the Lord would so specially honor, bless and use any other than a noble char-

acter. Whom the Lord uses we may safely esteem honorable.

Altho the Jewish Law does not so stipulate, tradition informs us that it was the custom to consider every boy who had fulfilled his twelfth year as "a Son of the Law," and to a certain extent from that age amenable to the requirements of the Law: and the narrative of our lesson seems to confirm this tradition, telling us that when Jesus was twelve years of age (in his thirteenth year) he accompanied the family to the Passover Feast at Jerusalem. Is there not a lesson here for all godly parents, suggesting that the training of the infancy period should be of such a character as to prepare the child for the consideration of sober and religious matters at the very threshold of boyhood? We think there is. And we think it a serious mistake made by some well-intentioned parents when they conclude that their children of twelve years have sufficient mind to have grasped the elementary principles of a secular education and to be prepared for higher studies of a secular character, but unfit for higher religious studies. The children who are ready at that age for higher secular studies have already been carefully instructed along elementary lines; and if any are unprepared for higher studies in religious matters it is at least possible that their elementary religious training may have been neglected by their divinely appointed instructors--their parents. No Christian parent can avoid this his natural responsibility toward his children --in moral and religious training as well as in the secular and physical.

The Feast of the Passover continued seven days, but it was the custom for many of the pilgrims from distant parts to remain over only two days, until after the principal ceremonies. It is probable that Joseph and Mary, in company with their kinsfolk, started on the return journey on the third day of the feast. It was customary for the women of a caravan to move on ahead, the men coming after, and a boy of Jesus' age might be with either of the parents and not be missed until nightfall; and so it seems to have been in this case. As one day had been spent in the journey, so another day was spent returning, and a third day in searching throughout the city; finally they found Jesus in the Temple, sitting with the teachers of the Law, the "Doctors." This was not so unusual as might at first appear; for at that time information was gained less from books and more from oral teaching, and the Doctors of the Law were supposed to be ready to instruct all who desired information, especially during the holy Passover week. Many young men availed themselves of such opportunities, and the custom seems to have been for the Doctors to sit on a special semi-circle of seats, while before them were low benches for the older students: the younger boys sat on the ground, literally "at their feet." Thus Paul, as a youth, was a pupil of Gamaliel, or, as the record reads, "sat at the feet of Gamaliel," to learn of him. Gamaliel was one of the chief Doctors of the Law in his day.

We are not to understand that the boy Jesus was bold, and that he went before the learned men of his day to denounce them as ignorant and as incapable teachers, and to show himself off, as some precocious but ill-trained youth of today might attempt to do. On the contrary, we are to suppose the boy Jesus to have a well-balanced mind, which probably recognized the fact that he had lived but few years in the world and had comparatively small experience in life, and that he by no means knew all, but recognized many questions upon which he would like to have further information, and that he asked his questions honestly, with a desire and hope of obtaining satisfactory answers from the teachers who "sat in Moses' seat."

The nature of the questions is not stated, but the time and surroundings would seem to indicate that they were of a religious character, and that the mind of Jesus was already grappling with the great questions which properly belonged to him as a member of the Jewish race to which God had made certain great and precious promises as the Seed of Abraham;--promises of divine blessing under Messiah, of exaltation to be the chief nation of the world, and of the subsequent privilege of blessing all nations and of being the

* See MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. V., Chap. 4.

mediaries through whom all mankind might be brought to the knowledge of God and to his service. From what we know of the operations of our own minds at the age mentioned, we may presume that Jesus was brimful of questions respecting the hopes of Israel, and no doubt from his mother he had received some intimation at least that divine providence had indicated that he himself was to bear some important part in connection with the fulfilment of the Scriptures; and he was seeking to know the part marked out for him by the Heavenly Father in the testimony of the Law and the Prophets.

Altho he did not have a Bible in his home, that he could consult respecting the divine testimony, he did have the common privilege of the youth of his day of attending meetings in the one little synagogue of Nazareth, which was but a small country town. There, from Sabbath to Sabbath, he heard the Law read and to some extent commented upon, sometimes also the psalms and prophecies. With these sources of information the eager mind of the boy had grappled, and now, on the occasion of his first visit to the great city of Jerusalem, nothing attracted him so much as the Temple and its symbolical services, and happening upon a court or chamber in which the great questions of the Law and the Prophets were being discussed by the ablest teachers of the time, Jesus became so deeply interested and enthused in the Bible study that seemingly he forgot all earthly things, so intent was he in studying about the Heavenly Father's business--the plan of God, in which he himself was to be so principal an actor.

Naturally his questions would be deeper and more logical than those of other boys of his age, and naturally the Doctors of the Law would be deeply interested in him because of this in conjunction with the modesty which we may be sure accompanied it. And as during these feasts great hospitality was exercised, especially toward strangers from a distance, Jesus was probably entertained by one and another of these new-found friends.

The narrative records that, when found by Joseph and Mary, Jesus was both *hearing* the Doctors and *asking* them questions. There is a valuable lesson here for all young persons respecting their conduct toward their elders and instructors. How different the thought we get from this statement than we would have gotten had it read that they found Jesus *instructing* the Doctors, or attempting to teach them. We do not doubt for a moment that the Doctors were as much instructed by Jesus as he was by them, possibly more so on some points at least; nor do we doubt that if they were truly great men they would be humble-minded enough to receive instructions from any one-- even from a child; and it is even intimated in the context that they asked Jesus certain questions, "and were astonished at his understanding and his *answers*." In both cases the proceeding was that of deference to the other, as implied in the asking of the questions: Jesus having deferred to the Doctors and asked them questions which manifested his depth of mind and clearness of understanding and logical reasoning, led them in turn to ask questions of him.

This question plan we commend to all of the dear friends of the truth as a wise and proper one, no less to us of today than to the boy Jesus and to the Doctors of the Law. We have seen instances in which ⁽¹⁾some of the Lord's dear people have greatly injured their influence in the truth by display of too large a degree of self-confidence, *self-assurance*, in speaking of the divine plan to others--especially to the learned. Meekness is a jewel wherever found, and is especially desirable as an adjunct and sling for the truth. Let the truth be shot forth with all the force *it* can carry, but always with meekness and humility; and the question form of suggesting truth will often be found the most forceful.

Naturally Joseph and Mary were astonished to find their little son in the company of and receiving consideration from the greatest teachers of their day, and probably nothing was said to Jesus publicly respecting their disappointment and their subsequent search for him: probably when alone Mary upbraided him for his neglect to be with the caravan: yet she did this in a very kind and moderate manner, which seemed to indicate that it was a very unusual occurrence, which in turn speaks to us of parental obedience on the part of Jesus.

Mary's expression, "Behold, *thy father* and I have sought thee sorrowing," has been questioned by some as being a confession that Joseph was the *father* of Jesus, but we answer, Not so; it would be unreasonable to suppose (1) that Luke would particularly trace the genealogy of Jesus through Mary, and ignore Joseph, and subsequently imply that Joseph was the father of Jesus; (2) Joseph having accepted Mary, accepted also her son, Jesus, and became his foster-

father, and under just such circumstances today the child would be taught to consider such an one a parent, and to call him "father." (3) It is not at all probable that the story of the immaculate conception of Jesus was ever made known to any but the closest members of the family, and it is highly improbable that the subject had ever been discussed with the boy Jesus, only twelve years of age.--nor would it have been proper to do so. Mary's language, therefore, is entirely consistent with all the facts set forth in the Gospel narrative.

Quite possibly the mind of the boy Jesus, while investigating the subject of his own responsibilities toward the Heavenly Father and his plan, had wondered whether or not his mission might not in some degree begin with his thirteenth year, since at that time he was recognized as a "son of the law." Quite possibly some of his questions before the Doctors of the Law were along this line, and quite probably he had finally about reached the conclusion that the types of the priestly office indicated clearly that his mission would not begin until he was thirty years of age. His reply to Mary's chiding was along this line: Did you not expect me to be about my Father's business? Did you not know that I had reached the age when I am a "son of the Law," and that therefore certain responsibilities have come upon me in respect to the Heavenly Father and his Word and his plan? And then, as tho remembering the conclusion that he had just reached in discussing the subject with the Doctors, he broke off the conversation, yielded himself to their wishes, and accompanied them to Nazareth, making (so far as recorded) no further suggestion of any other than the ordinary course of life until he had attained the age of thirty years. This is expressed in the words, "And he was *subject* unto them." Joseph and Mary realized clearly that the boy was more than ordinary, very extraordinary indeed, yet they did not fully comprehend the situation nor fully grasp the import of his words. Nevertheless, Mary treasured this with the other peculiar testimonies respecting him in her heart, and doubtless it was from her lips that Luke received the information contained in our lesson.

Tradition declares that Joseph died while Jesus was yet young, and that the latter took up the carpenter's trade and became the support of the family. This finds some support in the Scriptural testimony where Jesus himself is called a carpenter, and his mother and brethren are mentioned, but Joseph is ignored. (Mark 6:3.) Furthermore, no reference is made to Joseph in connection with our Lord's ministry, tho his mother and his brethren are several times mentioned. It is quite probable, then, that the long period of eighteen years of our Lord's life, from the time of the incident of this lesson to the time of his baptism, was spent in the performance of the ordinary duties of life. What a thought this gives us with respect to our Lord's development of *patience*--patiently waiting until the Father's time should come and he should begin his ministry; patiently studying meantime, as best he could, to know more and more of the Father's will and plan; patiently waiting for the baptism of the holy spirit, which would enable him to fully comprehend the situation and his own personal relationship to it. What a lesson there is here for all his followers, and everyone of us may well realize the truth of the words, "Ye have need of patience," and again, "Let patience have her perfect work." What a lesson there is for us also in the thought that we are not to attempt to hasten the divine plan, but to wait patiently for its unfolding--not to attempt to begin any work for the Lord unless we are sure that his time has come, and that he has called us to do it; then, like our Lord, to be instant in season and out of season, when convenient and when inconvenient, under favorable and unfavorable conditions; to do with our might what our hand has found to do,--what the Lord has called us to do. And we gather the further thought that the most humble forms of labor are honorable when they are ours in harmony with God's providence.

Happily for us, we are not born under the Law nor under the limitations which hinder us from receiving the call and responding to it before thirty years of age. On the contrary, under the ⁽²⁾New Covenant of *grace* it is our privilege to present our bodies living sacrifices to the Lord's service at as early an age as our knowledge of divine things and our enlightened judgments will permit. We, instead of waiting to grow to the fulness of stature mental and physical, are permitted to begin at once, as members of the Royal Priesthood, and to be growing at the same time we are serving. But let us not forget the necessity for growth, --adding to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge self-control, and to self-control patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness love.-- 2 Pet. 1:5-8.

"In malice be ye *children*, but in understanding be ye *men*."--1 Cor. 14:20.

⁽¹⁾ Aug. 4 Manna, 2 Tim. 2:24-25

⁽²⁾ See clarification on the New Covenant in Volume 6 Forward.