

THE BEREAN CHRISTADELPHIAN 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. Defending the original, foundation principles upon which the Truth was uncovered from darkness and upon which the Christadelphian movement was developed. Opposed to the dogmas of papal and protestant christendom. Upholding the Truth as The Berean Christadelphians since 1923.

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God Willing, The Berean Christadelphian 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**

KITUI, Kenya; Kitui Ecclesia, Bro. David Njoka; P.O. Box 212, Kitui, 90200, Kenya; Memorial Service Sunday 10 AM 0.00; Wednesday Evening Bible Study.

My Dear brethren and sisters all over the world,

We here in Kitui Central hope this finds you well, and we pray that we might be strengthened as we await the return of our Saviour.

To begin with is to inform all the brethren and sisters on the change of our address. Now is P.O. Box 212, Kitui Kenya, post code 90200 – phone +254729352165.

Last year has been a busy year for us. On 4th November, 2007, we had the pleasure of a visit from Bro. Ed Truelove, Bro. Sid Jones, Bro. Darrin Truelove of the Richard Canada Ecclesia; Sis. Shiloh Brown of the Austin, Texas Ecclesia, USA; Bro. Epa Wikati of the Kimukungi Ecclesia; Sis. Agnes M. Kariuki of the Nairobi Ecclesia and Bro. Moses A. Kasim and others from the Ikutha Ecclesia. It was a great encouragement to break bread together with the new members of the Kitui South Ecclesia.

Bro. Ed Truelove gave an exhortation based on “principles enabling an ecclesia to stand.”

Finally we are happy to report that Sis. Hannah Mangi is back in our fellowship after having a difficult time and moved to stay at Mombasa.

Thinking and praying for you all of like precious faith,

Bro. David Njoka,

On behalf of the Kitui Ecclesia

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held Yahweh Willing)

NORTH CAROLINA–VIRGINIA STUDY WEEKEND.....May 24–25, 2008

Bro. Dale Lee, (757) 620-6639, dleecpa@cox.net

LAMPASAS FRATERNAL GATHERING.....June 6–8, 2008

Bro. Ricky Hurst, PO Box 1381, Goldthwaite TX 1-325-451-4075

HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING..... July 21–27, 2008

Bro. Curtis Hurst, 250 CR 517, Mullin, TX 76864, USA. 1-325-985-3868

Study Class Topic: Hebrews 1-13; Bible Readings

CANTON ECCLESIAL PICNIC..... Aug 23-24, 2008 Bro. Don Miller, 6695 Carriage Lane, North Canton, OH 44721 1-330-494-7717

CANTON FRATERNAL GATHERING..... Oct 11-12, 2008 Bro. Don Miller, 6695 Carriage Lane, North Canton, OH 44721 1-330-494-7717

GOLDTHWAITE STUDY WEEKEND..... Nov 28–30, 2008

Bro. Curtis Hurst, 250 CR 517, Mullin, TX 76864, USA. 1-325-985-3868

Every Man Perfect in Christ Jesus

"Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering WITH JOYFULNESS"—Colossians 1:11

Colosse was a city in western Asia Minor, the present Turkey. It was quite near the city of Laodicea and the rest of the seven ecclesias of the Revelation. No mention is made of it in Paul's travels, though it is very likely he visited there.

Paul's epistle to them was, like most of his epistles, written from prison. Paul's concern was never for himself or his own circumstances. For the Gospel's sake he gave up everything. He had no family, no home, no permanent employment. His life was a weary and continual pilgrimage.

This epistle's great theme is **the supreme position of Christ in the purpose of God**—the necessity in all things of being *with him and in him*. This basic truth is presented as a bulwark against being led aside by crochets and invented forms of self-righteousness and self-discipline which ministered to pride, and do not get to the root of the problem of *overcoming the flesh*.

It teaches that true holiness is both beautiful and practical, cleansing and purifying and ennobling every aspect of life, but that there is no value or virtue, but rather harm, in performing self-imposed regulations that God has not required.

The epistle is addressed (1:2) to the—

"Saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colosse."

Most versions render this—

*"To the **holy** and faithful brethren."*

There *is* such a class of people. There *must be* such a class—holy and faithful—completely different from the world in all they say and do—men and women of heavenly beauty and godliness, sealed with the living seal of Christ in their character for all the world to see.

"Grace be unto you"—"grace" means kindness, favour, blessing, mercy, goodness. *"And peace"*—calm, relaxed tranquillity, confident in the assurance that *"ALL things work together for good"*—that God never slumbers, and that nothing happens or can happen that He does not control.

"We give thanks unto God for you" (v.3).

Paul's heart was always full of thanksgiving—thankful for the revelation of the great divine purpose—thankful that he was called to play a part in it—thankful for the holy and faithful brethren throughout the world who had been separated from the world and were united with him in God's great purpose.

"Praying always for you."

All men of God give much time to prayer—not just on specific occasions, but a continual attitude—a continual maintaining contact. All study of the Word and all work in the Truth should be done in the spiritual atmosphere of prayer—all should be done in the spirit of active, living communion with God.

Consider how many brethren and sisters were within the circle of Paul's attention and care! Yet he could truthfully say to *all* that he prayed *always* for them—not just general, impersonal prayers for them as a group, but loving and personal prayers for each one. We must pattern ourselves after Paul in this respect, keeping all the brethren and sisters in memory, contemplating them one by one in loving and prayerful regard.

"Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and your love to all the saints" (v.4).

This is a *special love*. We are commanded to love all men—that is, to look with compassion and benevolence upon them and to do them good, even in return for evil. But the love of the *saints* is a *special love*.

How do we know who *are* the saints?—the *holy* ones?—whom we should love in this special way? Paul says of some who were called brethren that they—

*"... walked as enemies of the cross of Christ, **minding earthly things**" (Phil. 3:18).*

It is not ours to judge, but our deepest love is drawn out to those alone whose hearts are wholly centered on the things of God. Love to the saints means being truly affectionate toward them and interested in them, desiring and enjoying their company. John warns against a "love" that is just in word.

"...for the hope" (v. 5).

That is, "*because of The Hope*," as most versions render it. Love to the saints must be mutually founded on the One Hope, and the Hope must lead to love of the saints, if this hope is not a barren, lifeless one within us.

"The Hope which is laid up for you in heaven."

He says later in the epistle—as he exhorts them to keep their minds on heavenly things—

*"Ye are **dead** and your life is **hid with Christ** in God."*

Our hearts and interests must be centered in heaven, for Christ is there and we are part of him. We have died to our natural selves, and to all things connected with present, passing things of the world.

*"Whereof ye have heard before in the **Word of the Truth of the Gospel.**"*

Here is the solid foundation of all—the Gospel of the Kingdom—the promise of God to Abraham—to Israel—to David—the return of Christ to sweep away all the present evils and sorrows of the world, and to establish universal peace and righteousness, to judge the responsible living and dead, to reward his servants with eternal life with him, and to begin the millennial reign that will bring all the earth to eternal oneness with God: "the *Word of the Truth of the Gospel.*"

*"Which is come unto you and **bringeth forth fruit**" (v. 6).*

The Gospel *must bring forth fruit* in us—the fruit of the Spirit—the characteristics of godliness. He emphasizes this very strongly, later in the epistle.

*"Since the **day** ye heard of it, and knew—experienced—the *grace of God in Truth.*"*

The Gospel had begun to work on their hearts and develop fruit from the first day they heard it—this is a wonderful thing—a great mystery of godliness—it is the *powerful, living*, spiritual seed sown in the heart.

"As ye learned of Epaphras, our dear fellow servant."

It would seem from this that Epaphras had been the one who had brought the truth to the Colossians. He was at this time with Paul in Rome, and it would be from him that Paul learned of the Colossians' circumstances and problems. Paul's commendation here would confirm the teachings of Epaphras and strengthen his hand in resisting the errors Paul later mentions.

"Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit" (v. 8).

The Spirit is the surrounding and bonding and guiding influence. Love *in the Spirit* is love founded upon mutual affection and understanding in spiritual things.

"For this cause also we do not cease to pray for you" (v. 9).

What does prayer for others accomplish? Does not the salvation of each depend upon their *own* record? And would God's care of His Own children be any less if Paul did not continually pray for them? Do we need other intercession than Christ? Does God have to be urged and reminded to look after his children?—it may be asked.

The mystery of the power of prayer is very wonderful and very real. We must seek to comprehend it. The natural mind cannot comprehend the things of the Spirit of God.

"Pray for one another . . . The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

It is the gracious will of our Father that we be *"workers together with Him"* in this respect. He assures us that the earnest prayers of those who please Him *do* carry great weight on behalf of others. It is His will that the Body should be one interdependent whole.

Do we exercise this great power and privilege as much as we should? Paul, amid all the pressure of daily things, felt a continual sense of responsibility to pray for the blessing of his brethren. *We* MUST feel the same urgent sense of mutual responsibility. And there is another important consideration—we must labor, too, to be among that well-pleasing class whose prayers alone *are* effective with God.

"That we might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (v. 9).

How do *we* compare in this matter? Are we just drifting through life from day to day, absorbed in our daily tasks and problems and desires, like all the rest of the perishing world, or are we consciously filled with these thoughts and **daily getting closer to this ideal?**

Life or death depends upon what we are filled with—what we fill our minds with most of the time—upon the consistency and earnestness of our search for spiritual understanding.

"Filled with the knowledge of His will."

A well-founded knowledge seems to have been the great need of the Colossians. Paul fears that they may be carried away with fanciful theories and crotchets, not having a broad, balanced picture of the Truth as it is in Jesus.

The word "knowledge" here is *epi-gnosis*. *Gnosis* is knowledge. *Epi-gnosis* is thorough, or full, knowledge. The Diaglott gives *"exact knowledge."*

The Truth is a lifelong study. To please our Father, our knowledge of what He has revealed must be *detailed and accurate*. There are no short cuts. Learning more and more of the depth and meaning of His Word must be the consuming purpose of our life. We have time for no side issues.

"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord."

We note the significant connection between an *exact knowledge* and a *walking worthy*. Paul makes it clear that we cannot walk in a manner the Lord considers worthy without a continual application to the broadening and deepening of our knowledge of Him and what He has revealed.

"... unto all pleasing."

This is the only place in the Bible this word appears. It means *to make amends, to seek the favor of another*. It was generally used in a bad sense to indicate a crawling self-abasement to another (just like the word "ptochos"—poor—which Jesus uses in the expression "poor in spirit"), but in a good sense it means fervent devotion—straining every effort and intensely desiring to be approved and accepted.

"Being fruitful in every good work."

A constant, active life of good works for Christ's sake. Not necessarily anything special, nothing great and spectacular, but in our everyday life and common activity. Everything we do—every word we say—even every thought—is either a *good* work or a *bad* one, according to whether we are consciously trying to please God and obey His commands, or just pleasing ourselves.

"Increasing in the knowledge of God."

Increasing—developing. This is the great purpose of life—*learning, growing, improving*, in every aspect of godliness and spiritual understanding. Can we not, in looking back, see how stupid and blind we have been in so many ways? But it is so hard to discern our *present* stupidity and blindness, yet we know it is there. We must *continually advance* — seeing our own

selves more clearly—seeing the mind of God more clearly—realizing how great our darkness and how marvelous the divine light.

Our knowledge is so limited—our ignorance is so great—at best we see but through a glass darkly. But still, growing in the things of God—painfully slow and creeping as it is—is the greatest and most important experience of life. It is a lifelong process, at different stages in different people, and who are we to judge the final result? These thoughts should engender great reverence and great humility. Verse 11—

"Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power."

Actually it is the same word both times—*empowered* with all *power* according to the ruling or dominion of His glory.

This is what our prayers are for—**that God work in us and empower us to overcome**. Of ourselves we can do nothing. We must recognize the utter evil and foolishness of our nature, our own complete powerlessness to overcome the motions of the flesh—anger, pride, impatience, selfishness, self-pity, fear, desire, greed, despondency, unhappiness. All overcoming is of God.

"Unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."

This is what the man of God is to be strengthened unto. **These things are the heart of the Truth**. These are the things that mark the true children of God. These are the things by which we must examine ourselves to *"see whether we be in the Faith."*

Patience, in Scripture, is far more than just cold, stoical resignation to the inevitable. It is an active, living, cheerful, persistence in goodness, regardless of any contrary circumstances.

Longsuffering must be the basis of all our dealings with others. In the great mercy of God we can be forgiven many things—mistakes, and failures, and blunders in the darkness, but unless—by persistently seeking the power of God—we are strengthened and enlightened in the way of kindness and longsuffering toward all, we shall never stand approved before Him. **Whoever lacks longsuffering is not a godly character, whatever his works and beliefs may be.**

With patience and longsuffering most problems can be solved. Without patience and longsuffering there is no point in even trying to solve anything else, because not only is the task almost hopeless, but even if it succeeds it is but a dead and barren triumph—an intellectual victory but a spiritual failure.

Any manifestation of impatience, or rudeness, or unkindness, or bitterness in any discussion on God's Way of Truth immediately reveals the whole thing as but fleshly contention—for these spiritual characteristics that Paul specifies here are the *basic principles of the Truth*.

Peter says (2:1:8-9) that he that lacketh these things—patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness and love—is *blind, barren and unfruitful* in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ—that is, the knowledge of Jesus Christ is in him a barren tree; it is like the talent hid in a napkin that will serve only to condemn its blind possessor.

But we have not even come to the most important part of Paul's thought—*"with joyfulness."* That is the most wonderful and unearthly part of all. **No one is living the Truth whose basic frame of mind is not a deep and thankful joyfulness**. Here again we can well *"examine ourselves whether we be in the Faith."*

This does not mean there will not be sadness and grief, for the Great Example himself was pre-eminently a *"man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."* This present mortal pilgrimage is in so many ways a vale of tears. But through all the passing sadness there runs the deep joyfulness of the eternal purpose. Though many things we cannot understand, we know God is wisdom and love, and if we faithfully serve Him, all will be well at last.

"Giving thanks unto the Father."

Do we find ourselves carried away by this overwhelming sense of thankfulness for all the goodness of God? This again is **part of the essential character of the true saint in Christ Jesus**.

It is this intense thankfulness—the humble recognition of the infinite, unmerited goodness and mercy and kindness of God toward us that warms and softens us and makes us gentle and compassionate to others.

We are all under the dominion of sin—all in the pit of darkness and corruption: and God—from the great height of His unapproachable holiness—has looked down in mercy upon us. We have all been forgiven 10,000 talents—what are the few pence we have against each other that we should dare be harsh and unkind?

"Who hath made us meet" (v.12).

"Meet" means fit or qualified. **It is God who makes His children fit for His Kingdom.** It is God that works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Our simple part is to draw nigh unto Him in love and prayer and reverent study of His Word, and to submit in joyful thankfulness to that divine willing and doing within us.

COLOSSIANS 1:13-23

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness"—Colossians 1:13.

Do we realize the greatness of this deliverance?—the terrible reality of this relentless power of darkness and of sin and of death? We take our salvation far too much for granted, and often act as if we were doing God a favor by serving Him. We unconsciously take a self-commending attitude regarding our work in the Truth, as if *we* have done something for *God!*

Jesus said, when they came in the night to seize him—

"This is your hour, and the power of darkness."

Sin and evil, darkness and death, triumphed for a moment in the schemes of the flesh against the spirit. But in his patience and submission he led captivity captive. Paul said to the Romans:

"Ye were the slaves of sin."

And Jesus said—

"Whosoever committeth sin is the slave of sin."

Let us keep that thought before our minds. Pleasing the flesh—self-will (which is sin, for *"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin"*) is not freedom but slavery. God has in Christ given us the key to freedom from this servitude of death. Regardless of how great a blessing may be, and of how thankful we are at the first, the natural way of the flesh is, like Israel, to soon take it for granted, and—in the very presence of divine glory—to squabble over petty things and complain of minor inconveniences.

"And hath translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son."

This passage is relied on heavily by those who teach that believers at present constitute the Kingdom of God, and who deny the true Gospel of the Kingdom. But this requires that we ignore all the plain teachings concerning the establishment of the Kingdom as a worldwide dominion at Christ's return, and the fact that those who inherit it must be immortal.

The word here rendered "translated" is the same as "put out" or "removed" in the passages—

Luke 16:4—*"When I am **put out** of the stewardship."*

Acts 13:22—*"When God had **removed** Saul."*

And the word rendered "into" is often translated *for* or *unto*, so the thought here is that God has taken the believers *out of* the dominion of darkness *for*, or *unto*, the coming eternal Kingdom of His Son, as Paul says to Timothy, using a very similar expression (2 Tim. 4:18)—

*"The Lord shall preserve me **unto** (same word) His glorious Kingdom."*

* * *

"In whom we have redemption through his blood (v. 14).

Paul is about to speak, in the next few verses, of the supreme position of Jesus in all the works and purpose of God. It is by him, and by him alone, that we have redemption from the power of death and darkness. He is our only gateway to life.

And that redemption is "through his (shed) blood." Greater love hath no man than this. **We are not, and dare not be, ordinary people.** We have been purchased and redeemed by a treasure of inestimable value and preciousness—the perfect life-offering of God's beloved and only begotten son—willingly and lovingly suffered, even to the cruelest, most shameful of deaths.

These are among the things we must ever keep before our minds. **All we do must be in solemn and gracious harmony with these great truths of our redemption and separation from the world.** True joy is divine, but there is no place for folly.

"Even the forgiveness of sins (v.14).

Forgiveness is a beautiful thing, when it is an eager and loving forgiveness, anxious for reconciliation, as the Parable of the Prodigal Son shows God's forgiveness to be.

God is strongly *desirous* of forgiving us. He has provided this beautiful way of forgiveness, and pleads with us to accept it. What could He do more? What condescension in One so infinitely high and self-sufficient! With what eagerness we should strive to comply with the terms of His reconciliation!

"Who is the image of the invisible God" (v.15).

We are led here to the threshold of a subject of great holiness, where we must tread with reverence and reserve. We are told just as much as is sufficient for us—that in the love and wisdom of the Creator man was made in the image of God—that Jesus Christ is His only begotten Son, and that it is His glorious purpose to develop a divine family for Himself from the redeemed of all ages.

"The firstborn of every creature" (v.15).

One of the principle purposes of this epistle is to establish the foundation of the preeminence of Christ—to bring him plainly to the forefront—to show the vital importance of being *in him* and *holding fast to him*.

There are various dangers the apostle warns them about—philosophy and vain deceit—the keeping of days—self-made regulations of men, well-intentioned indeed, but useless as far as the development of true godliness is concerned. It is very satisfying to create our own regulations of conduct and to glorify ourselves for keeping them, but we are not going deep enough. We are catering to pride, rather than overcoming it.

The only hope is a complete submergence into Christ—a complete emptying and denying of self—a carefulness to learn *his* simple, inner way of righteousness, and to be *"found in him,"* resting wholly upon him, freely confessing our insignificance and hopelessness without him. In his beautiful parable of the vine, he said to all who would follow him—

"Without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

A sense of personal achievement, whether in natural or spiritual things, is apt to blind us to the deep truth of that statement. We must get a true perspective of ourselves, and of mankind in general. There have been great men in the past—we do not mean the petty potsherd of the earth: the Napoleons, the Washingtons, the Caesars: but such men as Moses, Abraham and Paul—truly great men in a divine, eternal sense.

But they were nothing compared to Christ. Casting themselves upon God, they were empowered to do a great work each in their day, but all the meaning and value of their work depended upon Christ alone.

Any straying away from him—any assertion of our own individuality—any self-reliance—any pride or dependence upon self—and we are lost.

"The firstborn of every creature" (v.15).

This is made clear in v. 18: *"The beginning, the firstborn from the dead."* Christ is the firstborn of the Sons of God taken from among men, the beginning, the foundation stone upon which all is built, the forerunner, the Head of the Body; first and chief in every respect.

"By him were all things created" (v.16).

The RV and Diaglott have this *"in him"*—all the eternal purpose is built upon and contained *in him*.

"Whether they be thrones, dominions, principalities, or powers."

What are these? Paul speaks of them as *visible and invisible*. In heaven and in earth—all powers, all rulerships, all dominion and authority focuses in him. He is saying more emphatically what Jesus himself said after his resurrection (Matt. 28:18)—

"All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

For this end was he born. To this end was all arranged from the beginning. We have heard theories even among some who know the Truth, about there being other worlds, and other processes of salvation going on, outside of Christ, but Paul here shows him to be, under the Father, *supreme in heaven and earth*.

"He is before all things, and by him all things consist" (v.17).

Literally, as in the New American Standard, *"in him all things hold together."* This defines his supremacy very vividly—the whole framework of the divine purpose—the whole eternal building is held up, and held together, by him.

"He is the Head of the Body, the Ecclesia" (v.18).

The Ecclesia is a body having many members. The members have been scattered in all parts of the world, and in all generations, but they are all one in Christ. In him there is a oneness to their lives, wherever and whenever they have lived. This oneness knits them together in a love whose depth the world cannot comprehend. V. 19—

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell."

It pleased God to manifest Himself in and through the Son in every aspect of the divine nature and character—

"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Jesus said (John 8:29)—

"I do always those things that please the Father."

How simple, and yet how profound, was his way of life!—the ruling principle of his conduct—

"Not my will, but Thine, be done."

Paul said: *"He pleased not himself."* For a few brief years he *pleased not himself*, but gave every moment of his life to pleasing the Father—and now he hath a Name above every name. How simple, and yet how profound! What a simple formula of eternal success, and yet what prayer and self-control to carry it through!

The relationship of the Father and Son—the love, the unity, the victory, the glory—is the perfect example of the Father's great purpose with men.

"Having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him He reconciled all things to Himself" (v. 20).

It is good to be continually reminded of the blood of the cross, and how it was needed to bring peace between God and man—how in all things God must be exalted, His righteousness manifested, His holiness declared.

God having through Christ laid the foundation of holiness, He purposed through him to reconcile all things to Himself—to develop a state of things, all radiating from Christ, in which all will be in beautiful and eternal harmony.

"You that were some time alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works" (v. 21).

The natural man, however good and well-meaning, is in this category. To the Ephesians Paul says that the natural man is alienated from God by ignorance, blindness and darkened understanding. What the world calls good is *not* good. Only true, enlightened harmony with God is good—*all* else is evil.

Man must face these facts of his natural state and seek to be delivered from the darkness of ignorance and wickedness into the light of knowledge and obedience.

Paul says in v. 22 that Jesus had reconciled them to God—

"In the body of his flesh, through death."

He reminds them of the great price paid—**the one way to life that was opened with such sorrow and pain, and yet such glory and joy.**

"To present you holy, and unblamable, and unreprouvable in His sight" (v. 22).

The apostle tells us here that it is Christ's purpose and work to present the redeemed unto God *"holy and unblamable and unreprouvable."* It is his work and purpose to develop a group of people in this condition of holiness and perfection.

To the Ephesians the apostle says similarly that it was Jesus' purpose to present his Bride *"holy and without blemish, spot or wrinkle."* And in v. 28 here he speaks of his own work—

"That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

Now what we are concerned with is: What does this *"holiness"* and *"blamelessness"* and *"spotlessness"* and *"perfection"* mean as far as we are concerned? What does it entail? What is expected of us? What is required, and what is possible?

These are practical questions, and we should face them as such. We should face these things in their literal import, regardless of how we may find ourselves to compare with them. Then we should set ourselves the full time task of approaching as close as we can to them, never underestimating the mighty power that He has promised will work in us **just as long as we faithfully do our part.**

Beyond that, everything rests upon God's compassion and mercy. But **LET US AT LEAST RECOGNIZE WHAT WE ARE TO AIM AT AND STRIVE FOR**, and the continuous effort and study that is expected.

In ch. 3 Paul speaks specifically of many of the distinguishing marks of the state he describes as "*holy and blameless*"—marks by which we can measure ourselves. Among the requirements Paul lists are—

Fixing the heart on heavenly things;

Not setting our interests on any present things;

Putting to death the evil tendencies and reactions of the flesh;

Mercy, kindness, humbleness, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, forgiveness, love;

Allowing the peace of God to rule the heart;

Allowing the Word of Christ to dwell within us in all wisdom;

Every word and deed done in the Name of Jesus and in thanksgiving to God;

The speech always pure, and sober, and gracious;

Walking always in wisdom—"*Wisdom excelleth folly as light excelleth darkness.*"

These are some of the elements of the holiness of which the apostle speaks.

"If ye continue in the Faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel" (v. 23).

To be moved away from the hope of the Gospel does not just mean to *openly* leave the Truth. There are other equally disastrous, and far more subtle, ways we can be "moved away."

Other interests can take more and more of our attention—interests that may be perfectly legitimate and necessary *up to a point*—as our daily bread, or our family, or our home.

Or we can gradually get our knowledge of the Truth unbalanced and distorted by being absorbed by certain aspects to the extent of their becoming crotchets. It is so easy and so natural to just keep going around and around on the same subject or two, instead of truly *studying the Scriptures as a whole*, and developing knowledge of the whole Truth on a broad front.

COLOSSIANS 1:24 to 2:3

"I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that

which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh

for his Body's sake, which is the Ecclesia."—Colossians 1:24.

Paul was writing from prison. He, who was so concerned and anxious to be going about caring for the brethren, was unjustly *confined and kept in bonds*. And though he was so powerful a preacher of righteousness, and though workers were so few, still God left him in prison for years at a time. *Why?* The ways of God are not our ways. There are many aspects to His wisdom and His purpose. He has other things to accomplish for which an imprisoned Paul was more powerful than a Paul at liberty.

How difficult it is to bring ourselves to realize the hard realities of these sufferings of the men of God in the past! But we *must*, for all these things have essential lessons for our salvation, and unless we in reverent humility learn them, then for us they have suffered in vain.

Why did God allow Paul to be put and kept in such distressing and humiliating and frustrating circumstances, when he could have been triumphantly spreading the Gospel far and wide? The progress of God's work is not to be measured by outward results. The eternal results are deep and hidden things.

Paul *rejoiced* in the beatings and abuse and hardships he experienced, in that he was *completing the sufferings* of Christ for the ecclesia. The wise of the world would have long scientific names for Paul's rejoicing at what they would consider useless suffering, and which would reflect upon his mental balance, but **how little does natural man know of the ways of the Spirit of God!** How careful we must be to keep an independent mind, undefiled by the world's foolish, passing theories.

Does Paul's viewpoint seem beautiful and reasonable and satisfying to us, or does it seem foolish? In this we can test *our* spiritual perception. We must try to perceive the beauty and meaning of the ways of God.

What good did the sufferings of Paul do for the Ecclesia of Christ? What good did the sufferings of Christ do for his Body's sake? We know he had to die, but why did he have to suffer?

The answer lies in the deep problems involved in the development of the characters of his brethren—the principles to be established—the lessons to be taught—the transforming bond of love to be created by the power of righteousness. Perhaps we realize all too little the seriousness and importance of what must be done in breaking down the hard shell of the natural man.

The sufferings of Christ and of Paul—gladly endured in love for the brethren—should help us in breaking up the thoughtless hardness of our hearts. This should be kept constantly before our minds—the vision of these self-sacrificing men. Then gradually we shall see things in a clear, divine light.

We must learn and share the glorious secret of their joy in tribulation. It is all a matter of perspective—of where the heart is fixed—of what the hopes are centered on—of what is realized to be important, and what is seen to be desirable.

Animal comfort and pleasure is not the supreme essence of goodness, though the world measures its civilization and progress by it. *Spiritual joy* is a far deeper and more intense enjoyment, and it has no relation to either physical comfort or material possession.

These men realized that in the deep wisdom of God their sufferings were purposeful and necessary in bringing many sons to glory—necessary in breaking up the hard clods of the flesh and bringing to perfection the beautiful fruits of the Spirit. Even of Jesus himself it was said (Heb. 5:8)—

"He learned obedience by the things that he suffered."

And suffering today, which we often cannot understand, or see any possible purpose or reason for, is in some inscrutable way serving the same divine purpose. It is opening closed minds and softening hard hearts—often completely unknown to the weary sufferer. The glorious Body of Christ must—like their Head—enter the Kingdom through the refining of much tribulation.

This subject of the sufferings of the Body of Christ is a strange and beautiful one. How little we know of the ways of God! How little we understand of the true values of life! How little we comprehend of the forces involved in the mortal battle between flesh and Spirit!

Still, through the conflicts and the shadows—we can even now dimly perceive the workings of wisdom and beauty.

Beside his constant sufferings from without, the apostle bore within himself a personal and distressing *"thorn in the flesh—a messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure."*

Three times he pleaded to be freed from it, but the Lord's gracious but firm answer was—

"My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

And thereafter Paul no longer fretted for release, but found peace through the very medium of his suffering—

"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmity...for when I am weak, then am I strong!" (v. 10)

Is not this the glorious strength we all desire? What then if it need be made perfect in weakness? Are we not safe and strong when we are in the humility of weakness, but weak and in danger when we are in the pride of strength?

In v. 26 the apostle speaks of the mystery that had been hidden from ages and from generations. He explains it (v. 27) as:

*"The riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory.**"*

"Christ in you, the hope of glory." Is Christ *in us*? Jesus said, as he was about to give himself up to death—

"If any man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him" (John 14:23).

This is the marvelous blessing we must constantly seek—that he come unto us and make his abode with us.

"Christ in you, the hope of glory."

The promise depends, he says, on loving him and keeping his Word—*learning* it, *remembering* it, holding it ever before us. To the Galatians Paul said—

*"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again **until Christ be formed in you**"* (Gal. 4:19).

The forming of Christ in them is the birth of the new man. *This is* the "hope of glory." Unless the new man of Christlike disposition and gentleness is born, and the old man of the flesh is resolutely and determinedly put away, *no amount of knowledge* of the Truth will avail. Therefore Paul continues in v. 28:

"Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

Let us recognize and realize the importance Paul attached to this matter of presenting *"every man perfect in Christ Jesus."* He continues in v. 29—

"Whereunto (that is, the presenting of every man perfect) I also labor, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily."

Paul, in all his sufferings, was striving and agonizing for the perfection of those in his care, realizing the *seriousness* of the issues, and how *hard* it was to awaken them to the *importance* of what had to be done in them. How few realize the terrible *urgency* of these things! Let us be sure we *understand* what Paul was so anxious and concerned about—this *"presenting of every man perfect in Christ Jesus."* He continues, beginning the next chapter (2:1)—

"For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you...that your hearts may be knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding."

Love—and understanding. This matter of being *"knit together in love"* is not just a form of words. It is a pressing matter of the most urgent importance. It is a vital characteristic of the True Body of Christ. **No group that is not knit together in love can possibly be part of the Body of Christ.** He made this the great distinguishing feature of his brethren (John 13:35)—

"By this—BY THIS—shall all men know that ye are my disciples, IF ye have love one to another."

It must be a very remarkable affection to be such a mark of distinction. It is not something we can just leave to happen of itself. It is something we must give careful *attention* and *effort* to. It is a specific *command*, and must be observed and *obeyed*, just like any other *command*, regardless of our natural feeling in the matter. Jesus said—

"A new commandment I give unto you—that ye love one another" (John 13:34).

Nor can we leave it in the realm of hazy abstraction and vague good intentions. We must deliberately pursue it further, and get down to *specific facts* and *concrete evidence*. Putting aside all petty annoyances, we must see each other as the holy saints of God in various degrees of development.

The mind of the Spirit has—through Paul—given us a clear delineation and definition of what the Scriptures mean by love, and expect as evidence of it—

"Love suffereth long, and is kind."

If we are not infinitely kind and longsuffering to one another, we are violating this great command of Christ—we are not part of the Body of Christ. There is no use speaking of doctrine if we ignore these basic first principles of conduct.

"Love is not easily provoked: thinketh no evil."

If we are part of the True Bride of Christ, we shall be marked —above *all* things—by the manifestation of these beautiful evidences of scriptural love—especially toward one another. This is the forming of Christ in us—the *only possible* hope of glory—which Paul was so intensely anxious to bring to fruition in his brethren.

"And unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ: in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (v. 2).

"All the riches of the full assurance of understanding...all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The apostle has spoken of *love*. Now he speaks of *understanding*. Both are essential to the perfect man.

"IN WHOM are hid ALL the treasures of wisdom."

Paul seems to have reason to fear that the Colossians attached value to knowledge that was not related to Christ.

He is laboring to open their understandings to the fact that, in the wisdom of God, *everything* radiates from Christ as light from the sun, and that there is nothing outside of him but darkness. ALL human wisdom is darkness—often very skillfully woven darkness, but darkness for all that.

"In him are hid—concealed—bound up—ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

"In him" is the theme of this portion of the epistle. "In him" or "with him" occurs in nearly every one of the following dozen verses. All wisdom and knowledge are to be found only in Christ. The riches of these treasures, Paul says, are "hidden." To the Corinthians he said—

"We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom God ordained before the world unto our glory."

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual discerneth all things. We have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:7-16).

The Proverbs have much to say of this hidden wisdom, of its priceless value and the great need of seeking diligently for it:

"Incline thine ear unto wisdom;

Apply thine heart to understanding;

Cry after knowledge;

Lift up thy voice for understanding;

Seek her as silver;

Search for her as for hid treasures

—then thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

Are we sufficiently impressed with the urgency of this *tireless* search for the hidden wisdom of God? How much time do we devote *each day* to this search?—or are we just too busy with perishing things?

Do these instructions just mean attending the meetings and doing the readings, or do they mean *much more*—something *very special*—even the complete dedication of a lifelong seeking to draw ever closer to the mind of God? We believe this is what is meant, and **this is what will be expected.**

Bro. G.V. Growcott

Commitment

I would like for you to get into the thought process of COMMITMENT by taking a look at hymn #162 that we just sang.

"Come, let us anew our journey pursue

Roll round with the year..."

Most people of the world 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.

They take the opportunity to reflect – 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, if we take this idea and apply it to spiritual things, then what is this hymn 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? Well, 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. The apostle Paul tells us in Philippians *"But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* – And again in 1st. Corinthians he tells us that we *"Must always be abounding in the work of the Lord."* We have to do more than maintain the status quo – we must **IMPROVE.**

Improvement implies that there is a continuing growth process as we are exhorted in 2nd Peter 3:18 *"But GROW in the grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."* But improvement and growth also implies adding more and more to our faith as time goes on as Peter again tells us in his second epistle, *"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is*

in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, **ADD** to your faith virtue; and to virtue – knowledge; and to knowledge – temperance; and to temperance – patience; and to patience – godliness; and to godliness – brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness – charity. For if these things be in you, and **ABOUND**, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The apostle Paul even goes on to say in 1st Corinthians 13 that if we are not well rounded in these things, or if we omit even one of them like the last one mentioned which is charity (or love), then the others we have added would be of little avail. He says, “And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not **love**, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not **love**, **it profiteth me nothing.**” So we can see the necessity of continually improving our talents!!! For where much is given, much is required.

So the question I would like all of us to think about is “How have we progressed individually as a faithful servant up to now?”

Another year has come and gone during our probation and yes Christ delayed His coming so far in 2007...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 2007?...OR...Are we actually relieved He didn't return so we could have another year to prepare for judgment?... – Did we confess and repent of all our sins?...Did we Offend anyone?...Were we Busy bodies or Gossipers?...Selfish?...Think before we spoke?...Visit the sick and infirm?...Put God first?...Esteem others better than ourselves to be?...Did we do unto others as we would want others to do unto us?...Did we build our house on rock or sand in 2007??? When we were baptized, we went down as the old man and arose as new babes in Christ Jesus. This was truly a new beginning. This was the time we said “*All that thou hast said, we will do.*” We arose to a new way of life and a new way of thinking about life. We were on that pursuit of that probationary journey!!! But time and circumstances has a way of eating away at that zeal and enthusiasm we once possessed so abundantly. Sure, there is going to be trials, tribulations, and setbacks – joy and gladness – sorrow and grief. But we are promised that it is “*through much tribulation*” that we will enter the kingdom of God. We are also promised that if we are not chastised and corrected, – then we are bastards and not sons. So when we go through trials and tribulations – that is a good thing – It means God sees something in us worth molding and shaping now, in order for us to be fit subjects in His kingdom later.

So, 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, which has the effect of making us less sensitive to the importance of the truth. We must resist all pressure to water down or minimize God's word which we all know 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, all of 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 some areas of Christadelphia today.

There was more correspondence between Bro. Thomas and his younger associate, which 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 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 luke-warmness or abuse of your contemporaries. If you belong to the gold and jewels of the temple, then 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 demonstrate 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. We can see in our own time that the writings of the pioneers do not hold the same interest and affections to as many they once did. They may say and use their names, but ignore their teachings and insight derived from the Scriptures. They tell us that these brothers of past generations are too straight laced and not inclusive enough and the cry is for some new and modern thing. Like the philosophers of Athens in Paul’s day. They say new literature is what we need, thereby abandoning the “old school” and leaving the truth to more modern thinking, with newer and up to date methods that would attract and appeal to a broader spectrum of people. Even some Christadelphians of other fellowships fault us for being too strict and not inclusive enough. So in a small way we can understand how Jesus must have felt when he saw that his followers went back and followed him no more because of some “hard sayings” that they could neither understand nor accept. So, 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 analysis, 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. We must have 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.”

The point is, 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 Christadelphian, would there be enough evidence to convict us? In other words, would it be obvious to the world that we are Christadelphians by our way of life? Or do we just blend in with the rest of the world? Just remember that **‘things work out best for people who make the best out of the way things work out’**. For the Scriptures tell us “in your patience possess you your souls.”

We as servants of Christ are to be judged by Him according to our works...Matthew 24:43 – 51 talks about two individuals that are servants. One is a good servant and one is not. Here we have a **faithful** servant and an **evil** servant. Now the interesting part about this story is that they **both** are considered servants! And it is up to us during this probation to work toward being 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 faithfully**? 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, judgment 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? A good guess is that they would spend the time remaining to preparing for His coming...but wait a minute...I thought that was what we were supposed to be **doing now** during this probationary period we are living now!!! Because we don't know the very day of Christ's return, anymore than we know the day that death will overtake us...either way **resurrection and judgment** is the next prospect for us ...which if you think about it, is no different of a situation than if He was coming today...So **why** should our conduct be any different now than then...Remember one servant did not conduct himself properly, why?... because **“His Lord delayed His coming.”**

You see, 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. On that note I would like to read you an Encouraging Word we received the other day entitled “MY COMMITMENT AS CHRIST’S DISCIPLE”:

I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed.

I have stepped over the line.

The decision has been made.

I'm a disciple of Jesus Christ.

I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away or be still.

My past is forgiven, my present makes sense, my future hope is sure.

I'm finished and done with low – living, sight – walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, mundane talking, cheap living and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by power. My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is His Kingdom, my road is narrow, my way rough, my companions, few, my guide reliable, my mission clear.

I cannot be bought, deluded or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of the adversary, negotiate at the table of the enemy, or meander in the maze of mediocrity. I won't give up, shut up, let up, until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, preached up for the cause of Christ.

I am a disciple of Jesus.

I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till all know, and work till He stops me.

And when He comes for His won, He will have no problem recognizing me – my banner will be clear!!

Along the same lines of commitment and dedication I would like to read you this letter from Brother Josh Garvey received recently on the Encouraging Word:

“I wrote an exhortation last week for the Boston ecclesia focusing on things I've been thinking about now that I've been granted parole and will be home soon. I talked about things such as time: how we use our time in the truth and how much we waste. I mentioned how our time is limited and constantly passing and we should always be aware of that and make the most of it, especially in our work in the truth. I talked about keeping our faith throughout trials and how ecclesial unity is such a

key aspect of an ecclesia. I felt ecclesial unity throughout my entire incarceration by the way so many have reached out to help me, love me, and support me. A good point to think about, (I thought) was how I would feel if everyone gave up on me and never reached out to help me. How valuable would I think an ecclesia was? Thankfully many have helped me to keep focused on our goals and I still feel very much a part of the ecclesia(s) and the truth. I thank everyone for their love and support as you have all helped me overcome this trial in my life. Thankfully I am almost done with this sentence. I finished my talk with the idea of overcoming, and what it meant to Christ to be able to say 'I have overcome the world'.

Something I think I left out in my talk was the word deliverance. As I sit in prison I cannot wait for God to answer the many prayers asking him to deliver me from this prison. I am tired of this lifestyle, I am tired of the people I am surrounded by day in and day out. I am tired of witnessing so many people's lack of respect, all the gossip and trash talking about people, and realizing that they are not true friends at all!! I am tired of it all. I picture the day that God will allow me to be delivered from here, and let me back with family, biological and spiritual, with my real friends and people who (are) on the same page in life as me.

I think my feelings about being delivered from this prison life can relate to all our lives in this world. We are surrounded by godless people. We're just waiting for God's decision to say 'it's time'. He will send His son back to this earth and all our hurt, pain, disgust, shame, etc will all be gone. God will deliver us in His due time, and we must remember His ways are not our ways. There is a purpose to His plan and we wait to see the mystery revealed before our very eyes. No matter how physically, emotionally and spiritually tired we feel, we must fight on, depending on God's love, grace and mercy to allow us to live another day, day in and day out. While we wait we must remain in our walk in the truth, DO NOT GIVE UP, God will not give up on us. Use the time of probation to increase your knowledge on your weaker topics of God's word, spend time with other Brothers and Sisters in isolation, read God's word daily and don't forget to pray!! O – Our future life in God's heavenly kingdom in Israel depends solely on the mercy and forgiveness of our sins daily.

We must remember the image of Christ hanging on Calvary's cross each waking moment of our lives. How often we don't!! Christ's sacrifice was for us, to give us an opportunity at a better life, one our minds cannot begin to comprehend. Remember Christ. The beating he endured, the blood that pored from His wounds, the pain of the stakes being driven through His flesh multiple times, the shame and betrayal He endured. He went through it to fulfill God's plan for us. Now we have a way to be forgiven. Don't waste your time in the truth, make the most of it, and do the things that will be beneficial for you and others at the judgment seat. Our day of deliverance will be here soon."

But it is He for whom we meet here this morning to remember in this memorial bread and wine. It is He who is our savior, high priest, elder brother, friend, judge and king. Not only is he the supreme sacrifice but also our supreme example for us to follow. 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." Will this be our last memorial meeting before judgement... maybe – maybe not – If so, **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."

The times we live in are challenging. Sometimes the pressures are great and the trials difficult. At times 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. It is much easier for us to let slip 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" so, if we handle this adversity in a manner faithful to the Truth, then in the end, when our Master appears, the most exhilarating words for **those only** who have been resolute in their obedience and commitment to the Truth to the end will hear these words: "**Well done, good and faithful servants, enter thou unto the joy of thy Lord**"
Bro. Jerry Connolly

Thankfulness

An elderly Japanese [fellow] was with me who could only say a few words of English. Well, I had noticed him hard at work with a Japanese-English Dictionary, and on bidding him good night I learnt the why and wherefore, for he produced his book and pointed out deliberately word after word what finally made "I feel—so—happy—by—your — help — the — matter — has — been — concluded — without — any accident — God — be — praised."

What an example of thankfulness and gratitude to some, for instance, at Christadelphian business meetings, who appear to be always on the look-out for causes of complaint, instead of counting their many blessings. As a rule such brethren are those who invariably turn up at meetings where there is a likelihood of “steam” being let off, but just as invariably give the cold shoulder to those meetings at which solemn words of exhortation are expected . . . *Bro. F. G. Jannaway Travels—1922*

Providentially Provided Pioneers

There is not a current brother that I know, or whose writings I have read, that has a tenth of the Scriptural knowledge that these pioneer brethren had, and I freely and happily include myself in this comparison. The comparison is so lop-sided it is pitiful. There is no comparison. If we did not have the brilliant, stable, providentially-provided light of the works of these brethren - if we had to depend for help on the poor little flickering candles in the earth today - what pitiful straits we would be in!

Bre. Thomas and Roberts knew the Scriptures as few men have ever known them, and they entered fully into their beautiful and transforming spirit - a thousand times better than those who now repudiate their teaching. Many years ago I came to the firm conviction, daily strengthened ever since, that bre. Thomas and Roberts were divinely and providentially raised up to revive the Truth of God and the Body of Christ in these last days, and that they laid a sound foundation of Truth - all the Truth - as regards fellowship and salvation.

They were not inspired. They were not perfect. They were not always right in everything. But when it comes to the basic beliefs involving fellowship and salvation, it is my ever increasing conviction that, in the providence of God, they gave us a complete and sound foundation. This present controversy has greatly strengthened my conviction of this, and to this extent I am therefore thankful to God for this controversy. We must be forced by bitter circumstances to learn more deeply, and the false often is effectual in bringing out more clearly the true.

I have read many things in the works of bre. Thomas and Roberts that have grated upon me at first. Almost invariably (I believe I could safely say invariably without qualification) I have with further study and experience and the passage of time gradually come closer to them and have perceived that my own view was immature and out of balance. I have gone through exactly the stage these young brethren . . . are going through, but thankfully I held fast to bre. Thomas and Roberts as far as fellowship is concerned, until my own understanding developed.

This cry we hear so much today in defense of this new theory, raised against the teachings of bre. Thomas and Roberts, "We want the Scriptures, not the teachings of men!" this has been the battle-cry of error right from the beginning. When you hear that piously proclaimed, be well on guard!

Bro. G.V. Growcott—1971

Sincerity in Prayer

Being called on to engage their attention, I delivered a quiet sitting address of about an hour's duration on the chapter read from Daniel, and the many things opening out of it. I was called on to conclude with prayer—a sweet luxury to the weary spirit—the first condition of which is the active consciousness of God's existence: the second, the knowledge of Him as communicated in the Scriptures: the third, the love of Him generated thereby: the fourth, the knowledge of our needs produced by experience and reflection. “Saying prayer” is not praying. Prayer is the sincere and fervent address to the Father that would be natural in solitude, and at all events that does not depend upon the presence of fellow-worshippers. The prayer that is humanly-inspired is acceptable to neither God nor man. There are prayers that mortify and crush, because they are not prayers, but performances, and odious at that. Sincerity is the virtue that gives grace to all action.

Bro. Robert Roberts —1896

For and Against the Truth

The Truth creates “sides;” the for-it side, and the against-it side; and between these two sides there is no neutral ground. He that is not for me, said Jesus, is against me; and he styled himself “the Truth.” If we are for the Truth, we cannot encamp with the enemy, and cooperate with them. Being for the Truth, it will place us in the minority, and identify us with those who suffer for the Truth's sake.

He that runs with the hare, but holds with the hounds, will never save the fugitive from being worried to death. There were men in the days of Jesus who would preach his doctrine and not speak lightly of him, but would also carefully avoid

identification with his unsavoury name. This is referable to the pride of life, love of popularity, or to some other equally unworthy thing. It is certainly a course not prompted by a devotion to the Truth, or a love of righteousness. Moses acted not thus. He renounced the throne and treasures of Egypt for the society of enslaved brick-makers. The other course evinces indecision of character which cannot be approved of the Lord when he comes. Sky-kingdomism is unscriptural and wholly false, and therefore //subversive, wherever it prevails, of "the Gospel of the Kingdom of God," which is wholly Scriptural and only and altogether true. If I identify myself, without a standing protest against it, and with those who believe and advocate it, I become by example an enemy of that which I believe is true.

Dr. J. Thomas—Herald, 1853

Analecta Apocalypticae (23)

Walk With Me in White

The reader is requested to refer to what has been already written on the clothing of the constituents of the symbolic "Son of Man" in illustration of the promise of the Spirit to the few undefiled in Sardis. To walk with him in white robes is to be the subject of a union with the Spirit such as obtains now between Jesus and the same. Jesus now walks with the Spirit; for "whithersoever the Spirit goeth" he, as the pre-eminent of the Cherubim, also goes (Ezek. 1:12,20). Hence, as this obtains with respect to him, it will also with them; for it is written, that the redeemed from among men "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," which is equivalent to walking with the Spirit -- in material and personal union with him.

But they shall walk with him "in white robes." Those who walk with the Spirit must be "worthy." The "few" in Sardis are declared to be such -- "they are worthy," saith the Spirit. Their robes must be of moral and material whiteness. Their character being pure and unstained, their nature must be made to correspond. In the present state, the saints are invested with holy garments, termed "their garments" in the writings before us. Having "put on Christ" by faith in the kingdom and name, and by immersion, he is for them a robe of righteousness; and by walking in him according to the truth received and obeyed, and so yielding the fruit of the Spirit, they "keep themselves unspotted from the world," which is as a garment of "fine linen, clean and white," which symbolizes the righteous actions of the saints (Apoc. 19:8). These premises constitute the basis of their exaltation to holy spirit nature. This is "white," or pure. It is the incorruptible and deathless body, undefiled by the affections and lusts of our present nature, "in which dwells no good thing." Hence, then, he that walks with the Spirit in white robes is a righteous, incorruptible, and deathless man. To "clothe" the undefiled few in Sardis, "in white garments," is for the Spirit from heaven to reorganize their dust, and having modelled it after his own image as "the Heavenly Man," to give it life with incorruption, glory, and power. Thus will the resurrection-life of Jesus be manifested in their mortal flesh; and thus will they "be clothed upon with their house which is from heaven"; by which operation their mortality will be swallowed up of life "(1 Cor. 15:42; 2 Cor. 4:11; 5: 2-4).

They are Worthy

Belief of the gospel of the kingdom and immersion, while they are indispensable to worthiness, do not alone constitute men "worthy." The constituents of the Angel-Presbytery had all believed the gospel and been immersed, yet they were pronounced by the Spirit "dead." This faith and obedience gave them an orthodox standing among contemporary Christians, who supposed that they were enjoying spiritual life; but the Spirit, who sees not as men see, declared that they were unworthy of his favour, because "their works were not perfected in the sight of the Deity." They were in the case of a man who says "he hath faith, but hath not works." This is the reason why the Spirit testified that they were "dead;" for he had said by James, that "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." The Angel in Sardis said they had faith; while "the few" in the same city "had works." They all claimed to have faith; they had all believed the gospel and been immersed; for in the time of the apostles none were recognized as Christians who had not thus consented to "the wholesome words of the Lord Jesus." But how were the "worthy" to be distinguished from the unworthy? By their professions? No the "dead" undertook to "show their faith without works;" but the Spirit rejected their claim, and gave his approbation to "the few," who showed their faith by their works," as Abraham their father did, "whose faith" in the promises of the Deity "was perfected by works," whereby he obtained the honourable and exalted title of "The Friend of the Deity."

Contemporary with the apostles was one named Clement, who for nine years was a member of "the Angel" of the ecclesia in Rome. He wrote an epistle to the ecclesia in Corinth for the purpose of healing schisms that had arisen there after Paul's death; and which he terms a quarrel with their pastors from a weak partiality for one or two persons. There is a paragraph in this epistle, much approved by "the evangelists" of our day, which, if taken in the sense they put upon it, places him in fellowship with the class in Sardis, termed by the Spirit "dead." His words are these:

"All these," he is speaking of the Old Testament worthies, "were magnified and honoured, not through themselves, not through their own works, not through the righteous deeds which they performed, but through HIS WILL. And we also by his

will being called in Christ Jesus, are JUSTIFIED not by ourselves, nor by our own wisdom, or understanding, or godliness, or by the works which we have wrought in holiness of heart, but by FAITH; by which the Almighty hath justified all, who are or have been justified from the beginning."

Milner, the ecclesiastical historian, introduces this passage by saying that "the distinguishing doctrine of Christianity, without which indeed the Gospel is a mere name, and incapable of consoling sinners, is doubtless justification by the grace of Christ THROUGH FAITH ALONE. See the testimony of this in Clement. It deserves to be distinctly remembered, as an unequivocal proof of the faith of the primitive church" (Vol. 1. p. 79.)

From certain passages in this epistle, we apprehend that Clement was one of those "pious pastors" living at the close of the first century, who passed current for "ministers of righteousness," like the many in Sardis; but was in reality "dead," having to a considerable extent acknowledged "the depths of the Satan as they taught." Speaking of Peter, he says, "having suffered martyrdom, he departed to the due place of glory;" and of Paul, he says, "having suffered martyrdom from princes, he left the world, and reached the shore of a blessed immortality." This is Platonism, and stamps the faith of Clement with reprobation. If anything had gone to "the due place of glory" after Peter's death, it must have been, in Clement's opinion, what the heathen term his "immortal soul;" and if "the due place of glory" and "the shore of a blessed immortality" be somewhere arrived at before resurrection, the promises covenanted to Abraham and David are nullified as superfluous. A man holding such unscriptural notions is a very unfit exponent of "the faith of the primitive church."

But in relation to justification, we rather think that "the evangelists" have misunderstood Clement. What he says above is true enough of the justification of sinners. These are justified by faith in baptism. If they believe the gospel of the kingdom in its mystery, their faith without regard to their previous works, good, bad, or indifferent, is counted to them for justification, at the time when they are in the act of obeying the truth, in being immersed. This is not the clerical idea of justification by faith alone. This consists in a sinner attaining to a persuasion that Jesus died for him; and that in having reached this conviction, the blood of Jesus is thereby applied to his immortal soul, and he is justified. This may be an instantaneous operation, and totally independent of all knowledge of the scriptures, as evinced by "conversions" every day. We do not believe that even Clement, who believed in the resurrection of the fabled Phoenix from its own ashes, had any idea of such a justification by faith alone as this; and we are sure there is no such justification taught in the Bible from one end of it to the other. Clement was treating of the justification of sinners; not of the justification of saints. Sinners are justified from all their past sins in the way stated, and so become saints. As saints, "faith alone" will not save them. James teaches this clearly. "By works a man is justified, and not by faith only." He is writing of a man, who, like Abraham, had already become a saint. The saints are justified by works, but the saint who seeks to be justified by, or to be pronounced "worthy," by faith alone, is like his faith, "dead;" for "faith without works is dead" -- dead as that of the many in Sardis.

But, however heathenish some of his creed evidently was, Clement cannot be classed with the dead faiths in Sardis, upon the ground of denying the necessity of good works to the perfecting of a previous faith. He evidently believed it necessary for all saints, who would "be accounted worthy" by the Spirit, to be rich in good works. "Shall we," says he, "neglect good works? Does it hence follow that we should leave the law of loving obedience? God forbid; let us rather hasten with all earnestness of mind to every good work; for the Lord himself rejoices in his works. Having such a pattern how strenuously should we follow his will, and work the works of righteousness with all our might."

They who pursued this course were pronounced "worthy." They "received" the gospel, and "heard" it by obeying it and thenceforth, "patiently continuing in well-doing," sought thereby "glory, honour, incorruptibility and life" in the Aion (Rom. 2:7). Thus, their faith was perfected by their works; and, as Jesus taught, "they were accounted worthy to obtain that Aion, and the resurrection from among the dead," after which "they can die no more; for they are equal to the angels; and are the Sons of the Deity being the children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:36). In this way they are "clothed in white garments," and "walk with the Spirit in white robes; for they are worthy."

Arranged from the writings of Brother Thomas by Bro. Bob Widding

What Does That Mean?

"And Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus..." 2 Kings 16:11

Following the death of King Jotham of Judah, his son Ahaz succeeded to the throne. Jotham had been a good king, the son of a good king; the previous chapter tells us in 2 Kings 15:34, *"for he followed in the steps of his father Uzziah."* Though essentially a good king he did not follow in the footsteps of David, for he permitted the people to continue in their evil ways; ways which they had copied from the nations around them, and which were the reason that God had evicted the original inhabitants from the land of Canaan for their wickedness.

Although Isaiah, Hosea and Micah all tried to reason against Ahaz that he should not seek assistance from Tiglathpileser, king of Assyria he refused to have confidence in the God of his fathers, and because of his disbelief he was *"not established"* (Isaiah 7:9) and after his death *"they brought him not into the sepulchers of the kings of Israel"* because of his wickedness (2 Chronicles 28:27).

Ahaz saw a magnificent altar in Damascus when he went to visit Tiglathpileser; an altar built by the Syrians and used in the worship of their idols. Ahaz caused a similar altar to be built in the temple in Jerusalem, using it to offer the continual burnt offerings of the daily sacrifices instead of the “brazen altar” that had been built by Solomon which was ordained by God as had been the alter used with the tabernacle; an alter overlaid with brass.

Ahaz's reasoning was to replace the altar of Yahweh with the Syrian altar to be used to worship the gods of the Syrians, since they had succeeded in destroying the fenced cities of Judah. Ahaz's reasoning was that the Syrians gods were stronger than Yahweh. He removed the altar of Yahweh and thus sealed his own fate when he rejected the altar of Deity for a man-made substitution.

Because of his willful disobedience to the commandments of Yahweh, Ahaz and Judah suffered at the hands of the king of Assyria. Though the city was ultimately saved in the time of Hezekiah his father, Ahaz and the rest of Judah were punished for instituting the commandments of men instead of the laws of Yahweh.

Let us therefore ensure that we do not corrupt the commandments of Yahweh with the ideas of men, for if we do it will ultimately lead to our downfall and the loss of our hope of life eternal in Yahweh's kingdom, when His son returns to judge the saints. If we reject Yahweh's Altar we also reject the sacrifices that are made holy by the altar and both the altar and the sacrifices under the Law of Moses all point forward to the Messiah, as the Apostle explains in Hebrews chapters 8 and 10. Rejection of the altar by implication includes rejection of the sacrifices, thus we would reject the redeeming sacrifice of Christ and our sins would not be atoned under these circumstances, “our faith would be vain” and we would be “yet in our sins”.

Gleanings from thoughts