



But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:26)

I wonder how many readers of this devotion will remember their first grade teacher in primary school. I certainly remember, with vivid detail, my first grade teacher – Mrs. Painter. She immediately became my hero when we reported for the first day of school. I can now dismiss my manly pride and admit that I was scared stiff the first day that my mom left me at the door of the classroom with a last hug and a kiss. My older sister had taught me, long before, to sing the little jingle, *“School Days, School Days; Good old Golden Rule Days.”*

*School days, School days
Good old Golden Rule days
Readin’ and ‘ritin’ and ‘rithmetic
Taught to the tune of the hickory stick
You were my queen in calico
I was your bashful barefoot beau
You wrote in my book “I love you, Joe”
When we were a couple of kids.*

I was an approving participant until we got to that infamous line, *“Taught to the Tune of the Hickory Stick.”* That struck fear into my conscience for, Lord knows, I often required the ‘hickory stick’ at home to keep me faithful to the law and rules of the house. I soon learned that Mrs. Painter did not wield the ‘hickory stick’ with malicious intent, but rather in measures tempered with mercy and grace. I truly loved her. She reinforced my faith by opening every school day with a reading from the Psalms, a prayer, the Pledge of Allegiance, and a few stanzas of “My Country ‘tis of Thee.” I remembered it all so very well, and I particularly kept in mind that ‘hickory stick.’

Well, reader, there is nothing new under the sun. Our Primary School days are not that much different from the observers of the Law of Jesus’ day. The Law was truly given as *“our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”* The Greek word for Schoolmaster describes someone who not only oversees learning and enforces discipline, but also serves to protect the young scholars. When we have put on the Mind that is in Christ Jesus, we do not forget the imperatives of the Law of God, but we observe them with a better will power – HIS WILL – and that tempered by HIS LOVE! We have long ago bade farewell to our Primary School teacher whom we respected, loved, and for whom we may have harbored a hint of fear. We obeyed her out of respect for her person

and fear of discipline, or of disappointing her. But now we still remember the lessons of Primary School, and we retain them out of common sense and maturity rather than out of fear of reprisal.

The Law of God, given from the heights of Sinai's Summit, have not been disannulled or revoked. In fact, they bear a greater burden of obedience to the Christian than the God-fearing Jew of old time. The Law was given as our Schoolmaster to teach us boundaries of behavior. The Old Testament Church could not fully comprehend the extremities of the Love of God from afar – not before Emmanuel came and proved that limitless love that expunges the Law from those Tables of Stone and writes it upon the soft sinews of the heart of the Christian believer! Let us examine a fuller reading from Galatians 3: *But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* (Gal 3:22-27)

Though we loved our first grade teacher in Primary School (The Commandments of God) with a sincere and enduring love, we have grown up with the precepts and admonitions that she taught that we have internalized as part of our character and persons. We are no longer confined to our little desks equipped with inkwells and book compartments under the seats, but we are now free to go out and make application of those first precepts we learned, under the Law, in love and kindness to all around us – and to God our Father. The Law of God taught us impossible boundaries of conduct – impossible unless motivated by LOVE.

Jesus is our great Teacher, but more than that. He departed the Gates of Splendor to descend to this pig sty of sin and humanity. He walked, talked, taught, and did works of mercy among us for thirty-three years. He taught us the PURPOSE of the Law of God. As He taught the rich young ruler, we cannot keep the Ten Commandments unless we begin by keeping the first; and, if we keep the first, we cannot help keeping the others. It is the Love of God, shared in prolific measure, to us from Him that enables us to return that love to Him on high. And how can we truly love God if we do not love His manifestations in Creation – the animal kingdom, His natural provisions in beauty of structure and flowers - and our fellow man?

Yes, Christ walked among us, and taught us by Word and example, all that is needful for our soul's thirst and hunger. Today, He sits as our High Priest, Advocate and Intercessor at the right hand of God the Father. But His role as Teacher continues in the Presence among us of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the Third Person of the Godhead, but, unlike many charismatic churches, He will not mention Himself – that is not His role. His role is to teach and remind us of all things written in the Holy Scriptures of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

It follows as an imperative that we must first, at the very least, read the Words of Scripture if the Holy Spirit is to REMIND us of that which is written there concerning our Lord. *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.* (1 Tim 2:5-6 (KJV))

Instead of Primary School, the mature Christian is now operating at the Master's level at which those things learned and believed are put into practice at a higher level than out of the compulsion of fear. We obey out of love. We have mastered the Law by the redemption of Jesus Christ who satisfied the demands of the Law. In a sense, we were

even saved by Christ through the dictates of the Law. The Law demanded the wages of sin (death) for the sinner (all of us). The requirements of the Law could only be satisfied by One who was worthy under the Law (sinless) to be our surrogate and a propitiation for our sins. He taught us, too, to take up the cross daily and follow Him – to drink from that same cup of sorrow from which He drank, and to experience that same spiritual gratification, which He derived, by sacrificing for others. Just as He traveled that Dolorosa Way of Suffering and Shame, He asked us to not only take up our crosses and follow Him; but to follow Him ALL THE WAY to Calvary's blood stained brow. The Christian dies daily to self, and glories in that sense of living for others just as Christ did in preparing the way for us to follow.

The Christian must always remember his Primary School lessons, but now he must learn how to employ those lessons in service to others. I often ask my youth group some question involving the practical application of some geometric problem with which the solution I am certain they are intimately familiar. Most often, they cannot render a practical answer because, though they know the theory and geometric principle fully, they have never considered its practical application. Jesus gave us the practical application of the Law, and it is LOVE.

The Two Great Laws which Christ recited from the Old Testament are the keystone of support for the Commandments of God: ³⁵ *Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,* ³⁶ *Master, which is the great commandment in the law?* ³⁷ *Jesus said unto him, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*** ³⁸ *This is the first and great commandment.* ³⁹ *And the second is like unto it, **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*** ⁴⁰ *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* (Matt 22:35-40) Observe the love of God, and of our neighbors, are the two Stones of Landmark in keeping the Ten Commandments of God. Observe, too, these two Laws do not abrogate a single Commandment of God, but rather bolster the obedience of the Ten Commandments by the gracious imperative of love – love demonstrated by the two beams of the cross. The greater vertical beam illustrating our Love for God, and the lesser horizontal beam our love for others.

Yesterday, we were in Primary School, but today, we have moved on to the Master's Degree program – but we never graduate until, in the process of time and at God's own choosing, we are called Home from School, and life truly begins beyond the hallowed Gates of Splendor.