

"With the same measure that ye mete withal  
it shall be measured to you again."

- Luke vi,38

Deuteronomy xi,13-28

Luke vi,27-45

Psalm 57

New Book of Worship, Psalm 57, p.59

Is this true? All the precepts of the Word are Divine laws, given that the way of life may be known. If these laws are broken, disorder and confusion result. Breaking them arrays one against the Lord and against those Divine forces which are in their nature friendly and helpful to him. By disobedience to them he puts himself out of the currents of these forces or sets himself in opposition to them.

To learn the laws of nature and of spirit and to live according to them is man's task, a task given by the Lord for the purpose of developing the powers of the human mind and soul. Men did not and cannot make these laws, nor can they change them. The difference between man and animals is chiefly this, that man has the faculties of reason and freedom of choice while animals are dumb-driven by their instincts. The Lord cannot take away a man's freedom without making him an automaton and so destroying all the human qualities in him. But if we use our freedom of choice simply to follow our own desires and inclinations and our reason simply to defend our selfish choice, we make ourselves like the animals, and may even descend below them. The Lord leaves us free to choose, but He wishes us to choose the right way and He makes clear what that right way is.

It is the Lord's desire that all men so live that He may gift them with eternal life in heaven. To this end He put into the composition of man's nature all the elements necessary to form heaven in him, and provided all the means necessary to attain this end. A being of infinite love can have no other end in view than to communicate that love to others. Fire cannot freeze, cold cannot melt, acid must corrode, oil must lubricate. This is a universal law.

It is well known that those who are industrious and faithful in doing good to the community in which they live generally enjoy the favor of the community, and so they receive a fair return for their efforts. It is also plain that those who do evil are generally punished, and thus receive such as they give, and that those who are indolent are generally reduced to poverty. Thus the law "with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again" customarily holds good even in respect to natural things. Indeed it is from knowing this law that men labor in their occupations and choose and pursue their various courses of conduct. Whether they do or do not recognize a Divine Providence, they expect that what they do will produce a certain effect: that nature, or Providence, or

something else will render to them according to their works, that with what measure they mete it will be measured to them again.

If all men fully acknowledged the Divine Providence and lived according to the commandments, statutes, and precepts of the Word, all natural things would conform to this law. But because men sometimes live in opposition to the Divine Providence, there are cases in which men do not outwardly receive according to their works. Some people do much good or much evil without seeming to receive a due reward for their deeds. Yet this is so only in respect to the natural reward: in respect to the things of spiritual life, both good and evil, it is unfaillingly true that "with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." When we faithfully seek to perform our tasks as a service to society, we feel benefit and happiness in proportion to our labors, but when we are negligent of our duties and disposed to live independently of society, seeking only our own gain, we find that both our spiritual life and our happiness have declined. When we perform the duties of good citizens, we also enjoy the protection of the laws and the blessings of civil order, but when we violate the laws and act against the welfare of the community, we soon find that a retributive justice overtakes us and renders to us according to our works.

When we do evil we receive evil. Something of the evil that we do exists in our own minds before we do it, and by every word and action by which we express evil the inflow of evil into our minds and its appropriation there are increased. We have all seen persons beginning an unfriendly conversation. At first they were not very unkind and were somewhat careful, but one harsh word led to another until there was nothing but hatred in their speech, and this hatred increased with every expression of it. Thus it is that the evil which one does to another he does also to himself. For "all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." "They have prepared a net for my steps... they have digged a pit before me into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves." "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they made is their own foot taken."

This applies not only to cases in which we seek to do harm to others but to cases in which we seek to lead others to do evil. We cannot desire another to do a wrong without internally doing it ourselves, and so it will appear in the other life. The wrongs which we do and which we are willing to have others do are written in our minds and become a part of ourselves.

We recognize this. If one committed a murder a week ago we do not say that he was a murderer last week. We say that he is a murderer. We think that his present quality is that of a murderer, and so we think of him until we have reason to believe that he has repented and acquired a different character. It is

not the mere outward act that is judged but the love that caused it. Many outward acts assume the garb of decency and charity, but if they are not the true expression of one's thoughts and feelings, they are hypocritical. So we read that some said, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name... and in thy name done many wonderful works?" and that the Lord replied, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Their apparent works were evil because they were done not from love to the Lord and to the neighbor nor from obedience to the commandments, but from selfish and worldly loves. We cannot finally succeed in making our conduct appear different from what it inwardly is.

So we should not be satisfied with mere external performance of our duties, but in addition should strive to put away from our thoughts and affections everything which we see we ought not to express openly. It is for our good that the law is so clearly stated: "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." The Divine commands are not arbitrary decrees. Recall the story of the rich young man. He said that he had kept the commandments from his youth up. But he had not kept them from love to the Lord; he had kept them from self. One can be pious, moral, learned, patriotic, and even outwardly humble, but if there is not at the center love to the Lord, his attainments will corrupt rather than bless. All the commandments and precepts of the Word are summed up in two: love to the Lord and love to the neighbor. Their opposites are love of self and love of the world.

All nature depends upon the sun. From the sun comes light and warmth, causing the earth to blossom and bring forth fruit. The Lord is to the soul as the sun is to nature. It is as vain to expect a happy mind where the Lord is not as it would be to expect a beautiful earth without the sun.

A man who has love to the Lord and the neighbor cannot intentionally injure his neighbor. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. To be good a man must be actuated by good motives and seek to do good. And as we have faithfully sought to perform our tasks as a service to society, it becomes obvious to ourselves and to others that we receive benefits and happiness in proportion to our labors. As we look back upon our lives, it is not the so-called "good times" we have had that we cherish most but the joy of the services we have rendered without thought of personal gain and the sacrifices we have willingly made.

So, whatever the outward appearance may be, it is spiritually true of the good man as well as of the evil one: "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

Amen