

Leaves Of Hope #22

Family Devotion written by C.M. Gullerud

Precious Jesus, I beseech thee
May thy Word take root in me;
May this gift from Heaven enrich me,
So that I bear fruit for thee;
Take them never from my heart;
Till I see thee as thou art
When in heavenly bliss and glory
I shall greet thee and adore thee.

L.H. 296:4

Ecclesiastes 12:9-12

Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true. The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails – given by one Shepherd. Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.

Our text speaks of goads and well-embedded nails. What have these to do with us? - books and study perhaps,

but not goads and nails. We are neither ox drivers nor carpenters. But goads and well-driven nails have a great deal to do with us when they picture the profit and use of the words of the wise, spoken by the Good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ. For what do these words, so familiar to the pioneers, signify?

The goad was used to prod oxen when pulling the plow, urging them forward. In a spiritual sense, wise people will appreciate the context. For example, there are times when one will dillydally and become occupied with trifles, even to the point to become remiss in carrying out of God-given duties. There are times when one is sluggish and cold and time is fritter away instead of the carrying out of Christian responsibility. At such times as these, the goads of doctrine, of instruction in righteousness, of correction, come into play. These well driven words serve to awaken a person to duty and not sloth. A goad to urge us to shoulder our responsibilities and not push them aside, they serve to awaken the conscience that has become sleepy so that it does not respond even to an accusing voice.

These goads work as did the words of Peter on the day of Pentecost. Peter told the Jews that they had, with wicked hands, crucified and slain the Lord. At these words

the people were pricked in their hearts. The goad had done its work. They now asked: “Men and brethren what shall we do?” This gave Peter the opportunity to respond with his call to repentance: “Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” And we read that three thousand were added to the church on that day.

The picture of the well-embedded nails teaches another lesson. Nails are reminiscent of tent spikes which are used to hold the canvas in place in order to keep it tight and smooth, to preventing the tent from sagging and overlapping. Wise men can have words that are wavering and inconstant. Well-embedded nails fix those words and secure them to the moorings. Well driven nails (or words from Scripture) establish the heart and confirm good resolutions. Well driven nail can make sure that we do not shirk from duty nor try to get out of it altogether.

The words that serve these purposes are the words of Holy Scripture which make us wise to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. If Scripture does not accomplish this, then any number of books will not bring it about. The reading and study of such books would only

bring about a weariness of the flesh. The Holy Bible is the only book that can bring rest for the soul and peace for the heart. “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.” Titus 2:11-12 May we take to heart the words of the wise and inwardly digest them, for Jesus’ sake. Amen

Word of the ever-living God,
Will of his glorious Son;
Without thee, how could earth be trod
Or heaven itself be won?

Lord, grant us all aright to learn
The wisdom it imparts
And to its heavenly teaching turn
With simple, childlike hearts.

L.H. 291:4-5