

The Berean Ecclesial News

A monthly magazine devoted wholly to the Berean Christadelphian Ecclesial welfare, with the object of providing Ecclesial news, exhortations, articles and information of fraternal interest to the Brotherhood. Upholding the Truth since 1923.

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God Willing, The Berean Ecclesial News will be published monthly as an avenue of providing information of ECclesial interest to the Brotherhood. Ecclesial news and correspondence, Fraternal Gathering notices, special activities and upbuilding exhortations are encouraged. This is an effort to upbuild and prepare us in heart and mind for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

CHRIST IS COMING SOON AND WILL REIGN ON EARTH

Ecclesial News

Lampasas Berean Christadelphian Ecclesia—S.S. & Study Class, 10:00 AM; Memorial 11:00 AM; Seasons of Comfort Class 1:15 PM; Lecture- 4th Sunday; Bible Class Wednesday 7:30 PM; Fraternal Gathering, 2nd Weekend in June - Bro. Rusty Stephen, HC3 Box 16A, Lampasas, TX 76550; phone (512) 556-6771. E-mail ssstephen@n-link.com

Greetings in the Master's Name,

Once again it is my privilege to bring joyous news to the Ecclesial world. Bro. Ricky Hurst and Sis. Julie Adams were united in marriage on November 18, 2000 at the Lampasas Hall by Bro. Richard Wolfe and even though the weather was inclement, the wedding went off with out a hitch.

Also, another of Adam's race elected to come out from the darkness and requested an examination and upon a good confession of his faith was baptized on December 30, 2000. The right hand of fellowship was extended to **Bro. Craig Kiley** on Dec. 31, 2000. These things bring us in the Ecclesial world much joy, especially to his grandparents, Bro. Charles and Sis. Dottye Banta.

We wish this new couple and this new Brother God Speed. We have also been blessed with several visiting Brethren and Sisters, among which was Sis. Linnie Hennig, Sis. Anne Prado, Bro. Bob Bent, Bro. Bob and Sis. Sharon Wolfe and Bro. Lee Smith.

Sis. Sarah Snyder and Sis. Julie Adams Hurst are now members of our Ecclesia, both coming from the Canton Ecclesia. All of us here are well and we wish that ya'll keep the same.

With much love in the Master's Name,

Bro. Rusty Stephen, Recording Brother

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held God Willing)

LAMPASAS FRATERNAL GATHERING **June 8 - 10, 2001**
Bro. Rusty Stephen, HC3 Box 16A, Lampasas, TX 76550, 512-556-6771
RICHARD FRATERNAL GATHERING **June 29 – July 2, 2001**
Bro. Ed Truelove, 2165 Douglas Ave, N.Battleford, Sask, Canada S9A 3N8, 306-445-3240
HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING **July 23 - 29, 2001**
Bro. Curtis Hurst, Rt.1 Box 40, Mullin, TX 76864, 915-985-3868
HOLLADAY FRATERNAL GATHERING **October 6-7, 2001**
Bro. Warren Rankin, 699 White Tail Rd, Holladay, TN 38341, 901-584-3925

Let a Man Examine Himself, That He Be Not Judged With The World

The Lord Jesus Christ was bestowed upon with eternal life because of his complete obedience to his Father's will. He said while in the garden of Gethsemane, when about to make the supreme sacrifice, even the laying down of his life, "*not my will but thine be done*".

His whole life was a "*thus saith the Lord*", "*It is written*". And the lessons he taught those who would take upon themselves, his saving name is, that he requires no more of us than he required of himself.

Our lives, said the apostle Paul, are to be a **living sacrifice**.

When one comes to the knowledge of the truth and takes upon his or herself the saving name of the Lord Jesus in the waters of Baptism, symbolically, the old man of the flesh is destroyed and the new man in Christ rises out of the water.

In that sense then, we are no more our own. We have been bought with the blood of Christ, the old man of the flesh died so that we, that is the new man, might live unto God; "*For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.*" (Col. 3:3).

By this very fact, men should see, that our conversation (manner of life), is not as those of the world. For now being "**in Christ**," we are a separate people, a people set apart as was Israel of the flesh.

This difference between those "**in Christ**" and those in the world should in reality stand out.

In his sermon on the mount the Lord Jesus said. (Matthew 5:14) "*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven.*"

Our light must shine before men, though nine times out of ten we will not be liked for it.

Join in the world's pleasures and you will be one of them, their friend, but John in his first epistle chapter 2:15 says,

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is 27

in the world--the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

It is no wonder that James wrote; *"whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world in the enemy of God."* (James 4:4)

This separation from the world cannot be more clearly put than by the words of the apostle Paul in **2Cor. 6:14**,

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God. As God hath said: "I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate," saith the Lord. "And touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters," saith the Lord Almighty."

What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? None! The world in all its ways are unrighteous.

Consider the point of the ox and the ass. The ox is a large animal that ambles along swaying from side to side, while the ass walks lightly and straight forward. The ox is a clean animal under the law while the ass is an unclean animal.

The lesson is so obvious is it not?

The truth, and the world, are as day and night, positive and negative, life and death, fruitfulness and unfruitfulness. Both conditions cannot exist together. There is no compromise; we are either in one state or the other. We cannot have one foot in each.

"No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

The apostle Paul exhorts the one "in Christ" to examine himself. Chapter 11, exhorts the one in Christ to examine himself. Words, which we hear, repeated Sunday after Sunday, but perhaps without truly considering them.

"For I have received from the Lord that which also I delivered unto 28 you: that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed,

took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me." In the same manner also He took the cup when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death until He come."

"Therefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty against the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself and then let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Because for this cause, many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep."

It is imperative that we examine our selves, not just before we partake of the bread and wine on the first day of the week, but every day. We must judge ourselves by the light of the Word, not by each other, rather than be condemned with the world.

A while ago I heard of an accountant of a small firm telling the partners that they could not afford to stand still in business, a company must go forward he said, or it will go backward. **Timely advice!**

We live in a competitive world and a company must examine their methods and production to remain competitive and make a profit. A firm that stands still, while costs rise and rise, will eventually go bankrupt. They need to examine their ways and act accordingly to survive and be profitable.

So, too, the brother or sister in Christ, must examine themselves daily, for we need to **grow** if we are to attain the measure and stature of Christ.

We can become as the seed in the parable of the sower, which fell among the thorns, **unfruitful**.

For a plant or tree to bear fruit, the ground must be prepared, the stones must be removed, the thorns taken up and burned to stop them taking root again. There is always work to be done in horticulture and agriculture. The ground needs watering and fertilizing, and raking over. Checking for weeds, disease etc.

All these things are essential for the production of good fruit.

Equate that with our lives, and what is being pointed out is that we must be good ground, that the fruits of the spirit may grow in us, the ground must be watered by the Word, and the things in our lives which effect growth must be burned up, or got out of our system. A gardener who disturbs the weeds and just lets them lie on the ground will find they will take root again. They have to be taken completely away, or burned. A lesson for us, we cannot afford to toy with this world. We have to remain separate or get swallowed up in it.

This examining ourselves is of great benefit.

At the end of a long winter, go into one of the rooms of the house that has not been used very much and examine it to see what it is like. You look around and say, oh, it's not too bad. But on one of the bright spring mornings go into that room, draw the curtains right back so that bright clear spring sun can penetrate the room, and you will not be long getting out the cleaners or paint tins.

This is as the light of the truth upon our lives, it gets down deep into the recesses of the heart and mind, and then, and only then, do we see our faults and failings. Strangely enough, we do not have a problem finding faults in others, it is like second nature to us, but much more difficult when it comes to ourselves. Hence, the great need of the light of the Truth.

Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews 4:12, shows us how we need the word to examine ourselves.

"For the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

Here we are shown how the priest would dissect the animal for offering to see if there was any disease present, but Paul is reminding us of our high priest who has the power to see deep into the recesses of our very **minds and hearts**.

How needful then for us to do as the apostle Paul spoke of in 1Cor. 11 when he spoke of the need to examine ourselves first, for then we would not be judged with the world. It is only then that we will see our faults and failings, and alter our ways.

We have in the Apocalypse an example of an ecclesia, of, "called out 30 ones," those **"in Christ,"** a complacent ecclesia, an ecclesia who

failed to do this very thing, examine themselves by the light of the word, and because of this, they were found to be an ignorant ecclesia. They had no idea of their true position in Christ. Rev.3:14,

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked, I counsel thee to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

This ecclesia thought they were rich, and no doubt they were for Laodicea was a very prosperous city, and many of the ecclesia could have been affected in this regard. But with worldly wealth comes a responsibility for that wealth, for it can **choke the Word**, so that one becomes **unfruitful**.

"Knowest thou not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. "

They had failed to examine themselves by the light of the Truth or they would have been aware of their true state, that in reality, they were neither hot nor cold, but were lukewarm. In other words they were standing still, which as a business, is ready for bankruptcy.

Laodicea was known for its money markets, its soft black wool, its pagan worship, and a medical school, which specialized in eye and ear ointment that was compounded locally.

The spirit, with these commodities in mind, commodities which people came to Laodicea to purchase, says to the ecclesia, I counsel thee to buy gold, (**a tried faith**), linen, (**righteousness**) eye salve (**spiritual discernment**).

Buy of me Gold, tried in the fire, not deal in the markets for literal Gold, but a tried faith. **Isa. 55:1**.

Buy of me linen, which speaks of the righteousness of the saints, without which we cannot hope to please God.

Buy of me eye salve, not that compounded locally in the medical school, but to have that spiritual discernment which comes through the expenditure of time, energy to obtain them in the study of the Word of God, and *its* application in our lives.

The reason for the purchase of these commodities was *"that their nakedness do not appear."* By these words, we see that as yet, they were not in an impossible state. There was still hope for that ecclesia, if they acted upon the Words of the Spirit.

To be found naked at the judgment seat of Christ is to be denied the clothing upon of immortality.

So, this self-examination is a proof of its great benefit, it allows us to alter our ways if they are not right with our Lord, **while we are able.** (Tomorrow may be too late).

Be zealous says the Spirit, change your ways, your thinking and attitude, your manner of life.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with Me on My throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father on His throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias."

He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias.

There is no ecclesia at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, or Laodicea.

They have all gone the way of the world.

What of us, are we listening to the voice of the Spirit? Are we examining ourselves by the light of the Word for how important a matter it is for each one of us "in Christ."

The Psalmist in Psalm 1 says,

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the 32 chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not

stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish. "

The choice is ours, either to be "in Christ" and trust in his love, or to hear those words, as did the foolish virgins, verily I say unto you, I know you not. Let us examine ourselves now, while we are able.

Bro. Arthur Hughes

The Purpose of Trials

Things in life, whether good or bad, happen to Christadelphians for a very specific purpose. That is one of the most assuring thoughts there is in the Scriptures, and one of the principle tools that God has given us for handling our day to day affairs. Paul told us in his letter to the Corinthians:

I Corinthians 10:13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. "

Here is a promise from God made as plainly and clearly as possible. No one of us will be tempted above that which we are individually able to bear. If we think our trials and temptations and difficulties are too hard or unfair, the simple answer is: They are not. They are brought for some purpose, some very specific purpose, because God has found imperfections in us which need to be removed so that we can be admitted into the Kingdom. If we think we cannot endure the trials we are going through, we are wrong. God will not permit us to be tried in a manner which exceeds our ability to cope, so if we are going through them, it is only because God knows we can if we want to.

None of us are fit subjects the way we are born. We need lots of learning and understanding, lots of molding of our characters and actions, lots of crucifying of the flesh before we are in anyway useful to God. God is the potter, and we are the clay. He is the Jeweler. We are the stone. We must allow ourselves to be molded, polished and cut to His purpose through the actions of trial.

Those who are not Christadelphians, those who are not called to be sons of God but rather are merely the children of men have no such comfort. They are simply subject to whatever circumstances they find themselves in. The wise king Solomon noted this:

Ecclesiastes 9:11-12, *"I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all. For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them. "*

Time and chance is operative in the lives of the sons of men, but not to the children of God. Things that happen to us, happen to us for a very specific and personal reason. We must think of ourselves as the stones in the breastplate of the High Priest. There were twelve of them in all, representative of the children of Israel who were born upon the breast of the High Priest. It was in these stones that the purpose of God was displayed. The High Priest, to be the true High Priest of God, had to be able to stand up with the urim and the thummin, the lights and the glistening in these stones. The Great High Priest has now stood up when Jesus was resurrected from the grave and entered into the Most Holy--Heaven itself. It is now for us to determine whether or not we will be born upon his breast at his return. We ourselves determine if we have become a part of the lively stones which will shine in the Great and Dreadful Day of God Almighty.

A precious gem such as was set in the breastplate starts out looking much like all the other stones found in the earth. When found, they are often encrusted with clay and dirt and other impurities which need to be washed off before the polishing can even begin. Then, the stone is polished to see what such a polishing can reveal. All stones will reveal a certain brilliance, but along with it, it often reveals certain rough spots, unsightly blemishes, and weak areas which must be removed. Finally, these gems are struck with powerful blows in just the right areas to break away the unsightly areas, that the true brilliance of the stone may be display, and that it may reflect the light quite brilliantly, exactly as desired by the jeweler.

Like that rough stone, we too need to be washed in the waters of baptism that the true trials may begin. God, the careful Jeweler, then allows us to be tumbled and sanded and ground to see what sort of character we truly are. It would be the rare gem indeed which needed no further cutting and chipping to be found acceptable for immediate placement into that most splendid breastplate.

34 Commenting on the need for trial, Paul wrote:

Hebrews 12:5-11, *"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. "*

And Peter echoed the same thoughts concerning the trial the brethren were about to go through during the persecution of Christians at the hand of Emperor Nero: 1 Peter 4:12-13, *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."*

Trial then, is an indispensable part of life for those who would be called the sons of God. Trial is intensely personal. Trials may come to us through outside sources, but all of our trials are our own personal responsibility, and are necessary for our own development--otherwise we wouldn't be going through them in the first place. Bro. G. V. Growcott used to counsel, when you find yourselves in trials, learn what you are supposed to learn from it, and the trial will go away. How different is this from the world who seeks to make each of us victims, and therefore not responsible for ourselves, or our own actions?

While trial is intensely personal, trial is almost always brought on by some action of another towards us. We see this from the very beginning of trial and sin in the Garden of Eden. The Serpent tempted Eve, and she yielded to sin. Eve tempted Adam and he sinned. In each case, each was judged as guilty and responsible for their own sins. Note that neither Eve, nor Adam wanted to accept responsibility for their own failings. Both tried to make excuses for their failings, laying the blame on others. Of Eve we read:

Genesis 3:13, *"And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."*

And similarly of Adam we read:

Genesis 3:12, *"And the man said, The woman whom ga^yest to be with me. she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."*

Eve blamed the serpent. Adam blamed Eve, and went further, even blaming God for giving him the woman, and making him fail in his trial. But God placed the blame and the responsibility for the failings right on the individuals themselves. God said to Adam: "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife...". God placed the blame squarely on Adam who sinned, failing under an intense trial. These are important lessons to us. Yes, circumstances try us at times. It may be someone in the world taking advantage of us, or a Brother in the Truth not acting brotherly. Trial may come from our own mind if we allow ourselves to simply be dissatisfied with our lot in this life. Nearly anything can become a trial. But we must remember that when we are tried, we are tried under the hand and care of God. We can endure it. The flesh will not want to. That is the very nature of trial. But we can, and if we are to be fit stones in the Kingdom of God, we must!

Trials will come in many forms. It is how we react to the trial that determines if we are being shaped and polished to radiate the kind and gentle character desired by God at all times, including when under trial; or if we rebel and chafe under the difficulties, and allow the flesh to take over in its cruelty and lusts. We have an example of a Godly man under trial in Job.

Job's trials began with the world bringing intense pressure to Job. His goods were taken away by two invading armies. His children were killed by a natural disaster. Job patiently endured the loss of all that he had in the world. He didn't question the actions of God. He didn't try to blame others, though there were plenty of others to blame. Instead, he patiently recognized that all things belonged to God. The grace that he had a few weeks before came from God. The trial he now endured resulted from God taking back the things that were God's in the first place. If God determined he needed to go through this, he would patiently suffer all to be shaped according to the plan and purpose of God.

Job 1:20-21, *"Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Nake d
36 *came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither:**

the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."

Next Job was made to endure the misery of human weakness. He was sick and infested with sores. And in the newness of his poverty, and in the trial of his illness, yet another very powerful trial was added to Job. His wife and helpmate turned on him for a time. At this point, Job realized that she was caught up in the misery of his trial as well. Rather than turn away and ignore her, (which would have been the reaction of the fleshly man) and allow her to be caught away in failing the intense trial that both were now going through, Job patiently taught her, to bring her through the trial with him.

Job 2:9-10, *"Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips."*

Finally, having endured all that the world could throw at him, Job was tried by the greatest trial of all, the trial of faithful--but mistaken--men. We sometimes hear his three friends described as wicked men, but they weren't. They were Godfearing men, simply mistaken in their outlook towards Job. They were men who were ultimately redeemed by God, through Job.

There was no excuse for the three friends who brought these charges of wickedness against Job. They had not witnessed such wickedness as they imagined. Indeed in the first testimony of the friends, Eliphaz the Temanite testified as to the life of Job (Job 4:3-4), *"Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees."*

These were the things they had personally witnessed of Job. This is what they personally knew of his character. And although this is what they knew of him, they imagined that the things they had known and seen with their own eyes must not be true. In fact, Job must have been a wicked man, or all these things would not be happening to him.

It is interesting that while the loss of goods and family, and personal illness did not cause Job to do anything wrong, it was ultimately the trial brought on by his brotherhood which tried his patience and ultimately brought this exchange between God and Job:

Job 40:1-8, *"Moreover the LORD answered Job, and said, Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it. Then Job answered the LORD, and said, Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further. Then answered the LORD unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Gird **up** thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous? "*

And then at the conclusion of God's discourse with Job, Job says: *"Then Job answered the LORD, and said, I know that thou cant do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."* Job 42:1-6,

His brethren challenged Job's dignity. Job defended himself. In his defense, he crossed the line between lamenting his trials and praying for deliverance from them, and questioning the righteousness of God to bring upon us whatever trial God may deem necessary for our development into something useful for Him in His kingdom.

In the sight of God, the flesh has no dignity or integrity, however so much we imagine it to be so. And nothing rankles the flesh so much as to have its imagined integrity challenged. We have all sinned, and thereby have fallen short of the glory of God. We are all in need of redemption, and only God has provided for us that redemption through Jesus His Son. As Job confessed, we are all vile.

Our patient and loving manner in the endurance of the trails that God brings upon us testifies to whether or not we truly grasp the symbolism of the cross of Christ. Do we see a need to defend our integrity? Do we see a need to avenge ourselves of indignities? If we do, we don't get it. We should rather quickly forgive and forget the things that happen to us. We are nothing, having only so much value as God determines us to have, and God will defend His interests in our next lifetime, not this one. We need to be shaped by God's word, and shaped by the trials of life to be useful to God. Whatever God brings upon us, we must patiently endure, regardless of from where these trials come. Beyond that, we have no usefulness except that common to all the children of men.

A TIME FOR REFLECTION AND STEADFASTNESS

This is December 31, 2000 – New Year's Eve...the last day of the year and tomorrow will be the first day of 2001 – which will be the TRUE beginning of the new millennium!

Most people take the opportunity of a new year to stop and take inventory of the year that is past and greatly anticipate the year that is about to begin.

It is especially a time of reflection – to look at the successes and failures – good intentions and accomplishments – the goals set – and the achievements attained – the things we shouldn't have done and the things we should have done. I could continue – but I think you get the idea.

So let's take this thought and transfer it to the spiritual aspect of our life – as we are exhorted in this hymn 162:

"Come, let us anew our journey pursue

Roll round with the year..."

This hymn is telling us about renewal, rededication, new beginnings, an opportunity and a time, as a New Year rolls around to make it even better spiritually than the year before. It talks about improvement (talents improve) – improvement means doing better than we did before. The hymn talks about never standing still and we don't want to be caught stale or stagnant when the Master appears – we have to do more than maintain the status quo – we must IMPROVE.

So the question which begs to be asked of all of us is "How did we do individually and collectively in 2000?"

Another year has come and gone and yes Christ delayed His coming in 2000 - So, did we take advantage of that time - Were we part time or full time servants - Were we disappointed that Christ did not return in 2000 –OR - Are we relieved He didn't return so we could have another Lear to prepare for judgemen - Did we confess and repent of all our sin - Offend anyone - Busy bodies – Gossipers – Selfish - Think before we spoke -Visit the sick and infirm - Put God first - Esteem others better than ourselves to be - Do we do unto [others.as](#) we would want others to do unto us - Did we build our house on rock or sand in 2000???

We must awake to righteousness and obedience - we cannot afford to let the influences and pressures of the world lull us into a false sense of security and try to make us insensitive to the Truth. We must resist all pressures to water down or minimize God's Word (which He values above His name).

We know Bro. Roberts came under intense pressure from forces from within and without the brotherhood. He was being opposed on certain vital and fundamental truths that were being challenged. **He** felt the fierceness of those who made accusations and charges against him, which were false.

So he made an appeal to his friend and mentor, Bro. John Thomas, who gave an immediate and resounding response as he wrote this letter on December 11, 1865 -

"Now if you are courageous, faithful and valiant for the Truth; if you are really a good and useful man in your day and generation, you may lay your account with being misrepresented, slandered and abused in various ways; but if you turn traitor, in faith or practice, or in both, you will become popular, and obtain the applause of the ignorant and hypocrites. This is my experience, and it will certainly be yours.

"And how can it be otherwise? Human nature is the devil; and if ignorant and uncontrolled by the Truth, will act devilishly...do what is right, be valiant for the Truth, teach it without compromise, and all lovers of the Truth will approve: For all others you need not care a rush."

How refreshing to hear brethren speak honestly and plainly about the issues and not in a wishy-washy, vacillating manner as is evident in areas of Christadelphia today.

There was more correspondence between Bro. Thomas and his younger associate, and it was filled with frank observations that might shock people today. Because the style was vigorous, honest and abundantly clear. If we are taken back and astounded at the Laodicean state of the brotherhood today. Just listen to how the pioneer brethren viewed the spiritual condition of Christadelphia in their day!!

Bro. Thomas writes, "I entirely agree with you in your graphic description of the barrenness of Christadelphia. Yet, dry and withering as things appear within its limits, all exterior to it is scorched and destitute of any vitality at all. The Christadelphian Body in the days of the apostles abounded with professors whose hearts were but little attuned to the faith and hope they possessed.

"Peter styles them 'washed hogs;' and Paul, as little complimentary of them as he, terms them 'liars, evil beasts and slow bellies.' These were creatures who had 'crept in unawares,' and 'spoke evil things which they understood not.' ...Do you expect poor, decrepit human nature to evolve holier influences now, than it was socially capable of, under an apostolic
40 ministration of spirit? I believe you do not.

"It would be very pleasant if there were none in Christadelphia but the called, the faithful, and the chosen, all of one mind, and 'with one mind and one mouth glorifying God.' If all understood the Truth and were governed by it, who profess to believe it, there would be a very different state of things to what has obtained in any age or generation, past or present.

"But ecclesiastical perfection is not to be expected in the absence of Christ...I should be very sorry to see you 'quit the field,' so long as you are valiant for the Truth. Sink or swim by this. Do not be discouraged by the lukewarmness of abuse of your contemporaries. If you belong to the gold and jewels of the temple, the wood, hay and stubble will be sure to honour you with their envy, hatred, and malice.

"You must have a face of flint, and nerves of iron, if you would do real service in the house of God." Written in July 1866.

I bring these two items of correspondence to your attention to show the pioneers courage, commitment, endurance and dedication to the Truth while refusing to submit to the pressures and influences by any who might try to change the Truth in its purity.

There will always be challenges to the Truth and we should not expect to be exempt from such influences and challenges in these latter times. Why should our probation be any different from the experiences of our Master, His apostles or our pioneer brethren? Actually when we think about it – in the final sense when we stand before the judge of the whole earth. It does not matter if compromise and challenge to the Truth are in existence. What matters is how faithful brethren will act and react in relation to them. It must be a faith that will defend and support the clear principles of Truth. To joyfully uphold the privilege of our calling and to encourage and support those brothers and sisters who are trying to maintain the faith under difficult and trying circumstances.

There is no doubt that the Brethren who came before us possessed zeal, vigor, determination, unwavering faith and a resolute commitment to maintain, defend and support the "faith once delivered unto the saints."

Their resolve should be our resolve as a new year rolls around. Our resolve must be to commit as much time as possible to God's Word and service - every day of the week - study our daily reading every day - attend our study classes - keep His commandments - pray for guidance and understanding - think on God's word every day - and let our light shine by our deeds, words, actions and our way of life. Do you remember what I asked in a previous exhortation? "If we were charged with being a 41

Christadelphian, would there be enough evidence to convict us? Would it be obvious that we are Christadelphians by our way of life? Or do we just blend in with the rest of the world?

Brothers and Sisters, we as servants of Christ are to be judged by Him according to our works - listen to Matthew 24:42-51,

Here we have a faithful servant and an evil servant. Now the scary part is that both are considered servants! And it is up to us during this probation to work to be a good steward and a faithful servant. Because it is our hope that we will be able to identify with the last verse of hymn 162:

"Oh that each in the day of His coming may say

I have fought my way through;

I have finished the work Thou didst give me to do.

Oh that each from his Lord

May receive the glad word,

Well and faithfully done!

Enter into my joy, and sit on my throne."

This verse is based on II Timothy 4:7-8 where the Apostle Paul says:

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day; and not for me only, but unto all them that love His appearing."

Can we assure ourselves of a good fight – for the Truth and against the flesh? Can we tell ourselves with absolute confidence that I have finished my course? To the best of my ability...not veering to the right or left, but straight ahead with resolve, dedication, determination and commitment to God's Word seven days a week...Could you, beyond a shadow of a doubt, tell yourself that you have kept the faith, with full assurance and confidence?

What if we knew for certain that Christ's return was today? Each time we heard a knock, judgement was at the door...would our plans this afternoon change? Or would we go about our normal routine? What a ridiculous question to ask, one might inquire? Just who in their right mind would do the things they would routinely do if they knew Christ was returning today!!! Then what would they be doing? They would spend the time remaining to prepare for His coming...but wait a minute...I thought that was what we were supposed to be doing now during this probationary period!!! Because we don't know the very day of Christ's 42 return, any more than we know the day death will overtake us - either

way resurrection and judgement is the next prospect for us, which if you think about it, is no different of a scenario than if He was coming today...So why should our conduct be any different?...Remember one servant did not conduct himself properly, because "His Lord delayed His coming."

The activities we considered so "out of place" when we thought Christ's return was today - we somehow seem to hold in a different light when His coming is a future prospect. The fact is we need to be up and about our Father's business...we need to "come let us anew our journey pursue, roll round with the year, and never stand still till the Master appear."

I ran across the following poem written by Fay Pitt that sums up rather nicely the point we have been trying to make in this exhortation. It is entitled - - -

"THE WORD, OR THE WORLD?"

In this world of Gentile darkness, where can God's Word be found?
And where are those who stand for Truth-the Pioneer trumpet sound?
This world bereft of Truth and right, plunges to its fate,

Ecclesially we feel its pull to try and captivate

The weak and tired who lag behind - as Amalek of old -His
forces strike, without a care, to maim, to kill, enfold! Prophetic
times show clearly, man's dominion soon will fall,
As nations hasten to the prey - "'Hark!" hear the Master's call!"

We pray, "Thy Kingdom come, O Lord," but do we hope he might
Not come just now, are we unprepared? our lamps not very bright?
What of our stand before him, when all we have concealed,
Before His Son will be made known -O be openly revealed.
And every foolish empty word and things we did for show,
Our unkind thoughts and actions, the Judge will surely know.
And when our inner hearts are bared, revealing every mar,
Flesh will be seen for what's worth, revealing what we are.

Will he just see an outward show, a servant in decline

With standards we have not upheld, a faith grown dim with time?

Our armour just too weak to shield sin's evil darts away,

Our sword put useless on the shelf, not used to fight the fray?

And if we stood before him thus, there's nothing we could say;

For the time to do the things we should, is now, while he's away. 43

So if our hearts are anxious, and maybe tinged with fear,
Now is the time for action and change, our Lord's return is near.
And if he come at evening, or at the break of day,
We pray he'll find us working, to pass the time away,
Upholding standards firmly set by faithful ones of old,
His Word an open book, its lessons daily read, retold;
Watching with all diligence, in humbleness to pray,
Our armour ready to withstand against the evil day.
With heartfelt prayer saying to Thee, "Thy Kingdom come, O LORD,"
The world not be a snare to us, because we trust Thy Word!

This is the last memorial meeting of the year 2000...One Sunday, if not next Sunday, then one Sunday soon... it will be our last memorial meeting before judgement...will we be ready? Will we continue in our old ways or will we resolve to make a concentrated effort to redeem the time we have left? We have all heard the saying "Today is the first day of the rest of your life." We would like to paraphrase this a little and say, "Today is the first day of the rest of your probation."

Brothers and Sisters, the times we live in are challenging. Sometimes the pressures are great and the trials difficult. At time we may feel that our walk in the Truth is sort of like swimming upstream and there is no doubt that we would find it much easier to swim with the tide, instead of against it. Much easier for us to ignore our total responsibility and obligation to the Truth...especially at a time when it requires dedication and firmness in standing up for "the Faith once delivered unto the saints" which is under such a barrage of challenges and theories from those who would subvert it. But we are promised that "it's through much tribulation that we will enter the kingdom." And if we handle this adversity in a manner faithful to the Truth, then in the end, when our Master appears, He will have the most exhilarating words for those only who have been resolute in a commitment to the Truth to the end: "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter thou unto the joy of the Lord."

Bro. Jerry Connolly

The status of Persia:

Ezekiel 38:3-5, *"And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: "Lost in all the world news of elections and Mid-east violence is this*
44 significant development in Iran, name given to Persia in 1953. On

December 28, 2000 MSNBC reported that Iran signed an agreement with Russia for "military and technical cooperation" thus violating and thereby ending an agreement between Russia and the US not to aid the Iranians militarily, struck in 1995. This is the first Russian/Iranian military deal since the Muslim revolt of 1978-79. Russia has come under increasing attacks for its cooperation with Iran.

It is believed a nuclear power plant built in Iran with Russian help has greatly assisted Iran's nuclear military capability. Also, an Iranian built mid range ballistic missile which the Iranians claim was built with the aid of North Korea, is thought by US strategists to have been built with the help of Russia instead.

In Iran itself, the religious leadership has found itself struggling to control the masses, and secular leaders are pressing for reforms. Modern "coffee shops" have sprung up throughout Iran, where western music and dress is practiced. While vigorously opposed by the religious leaders at first, the infractions now are so many and varied that closing them has become a virtual impossibility.

Also troubling the so called Theocratic-republic is the general trend of politics in Iran. The current elected President of Iran Ali Mohammad KHATAMI-Ardakani does not have the support of the ruling religious leaders. Other presidents have been elected without support of the religious leaders before, but none have been successful implementing reforms, such as the current man during his three year reign.

In the most recent election of 2000, 189 seats of the 290 seat parliament went to "Reformists." Only 54 seats were won by the ruling religious party. While constitutionally, the true power continues to rest with the "Chief of State" which is appointed by the ruling religious party and is currently the Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-KHAMENEI, the hold of the religious party appears to be becoming weaker and weaker. If the current trend continues, it will ultimately force another civil war, or an abdication on the part of the Islamic religious leaders as Iran again becomes a secular state. Russia is positioning herself to be there to pick up the pieces when this happens.

Bro. Jim Phillips

As Ye See The Day Approaching

The twenty-first century has dawned and with it, a new millennium! What a fascinating and exciting time to be alive on Planet Earth; knowing that our master will soon return to establish that kingdom which will never be destroyed or left to others! Knowledge is increasing at such an incredible rate and in such a geometric progression, that it is comparable to the unleashing of atoms in an atomic bomb detonation. There has been more change in the past one hundred years than in all of recorded history combined! These facts are absolutely mind-boggling. Man has come a long way from the horse 45

and buggy days at the beginning of the twentieth century. Through the harnessing of electricity the planet has been catapulted into this rapid age of change. Just yesterday I had an opportunity to download and examine a photograph of the earth's lights viewed from space in the darkness of night. Considering each continent, I realized how truly the earth has been overspread and subdued. Earth's light is very evident from space. I found it quite awesome to be able to see the major cities and populated areas across the world. It was a jolt to my mind to see in the photograph the actual expanse of distance covered in a (propeller engine driven) flight I took in my youth between New York and Paris! In those days flights of that distance took the better part of 24 hours. That particular one required two refuelings after initial takeoff; one in Newfoundland and the other in the Azores. The earth has seemed to shrink in light of the development of the jet engine, and the spacecraft. The telegraph, telephone, radio, television and the computer have all helped to bridge the great distances from point to point on the planet. Nowadays it is possible for many of us to communicate with each other at lightning speed via the Internet. We are very thankful for this privilege in these latter days, as we are so few and so scattered out across the face of the earth.

What could not be revealed in that photograph was the actual population of earth. Nor is the condition of mankind manifest. His tragic history is not evident from that lofty height, either. He is not visible with the naked eye, even in daylight from orbit. In a daylight photo of the earth from space, the planet shines with a brilliant blue atmosphere, marbled by the white and gray of the clouds; land appearing in various shades from beige to green. Special surveillance cameras and equipment are necessary to see man from that high up. License plates can be read with high tech equipment from space! I have seen a picture of my neighborhood and house taken from space. It is fearful to see technology developing in such leaps and bounds. Much technology is developed by the military and defense complexes of the various nations. Scientific and medical research also contributes greatly to the mass of knowledge. One wonders what the governments see, detect and track that they don't reveal. We all have heard of global positioning devices and of the precision and pinpoint accuracy of the cruise missiles and "smart bombs" used in Iraq and Kosovo. The laser is being used for both good and bad purposes. Man has devised many ways of collecting, measuring, quantifying and assessing all kinds of data. This is truly the digital age.

Mankind has sought out many inventions, but in the main, has left God out of account. He goes on in his tower building and goal seeking with little or no regard for the Almighty. In the past century architecture reached unparalleled heights in the development of the skyscraper. The Empire State Building, The World Trade Center and the Sears Tower are examples. The big 46 bridges were also built over the past 125 years, such as the Brooklyn

Bridge, the Golden Gate Bridge and the Tappan Zee. Mighty dams and other engineering marvels have been constructed. In 1969 man walked on the moon. The Russians placed Mir in orbit around the earth and maintained that craft for many years. Now man is building the International Space Station. Man has mapped the human genome and believes he will conquer diseases such as cancers, cardiovascular disease and many others also originating in genetic malfunction. Man goes on in pride, neither knowing God, nor having any desiring to know Him. They cast His word behind their backs, regarding it as mere folklore and the uninspired writings of men.

Yahweh is about to confound their works. His son, Jesus, is about to return in power and great glory to upset their tower building and other plans that leave both he and his Father out of account. The nations will inexorably be drawn into the vortex of war and trouble by which they will be brought down and greatly humbled. The infrastructure that man has built will come down when the judgments of God are in the earth. The earthquake mentioned in Zechariah chapter 14 will be one of the means used by Yahweh to effect this. It is written in **Isaiah 2:10-22:**

"Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols he shall utterly abolish. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

Brethren and Sisters, in light of the fact that the night is far spent and the day is at hand, let us draw nigh to God, knowing that he sees far more clearly and deeply into the hearts of men than any contrivance that man could ever devise. We know that His son has said: "**...I *am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.***" (Rev. 1:23)

What Does That Mean?

"Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live." (Ezekiel 20:25)

If God gave Israel laws "...that were not good", as well as good ones, how do we know which ones we should follow?

The "bad statutes" that God gave Israel are explained a few verses later in this same chapter, *"As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols..."* (v.39). These "judgments whereby they should not live" came only after God's prolonged and patient pleading with Israel to obey His good and just statutes, which they refused to do. But still--how is this apparently dubious statute explained?

This chapter opens with the elders of Israel coming to the prophet Ezekiel to inquire of God. God tells Ezekiel that He will not regard their request any more: *"As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be enquired of by you."* (v.3). He explains in the rest of the chapter why He is rejecting Israel: He brought them down into Egypt and increased them as a people; He gave them good laws and requested that He alone be their God and that they have no idols. He offered to bring them into "a land flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands." But they rebelled and did not obey; therefore, He brought them into the wilderness to work with them and to teach them. He gave them more of His good laws, which would be a "schoolmaster" to bring them unto Christ. Verse 13 tells of Israel's reaction: *"But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments."* Regardless, God continued to work with them, as we see in verse 17, *"Nevertheless, mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness."* He brought Israel into that good land and sent them prophets, judges and kings to work with them, but the results were always the same.

At this point, God had had enough of the Children of Israel and their rebellious ways. He was about to turn them over to their own wishes, as we see in verse 39, *"As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, i fye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols. So: God is not granting permission for evil here, but rather **passing a judicial sentence** based upon Israel's repeated lack of response to His mercy, and their desire and determination to seek idols.*

We find the same can happen to us, Brethren and Sisters, if we, like Israel, continually turn our backs on God's good statutes: *"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind."*

God is patient and longsuffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But there is a limit, and we must not presume on his goodness, for we are told: *"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."* (2 Thess. 2:11-12)

It happened to Israel - don't let it happen to us.

