

# 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**

WILLIS, Texas, Sis. Bea Groda, 15923 McKay Rd, Willis, TX 77378

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Loving Greetings in Jesus Christ,

Thank you all for your love, flowers, cards and calls after the death of my husband, Bro. Allen. I appreciated and was very grateful for all your expressions of sympathy.

This is a very lonely time for me, but I'm happy to report that I have been able to attend meetings and classes again and have the association of the dear brothers and sisters here in the Houston Ecclesia.

With love to you all, in the bonds of the Truth,  
Sis. Bea Groda

CANTON, Ohio – Sunday School 10am, Memorial 11am; Mid-week class 7pm Tuesday, Mayfield Senior Center 3825 – 13<sup>th</sup> St. SW, Canton Ohio, Bro. Beryl Snyder, 4095 Prosway SW, Massillon, OH 44646; phone (330) 837-1956

It is this Brother's sad duty to report that two of our members have fallen asleep in Christ. Brother William Phillips fell asleep on Monday, October 29, 2001. Brother William loved music and was often found playing the hymns on the piano at home. At the various meetings he was always joyfully singing praises to God. Shortly after his death on Saturday, January 19, 2002 his sister-wife, Sister Emily Phillips fell asleep in the Lord. She had fallen, breaking her hip. After having complications from surgery on her hip, she fell asleep. Sister Emily loved having the Brothers and Sisters over to her home. She was a kind and gracious host, always welcoming visiting Brethren with a smile, cup of coffee, and conversation on the Truth. The loss of Brother Bill and Sister Emily is felt throughout the ecclesia. They will be missed by us, but they have spent a lifetime in the Truth having the full assurance of the hope which is before us all.

Last December, after spending some months visiting the Wanaque and Deadham ecclesias, our Brother David Sommerville has transferred his affiliation to the Deadham ecclesia. He was an example to all the members with his love and knowledge of the Gospel. He is greatly missed by this ecclesia.

Since our last letter we have had the following visitors around the table of the Lord: Bro. Jim Rankin, Sis. Annette Jones, Bro. Jim & Sis. Kathy Sommerville, Bro. Tim & Sis. Kay Stinchcomb, Bro. Rick & Sis. Julie Hurst, Sis. Sarah Snyder, Bro. Fred & Sis. Ruth Higham, and Bro. Steve & Sis. Sharon Osborne.

We would thank Brothers, Jim Sommerville and Fred Higham for 58 ministering to our needs. Brother Fred Higham gave the memorial at

Brother William's funeral and Brother Jim Sommerville preformed similarly at Sister Emily's.

Let us take courage during the coming year, that we may grow stronger in knowledge of the ways of our God. That service, coming from unworthy vessels, is acceptable homage. We pray that we remain steadfast and faithful, that in the Great Day we may hear, " Well done good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord".

Bro. Beryl Snyder, Recording Brother

## FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held God Willing)

### **HENGOED FRATERNAL GATHERING ..... March 22 - 25, 2002**

Bro. Phillip Hughes, 25 Hoel Y Gelli, FForchneol Parc, Godreaman, Aberdare, Mid Glam., UK CF44 6LN; phone (011) 441-685-870254

### **HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING ..... July 22 - 28, 2002**

Bro. Curtis Hurst, Rt.1 Box 40, Mullin, TX 76864, 915-985-3868

### **BOSTON FRATERNAL GATHERING.....Oct 19 - 21, 2002**

Bro. Jim Sommerville, 34 Birch Hill Rd., Northboro MA 01532 508-393-2874

## Bound With This Chain

*"For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you and to speak with you: because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." (Acts 28:20)*

We are all quite familiar with the Scripture record of the life of the Apostle Paul. In his life, there were two very significant dividing lines that altered his life style. As we know, the first one was his conversion on the road to Damascus when his focus was changed from being a persecutor of Christians to being a disciple of Jesus. The other major change occurred in Jerusalem, where, after an uproar in the Temple, Paul was taken prisoner. It is this life as a prisoner I would like to briefly consider this morning.

Until the time of Paul's imprisonment, he had been involved for many years in active service to his Master: journeys by sea and land, preaching where none had been before the Gospel of Salvation, centered in the Lord Jesus. He had been enjoying the company of brethren and sisters in little towns along the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. But from the moment those evil Jews in Jerusalem cried out to their fellow worshippers in the Temple, *"Men of Israel, help."* (Acts 21:28) from that very moment Paul's life was changed from freedom to bondage.

Although the murderous intentions of the Jews were suppressed by the arrival of the soldiers from the nearby garrison, who rescued the apostle, it was certain Paul would be deprived of his liberty. Paul, the missionary became Paul, the prisoner. And as if to emphasize, yeah to epitomize the change that had now come upon him a jangling and clanking chain was brought, and roughly clamped to his arms. The other end would be attached 59

to a fixed object, or to a Roman soldier. So thus manacled, Paul was led away to the Roman Citadel.

As he lay there, that night, it was just like the Apostle Peter some years earlier. He, too, was chained to a soldier sleeping beside him. Little did Paul know that such a chain and soldier would hardly leave him for the next four years. Although the captain of the garrison agreed Paul had done nothing worthy of death, or of bonds, we read, that two years later he was left in bonds by Felix. Even Felix's successor, Festus, brought him out on a pompous occasion before King Agrippa. He was not released from the indignity of being fettered. *"And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, ..."* and quietly added, perhaps raising his wrists, *"...except these bonds."* (Acts 26:29)

After that interview, both Festus and Agrippa agreed Paul had done nothing worthy of death or bonds, but still bound he remained. Two years further on, after his adventurous journey to Rome, awaiting in that city the decision of the emperor, although he now dwelt in his own hired house rather than in prison he was still with the constant presence of the Roman soldier only a chain length away. No wonder that each of the epistles written at that time alludes to those fetters.

To the Philippians four times in the first chapter, he refers to them. He says, "Remember my bonds." In Philemon, the run-a-way slave Onesimus was "Begotten," says Paul, "in my bonds." To the Ephesians, having drawn that graphic, spiritual counterpart of the uniform of the soldier at his elbow, he went on to say that he was, "The ambassador of the gospel in bonds."

Yes, the chain was always with Paul. Why did he wear it? What had he done that had given the Jews an excuse of depriving him of his liberty? We know the answer. It was because of his preaching. What did he preach? Not heresy, but a wonderful hope for mankind. He was prepared to tell everyone of this hope. In all of the defenses he made before the Sanhedrin, Felix, Festus, Agrippa, the Jews in Rome, it was this hope that was uppermost in his mind.

To the Sanhedrin he said, in Acts 23:6, *"...of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question."* To Felix (Acts 24:15) he said, *I "have hope toward God... that there shall be a resurrection of the dead..."* To Agrippa, Paul declared, in Acts 26:6, *"And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:"* To the Jewish leaders who visited him in Rome (at his request), he compressed the essence and substance of his teaching into just four words. Raising his fettered wrists, he said to them, Acts 28:20, *"For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain":* The Hope of Israel. That was what the chain stood for, to Paul.

For Paul, when he wanted just a few words to express his belief, or to epitomize his entire life, he could find nothing more appropriate than those 60 four simple words. They were the same simple words our beloved pioneer

brother used over a century ago to epitomize that Hope he had resurrected - Elpis Israel – The Hope of Israel. As we think about that Hope, as we examine what it meant to Paul, we will hardly be able to resist the instinctive comparison that such a study will make of our own lives.

What did the Hope of Israel mean to Paul? First of all, it was a system of belief. As he told Agrippa, it was the promises made to the fathers and fulfilled in Jesus, the Messiah. That was the Hope of Israel. This Truth along with all its associated beliefs (such as resurrection and reward) was held passionately by Paul. There was no other basis of salvation than this Hope of Israel. Therefore, his lifetimes journeying, preaching, his arrest in the Temple, the attempt to convert his ex-colleagues of the Sanhedrin while before them, and his plea to King Agrippa to accept the message he preached were all the result of his faith and the Hope of Israel.

In the epistles to his brethren and sisters, he reminds them of the absolute necessity of keeping the Hope of Israel unaltered. In the Letter to the Galatians, he emphasized the fact that any modification of the Gospel message would invalidate the Hope of Israel. This hope, and its preservation, was the mainspring of Paul's life.

It is interesting to wonder what Paul would say if he were miraculously translated into our world, and try to recognize the same Hope of Israel. The Hope, for which he had borne imprisonment and worn that chain, would it be found in the world? He would possibly enter many fine, ornate churches, some of them bearing his name, and yet, he would look and listen in vain for those same simple beliefs for which he was once bound.

Suppose he came to one of our meetings. Would he be able to recognize in our teachings the same beloved scriptural passages that he once used? Would he hear his own words used in the defense of the Hope of Israel? Would he hear the Promises to the fathers, resurrection of the dead, the establishment of the Kingdom of God? Yes, he would hear it from us, for we are sure that we have that wonderful Hope that Paul preached.

Dramatically now, the responsibility is upon us! Let us, then, persevere in this good work – following Paul's example. May the effect of Paul's chain and what it stood for be the same on us as it was to the brethren in Rome, about whom he told the Philippians in chapter 1 verse 14. *"And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."* Let us follow their example. The hope we have is the true Hope of Israel, so we, too, should proclaim it without fear.

Suppose, again, for a moment, that when Paul had gotten to know us a little better he found that some were edging back from that wonderful Hope. They were moving toward those whom he had just turned away in dismay. Suppose that he found that the barriers between the holders of the true Hope of Israel and the Apostasy were slowly being eroded. What would he think? We can almost hear his chain rattling with indignation, and see his eyes wet with pity and concern. All his old instincts would reappear. He would 61

quickly gather paper and pen to write a letter of warning. But in fact, there would be no need. We have already received letters from him; many directed against this very danger of falling away from the Hope of Israel.

As he told the Corinthians, *"For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would..."* (II Cor. 12:20). Would he say that about us? Or would he say, *"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel"?* (Gal. 1:6) Or, *"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth..."?* (Gal. 3:1) Or, *"But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?"* (Gal. 4:9) Or would he say, *"Ye did run well., who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?"* (Gal. 5:7)

What Paul is telling us is that the Hope of Israel in his heart was the most precious thing in the world. It was unalterable, and he wanted his hearers to have the same compassionate conviction about it.

We have inherited that same Hope. The responsibility of its safe custody depends upon us. Do we feel the same as Paul did? May that Hope be as safely chained to us as the soldier was to Paul. And may we guard it as that Roman did his prisoner – with his very life.

Going back, again, to the chain that held Paul. It stood for something more than just a system of belief. Paul could have believed the Truth and gone quietly about his life, without his adversaries caring about him at all. But he was bound with the chain, not because he just believed the Hope of Israel, but because he acted upon it every day. To him the Hope of Israel was not just something to believe, but a way of life. Because he believed, he had to do something. That something was the complete dedication of his life in the service of his Master: a complete, personal commitment to The Hope. His time was regarded as valuable only if he could put it to use in the work of the Truth. His physical effort – miles and miles of walking on poor roads in dangerous conditions, and thousands of miles by sea in small, storm-tossed boats. His home-life was non-existent. His personal possessions were dedicated to the Hope of Israel. As he told the Corinthian brothers and sisters, *"And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you,"* (II Cor. 12:15) His personal health was not a concern to him, although there are some hints he had some type of ailment. To the Galatians he said, *"Ye know how through **infirmity** of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first."* (Gal. 4:13) To the Corinthian believers, he stated, *"that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life."* (II Cor. 1:8) He went on when others would have given up.

His personal safety was always at risk, yet not a cause for concern. At the very beginning of the journey that ended in his imprisonment in Jerusalem and Rome, he said, *"for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at 62 Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."* (Acts 21:13)

Yes, if that chain stood for anything, it symbolized the life absolutely committed to living out what he believed. Personal consequences were immaterial to him. We see Paul as a near perfect blend of faith and works.

But, again, if Paul could visit us today, what would he think of our way of life: how we live and spend our time, the excuses we make, the lack of service? No one could have spent more than a few minutes in the company of Paul without knowing that he was a thoroughly dedicated follower of Christ. Is that the impression we give to others? Or is our light so hidden under the bushel of our homes, gardens, jobs, vehicles, or even our simple pleasure that we do not seem any different from anyone else? Is the chain that binds us to the Hope of Israel held aloft for everyone to see? Or do we hold it behind our backs, hoping it will go unnoticed?

Another result of Paul's imprisonment was the effect on his life of changed (or altered) circumstances. When he stood at his various trials, he was an old man for those days. We can picture him, as he stood before his accusers. He was at the stage of life when he would have had every excuse to take it easy, and to look after himself, to review his eventful and useful life, and feel that he had done his share of the work. He would have been happy to retire, to leave the work for others. As we know, this did not happen. He knew that the demands of the Hope of Israel were not reduced by changed (or altered) circumstances.

He could no longer visit his Brothers and Sisters during that time of imprisonment. He did the next best thing: he wrote to them. He could not preach in public, but he could, and did, in private. The Jews, in Rome (like Onesimus, and no doubt many others) learned the Hope of Israel from that chained prisoner — even the Roman soldiers. What an opportunity Paul had as the guards came and went, on and off duty, attaching themselves to the other end of his chain — a captive audience, if there ever was one. No doubt each of those soldiers heard the Truth.

During this time, Paul wrote to the Philippians. (The RSV) "The whole Praetorian Guard had known that his imprisonment was for Christ." What a great testimony to his work!

Coming back to our own days, as we go through life, our circumstances change. Sometimes our lives change slowly, a gradual progression from youth to maturity, increasing age, failing faculties. Sometimes our lives change: a sudden illness, a new job, a new home, or a period of isolation. But these events do not change the demands of the Truth in our lives. We must still serve the Hope of Israel even though the method of our service may change. If we cannot visit, perhaps we can phone. If we can no longer speak at meetings, maybe we could write. At least we can attend the meetings to guide and encourage. We can be sure that whatever our circumstances are and however they may change, there will be some outlet for our service.

Although Paul did not welcome his change, he did not let it impede the work for the Master. And in this, of course, he was only following

the example of the Lord. He could truly say to his readers, "Be ye followers [or imitators] of me, as I also am of Christ."

So our study this morning of Paul's reaction to his imprisonment, although not mentioning our Lord, has in fact, guided us through Paul to the perfect service of Jesus. Our Master was also seized and bound by wicked men. He, too, faced his judges across the floor of the Sanhedrin. He, too, testified before the Roman governor, and the king. Unlike Paul, who was eventually released from his first imprisonment, Jesus was condemned to death. Despite the apparent contradiction of that scene, on that day at Calvary, the Hope of Israel shone at its brightest; for this, and only this, was the way that the Hope of Israel could be realized. God grant to each one of us, by sharing the hope and dedication of Paul and his Master, that we may experience the inexpressible joy when the Hope of Israel, at last, becomes a reality.

*Bro. Doug Luard*

## **I Timothy 1**

Brothers and sisters, today we begin a study of I Timothy, which is the first of the three pastoral letters Paul wrote. The other two are II Timothy and Titus. This first epistle to Timothy was written between Paul's first and second imprisonment's. The reason they are referred to as the Pastoral Epistles is because Timothy and Titus were pastors, which signifies shepherd. Other terms used, which meant the same in the first century ecclesia, are bishop and elder.

The Pastorals differ from Paul's other letters in that they seem to be written primarily for the benefit of Timothy and Titus. The way these letters are written differ also in the sense that they are more exhortational and comforting than Paul's other epistles. A likely reason for the style change is twofold: First, these were written shortly before Paul's death, and secondly, he was directing his thoughts to individuals, who were close friends, not to a large group.

Paul uses quite a few different words in these Pastorals, which are not used in his other letters. An example is the Greek word "ensebeia," which is translated as piety, holiness, religion, and godliness. This word is used frequently because of the strong emphasis in I Timothy regarding our behavior and walk. Another word is "soter" or savior. This word is used numerous times in the Pastorals, but only twice in Paul's other letters.

One final difference we want to mention between these Pastorals and Paul's other letters has to do with Paul's mode of thinking. In other epistles, Paul argues against false teaching, because it doesn't go along with a belief in the Truth. In the Pastorals, Paul still speaks against false teaching, but he does not argue. We might wonder why. The reason is because he is speaking to close friends who have a good knowledge of the Truth. These words were written primarily to encourage and warn. We cannot become complacent

in the Truth. We know the difference between truth and error, but we must continue to read and study the Bible to strengthen ourselves spiritually, so there is no chance for false teaching or doctrine to creep in unawares.

Who was Timothy? We see from Acts 16:1 he was the son of a Greek man and a Jewish woman. His mother was a believer as well as his grandmother, so Timothy had knowledge of the Truth. He was brought into the Truth by Paul and became Paul's closest associate. This is reflected in verse 2 of this first chapter, where he says, "*Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith.*"

Paul begins the chapter by introducing himself as "*an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior.*" "*God our Saviour*" is not a common phrase, but it brings out an important point. It is God who offers salvation to all men through Christ, who was offered up on the cross as the perfect sacrifice. We can see this in chapter 2, verse 3-4: "*God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the Truth.*"

In verse 2 of this chapter, Paul uses a phrase that is unique to the Pastorals. Paul usually uses "grace... and peace," but in the Pastorals he uses the phrase "*Grace, mercy and peace.*" The only other one who uses this phrase is John, who used it once in II John 3. Grace is the gift or favor from God. To receive it, we must allow the Word of Truth to work in us. We have to have a sincere love of God. Mercy is the forgiving of our many sins and shortcomings and fleshly desires that we are prone to do. We must strive, or agonize, to put them away and to be rid of them as Paul did. God realizes we are poor, weak mortals. The key is for us to realize this fact and acknowledge to God that without his mercy we have no hope. Peace—peace with God. If we realize, through sincere love for God, we can obtain grace and mercy, then we can attain a level of peace of mind that will help us through any trial we may have to endure. Paul says in Philippians 4:7, "*The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.*"

Verses 3 – 10 deal with the apostasy of the Judaizers. Paul had left Timothy at Ephesus while he went into Macedonia. Paul in effect exhorts Timothy to warn those of the Ephesian Ecclesia, who are teaching wrong doctrine, to stop. The penalty for teaching false doctrine is given by Paul in Galatians 1:8, "*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*" Some in the ecclesia were trying to combine the Law of Moses with the law of grace in Christ, and in so doing they took away from the effect of Christ's sacrifice and God's mercy.

These errorists of Ephesus were wasting their time trying to keep up with Jewish fables, or rabbinical traditions, and endless genealogies, which had to do with the proper ancestry of priests. These men who worried more about fleshly relationships, instead of realizing that all of those in Christ are related to him from a spiritual standpoint. They should have been helping to build up the ecclesia, through godly edifying. Many questions can arise when studying the Truth, which can cause debate. But more often than not these questions, 65

if answerable, will not help us get into the kingdom, But they may cause strife and lead to some leaving the Truth. When we study the Bible, we should do so with the idea of getting the most out of it to help us in our walk to the Kingdom. Paul tells us in II Timothy 3:16-17 how we should use the scriptures. *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."*

In the 5<sup>th</sup> verse, Paul is telling us that if we follow God's commandments and live our lives with the knowledge of God as our foundation, then we will naturally develop a true love for God and with that comes a pure heart. True love for God means we diligently and prayerfully study God's word and obey it without reservation. With that knowledge comes a good conscience, because we are convinced beyond all doubt that we are on the right path, so we sincerely try to do the right thing all the time. By doing so we develop true faith—one that will not waver in a time of trial. To really grasp this concept we have to stop and analyze our lives and see where God fits into our list of priorities. If He is not at the top, then we are in trouble.

This is how all the brethren in Ephesus should have been living, but Paul tells Timothy in verse 6 that some had turned aside and were not walking sincerely in the Truth. They wanted to be teachers of the Law, which if they had the right attitude wouldn't have been so bad, because they might have been able to see the error of following the Law. The problem was they wanted to be teachers, because it was a way for them to have a high position among the people, and they enjoyed the notoriety. They didn't understand what they taught.

The Law was done away with in the death of Christ, and now we follow the Gospel. The Law still has some value to us; the commandments teach us how we should live—about moral behavior. The key ingredient of the Law was love—God's love in providing redemption, man's love in obedience, and the love of one another.

Again, realizing the position of the Law in relation to the Gospel, we can see what Paul is saying in verse 9: *"the Law is not made for a righteous man,"* because without Christ we have no hope. Hebrews 7:19 *"For the Law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw near to God."*

The Law is good now for wicked persons, because it does keep them somewhat in check. Paul lists six characteristics: lawless, disobedient, ungodly, sinners, unholy, profane. Six is the number of flesh and these words completely cover the mind of the flesh. They go against the mind of the Spirit in the first four of the Ten Commandments. Murderer of father and mother are those who disregard the fifth commandment. Manslayers are those who disobey the sixth commandment concerning murder. Then is verse 10, *"whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind."* This involves the breaking of the seventh commandment. *"And if there be any other thing 66 that is contrary to sound doctrine."* Some of those in Ephesus were

teaching wrong doctrine because of ignorance and the love of high position, which is contrary to the tenth commandment of covetousness and envy.

Verses 11-16 tell us how Paul went from following the Law to following Christ. We see that the sound doctrine Paul speaks of in verse 10 is brought out in verse 11: *"the glorious gospel of the blessed God,"* or the good news and glad tidings of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.

Paul has been the leader of those against the disciples of Christ. He was a blasphemer and a persecutor. Paul truly thought he was following the right path when he went against the teaching of Christ, and he persecuted many. In Acts 22:4, *"And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women."* Galatians 1:13, *"Beyond measure, I persecuted the ecclesia of God, and wasted it,"* and in Acts 8:3, *"As for Saul, he made havoc of the ecclesias, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison."* Also, he was injurious; he was so consumed with contempt for those following Christ that he would go so far as to threaten death. Acts 9:1, *"And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord"* Paul had tremendous zeal for what he believed. But he was ignorant of God's way. That's why he obtained mercy and was shown that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Law. God knew Paul would have the same zeal to teach others about Christ, as he did in teaching the Law. Therefore, once he was enlightened he knew that true faith and love was in Christ Jesus. Now he realized the great responsibility he had to teach others what he now knew. Jesus had come into the Jewish world to save sinners, and they rejected him. John 1:11, *"He came unto his own, and his own received him not."* Later through the apostles, especially Paul, he came to the Gentiles. We see in verse 16, Paul had received mercy, that *"in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe."* Paul would be the example to those who were in the same position that Paul had been in. They would be able to see there was a better way and hopefully they could transform themselves and be willing to put on Christ.

In verse 17, Paul gives words of praise to God, he says, *"Now unto the King eternal* (We all know God has been in control of the world since the beginning), *immortal* (living forever), *invisible* (unseen; *'No man,'* says Jesus, *'hath seen God at any time'), the only wise God."* Wise is omitted in most translations. God is one; there is none beside Him. Now why would Paul insert these words of praise here? We get a better understanding when we realize Paul did this also in I Timothy 6:15-16, and in Romans 8:33-39 and 11:33-36. Paul had a genuine love for God and His Word of Truth. Paul realized the significance of the tremendous gift of eternal life. He knew he had a chance to receive it through God's mercy by following after Christ, and he was overjoyed by it. Now the important question for us: Are we overjoyed by the prospect of eternal life if we remain faithful until Christ's return? Our most pressing desire in life should be to live the Truth, because we have a sincere love for God.

Paul concludes this chapter by pointing out to Timothy his responsibility to "war a good warfare" and defend the Truth, "holding faith, and a good conscience." As Paul says in Hebrews 6:18-19, "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." Faith and a good conscience are our anchors in the Truth. If we cast them aside, as some of those in Ephesus did, we will cause a shipwreck we will have no control over and we, as Paul says in Ephesians 4:14, "will be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine."

In verse 20, we see what must be done with those who teach wrong doctrine. Hymenaeus taught that the resurrection was past already. Paul says in II Timothy 2:17-18, "And their word will eat as doth a canker... and overthrow the faith of some." People in the Truth who teach false doctrine must be put out of fellowship in order to keep the Truth pure. Having been delivered unto Satan or disfellowshipped, he had lost a chance for eternal life. Hopefully, they will realize the error of their way, repent, and earnestly desire the pure work of the Truth once again.

*Bro. Jim Rankin*

## **I Timothy 2**

I want to thank the brothers and sisters who have worked hard to put together this Gathering, to allow us to be able to gather together here under this tabernacle unmolested from the world. It is gathering together like this, in this assembly one with another in faith, that allows us to gain strength in times of need, encouragement in times of uncertainty, and companionship in our duties relating to the call—that calling out of the world of darkness into light.

An event such as this Gathering takes many hours of preparation. First, by the planners and as assisted by those who have been engaged to take up the committees. There must be speakers chosen, talks and lectures, subjects planned, notification of times, dates, responsibilities, transportation assistance, lodging preparation, food and maintenance. There are tasks before and tasks after the Gathering that must be managed. From year to year, this Gathering occurs by the Will of God, allowing us to gather together for edification and for rejuvenation in the Word. Year after year, these tasks of planning and preparation and performance have been passed down and practiced, with guides to those who are to take over the duties for the next year. Problems are addressed, and measures are taken to change the system when needed. Time-consuming tasks are replaced by simplified ones, and concise working solutions are tried and perfected. So preparations for the Gathering and the planning process are just a system of management, or a management of systems.

Paul suggests here in his letter to Timothy that there is no one aspect of that planning process that is less important, and there is no one part of that 68 planning process that is more important. All parts work together to allow

the whole process, or the whole system, to function. It is failure to the system, when one aspect of the system is sidestepped, forgotten, or becomes ineffective or weak.

In this chapter Timothy is encouraged by Paul. He is presented with the idea that there will be questions as to reasons for and rationale for why certain tasks are to be performed in a specific way or requirement that must be undertaken. Requirements may differ from one performer to another; however, the whole design of the system is that all parts work together to function. There is a specific reason for each part.

Paul encourages Timothy to work. There are some preparations that need to be performed and guides that need to be developed. Paul has suggested that there are many hurdles that need to be overcome. As an example, in order for a sky scraper to be built, a starting point or a reference point must be developed. Every aspect of this building must be referenced on a daily basis, and continuously, in order for that building to be erected. All calculations need to be made from that one reference point. Any deviation from that focus point could cause collapse or failure of that building.

The starting point, or focal point, or reference point related to the Truth—the system that Paul is presenting—is based on prayer. It is the acknowledgment of where we derive our strength. He presents prayer to God, who is the originator of life and light, to be the focal reference point for all

aspects in our walk. And, it is this act of humility that represents our subjection to His Will.

Verse 8: *"I will therefore that all men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."* Paul says, I would that all men pray, everywhere. To whom? Verse 5: *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."* Because, in verse 6, he *"gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."*

The reason for this prayer is so that those professing belief in the promises made to Abraham—meditation of our chance at life through Christ Jesus—may demonstrate and acknowledge their humility and subjection to Him who has derived this plan. It is through prayer that one can profess humbleness through belief, especially those who profess to be part of the bride of Christ at his return

Paul presents that this prayer must be, not only to God and through Jesus Christ, but acknowledging the superiority for all men—all men that are in high places in this earth that allow us the freedom to be able to gather together, to practice our beliefs, to pray for forgiveness without harm, and to profess to those in our environment, the promises and opportunities that they also could have.

The specifics of this chapter may be brought out in discussion and comments. My desire for this presentation is to present the process as the key to a system that all parts need to function together, that all parts are important, that all pieces work to form the whole.

Paul presents that prayer is the origin and focal point—the reference for us to constantly turn to, and to pray for all men—especially those who are in high places. Our walk and conduct and preparation is that we hope to be chosen—to be part of the promises made to Abraham that have been made available to us through the actions of Christ, so that we can be numbered with the bride of Christ.

*Bro. Gary Stephen*

## 1 Timothy 3

Good morning brothers, sisters and guests. As announced, the chapter under study this morning is the third chapter in the first epistle from Paul, to Timothy. The letter is basically some guidelines Paul is giving Timothy concerning the conduct of those in the ecclesia at Ephesus. A brief look at the circumstances leading up to this epistle, may be in order.

Not much is mentioned of Timothy's personal life, he is best known, and Paul's closest of fellow-laborers. He was brought into the Truth by Paul and is mentioned in v. 2 of the first chapter as "Paul's own son in the Faith". Timothy joined Paul on his second of three major journeys throughout the Roman Empire. He worked with him through the end of Paul's life. Timothy lived at Lystra in East Asia Minor, having joined Paul, they traveled through places such as Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. It is thought by some that Paul was perhaps concerned about Timothy's inexperience in dealing with the ecclesia's problems. Paul exhorts him in the fourth chapter, twelfth verse to "Let no man despise thy youth." Perhaps Paul's concern was that Timothy was reluctant to use his authority in relation to older brethren. Timothy's work indicates he was faithful, devoted, and courageous. A young brother who has deep respect for that of the older brothers may hesitate to take action against sin and error in the ecclesia (as Timothy may have experienced in Ephesus).

The circumstances between Paul and Timothy are paralleled between the younger Bro. Roberts taking instruction of the elder Bro. Thomas, on how to handle difficult matters in the ecclesia.

We find that Timothy joins Paul at Corinth and remains with him for the rest of the second journey. The third journey indicates they spent about three years at Ephesus. The first epistle shows Paul leaving Timothy in Ephesus to set things in order with the ecclesia. There is much instruction concerning the ecclesial affairs. In chapter 3 of this first epistle Paul reviews the qualifications of one desiring the office of a bishop, (or often referred to as elders or arranging brethren.) The qualifications he mentions are required in all brethren but especially those chosen to serve the ecclesia. He says a bishop must be blameless – that means above reproach. An arranging brother must avoid anything that has the appearance of evil or may discourage brethren or cause those in the Faith to stumble. This Brother must be vigilant, meaning wide awake, watchful, aware of everything that may negatively affect the ecclesia. Sober, - not excitable or impulsive. Hospitable and apt to teach - one 70 who is happy and quick to care for others – enthusiastic about the Word.

He should present himself as a patient worker even in the face of opposition. Paul goes on to say this brother must be well versed in household affairs and a good report of them from without "lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil".

The deacons or (serving brethren) likewise, must be grave or honorable, not applying effort toward the sake of money. Similar attitudes must carry on to the wife of the serving brother, that they together, must act as one in the Truth. The serving brother with proper thoughts and actions has much to gain with great boldness in the Faith, which is in Jesus Christ.

The last few verses of this short chapter reflect the desire Paul has to meet once again with Timothy and those brothers and sisters in Ephesus. However if Paul should tarry, his instructions to Timothy are a reminder to conduct himself accordingly. Paul has set forth the guidelines for his *"own son in the Faith" ... "in the house of God, which is the ecclesia of the living God, the pillar (or support) and ground (or being sedentary, immovable) of the Truth."*

As a final note Paul reiterates why these instructions should be followed. That those in the Faith may call to mind the sacrifice and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He says, *"And without controversy (or confessedly) great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."*

*Bro. Mark Dylla*

## DANIEL - IN THE DEN OF LIONS

*"Daniel, among the royal captives taken from Jerusalem to Babylon, excited jealousy by his ability and success among those above whom he was promoted in the days of Darius, the Mede. His envious compeers, knowing that Daniel was in the habit of praying three times a day, obtained a decree forbidding, for thirty days, all prayer except to Darius, under the penalty of being thrown to the wild beasts. The publication of this decree did not deter Daniel from his daily duty; and being caught in the act of prayer, he was thrown to the lions. [Visible hand of God p296]*

A group of young people were once asked, "Was Daniel thrown into a den of lions, or into the lion's den?" The confused and suspicious look upon their faces was expected! What is the difference? Does it matter?

In reality, there is no difference, and it doesn't really matter! The question was asked because critics of the Bible had apparently tried to play down the miracle recorded in the sixth chapter of Daniel. They claimed that Daniel was not thrown into a den of lions, but into the lion's den, i.e. into the den *belonging* to the lions, but without the lions being in occupancy! What desperate measures the foolish sceptic and atheist will go to in the futile attempt to disprove or contradict the Bible.

Josephus records that those who had conspired against Daniel believed that the lions had been secretly fed before Daniel was thrown in among them, and thus Daniel was not eaten!

At the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the chief priests resorted to lies and deceit in the embarrassment of an empty tomb by instructing the soldiers to say "His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept" (Matthew 28:13).

It is the same in every generation. Flesh refuses to believe God, and prefers to take refuge in the host of lies, from the great responsibility that rests upon them when the existence and power of God is recognised and accepted. Great and ingenious endeavours are engaged in to try and prove the Word of God to be false, but in vain. The Bible is proved to be true and faithful, time and time again.

The apostle Paul in the wonderful list of men and women of faith in Hebrews chapter 11, says in verse 38 that "the world was not worthy" of them, ("they were too good for the world" — Jerusalem Bible). The humble servants of the Deity in every generation have proved to be far better than the critic and scoffer etc. Daniel was among this catalogue of faithful characters of whom the world was not worthy, "who through faith...stopped the mouths of lions" (Hebrews 11:33). The lions *were* there, and as subsequent events showed, they *were* ravenous:

*"And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den."* (before they reached the bottom of the den — RSV) (Dan.6: 24)

The words of Proverbs are appropriate:

*"Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him."* (Proverbs 26:27) (See also 1 Samuel 19:11 and Esther 7)

*"The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead"* (and the wicked gets into it instead — RSV) (Proverbs 11:8)

We know the details of this chapter very well, and have perhaps outlined its lessons on numerous occasions to our children or to the Sunday School. The lessons are easy to grasp, but they are also of fundamental importance. Faith is perhaps the obvious one presented to us. Daniel would have been about 90 years of age at this time. (That perhaps is a lesson in itself. There being no retirement age in the Truth! We see Daniel as active in his later years as he was in his youth. As Bro. Growcott once wrote "The Truth needs faithful workers unto the end.")

At 90 years of age, he may well have thought that his probation was at an end; that the time had come for him to die, and this was the way appointed. Many of Yahweh's servants had suffered violent deaths. It is said that Isaiah was sawn asunder, and Daniel perhaps thought that being thrown to the lions 72 was the way in which he would end his days. Throughout his life, he had

manifested faith in Yahweh, and this was not going to stop now. He defied the decree of the king, which had been secured through evil and subtlety, and placed his trust in the Creator of the Universe. No doubt he had the same thoughts as his three companions had some 50 or 60 years earlier, who when they stood before a furious Nebuchadnezzar accused of not falling down before his golden image said *"our God whom we serve is able to deliver us... but if not ....we will not serve thy gods"* (Daniel 3:17-18). Daniel believed that God could deliver him, but there is no indication that He would. Daniel had to have faith in God whatever the outcome.

When the king, after an uneasy night, *"cried with a lamentable voice ....O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?"* Daniel replied:

*"O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt"* (verse 22).

Did Daniel think of Psalm 34:7?

*"The angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that fear (reverence) him, and delivereth them."*

How would our faith stand up in such a trial? We will probably never be tested in the way Daniel was, but do we manifest faith in the every day incidents of life, small as well as great? Are our lives characterised by faith? Daniel's was, and this is also brought out in the chapter under consideration, as Daniel's faithfulness is observed and assessed by those around him.

Before considering those details however, let us ask ourselves how we would have responded to the decree of the king which prevented any petition being made to anyone other than Darius, on pain of death. Would we have acted like Daniel and prayed with our window open towards Jerusalem in direct opposition to the terms of the order recently promulgated? Verse 10 is very clear:

*"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforesaid."*

We may have argued that it would have been "prudent" to have closed the window, or to move to a different part of the room. We would not for one moment have considered obeying the decree of the king, but simply made some adjustments to our lives that would have prevented us from being noticed in the way Daniel was. We quite correctly don't seek martyrdom and persecution, as many have done in the past. So to avoid this we could have acted much more discreetly. We could have continued to pray, and nobody would have been any the wiser. So why didn't Daniel do that?

The crux of the matter is to be found in the last part of the verse just quoted – *"as he did aforesaid."* It is rendered in the Jerusalem Bible "as he had always done". The verse is teaching us that we should not deviate 73

from an always held and practised Scriptural position, even if opposition or persecution is the result. For Daniel to change his daily routine of open prayer and praise to Yahweh would have been to compromise his standing before Him. It would have demonstrated to the world, that Daniel worshipped God, but that under certain conditions he would stop doing so, especially if his own life was in jeopardy.

Like other faithful servants of the Most High God, Daniel was not prepared to do that. This is the second lesson that we can consider. Daniel had an uncompromising adherence to the Truth. Nothing was going to deter him in his life of praise and service to God. The apostles demonstrated a like determination:

*"Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard"* (Acts 4:19-20)

*"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."* (Acts 5:29)

Daniel too placed God first, and was not prepared to compromise his position, and the remarkable thing about this incident is that the jealous presidents and princes knew that too. They knew Daniel would not alter his faithful way of life. They were absolutely convinced about that. The plan for bringing about Daniel's destruction could not fail, because it depended upon Daniel's faithfulness to his God. The only part that really could go wrong, or be frustrated; the very part of the scheme that was critical to its success, was guaranteed to work! Daniel's fidelity to his God was the key to the plan's success, and that was never in question, and everybody knew it. As such, the plan was fool proof!

*"We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God."*

On two occasions in this chapter Darius refers to Daniel's service to Yahweh as "continual". *"Is thy God whom thou servest continually able to deliver thee from the lions"* (verse 20 – see also verse 16).

This really leads us into the third lesson; a lesson which is much deeper than the abstract principles of faith (though such is fundamental – Hebrews 11:6). This lesson assesses our hearts and actions. We are compelled to ask ourselves if we are really manifesting the character of Yahweh in our lives, or just enjoying the social aspects of the Truth, and when we are in the world in our daily lives, we are really no different from them! The lesson refers to our conduct and integrity. In the fourth verse of the chapter we read:

*"Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion, nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him."*

Can that be said of us? Would our colleagues be able to say that they can find no fault in us? Or would they be able to pin point some trait in us

which would embarrass us? Would they be able to say "I didn't know they were religious!" This is of course, another lesson in Daniel chapter 6. How do we conduct ourselves at work, and what kind of service do we give to earthly masters. The apostle Paul wrote:

*"Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice (i.e. working only when we are being watched) as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God."* (Colossians 3:22)

Would our neighbours be able to level an accusation against us? Or are the principles of the Truth so deeply affecting our lives, that we are truly manifesting the spirit of Christ to the best of our ability, and there would be nothing to say against us? We read in the third verse:

*"Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him."*

The apostle wrote to Timothy:

*"Give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully."* (1 Tim. 5:14)

It is not easy to maintain a continuous and consistent way of life where our conduct is impeccable, and our integrity free from question. The critical word, the loss of temper, the uncaring attitude, the service to our employer which could be questioned, etc. could all prevent it being said that a "marvellous spirit resided in us" (Jerusalem Bible). But that is what we must aim for. Daniel was flesh and blood like ourselves. He was no different from us. The same temptations and trials were before him as they are before us, and we are called upon to manifest the same principles in our lives.

One other lesson comes to mind, though no doubt there are many others. Daniel was not ashamed of his faith. He stood out among the crowd, and demonstrated the faith which was the bedrock of his life, and which characterised all his actions. He had maintained this course from the days of his youth. He was not ashamed to pray to his God with his window open. The apostle Paul declared in later years, *"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth."* (Romans 1:16)

Let us be encouraged by the example of Daniel, recognising and accepting the high standards of the Truth, and also the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord too was the subject of jealousy and envy (Mark 15:10), and nothing could be said against him (John 8:46). The jealous leaders of Israel forced the hand of Pilate (John 19:12), who acknowledged the injustice of the charges laid against him (Luke 23:14). As a stone was "brought and laid upon the mouth of the den" (Daniel 6:17), so a stone sealed the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:66). However, on the third day, the Lord rose from the tomb (Luke 24:6), and those who conspired against him suffered in the destruction of AD70 (Luke 19:41-44). The closing words also remind us of the glorious kingdom yet to be established, and which is so often the subject of the prophetic writings:

*"Then king Darius wrote unto all people ....Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even to the end." (Daniel 6:26)*

*Bro. Phillip Hughes*

### **Identification and Participation Part 3**

We have previously considered how the Apostle John's pre-millennial vision of *the* Rainbow Messenger astride sea and earth corresponds with Moses' revelation of Yahweh coming from Sinai and David's inspired contemplation of the ark accompanied with the elohistic seed of Abraham, coming to Jerusalem and Ezekiel's vision of Divine glory in judicial manifestation; all these as a composite picture speak to us of that blessed yet awful time when God's righteousness will be declared in the earth and the power of sin will be prostrated. John's taking of the little opened scroll of thunder judgements out of the outstretched right hand of the mighty Rainbow Messenger and the eating of it up as Ezekiel's digestion of the scroll written on the front and back with lamentations, sighings and wailing, speak to us of these men's necessary mental and moral assimilation and identification with Yahweh's work of judgement on a guilty world, *"beginning from the house of God."* In the time of Ezekiel a temple was demolished so likewise in the time which immediately lies ahead of us a temple - that which is constituted by the ecclesia today as the temple of the living Deity (II Cor 6:16) will also be destroyed. In its place the habitation of the spirit will be manifested in that Divine edifice of the ancients and worthies of all ages with the Lamb gloriously set forth in their midst.

As we contemplate these things it is only natural for us to ask, "When, when shall it be? When shall the time of judgement commence?" There is a Divine principle which we ought to take cognizance of in the answer to this question. In the case of national judgement God's prophecy through Jeremiah shows that it begins with Israel, because Israel is the most responsible nation. *"Jeremiah [whom Yahweh appointeth and exalteth] son of Hilkiah [in the portion of Yahweh] of the priests that were in Anathoth [answers] in the land of Benjamin [son of the right hand]" - [Jer. 1:1]* is representative of that multitudinous unity who is depicted in John's vision of the Rainbow Messenger, the Cherubim of Yahweh bearing the Glory of God coming from Sinai to Jerusalem, whom God will exalt, in the portion of Yahweh, in answer to *the prayer of the Son of Yahweh's right hand.* As such he is commanded in the 25th chapter to take the cup of indignation wine out of the hand of the God of Israel and to cause all nations to drink of it. Beginning at Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, the Divine indignation was poured forth and continued even unto, *"all the kings of the north, the near and the far every man with his brother and all the kingdoms of the earth"* [v 26] but says Yahweh Tvaoth, 76 *"with the city on which My **Name** hath been called am I making a*

*beginning of sending calamity ... For a controversy hath Yahweh with the nations, Himself hath entered into judgement with all flesh, as for the lawless He hath delivered them to the sword."* [V's 29&31]

The Apostle Peter quoting the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of Ezekiel warned, *"For it is the ripe time for the judgement to begin from the at and proceeding from] the house of God"* In this 9<sup>th</sup> chapter we have the instruction to those wielding the sword where it was to begin - *"at My sanctuary,"* [v 6] *"So they began with the elder men who were before the house,"* - they were to begin with those who were most responsible who had known of Divine law and whose duty was to teach others. Upon this divine principle set forth here and in other places it is evident that before Israel National is judged, Yahweh through His Son, of His right hand, will issue the decree to be executed by the Elohim of olden time to, *"Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."* [Psa 50.5]

Our experience of judgement is in part set before us in chapters 8 and 9 of God's prophecy through Ezekiel. The section in Ezekiel is based upon the Divine pattern prescribed in Numbers chapters 5 and 6 which deal with the juxtaposed law of the leper, the law of the Nazarite and the law of jealousy. Ezekiel sees in vision the enactment of God carrying out the arraignment of a wife suspected of adultery before the priest and having her examined. The betrothed bride of Christ is brought before her Husband in prospect for the purpose of Divine inspection, *"Who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts;"* The purpose of this trial of jealousy is to make manifest what may have been hidden under a cloak of apparent faithfulness and dutiful activity. (Matt. 7:21-23) Though the Eternal Spirit knows the truth of the matter it is essential that this public uncovering be performed so those who truly constitute the bride of Christ will be publicly vindicated and receive praise from their God. This fiery trial of bitterness which they must drink along with those who will ultimately be rejected as adulterers will humble the humbled and reveal their true motive of service - a lifetime of sacrifice, trial and tribulation of which the judgement seat will be the final purging, bringing forth an unparalleled yearning, a wholehearted longing to be completely identified mentally, morally and physically with their Bridegroom as, *"a glorious ecclesia not having spot, or wrinkle or any such thing."* *"But if thou hast turned aside to another instead of thy husband and if thou hast made thyself unclean ... Then shall the priest put the woman on oath with an oath of cursing, and the priest shall say unto the woman Yahweh give thee up for a curse and for an oath in the midst of thy people ... And the woman shall say amen, amen."* [Num. 5:20-21]

In Numbers chapter 5 a man suspecting *his wife of* being unfaithful brings his wife into the priest with her offering comprising of barley meal [symbol of the works of her hands] devoid of oil [symbol of the Truth] and frankincense [symbol of the spirit] it is an offering of poverty, her acceptance before Yahweh is yet to be confirmed for there is in her husband a suspicion 77

which has caused the spirit of jealousy. This husband is jealous of the glory that is rightfully his.

*"For He is kind, yet inflexible in the requirements of His law, loving and compassionate, yet terrible as a destroying fire against the rebellious and the guilty; forgiving towards offences, yet jealous of the dignity, the glory, and the supremacy of His name. He is holy, and cannot look upon sin. He is wise, and cannot tolerate fools. He is true and faithful, and will destroy all the false and perfidious. He is just and true and perfect - at once the fountain of love and vengeance, the author of life and death; the source of reviving mercy and consuming fire. He is eternal, unchangeable, unsearchable, infinite, glorious in power and majesty - the King Immortal, the Possessor of heaven and earth, to whom alone is glory due."* [Christadelphian Instructor]

Therefore that which his wife brings to this terrible, solemn, humbling and searching occasion is an offering of memorial - a reminding gift, a bringing of iniquity to remembrance. [Num. 5:15]

Now we must step back from this for a moment and leave the confines of those darkened precipices and barren, awful landscape of Sinai and our arraignment before our Lord for that is where we have been brethren and sisters, back to the present around the emblems of God's love.

*"For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do shew the Lord's death till He come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."*

At the judgement seat of Christ our iniquity will be brought to remembrance if we have not properly participated in this which Paul has just described. Ezekiel had to be shown in chapters 8 and 9 the true depths of the ecclesia's iniquity by vision, he clearly had no idea of the true extent of Israel's depravity because it was not clearly evident. He had to be shown what mortal eyes could not discern, those left back in the land clinging to the worship of Yahweh, defending Jerusalem, guarding God's temple, the ecclesia dutifully worshipping day by day, week by week bringing God to remembrance! It is possible for you and I to eat and drink these emblems without truly participating. We have the opportunity now to ask what constitutes true participation in this service so that we may truly, *"shew for represent, signify and proclaim) the Lord's death till He come."*

To do this we must, says Paul, be crucified with the Lord. To understand what was done in the crucifixion of our Lord and then voluntarily identify ourselves with it! To realize that true participation will mean suffering and shame, derision and mental anguish and perhaps a long lingering painful death. That in this process self is utterly repudiated and surrendered with all it's propensities towards all things filthy and unclean and to experience and deeply appreciate, the truth that God was right in saying this nature is unfit for 78 perpetuation and must die that God's honour, majesty and supremacy

could be upheld. That His righteousness was declared in the public exhibition and ceremonial condemnation of sin in the flesh through the crucifixion of the Son of God Who in perfect righteousness manifested the glory of Yahweh to a world utterly incapable of doing so themselves, and He did so as the basis of our identification and participation with Him. That through this sacrificial death He was purified from the nature He bore and opened the way by which God could forgive man's sins. while not infringing in anyway upon God's honour, holiness and supremacy. The wonder of wonders beyond even this, God so arranged His purpose in Christ to provide His servants with a motive for transcending law keeping as the means of our participation - Christ living in us, His faith, His love, His giving - God's unspeakable gift - for me! [Gal. 2-20]

Ezekiel at the beginning of the 8th chapter is sitting with the elders of Judah and saw the reappearance of the Cherubic Glory of the opening chapter and in particular the reappearance of a man - the man of 1:26 which is more fully described in that opening chapter as corresponding to the Rainbowed Messenger of John's apocalyptic vision. Ezekiel is taken up by a lock of his hair symbol of his priestly vow and as a representative of the multitudinous Christ body - the bride of Christ.

Ezekiel as a representative of those who are ultimately accepted is taken by spirit to witness Yahweh's inspection of His betrothed wife. Ezekiel is taken by spirit to Jerusalem, to the temple - not the literal temple but here it represents that edifice of men and women who ought to have been worshipping Yahweh in spirit and in Truth. The Cherubic Rainbowed Messenger represents the redeemed and after the type in Numbers 5 stands as Yahweh's priest in the presence of whom that portion of Yahweh's betrothed bride having been examined at Sinai and found to be adulterers are rejected, *"though they have cried in mine cars with a loud voice yet will I not hear them,"* says Yahweh, *"mine eye shall not shield neither will I pity."* [8: 18]

Now it would appear that Ezekiel saw this vision at the conclusion of the 430 days [4:4-5] during which he as a type of Christ was commanded to lie on his side symbolically bearing the iniquity of the house of Israel. This 430 days symbolized that period of time from the laying of the foundations of the temple by Solomon to the destruction of the city and the temple in the 19th year of Nebuchnezzar's reign. We have therefore the beginning of a work in relation to God's temple by one who at the commencement of his reign was a glorious type of Christ but by the end of it had commingled idolatry with the worship of Yahweh to constitute an apostasy which was at last severely punished at the end of the 430 years. This section of Ezekiel chapters 8-10 however has an obvious bearing also upon the events of the Lord Jesus' work with the nation, the departure of God's Glory from the nation via Christ's ascension and the judgements of AD70. So too as we have been considering, does this section apply to the Lord's judgement upon that temple made up of millions upon millions of responsible men and women of all ages which He shall inspect at His second coming. In each case iniquity came to it's 79

pinnacle before Yahweh's dramatic intervention. It is very likely that we are that generation of believers in whom the pinnacle of iniquity Ezekiel was made to see has risen to intolerable uncleanness. It is this terrible contemplation which compels a soul searching examination of the series of ever increasing abominations Ezekiel was made to see.

Ezekiel is brought to Jerusalem which is used by Paul in Galatians chapter 4 as a symbol for both Israel after the flesh and Israel after the spirit. Ezekiel is to be shown the issues which will divide the two for all eternity. He is brought to the door of the inner gate [symbolic of Christ as the Judge] of the temple that looketh toward the north [symbolic of judgement] where we are informed that by the gate of the altar [Christ - the Heavenly provided means by which man can alone approach unto God] was a statue of jealousy that provoked Yahweh to jealousy.

What was this image of jealousy? In II Kings 16 Ahaz King of Judah went to war and had as his ally the King of Assyria. After the battle was won with this King's help he went to Damascus which had been taken by the Assyrians to meet Tiglath-Pileser and there he saw an altar which he ordered a copy be made, so that when he returned to Jerusalem he could worship upon it. No doubt it was decorated with all the heathen abominations and in particular with the goddess Semiramis with her turrethead crown [symbolic of Babylon's ancient beginnings in the Tower of Babel and as the deity of all tower builders) cradling her infant son in her arms, the images of which were commonly worshipped by the Assyrians. Layard notes that, "Semiramis was the female counterpart of the deity presiding over the fortresses of Babylonia," and this deity was Ninus or Nimrod who after his death was deified and worshipped as, "the seed of the woman," the crusher of the serpent's head and was depicted as being cradled in his mother's / wife's arms! In this 9th chapter of Ezekiel he is referred to as, "Tammuz," and known by the Greeks as, "Adonis." He was cut off says ancient historians in the prime of his power and was given the title, "Bacchus," –"the lamented one." He was worshipped because he was the first who carried on, "war against his neighbours," and "conquered," says Hislop, "all nations from Assyria to Libya." Nimrod was the first after the confounding of the tongues to gather mankind into communities and offered idolatrous sacrifices setting up an apostasy against the God of Noah and Shem. "He delivered," says Hislop, "their minds from that awe of Yahweh and the fear of the judgements of heaven that had rested on men while the memory of the flood was recent." Ahaz moved the brazen altar which Solomon had made after the Divine pattern which was before the Lord from the forefront of the house and put it on the north side of his idolatrous altar, which celebrated the mysteries of Babylon's dark religion, the murder and enslavement of one's neighbours, the debauched immortality of every form of promiscuousness with the assured happiness, of purification from guilt and sin by the blood of substituting sacrifices!

So Ezekiel is shown this image of jealousy being placed as Ahaz had done, 80 by the gate of the altar, this statue of jealousy in the very entrance - the

symbol of Yahweh's Christ, His unspeakable gift, the kernel of the promises made to the fathers by which we might be, "partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

When Christ comes to examine His betrothed He will by the meticulous peeling away of every facade and pretension reveal those who despite their apparent religiosity have in fact displaced Yahweh from the entrance of His temple. A temple which we are, or ought to be, by our identification and participation with His provided sacrificial covering of sin. Have we displaced Yahweh with the devices and idols of this age, as the means of having the mastery over our neighbours as Nimrod, and as the means of gratifying our hidden cravings for pleasure? Are we so deceived to think that our religious acts are a substituting device by which God forgives sins for Christ's sake quite apart from, "the righteousness of saints;" that is, the righteous character of saints finding expression in the righteous deeds of saints. Truly he only is righteous that doeth righteousness. In our affections are we pushing God to the north, around the corner while we worship other altars and other gods in the place where Yahweh ought always to be and console ourselves with the thought as we stand with all our other brethren and sisters that they are all doing the same! *"Son of man can'st thou see what they are doing, - the great abomination.-. which the house of Israel are committing here that I should go far away from My sanctuary? But turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations."*

The prophet was then shown a hole in the wall of the temple. The wall was designed to separate the world and its abominations from the Glory of Yahweh inside. Indeed Israel as Yahweh's bride itself was designated to be a part of that wall but someone had made a little hole in that wall and Ezekiel by considerable labour broke through this opening to find a single door, through which Christ door he passed into the sheepfold to see what the elders of Israel were, *"doing in the dark every man in his image chambers."*

Hislop recounts the ancient testimony of a pagan devotee to the mysteries of Babylon of their secret worship how it's priesthood by supposedly magical means using magical lanterns projected upon the walls of their temple a mass of light which transformed while unfolding itself into a visage divine and supernatural, *"So I went in and looked," says Ezekiel, "and lo! Every similitude of creeping thing and detestable beast and all the manufactured gods of the house of Israel, - portrayed upon the wall round about on every side, and 70 men of the elders of the house of Israel with Jaazaniah ["alternative to Yahweh'7 son of Shaphan ["a rabbit" is one who gave every appearance of chewing the cud but did not have cloven hooves therefore unclean] who stood in their midst were standing before them, even every man with his censor in his hand - and the fragrance of the cloud of incense ascending."* [8: 10-11 Rotherham Translation]

These abominable, detestable things were depicted on the very walls which were designed to wall Israel in by the law which God had given them

and were now used as a prop to display apparitions which excited the propensities of their carnal mind. They did it in the dark, every man in the secrecy of the chambers of his imagery. The rooms or closets in which idolatrous images were set up were all revealed to the prophet, And what did they say? *"there is no Yahweh seeing us! Yahweh hath forsaken the earth!"* This is the very thing our Lord warned of in Matthew chapter 24 in association with the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple by the armies He would lead in AD70 and in relation to His second coming. He speaks of that evil servant who says in his heart – *"The Lord delayeth His coming and shall begin to smite his fellow servants and begin to drink with the drunken, The Lord of that servant will come in a day when that servant is not looking [or expecting] Him and in an hour that he is not observing. And shall cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

Note how this evil servant says these things in his heart - do we ever hope the Lord will delay His coming? Do we in this mindset begin to act in such a way that we smite our brethren and sisters and indulge in the mind deadening idolatry of this age? Our dereliction of duty and responsibility begins to affect our fellow servants and before long the whole ecclesia is affected. This evil servant like Jaazaniah can give the appearance that he is a faithful servant when he is not. So that when Christ returns, that evil servant is cut in two because he was a duality - one thing externally and rottenness internally.

It is possible in this age where every influence beers upon our minds to dim the enormity of sin, the pressures to succeed and every influence of public and home entertainment tends to cultivate that which is carnal and obscure everything that is spiritual, to cause us to act in such a way that gives force to that thinking of our, "image - chambers," that Christ delayeth His coming, that Yahweh does not see us, He has forsaken us, because we just do not believe He will forgive our sins. We lose consciousness of God's presence in our lives, a feeling we once had at the beginning of our probation but has been displaced in the dark places of our imagery by idols we simply don't want to abandon.

At the beginning of what we may call the temple parable, Solomon on the occasion of it's dedication prayed, *"What prayer and supplication which any man may have, of all thy people Israel - who will certainly know every man the plague of his own heart ... Then wilt Thou Thyself hear in the heavens ... And forgive and act and give unto every man according to all his ways, whose heart Thou wilt know..."* [I Kings 8:39-391

We are all painfully aware of the plagues of our hearts, our deplorable weaknesses, the sin we hate, the iniquity which can so easily deceive, the loathing of continued failure, the apparent outward resilience but inward rottenness with it's tormenting fear so alien to the life of Christ which 82 struggles to be manifested in us if only we truly want Him to.

There is a spiritual antidote. Paul tells us it is thankfulness, that we should, "Give thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ." [Eph 5] Let us thank Him for all He has given us and be truly thankful and we will not want to displace Him from our affections or desire something we know He would not approve. We then can come to the emblems of His love this morning and each Sunday with great desire filled with relief that we can be cleansed from what has transpired during the past week and seek His direction and strength. In silent meditation and prayer we lay before Him the plagues of our hearts and believe that He can, "incline our hearts unto Himself to walk in all His ways," because we really and sincerely want to rededicate our lives to Him and identify with His Son and participate in His purpose. [to be continued]

## **Infallibility and the Full Assurance of Faith and Hope**

It is a shame that papal behavior has ruined a perfectly good word. By appropriating the word "infallible" to himself, the Pope has so stigmatized the term that no one will dare use it in connection with man. This is understandable because of the erroneous manner in which he flaunts it, and the illegitimacy of the doctrines which he promotes under its guise. Yet there is occasion when application of the word to man is appropriate, as Brother Thomas points out in this following short excerpt from *The Herald*.

"But human infallibility has been brought into disrepute by His Roman Holiness assuming it as one of his attributes. To get rid of his assumption, his enemies (and those who pretend to be his enemies) have roundly affirmed that the human mind cannot be infallibly right on any point. This, however, is more specious than true. Without the ability to decide without fail or error, which is infallibility, no man could please God; for the faith He recognizes is 'the hypostasis of things hoped for; the elenchus of things unseen' — styled by Paul, 'the full assurance of faith,' and the 'full assurance of hope.' Two and two make four. That is infallibly true; and he that knows it is infallible, and speaks with an air of infallibility on that point."

As our brother suggests, it is possible for good and honest hearts to draw infallible truths from the well of Living Water, and for such an individual to this speak with authority on these matters. For example he may conduct a discourse upon the oneness of God, as opposed to a trinity; the Kingdom on earth, as opposed to heaven going; the resurrection, as opposed to immortal soulism; the nature of sin, as opposed to a person devil; and the list goes on. (See the fundamental doctrines enumerated in the BASF.)

Let us always remember that doubt is the antithesis of the faith which pleases our Heavenly Father. Therefore, may we in both conviction and conduct endeavor to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

## What Does That Mean?

*"Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee." (1 Kings 22:23)*

If God condemns all liars (Rev.21:18), why did He put a lying spirit in the mouths of the prophets of Ahab?

In this chapter, the prophets of Ahab falsely predicted victory for him if he attempted the recapture of Ramoth-Gilead from the Syrians. Ahab did not want to know--or hear-- the truth of the matter. When Jehoshaphat heard all the false prophets telling Ahab to go into battle, he asked for a prophet of the LORD that they might enquire of him. He received this reply: *"And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."* (1Kings 22:8) Ahab did not want to know God's judgment of the matter; he hated and opposed God's moral law wherever it countered his own will. Therefore, he could expect no guidance from God in the matter of besieging Ramoth-Gilead. God furnishes no guarantee that He will disabuse sinners of error if they really prefer error to the truth. There is no reason why he should.

In many respects, Ahab was the best king Israel ever had. He knew and understood right from wrong; he worked with Elijah and humbled himself when Elijah pointed out his wrongdoings. He is, however, considered Israel's worst king because he *knew better*; he knew what was right and sometimes did it, but most often he chose to follow his wicked wife Jezebel. God has no use for this type of person. Ahab deliberately chose the prophets that would give him the answer he wanted. He refused to consult the Prophet of God knowing that he would not get the answer that he wanted to hear!

God has given us free will to follow truth or follow evil. In this scenario, Ahab's time had run out. He made his choice clear; *"But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. "* (1 Kings 21:25)

How does God treat a person like this? He will simply give them over to that which they have chosen. Again: The fact that God permitted-- and even encouraged-- faith in a lie simply confirms that *God does allow us free will*. If men refuse the true God, they will have to make do with a false idol of their own devising. If they reject the truth, they must be content to feed on falsehood. *If it is false, flesh-pleasing answers we seek; then God will grant us what we seek. Does that make Him wrong? No the burden is on us! "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."* (1 Peter 3:12)

