

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 Berean Christadelphian Ecclesias

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Please advise us of changes or corrections to the above information.

Ecclesial News

DALLAS, Texas – Sunday School 4:30 pm, Memorial 5:30 pm, Wed Night 7:30 pm (Temporary Time change)

Greetings to all in Yahweh's vast vineyard,

It's been a while since our last correspondence to the brotherhood. Suffice to say that everything is going well in Dallas. We have now obtained a hall for our meetings and we are pretty happy with that. Our first meeting was held in our hall this past Sunday, Nov. 29th. Brother Jon gave a good exhortation on the procedure and preparations of a cultural Jewish wedding and how it symbolizes our upcoming marriage with Christ, as the Bridegroom, preparing our minds for the Breaking of Bread that followed. His exhortation was drawn from Genesis 24 and Eph. 5 readings. It shows how the groom would pay a price for his bride, which brings us to what Christ did for us (and himself) on the cross.

Our hall address is: 620 N. Coit Road, Suite 2155B, Richardson, Texas, 75080. We have not a phone at the hall yet as new technology in cellphones doesn't give it that high priority at this time. Until further notice, all mail correspondence and magazines should be sent to the old address, which is, 3032 San Martin Drive, Arlington, Texas, 76010.

Hope everyone is doing well in Yahweh's vineyard and that we all are keeping the lamps burning awaiting the soon return of our Lord and master to set up the long promised kingdom on earth.

Love to all in Oneness of Truth,

Bro. Bob Bent

HOUSTON, Texas – Sunday School 10am (1,2 Corinthians); Memorial 11:10am; Study Class 1pm; 4th Sunday 1pm (Open discussion, roundtable Bible class); Thurs. 7:00pm. Meeting Hall address: Bro. Michael Kramer, 8008 Junius Street, Houston, TX 77012

My beloved Brethren and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

The 2010 Houston Gathering will be held April 9, 10, 11, at Lake Houston State Park. We have been blessed and encouraged by visiting brethren from various parts of the vineyard. Our visitors have included Sis. Juanita Hurst, Bro. Jonathan Lorquet, sis Casey Burgamy, Bro. David and Sis. Kelly Sommerville, Bro. Mark and Sis. Naomi Braune, Sis. Alison Hopper, Sis. Elizabeth Hughes, Bro. David Hughes, Bro. Matthew Hughes, Sis. Esther Hughes, Bro. Phillip and Sis. Cheryl Hughes. We appreciate the comforting words of exhortation delivered by Bro. Phillip. We must also announce that three of our members have moved to other parts of this state. Sis. Carolyn McLaren is now staying with Bro. Vernon and Sis. Marie Hurst and is now part of the Goldthwaite ecclesia. Also Bro. Harry and Sis. Cindy Cassidy have moved to Justin and are now part of the Dallas ecclesia. They will all be sadly missed here in Houston. We wish them well. By God's mercy and grace may we all be granted some place in His Kingdom.

With love to all from the brethren and sisters of the Houston Ecclesia,
Bro. Michael Kramer

BOSTON, Massachusetts---S.S. 9:00 A.M. Memorial 10:15 A.M. Mid-week Study Class Thursday evening and Friday evening.
Recording bro. James Sommerville, 34 Birch Hill Rd. Northboro. MA 01532

Dear Brothers and Sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ,

We have had many visitors to the Boston Ecclesia since our last report. Most recently we enjoyed the fellowship of the Dylla family from Houston, TX. Bro Mark arrived Monday evening November 9th and donated a kidney to Bro. Jeremy Osborne the next morning. Both came through their surgeries very well. Mark was released from the hospital Sunday morning Nov. 15th and was able to join us for memorial service. We also enjoyed the company of Sis. Carol, Bro. Thomas and Sis Carolyn at memorial service and a lunch in the hall afterward. Brother Jeremy was released from the hospital Tuesday November 17th and is doing well with a “new” functioning kidney. We pray he continues to improve. Our prayer is also that he will recognize and forsake the error of his ways and return back to fellowship with us.

Other visitors since our last report have been: Bro. Steve Armstrong of Edmonton, Bro. Terry Readman of Richard, Sis. Leslie Morrell of Las Cruces, Bro. David and Sis. Cheryl Sargent of Denver, Sis. Jessie Prentice and Sis. Norma Rankin of Worcester, Bro. Harry Phillips of Canton, Bro. Scott and Sis. Lara Ricks of N.C.

On February 20th **Kerri Scott**, daughter of Bro. Wayne and Sis. Pam Johnson, was examined, baptized and received into fellowship the following Sunday. We welcome her around the table of the Lord.

For the past few years we set aside one lecture Sunday each quarter and meet with the sisters in Worcester. We plan to continue that this coming year, God willing. Our last meeting with them was December 6th. It is nice to have the visit and enjoy fellowship for the day.

Boston, God willing, will be hosting the Northeast Gathering in the upcoming year. It is planned to be at the Hilton Garden in Burlington, MA, October 9&10, 2010. The theme will be on God Manifestation. We welcome any that will be able to attend.

Our plans are continuing for another trip to the Holy Land in May, 2011, God willing. We expect more people than we had on our first trip and should have prices firmed up in a couple of months. Instead of going down into Egypt we hope to visit a few places that Paul traveled to: Athens, Corinth and Cenchrea before departing for home. You may see the complete itinerary at the Richard web site (richardbereans.com). We look forward to the day when we will all assemble at Jerusalem to enjoy that marriage feast prepared for those that are accounted worthy. What a glorious hope we can look forward to. May we all find mercy and acceptance.

On behalf of the Boston Ecclesia,

Jim Sommerville
Recording Brother

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held Yahweh Willing)

HOUSTON FRATERNAL GATHERING.....April 9–11, 2010

Bro. Michael Kramer, 8008 Junius St, Houston, TX 77012

HENGOED FRATERNAL GATHERING.....May 21–24, 2010

Bro. Steve Male, 19 Glas Y Gors, Aberdare, CF44 0BQ, Wales, UK. Email tiscali.co.uk

LAMPASAS FRATERNAL GATHERING.....June 11–13, 2010

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

HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING..... July 26–Aug 1, 2010

Bro. Mark Braune, 209 Ranger Drive, Buda, TX 78610, USA. 1-512-295-2868, email markbraune@gmail.com

The Study Class will be on the

book of Daniel.

NE FRATERNAL GATHERING – BOSTON.....Sep 30–Oct 1, 2010

Bro. Len Naglieri, romans6@mac.com, USA. 1-603-598-1745

The BCAA

A website called Berean Christadelphian Audio Archives, or BCAA for short, has made available a large selection of talks on MP3.

The address is www.bcaudioarchives.blogspot.com. Please bookmark this link as we will be updating this archive with new material as much as possible.

The main purpose of this site is to restore and make available lectures, exhortations, and study classes. Some of these talks are decades old and have seldom been heard. The quality of the material will vary; they have been transferred from audio cassettes and reel to reel tapes. Some have occasional distortion and tape flips.

It is an ongoing project, and we have lots of material to work with. However, we are always looking for tapes, and if you have some talks that you would like to share, please email either Brother Craig Kiley (craigkiley@yahoo.com) or Brother Noah Brown (sbsugar@gmail.com) and we will be happy to transfer the talks to mp3 format and post them.

Any comments and questions are very welcome; we want this website to become a resource for brethren and sisters worldwide.

If I May But Touch Him

“Behold a gluttonous man and a winebibber!”—Luke 7:34

We are apt, in our fancy, as we read the story of Jesus, to envision a quiet, majestic figure slowly traveling about Judea and Galilee with respectful throngs following him, a person at least of general respect, if not of wholehearted general approval. *But this is not the true picture.* Multitudes thronged him, truly. But they were not the ‘respectable’ people. The

respectable people, unless they were of exceptional courage, came secretly at night, like Nicodemus, if they came at all. The respectable people whispered, as they viewed his simple followers

“Behold a glutton and a winebibber: a friend of publicans and sinners!” (Luke 7:34).

The ‘respectable’ were afraid to be associated with him, for the Jews had agreed already that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. And because the man who was born blind confessed him, they *did* cast him out. The respectable people could say, with triumphant contempt (John 7:48-49)

“Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on him? but this people who knoweth not the Law are accursed.” And it is further recorded (John 12:42), *“Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”*

It is clear that to confess him meant ostracism from respectable society. As Isaiah tells us (55:3), he was not only rejected, but *despised*

“A reproach of men, and despised of the people” (Psa. 22:60). *“Him whom man despiseth, him whom the nation abhorreth.”* He, no less than Paul (1 Cor. 4:12-13), was,

“Reviled, defamed, made as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things.”

And those that followed him were told to expect the same— *“If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?”* *“Blessed are ye when men shall revile you for my sake.”*

But *“WOE unto you when all men shall speak well of you!”*

In Mark 4, we have first the parable of the sower, emphasizing the three great dangers to faith. First, the fowls of the air, *organized opposition*, the specious falsehoods of men, the deceits of the adversary who snatch away the seed before it has time to take root. Then the *poor, thin, shallow ground*—no depth, no real grip on the truth, no stability or constancy. And lastly, the *cares of this world*, the deceitfulness of riches, the thousand and one little things that can, almost unnoticed, steal away, piece by piece and day by day, our precious time and opportunities, until at last we look up in dismay and find ourselves far from our goal and the day nearly spent.

Then the storm on the sea, and the fear of the disciples— *“Master, carest thou not that we perish?”* (Mark 4:38).

They had many lessons to learn by experience, and experience is usually hard. Yet each experience, whether we fail or succeed, can be a stepping stone forward, *if we are rightly exercised by it*. Even if we fail still our failure can be profitable and useful: subsequent reflection can tell us why, and can also impress us with the unsatisfactory and depressing character of a past whose milestones are instances of weakness — thus giving added incentive to overcome. So even here *“All things work together for good to them that love God.”*

Then when he stilled the storm with a word, they feared even the more, because of the powers which they saw and did not understand.

“What manner of man is this?”

“He was asleep, in the hinder part of the ship” (Mark 4:38).

This tells us many things. It speaks first of his perfect peace of mind. He had many troubles, but no worries; countless sorrows, but no anxiety.

Then it speaks of the fatigue that would make sleep possible upon such an occasion, tossed about in a small boat on a rough sea. And it gives us a glimpse of the life he led—unsettled and wandering — no fixed dwelling place, or mode of existence —spending long nights in prayer—sleeping when the opportunity afforded. He enjoyed none of the external elements of rest and peace, but was the greatest example of them inwardly.

“My peace I give unto you” (John 14:27).

“Come unto me and I will give you rest” (Matt 11:28). Then he adds, lest we should harbor an illusion, *“Not as the world giveth, give I unto you”* (John 14:27).

The world would not call it rest, nor would they recognize his peace. He, even more truly and deeply than Paul, could say, *“I have learned, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content.”*

A perfect mastery of the mind over external circumstances. His peace did not consist in *ignoring* the circumstances, or excluding the facts from his consciousness, or not caring about them. It consisted in *the confidence that whatever came, he was ready, with God’s help, to face it*, and make the best of it; and in knowing that in all things he conducted himself in perfect harmony with the will of God. He said (John 8:29),

“I do always those things that please the Father.”

That was his peace. Consider the whole statement “*He that sent me is with me; the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him.*”

Many times he said that: “*I am not alone.*” That was his anchor and confidence through every storm. “I am not alone.” God said in the beginning, “*It is not good for man to be alone.*” For the first Adam, the natural man, He made one provision, but it remained for the Second Adam to demonstrate the full truth and depth of the statement. “I am not alone.” Though all the world was against him, he was still in the majority: though all his companions forsook him, he was not alone. As the last hour approached, he said (John 16:32),

“*Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things have I spoken to you that in me ye might have peace.*”

When the ship reached the eastern side of the sea, the country of the Gadarenes, the incident of the swine occurred, in connection with the curing of the maniac.

“*And they were afraid . . . and they began to pray to him to depart out of their coasts*” (Mark 5:17).

It seems incredible that any should *beg him to depart*, after seeing a demonstration of his healing power. But they were afraid—afraid of the implications that that power carried with it. For it worked both ways. He not only healed the maniac, but he destroyed the swine. Therefore, knowing themselves, they wanted him to leave them alone. With such a power among them, there was no knowing where it would stop, or what it would search out. *The works of darkness could not live within the circle of his light.* Wherever he went, the issue of right and wrong—righteousness and evil—was joined and could not be evaded. He would not let it rest.

He came proclaiming righteousness and the power of God; the loving and perfect and self-sacrificing way of the spiritual mind. All the specious arguments and attempt to confound the issue and justify the flesh that were put forward were gently but relentlessly exposed. The common people heard him gladly —though few comprehended the depth of his teaching. But those who began to perceive the full implication of his words, and did not want to face it, begged him to go *away and leave them alone.* And the vested interests and ruling classes persistently sought to discredit and destroy him, because in quiet, everyday words he preached a revolution that was deeper, more fundamental and more searching than man has ever conceived.

He returned again to the other side of the lake, and among the throng that followed him was the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25). Consider this woman’s faith. She felt that, though she knew not how, if she could only *get close enough to Christ*, the evil would of itself disappear. “*If I may but touch him!*” And that indeed is true, and is the simple, universal solution to all our problems. Other solutions may be quite logical and convincing, but they are *lifeless*, and we find when the issue comes that they lack the power to carry us through. We are convinced, and confess it, but we are not moved, transformed and regenerated. As Paul says, law merely convinces us of sin, and leads to the exclamation,

“*O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?*” (Rom. 7:24).

We must have the personal impetus that comes of a vivid loving perception of and close proximity to Christ, as a living person. Otherwise the *path of right*, as opposed to the *path of pleasure*, is an intolerable and seemingly meaningless burden. Paul found his incentive in his *affection for Christ, and his desire to approach him* (Phil. 3:8)

“*I count all things but loss that I may win Christ . . . I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*”

He expressed unlimited confidence in this power—more than equal to all circumstances (Rom. 8:35-6)

“*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?—Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us . . . As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long.*”

That is the keynote—“*For thy sake.*” We must have a living, *personal* reason; someone we love and are striving to please. We are constituted that way.

“*God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you,*” says Paul (Eph. 4:32). Christ *for our sakes*, laid down his life, John records, (1 John 3:16). And we, *for his sake*, serve God. And it is in doing things for his sake that gives them efficacy and meaning.

“*He that loses his life for my sake shall find it*” (Matt. 10:39).

“*Everyone that hath forsaken all in this life for my sake shall inherit everlasting life.*” (Matt. 19:28).

The incentive throughout is personal, and Paul, impressed by the transforming nature of this incentive, always bases his appeals upon it. And of himself he says,

“*I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake*” (2 Cor. 12:10).

“Unto you it is given—it is granted, you have the honor, pleasure and privilege in the behalf of Christ—not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake” (Phil. 1:29).

This is not just an extravagant flight of rhetoric. Paul literally meant what he said. In the primitive and pure ecstasy of the early church, it is recorded (Acts 5:41).

“They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for his Name.”

We have all, in some small measure (and many doubtless in larger measure), experienced the pleasure of pain for another’s sake, and the joy of the bond that it creates, So she felt that if she could get close enough to Christ, all would be well. His power would envelope her, and evil would flee from his glorious, healing presence. He would take her problem upon himself, if she would but carry it to him. *“If I can but touch him, I shall be whole.”* Jesus said, *“I am the true vine. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit in itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me . . . without me ye can do nothing”* (John 15:1-5).

Without him we can do nothing. We strive mightily and get nowhere. Like the disciples, we row all night and accomplish nothing, unless he is in the ship. Unless we actually establish a vital connection between him and ourselves, we remain just ordinary people, living in an ordinary way, and finally dying the common death. The connection must be personal and actual—not just apparent, or mechanical, or superficial.

It is through the recorded Word that the contact is made and maintained. That is the medium of intercourse and communion:

“If ye abide in me, and my words, abide in you, ye shall bear much fruit” (John 15:7).

“My words.” We have the recorded Word before us. That is something real and tangible that we can hold in our hands, and any advance into the spiritual realm must be through that. We cannot sit and commune with God on our own terms. We must seek His presence where *He* chooses to be found, and through the medium *He* provides. That is why the Psalms contain so much on the theme

“O, how love I Thy Law! How sweet are Thy words to my taste!”

That is the frame of mind to which we must educate ourselves—by prayer, and study, and meditation. And we must never rest content until it takes complete hold of us.

A little later (ch. 6) in the course of his travelling, he came to his native city Nazareth. Their reaction to him is strange. They did not deny his wisdom and power. Rather it was that very wisdom and power that annoyed them!

“From whence hath this man these things? And what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? . . . And they were offended at him” (Mark 6:12).

How utterly illogical! But how typically human!

“And he marvelled because of their unbelief” (v. 6).

Even he, who knew all men, and knew what was in man—he marvelled because of the unyielding hardness of their unbelief. The evidence which was forced upon them only infuriated them, and the only solution they could think of to relieve themselves of the problem he presented was to destroy him.

He marveled that hearts could be so bitter and obstinate in the very presence of the power and goodness of God—that the flesh could be so unreasonable, and so blind to itself. But such is the material with which we each have to work in ourselves. The Spirit through Solomon declared—

“He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.” (Prov. 28:26). —And we must admit that once a man has been enlightened to the destructive deceptiveness of the desires of the flesh, this verdict is so true.

How easy it is to be blind to ourselves! How necessary is a constant, prayerful searching of the Word, and unsparing self-examination in the light of it! How natural to be obsessed with the faults of others!

Isaiah—at the beginning of his prophecy, when he speaks of the glorious day of the Lord when all human things shall come into judgment, and all that is out of harmony with the Truth shall be destroyed—says that in the great day of judgment they shall cast their idols *“to the moles and to the bats.”*

Why especially *moles and bats*? Considering the scriptural evaluation of the flesh, we can see why such are chosen. These two are the most outstanding examples in the animal kingdom of the flesh’s primary characteristic—they love darkness rather than light.

That principle goes far deeper than we self-righteously realize. *Anything foreign to the pure and gentle Spirit mind is darkness.* The mole spends his time in darkness, burrowing in the dirt, undermining, digging away in secret, and he is content. He literally has eyes but cannot see. Bats, too, have a strong aversion to light. They hide away in the daytime and confine their activities to the night. And both are classed as unclean creatures.

Such is the flesh, but the picture would not be complete without presenting another angle. There is no cause for despair, or even regret, that we are made so. All is for a good purpose

“The creation was made subject to vanity by reason of Him Who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” And continuing the same line of thought, Paul says,

“And we know that ALL things work together for good to them that love God” (Rom. 8:20-28).

Our present state is a necessary step in the eternal purpose. It is *not a* gloomy picture, but rather one of bright promise and hope. The only danger is *refusal to face and admit the facts*—running from the light—drawing back fearfully into the darkness—hesitating to concede the miserable deceptiveness of the flesh—excusing it and glorifying it—calling its vicious traits by fair and flattering names. Paul flatly declares (Rom. 7:18) —

“In me—that is, in my flesh—dwelleth no good thing.”

Frankly and honestly admit that to ourselves, and at least we are off to a good start.

* * *

A little later in ch. 6 the death of John the Baptist is recorded—him of whom Jesus said (Matt. 11:11)— *“There hath not risen a greater prophet among men.”*

He was a voice crying in the wilderness—a voice that the powers of Israel refused to accept, but dared not deny. They asked Jesus, *“Who sent you, and gave you your authority?”* And he answered, *Who sent John, and gave him his authority?”* That answered their question, but they would not face it.

John did no miracles, but his pure voice from the wilderness pierced the consciences of the people. For fearlessly testifying to corruption in high places, he was shut up in prison, and finally murdered. When Jesus heard of it, he departed into a desert place apart, deeply affected by the news of John’s death, and desirous of being alone. To his disciples he said (Matt. 17:12)—

“Elias is come, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spoke unto them of John the Baptist.”

But when they reached the desert place, they found that the multitude had guessed their destination and were there waiting for them. Seeing them, he had compassion on them, and, foregoing his own privacy and rest, he set himself to teach them about his Father. Afterwards, by a miracle, he feeds them, and v. 40 (Mark 6) gives an interesting thought—

“They sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.”

Not as a haphazard crowd, but an orderly assembly. There is always beauty and dignity in orderliness and arrangement.

All God’s works are marvels of order and precision. Nothing, however minute or unimportant, is slipshod or carelessly done. And this characteristic struck observers in regard to Jesus. In the next chapter, Mark 7, we read that they exclaimed—

“Behold, he doeth all things well!”

That was the stamp of God dwelling in him. Even in this incident of feeding the multitude, he arranges it with a pleasing orderliness. No crowding, no confusion, but—

“He commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties” (Mark 6:39-40).

If he was to be a party to the transaction, it would have to be done with becoming decorum. And the multitudes, finding themselves part of quiet and orderly assembly, would be impressed with the meaning and dignity that is possible to human nature when it is controlled and directed by the wisdom of God.

There was nothing slipshod or haphazard in Jesus’ life. Though he wandered homeless, taking no thought for the morrow, his was actually the most intensely purposeful life ever lived. We must not judge by appearances, or common standards. The priest and Levite, hurrying between Jerusalem and Jericho, were following a schedule, but it was the Samaritan who had a real purpose in life.

But there is a distinction between true dignity and false. As Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the whole multitude of the disciples began spontaneously to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice (Luke 19:37). And some of the Pharisees said—

“Master, rebuke thy disciples.”

According to their standards of etiquette, that was not a fitting way for people to act. They were completely unmoved by the significance of the occasion. They said the same thing when the children praised him in the Temple.

The Pharisees were always there to cavil over trifles, and to throw an ugly, jealous shadow over the pure joy of the occasion. Going a little further, we find them criticizing the disciples for eating with unwashed hands. This attitude finally brought upon them the most scathing denunciation that is recorded in the Scriptures, filling 26 burning verses in Matthew 23—

“Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, HYPOCRITES!”

Primarily following Mark’s record, but with reference to the others, we have travelled briefly with Jesus. It is remarkable how the four gospels supplement each other and afford a depth and interest that one continuous narrative could not give. There have been many attempts to fuse the four accounts into one story, but the results are always disappointing.

When a colored picture is printed, four layers of color are superimposed upon each other, each supplying its own appropriate tints and details. In singing, four types of voice are combined to give depth and body and completeness to the tone. And to carry the comparison further, the Psalms, like a soft, instrumental accompaniment, supply the theme and undertone, and reveal much that would otherwise be hidden.

So, each contributing its own part, we are given a complete picture of the perfect life—the life of Jesus. Not that the outward circumstances of his life were perfect, that would mean nothing. But, regardless of the circumstances, in spite of the bitterest experiences, his *reaction* to them all was perfect, and his inner peace, the peace of a complete faith and a righteous conscience, like an impregnable fortress, though constantly assailed, was never broken into.

—*Bro. G.V. Growcott*

Harmless As Doves

This morning our exhortation will be focused around Matt. 10:16 – *“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”*

We first need to consider the background and setting for these words. We find Christ is speaking to the 12 apostles and sending them out to preach. He commanded them not to go into the way of the Gentiles, or into any city of the Samaritans but to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He not only tells them where to go, he tells them what they should preach, verse 7 – *“And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* As well as where to go, and what to say, he also tells them what to do, verse 8 – *“Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.”*

They were given power and they were to use that power to bring Israel back into the fold.

To do the work there was no need of money or clothing. Christ says, Matt. 10:9 – *“Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.”*

There was no need of things of the flesh. Their calling was much greater. There would be someone that would recognize their fleshly needs and would tend to them. Their whole purpose now was to tend to spiritual needs. Their serpent-like wisdom would govern the words they spoke as well as the activities they carried out. Jesus wanted them to communicate His message wisely, but without hurting the people who heard it—as harmless as doves.

When I first considered this subject in relation to the theme of this year’s gathering, I was focused in on the serpents and doves. But in reality there are four types of animals mentioned in this verse and we will consider each of them briefly this morning.

Why would Christ label the disciples as sheep?

Those who submit to the word of Christ and obey his commandments are most suitably represented by sheep. The sheep is a strong but harmless animal. This is a very powerful exhortation in itself to use the sheep as a figure of speech for Christ’s disciples as he himself is the Lamb of God.

The disciples were to be sheep in the midst of wolves. A wolf is a cunning, fierce and vicious animal that lives to kill. He will stop at nothing to appease his hunger, provided he runs no risk. He attacks the weak and steers clear of the strong. In contrast to the sheep, he represents the ravenous character which is common in the world—headstrong, unscrupulous, merciless men who will sacrifice everything but their own skins in the accomplishment of personal ends. They prefer the weak for their prey. Therefore, the sheep are their special victims, because the true sheep are not given to fighting. They are docile and weak and therefore no match for the wolf. *“The wolf catcheth the sheep and scattereth them.”*

Jesus was trying to tell the disciples what they were getting into. He was not sending them with an army to back them up. They were defenseless against the foes they were to face. Their only defense was to flee. Their mission in preaching the gospel to their own people was not going to be easy.

Let's look at Matt. 10:17-18 – *“But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.”*

We can imagine how the apostles felt, knowing what the conditions would be like. If we were told this, would we still want the job? There is a big contrast to the peaceful surroundings we are enjoying today. We can hardly imagine being arrested, brought before judges, hated, stoned and even suffering death. However, they were not really alone. They were also told that when the governors and kings delivered them up, they were to take no thought how or what they were to speak because in the same hour it would be given them what they should say. How comforting that must have been. It would relieve the natural tendency to worry about what to say.

In all circumstances they were to be *“wise as serpents.”*

Why would Christ use the serpent as a symbol? Why didn't he say to be as wise as a fox? We think of a fox as a cunning animal, but that trait is used to deceive, and catch their prey. A wise serpent on the other hand will shy away from direct confrontation. This is their defense—they had to be quick witted to avoid evil. They were not to fight the wolves nor to offer themselves as victims, but to flee from them.

The apostles were men, just like you and I, talking to their fellow countrymen. They were to beware of the scribes who desired to walk in long robes and love greetings in the markets and the highest seats in the synagogues and the chief rooms at feasts. This was not to be their position at this time. They had the power of the spirit, but it was to be used to preach the gospel, not to make a name for themselves.

We also brethren and sisters should heed this lesson. We must be wise as serpents. We need to watch the signs of the times and see what is happening in the world so we can be prepared and know when to speak up, when to be silent, when to flee from danger.

After Moses' death Joshua tells the people to *“be strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest”* (Joshua 1:7). To prosper means to act wisely or be prudent or skillful.

Christ also told them to be *“harmless as doves.”* This may seem like a strange combination by our standards. But let's look further into the characteristics of the dove and see what we can learn from this animal.

Jonah, or Yonah, is the Hebrew word for “dove” or “pigeon.” The dove was the only bird offered in sacrifice under the law. It was the offering of poverty for a sin-offering, or a burnt-offering, and also was offered with a lamb at childbirth. In the case of poverty, two birds were offered instead of a lamb, as was done in the case of the birth of Jesus. The dove was also used in the ritual for cleansing a leper.

Though the dove was a “clean bird,” it is said that Jews never ate it because of its unique character in sacrificial offering. When offered, it signified innocence or perfection of character. Thus it is a fitting representation of the Lord Jesus.

Just as a lamb or sheep represented Israel, so did the dove. The Psalmist, pleading for Israel, declared, *“O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude of the wicked: forget not the congregation of thy poor forever”* (Psa. 74:19).

Using the same symbol, but speaking of the future glory of the nation, he said: *“Though ye have lain among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold”* (Psa. 68:13).

In these terms he portrayed Israel, as Yahweh's dove, elevated from the degradation of the pots, and made resplendent with silver and gold—the silver of redemption and the gold of tried faith.

Israel failed to manifest the trusting, innocent virtue of the Dove, its symbol. Hosea likened Ephraim to a *“silly dove without heart,”* fluttering panic-stricken from one nation to another for help, and ignoring the Power that could save it.

But God from the beginning had determined to reveal His ideal Israel—His true dove—in a Man who would manifest to perfection those divine attributes that Israel failed to reveal. He presented himself to John for baptism, having no sins to confess, and when the rite had been completed, his real identity was revealed by a Voice from heaven. Luke records: *“It came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased”* (Luke 3:21).

Thus we see Christ was the antitype of the prophet Jonah, and fulfilling the allegorical significance of his mission. Jonah gave himself in sacrificial death; he was figuratively raised from the grave; he preached repentance unto the Gentiles. The Lord Jesus, either personally or through his disciples, fulfilled the type.

A dove is a harmless bird. It will not hurt you or peck at you like some birds do. In Israel a dove is kept as a pet, because it is harmless.

There are many attributes of the dove that we should emulate. Several characteristics come to my mind. The first is meekness. Christ said, *“Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls”* (Matt. 11:29).

This idea of finding rest for your souls relates well to the dove. Noah sent forth a dove to see if the waters were abated from off the earth, but it found no rest on the restless planet, so it returned to the ark for security. We should be like this dove, as our rest and security is not found in this world, but only in Christ—the ark provided by God.

Being meek, we must be humble, submissive to the divine will; not proud, self-sufficient, not complainers. Christ said, *“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”* (Matt. 5:5).

Another characteristic of the dove is that they mate for life. We are to be pure, chaste and undefiled. As Paul told the Corinthians in the second epistle, *“I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”*

We must be free from obscenity. Our conversation should be chaste.

Another characteristic of the dove is that they make their nest in a rock. We are to build on our rock, the Lord Jesus Christ, as our firm foundation. The nest is usually flimsy, being made of sticks. Our nest here is not a permanent habitation; we, along with the faithful listed in Heb. 11, are strangers and pilgrims on this earth, and desire a better country.

A dove feeds on seeds, fruit and other soft plant stuff, not on dead animals like the raven does. We are to feed of the scriptures, which are pure and able to make us wise unto salvation.

The doves are always found in pairs. We also must not go off on our own, as the writer to the Hebrews tells us, *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”*

Paul in his first letter to the Thessalonians says: 1Thess. 5:11-13 – *“Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another...And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves.”*

When we read these words we can think of the dove-like characteristics, which lead to peace.

Some birds lay blue eggs or speckled color eggs, but the dove lays white eggs, which is a symbol of righteousness. Both the male and female incubate the eggs. Unlike most other birds, doves produce “crop milk,” which is secreted by a shedding of fluid-filled cells from the lining of the crop. Both sexes produce this highly nutritious substance to feed their young. Both parents have the responsibility to keep and feed the young the milk of the truth and this can only happen after they have digested the proper food of the truth themselves.

A dove has no other defense except flight. We, are not to fight in this world, but to flee. Christ told his disciples in Mat 10:22-23 that they would *“be hated of all men for his name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.”*

It is interesting to note that there are about 6 different types of doves in Israel. Every spring, about the beginning of April, the turtle dove returns to the land. They are a sign of spring to the inhabitants of the land.

Jeremiah refers to this in Jer. 8:7 – *“Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle (dove) and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming....”*

I’ve been told that because of the condition of the land the turtle dove, which usually migrated to Israel each year, stopped returning for several years. Then in the 50s the doves began again to migrate back to the land. To me this is significant that we are getting closer to the time Solomon refers to when he says, *“For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle (dove) is heard in our land”* (Song of Solomon 2:11-12).

The turtle dove makes a cooing sound when it has lost sight of its mate. When Christ the divine bridegroom returns to claim his bride, the sound of the turtle dove will be heard in the land, as she is called to him. That will be at the *“set time to favor Zion.”* Then the dove, which found no rest in the days of Noah, will finally rejoice in the salvation provided in the kingdom of God.

Hezekiah says in Isa 38:14 – *“Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me.”*

He was afflicted and mourned, as a type of Christ. Christ says in Matt. 5, *“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”* This would be a great comfort for the apostles who had to suffer persecutions at the hands of the grievous wolves in the first century. And this is also a great comfort to us as we may be called on to endure painful trials in this time of probation, but we can look ahead to the future when the kingdom is set up, and when sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

Being wise as serpents and harmless as doves applies to us as well as to the apostles that Christ sent out to preach. We do not face the same trials as they did but have our own set of circumstances to contend with in our day. We must be wise to deal with the situations we are subjected to. We sometimes feel overwhelmed and at a loss of what to do because sometimes God’s principles at first sight seem incompatible with one another.

- We are to do good to all men, and yet not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers.
- We are to be *“in the world,”* and yet to *“come out from among them and be separate.”*

- We are to love our enemies, and yet to love not the world.
- We are to be patient with the erring, and yet to abhor that which is evil and not to bear with men that are evil.
- We are to think no evil, and yet to try the spirits.
- We are to submit to wrong, and yet to refuse even to eat with men that are called brethren who espouse wrong doing or error.
- We are to show hospitality, and yet to receive not into their houses those who bring not the doctrine of Christ.

God in His wisdom prescribes these apparently conflicting duties, and we are to use our wisdom in a harmless, dove-like fashion to at last bring about a fine balance of character.

Solomon linked wisdom with words hundreds of years before Christ. He said in Proverbs 16:23 – *“The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.”* We can see that if we are truly wise, it will affect the way we speak. Again, in Prov. 15:2 Solomon says, *“The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright.”* We may be a very knowledgeable person, but it takes wisdom to help us direct our tongues to express what we want to say in an appropriate and acceptable way.

Solomon says, *“The tongue of the wise brings healing”* (Proverbs 12:18). God’s wisdom, expressed through the tongue, results in healing rather than harm. This is being as wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove.

Some may consider themselves to be wise, but their words hurt rather than heal. This leads us to believe there is another kind of wisdom besides God’s wisdom. The Apostle James confirmed this. He, like Solomon, linked wisdom to the way we use our tongues. Immediately after twelve verses on the tongue, he wrote, *“Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation (or good behavior) his works with meekness of wisdom”* (James 3:13).

He is talking about our entire manner of life, not just words. But we cannot eliminate words from what he said. He goes on to mention bitter envying (or jealousy) and strife in your hearts, (v. 14), things which are normally expressed by destructive communication. *“For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work”* (James 3:16). Unwise words harm rather than heal.

We may think we have used good sense and sound judgment in what we have said, but if it has produced disorder, dissension and turmoil rather than healing, it has not been God’s wisdom, but rather a counterfeit wisdom.

“This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish” (James 3:15). This wisdom finds its source in our old sinful nature.

This wisdom is much different than the wisdom from above—wisdom that helps and heals, that brings peace and harmony, that increases love and good feelings among us.

How can we know whether our words are prompted by godly wisdom or by fleshly wisdom? James gives us a sevenfold standard by which to measure them. *“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy”* (James 3:17). Let us weave that standard into the fabric of our thinking, so that we too can be wise as serpents, yet harmless as doves.

Wise Brethren and Sisters Are First Pure—

Wise words come from a pure heart—pure in every sense of the word—a heart that has been cleansed of error, moral impurity, bitter jealousy, selfish ambition, and ulterior motives. Our words are a reflection of what goes on inside us, so if our hearts are impure, our words will ultimately betray us. We may be able to fake it for awhile, but eventually the truth will be known. Good communication begins with a cleansed heart.

Wise Brethren and Sisters Are Peaceable—

The person who is filled with God’s wisdom is not easily provoked into arguing. He isn’t quarrelsome or contentious, but consistently seeks a peaceful solution to problems. He believes that strong, loving relationships are more important than winning arguments. He takes the exhortation of Paul seriously: *“If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men”* (Romans 12:18). He weighs his words carefully, and endeavors to phrase them in such a way as to avoid arousing antagonism in others. If others attack him with angry, exaggerated accusations, he refrains from responding in a similar manner, but calmly seeks to understand their needs and what he can do to help them. He is a peacemaker, whom Jesus called children of God (Matthew 5:9). He knows how to avoid arguments and solve conflicts.

Wise Brethren and Sisters Are Gentle—

Gentle is a difficult word to render into English. There is not one English word that sums it up adequately. It refers to a mild, gentle and kind forbearance that refrains from insisting on the letter of the law; a gracious, yielding spirit that refrains from tenaciously standing up for one’s own rights. A gentle person recognizes that there are more important things than rules and regulations, namely people and relationships. And while he may have the right and the power to enforce the law, he tempers strict justice with mercy.

Wise Brethren and Sisters Are Reasonable—

James says the wisdom that is from above is “*easy to be entreated.*” But it is only one word in the Greek text, so either reasonable, conciliatory, yielding or submissive might be acceptable English equivalents. The reasonable person is not stubborn or inflexible, but pliable, ready to listen to reason, willing to yield to reasonable requests or opinions. There are some who, once they make up their minds, simply do not want to be confused with any more facts. They refuse to moderate or alter their stand no matter how much new light is presented, or how many people disagree. That is not God’s wisdom. It is human wisdom.

Few things are more detrimental to good relationships than the attitude of a person who thinks he is always right. If you see it one way, he will probably see it another. And it is not likely that he will ever change his mind. You either give in to him, or live with the constant friction of open disagreement. Compromises are out of the question for him. You play by his rules or you don’t play at all. People like that rarely understand why others back away from them, and they may keep on insisting that they are right until their last friend is gone. Is it possible that they could be operating on human wisdom? We do not want to be like this.

Wise Brethren and Sisters Are Full of Mercy and Good Fruits—

There are two ideas here, but they go together. True wisdom is filled with mercy—feelings of sympathy and compassion toward people who are suffering.

But mercy does not stop with the feelings. It causes us to speak words of kindness and encouragement, then do something to help relieve the suffering.

James wanted to be sure we understood that. That is why he says wisdom from above is full of “*mercy and good fruits.*” God’s wisdom working through us extends practical help to others in need, even people who have wronged us.

That is an element of mercy we find difficult to express. Real mercy restrains the urge to get even, then goes one step further and reaches out in kindness to help.

People who overlook little slights and keep reaching out to help one another with acts of kindness will have very little problem maintaining harmonious relationships.

Wise Brethren and Sisters Are Unwavering—

The Revised Version gives “without variance” for “without partiality.” Without variance means unwavering. In our use of the word partiality we lose a lot of the meaning.

This aspect of God’s wisdom helps us stand firm on Biblical principles and undivided in our allegiance to Him. But it also keeps us from vacillating according to the expediency of the moment in our relationships with each other. The person with human wisdom is shifty. He may speak well of a person one day, but cut him down the next, whichever is to his advantage. He may insist that one course of action is best today, but insist on the very opposite tomorrow, whichever is to his advantage. He may assure you that what he is doing is fine, but if another brother does it, he will tell you that it is dishonest. He may let his children engage in certain behavior one day, but not the next, because it happens to get on his nerves more than. He can usually justify his contradictions with irrefutable logic, but it is wavering human wisdom, prompted by pride and selfishness. And it harms his relationships rather than healing and strengthening them. God’s wisdom is consistently fair, reasonable and considerate of others.

Wise Brethren and Sisters Are Without Hypocrisy—

The word hypocrite was used originally of Greek actors on the stage, people who could play a role expertly, often wearing masks. But it came to be applied to anyone who covered up his true self and pretended to be something he was not. That is what human wisdom does. It is deceptive, evasive and clever at concealing its real character, aims and motives. The person who uses it answers you in ambiguous and confusing terms so you cannot pin him down and know exactly what he is like, what he is thinking or what he is after. He lives with his guard up and his mask on, seldom letting you know what he is really feeling. It is nearly impossible to develop any kind of mutually satisfying interpersonal relationship with him.

The wisdom from above is the very opposite of that. It is open, honest and straightforward. The person who has it does not try to disguise his feelings to make himself look good or gain his own ends. If he is disturbed about something, he says so, kindly but honestly. He doesn’t say, “No, there’s nothing wrong between us,” just to avoid the unpleasantness of confrontation, or to cover up his pickiness. He shares his feelings openly, without criticizing or finding fault with others, and so helps to keep the channels of communication open. He contributes to an atmosphere of peace and harmony, and that is the kind of atmosphere in which righteousness can grow.

James concludes the third chapter by reminding us that the peacemaker who sows in peace, reaps the fruit of righteousness (James 3:18).

Let us be among those who reap the fruits of righteousness. Let us now develop the dove-like characteristics with wisdom from above. The time is coming when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, when there shall no longer be the vicious wolves to contend with. We pray that time will come soon; may we all be ready and prepared for it.

Encouraging Words No. 4

“THEREFORE all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” Did Elijah show obedience to this rule when he brought dire distress upon Israel by praying that it might not rain (Jas. 5:17)? Did Paul observe it when he was the means of placing certain Jews in a position in which they had either to break their oath or starve to death: or, when he insisted upon magistrates humbling themselves to come and fetch him out of prison? If so—and it cannot be questioned—Christ’s injunction evidently does not mean: Do to every man exactly as he wishes—placidly yield the truth’s concerns lest they should jar on the humanly attuned susceptibilities of God’s enemies. The injunction requires to be scripturally interpreted. To whom was it addressed? To the disciples—men who were prepared to accept the divine standard of motive and action. And what is this standard? God and His honour first, and the highest good to man (comprehending the knowledge of God unto eternal life) next. To fail to recognise these qualifying truths is to introduce difficulty, contradiction and confusion. Paul pointedly sums up the requirements of the case when he says: “Let everyone of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.” Paul’s actions, whether in the performance of miracle or otherwise, never belied the principle embodied in Christ’s injunction. He suffered the loss of goods, of life, and would even have accepted the calamity of being accursed of God, if this would have brought to his kinsmen eternal life. Therefore it is no stretch of language to say that, even in a case such as that of Elymas the sorcerer, Paul did as he under similar circumstances would have desired to have been done by. God’s purpose and man’s participation in it have been the great object with both prophet and apostle. What light this throws upon many seemingly harsh situations which the truth has created in time past! Israel, in danger of being cut off from the covenants, is, at Elijah’s instigation, visited with famine, that they may, if possible, be brought to their senses. Paul, in danger of having his salvation-bringing activities cut short, forces God’s enemies into breaking their oath; also, when the opportunity occurs, insists upon magistrates publicly acknowledging that they, and not the proclaimers of God’s message, are in the wrong. But apparently harsh situations, as a result of obeying Christ’s injunction, are not peculiar to the past. Its observance is quite as liable to-day to bring, as Christ indicated, a sword and not peace, discord and not harmony, reproach and not praise. Sister, hold not back from duty on this account. Be circumspect—use not Christ’s warfare as an occasion for the flesh. Rail not, retaliate not. Be sure that it is the truth that you are holding on high, and not your own aggrieved dignity. If then “ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth on you: on their part he (Christ, who is responsible for the law which governed your actions) is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.”

The truest kindness lies at the root of Christ’s injunction. The world’s unscriptural sentimentality is not kindness. Be kind, but let your kindness be of that sterling quality exhibited by God’s approved servants. Do as you would be done by, but take heed that your aim is the apostolic one—men’s obedience unto life eternal. If you were overcome by the potions (pleasant, perhaps) of the Apostasy you would like to be shouted at, and, if need be, shaken, that you might be aroused from your deadly stupor. Then, dear sister, consider your neighbour, and do as you would be done by. If you were imperiling your salvation by setting aside Christ’s commandments, you would wish that your folly might be arrested, even—if kindly reproof and warning failed—to the drastic and sobering procedure of disfellowship. Then, dear sister, consider your brother and sister, and do unto them even as you would be done by.

Make not the fatal mistake of endeavouring to improve upon Christ’s methods, or of imagining that your kindness is greater than his, lest in so doing you bring down your neighbour’s blood upon your head.

—Sis. C.H. Jannaway—1906

Brethren Thomas and Roberts

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 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!

—GVG 1971

I Have Given Them Thy Word

“Sanctify them through Thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth” -John 17:17-

What a great blessing it is that in our homes and everywhere we go, we all have the Holy Scriptures! We can, at any time, reach out and open the Book and read the wonderful, thrilling Message that God has revealed to man concerning Himself, His purpose in the creation of man, and what He would have us to do that we might realize to the utmost the greatest good possible for man, even joyful life forevermore!

Now the value of any book is measured by the position and importance of its author and what it brings to the reader that may be of interest, pleasure or material well-being to himself. Looking at the Bible according to these standards, where could any other book be found that could even faintly be compared to it? Yes, we say; it is the greatest book in the world. A most marvellous thing—a direct message from the Creator of the universe! *But do we ACT as if this were so?*

It lies in many homes, as just another book, to be picked up and read, just like another book, when we can find the time away from other things that we feel “must” be done.

It is true that among Christadelphians the daily reading of the Scriptures according to the Companion is almost universal; but there is a danger that we do not give it the place it should occupy in our everyday lives. This is the most important thing we do each day, and ample provision should be made in the ordering of our affairs so that we can approach our reading period with the best of our efforts of mind.

Let it not be done as a matter of duty or habit, to be gotten over with as soon as possible, so that we can be free to pursue other things more pleasant to the flesh. Reading will become a pleasure to us and bring growth and strength in the wisdom and knowledge of God, in proportion as we understand what we read and apply it to ourselves. *It is a dishonor to God to read His Word without the most careful and reverent attention to the thought conveyed by the Spirit.*

Do we not take care to catch every shade of thought and meaning as we read a letter from a loved one? Not a word or a sentence is passed till the meaning of the writer is understood.

How we examine every phrase for the sweet message of affection it may contain! Is it possible that we treat God’s Word with less respect than that of our friends!

Bro. Roberts writes in the preface of *The Bible Companion*: *“Salvation depends upon the assimilation of the mind to divine ideas, principles, and affections exhibited in the Scriptures. This process commences with a belief of the Gospel, but is by no means completed thereby; it takes a lifetime for its scope, and untiring diligence for its accomplishment”.*

It is plain, then, as we consider these things, that those who in the end obtain oneness with the Father in nature, and do become partakers of the glorious life to come, will have attained to such a state by the influence of the Word of God in their lives. Jesus said—*“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”* (John 6:63).

The Bible speaks of the “carnal mind” and of the “spiritual mind.” Our minds are all carnal to begin with, and they only become spiritual, or in accordance with the Spirit, when the transforming influence of the Spirit-Word has elevated and purified our minds so that we think and act in accordance with divine principles— *“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace”* (Rom. 8:5-6).

Many of us, no doubt, can remember when we were children, before our interest in divine things had developed, when we were required to sit and listen to the daily readings, how glad we were when it was over, and we could run out to play.

There is an example of the mind that is still carnal, that walks after the flesh. But, sad to say, this condition is not confined to children. There are mental and spiritual infants, too.

But as we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we come to rise to the beauty and holiness of the spiritual outlook, by continual association on the higher plane with the power that is in the Word of God, we can find delight and pleasure in reading and meditating upon it. We can then enter into the spirit of David’s words in Psalm 119—

“I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.” “I will meditate in Thy precepts, and have respect unto Thy ways.” “I will delight myself in Thy statutes, I will not forget Thy Word.” “I will delight myself in Thy commandments which I have loved.”

To arrive at this state of mind that David had, to learn to love the law of God, and delight in knowing and doing of His will, is not the natural thing for a human being to do. Much labor and diligent application over a period of time, in the channels of God’s Truth, are required before we reach this high level of spiritual discernment. Peter said— *“For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass.”*

The grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth away; but the Word of the Lord endureth forever.”
—Bro. Emitt W. Banta

Novel Reading

Novel reading—from the standpoint of the man or woman in earnest about spiritual growth—what of it? An altogether unsuitable diet. It cannot be justified on any ground. The view of life set forth is a distorted one. God is absent; and holiness, and faithfulness, and simplicity are openly derided and scorned.

Christadelphians certainly should not keep company with people guilty of these things. Then why read their writings?

It is urged that we ought to read them for their "portrayal of human nature." To the individual who really knows himself, or herself, in all his (or her) weakness, it is superfluous, as the task has been infinitely better done in the inspired records of the lives of good men and women of days past, in which their sad lapses are seen in true repentance and forgiveness, and their victories as triumphs of holiness.

Of such writings, Paul said to Timothy, "Give attendance to reading" (ITim. 4:13). But of the trashy, sentimental, and suggestive novel of the day, we can only speak in terms of disgust and condemnation. Shun the novel!

—*Christadelphian Treasury*

Meditations – Deity's Ways No. 7

The moral character of God is manifest in Christ and the Bible. Each is holy, just, and true. The excellences of the one pervade the other. They are alike wise, beneficent, angry with the wicked, strictly impartial, and faithful witnesses. The Spirit, which is righteousness as well as truth, developed and inspired them. Each could fearlessly exclaim, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Many have attempted the task, but signally failed. The characters of Christ and the Bible are faultless! Is it credible? Yes: God's purpose required it, and His hidden power accomplished it. Compare John 14:6 with Dan. 10:21; Matt. 12:42 with Psalm 119:98; 2Cor. 5:21 with Psalm 119:172; Isaiah 11:5 with Psalm 119:86; Isaiah 9:6 with Psalm 119:129; 1Pet. 1:19 with Psalm 12:6; Isaiah 28:16 with Psalm 18:30; Heb. 2:10 with Psalm 19:7.

The assertion that the sanction given by Christ to the writings of Moses is to be taken in a limited sense is of serpent origin. Those who are beguiled by it are most certainly disloyal both to Moses and the prophet like unto him. How pertinent are the words addressed by Christ to this incredulous class—"Had ye believed Moses ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words." Note—not portions of his writings, but "his writings." Who misleads—Christ or the would-be-wise of the nineteenth century? Christ's allusions elsewhere to Moses' writings preclude to an unsophisticated mind (and those only who have such a mind are acceptable to the Deity) any limitation. Christ has referred to items dotted throughout the writings, and to those which from a sceptic's point of view are most incredible. Let us cling to Christ. It is his word which is to judge us in the last day (John 12:48).

Unless we are Abraham's children, we are mere creatures of the flesh, doomed to a death from which there will be no redemption. Abraham's children are distinguishable by their actions—"If ye were Abraham's children ye would do the works of Abraham." This test is simple. Abraham was content to abide God's time—to wander for a 100 years as a stranger in the promised land. He could have settled—he possessed a force of armed servants (Gen. 14). He could have returned to his native country—the opportunity was given him (Heb 11:15), But his appreciation of the covenant permitted him to do neither. Abraham's children are like him. They dearly prize the favour and promises of God. They forget the things behind, and press forward. They walk not the narrow way, casting wistful eyes upon the past. They are willing to wait—to patiently endure—even though death, as in Abraham's case, intervene between the promises and their realisation.

How practical was Abraham's faith? Imagine a man of substance, with numerous friends, possessed of a large retinue of servants, starting suddenly off without being able to say whither he was bound (Heb. 11:8). Abraham's children walk in Abraham's steps. They obey God, though often unable to see where the command will lead them. Abraham's children of today have received a call. They have been commanded to "come out"—to leave (in a moral sense) their idolatrous kinsfolk, and to confess themselves to be "strangers and pilgrims on the earth." They have been exhorted to pass the time of their sojourning here in fear. If faithful they exhibit their father's mind; they suffer themselves to be led by God and recognise that their surroundings are only temporary—that at any moment they may be summoned to leave them. Such a disposition is acceptable to God, and He is not ashamed to be called the God of those who possess it (Heb. 11:16). Will He be ashamed to call Himself our God?

To walk faithfully regardless of reward is impracticable. It is not Bible requirement. The Deity's arrangement (and His way is perfect) is set forth in the following: "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" (1 Cor. 3:8). Here is an incentive to work—to work hard, and the incentive lies in the prospect of remuneration! Some call this selfish. Be that as it may, it is selfishness *of a kind* which God approves. It is to be seen in the characters of the most estimable. Christ endured because of the prospective joy (Heb. 12:2); Moses had respect into the recompense of the reward (Heb. 11:8); Paul pressed forward for the prize of the high calling (Phil. 3:94). Regard for self is not unscriptural if it be fostered according to the divine mind. Man's interest (in the true sense) can only be secured by pleasing God. His pleasure requires us to practise self-abasement. This is a condition which discovers the godly from among the ordinary run of self-seekers. The condition involves a trial—a trial which alone can be borne by those who keep the reward well to the front. Who cannot heartily endorse the words of the Psalmist: "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living?"

The Religious World says that Paul was over-zealous, and that he stood upon an entirely different level from others in relation to the obligations of the truth. This notion betokens great lack of spiritual discernment. Paul has been specially set forth as an example for believers to copy. He was not mocking when he said: "Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, *do*." That Paul was immoderate is purely an imagination of the carnal mind. Measure Paul by the standard of Christ, and his actions then become but his "*reasonable* service." Has God over-regarded zeal or warmth in His service as a sin? Has He not rather esteemed it as a virtue? The divine law requires a man to love God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself. It is undeviating fidelity to this that makes the conduct of a man appear extreme. Reason out to its logical issues the Scripture doctrine of love to God, and love to man, and Paul's so-called eccentricities will present themselves in another light. Would that there were a Paul today! Let us daily and unceasingly strive to be Paul-like, and the God of peace will be with us (Phil. 4:9).

It is stated that there "is now a larger number of Jews in Palestine than at any period since the days of our Lord. There are more than 42,000 Jews in their fatherland—almost the same number as returned from the captivity in Babylon." This is extremely gratifying. Surely the end is near! A few years back and the idea of the restoration of the Jew was scouted! But "the Scripture cannot be broken." "Yet a little while" and another sign—"the sign of the Son of Man," "coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." The present aspect of affairs calls loudly to the diligent not to slacken their activity—to the weary to hold on—to the lukewarm to re-ignite their first love—to the slumbering to arouse themselves. What joy for us if Christ on his return should find us busily engaged in his work! On the other hand, what dismay if he find us shirking it! The word says that the two classes will await him. Let us be sensible, and elect to be among the right one. We have power to elect in this matter.

Morality from the world's standpoint is extremely shifty—very varied and ever-changing. The children of God have been delivered from this perplexing evil. They are blessed with one unaltering standard. That standard is God's word, made known in the neglected Bible, and exemplified in the life of Christ. This standard is high—very high—but its highness stamps its divinity. Let us not be stupid or wicked enough to attempt to lower it. Let us check firmly and effectually the rebellious heart which is always hankering to do so. God does not expect perfection from man. He has made every provision for the shortcomings of His duty-loving children. He delights in mercy, but He extends it only to those who acknowledge His law, and strive to obey it. For such there is no limit to God's forgiveness. Those who recognise the divine standard, feel their own unprofitableness, and appreciate the immeasurable kindness of God. This is an acceptable mind. To create it is the divinely-arranged outcome of the scheme—to engender gratitude, to prevent the flesh from boasting, and to bring all glory to God. Christ, and he alone, ascended to the divine standard. But God was the worker—"The Son can do nothing of himself." Christ is an exhibition of the principles of true morality. These principles we should make it our great aim to develop and establish in the mind.

What about the failings of Paul? Are we to copy these? But here we are assuming. Paul had failings undoubtedly, but what were they? And are they recorded? The evidence justifies us in saying that they were not grievous, and are not recorded. The evidence is as follows: "Be ye followers of Me, even as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1, 4:16-17)—"Ye ought to follow us" (2Thes. 3:7)—"Mark (with the object of imitating), them which walk so, as ye have us for an example" (Phil. 3:17)—"I have lived in all good conscience before God" (Acts 23:1, 24:16)—"Ye (the Thessalonians) are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe (1Thes. 2:10). Such, then, indicates the character of Paul. Let us be slow to charge Paul with unrighteousness. The ground upon which some are prepared to do this is flimsy in the extreme. The Apostle is said to have acted unscripturally when before Ananias—to have resisted evil—to have threatened (Acts 23:3). But the one who sets forth this view is indifferent to Christ's words (see Matt. 10:18-20), which make the Spirit, and not Paul, the author of the denunciation in question. Paul's habit, unless used by God for a contrary purpose, was to bless and not revile (1Cor. 4:12).

Bro. A. T. Jannaway—1887

Analecta Apocalypticæ (44)

The Second, Third and Fourth Trumpets

After this, there was an interval of peace. In twenty years, the time came for the second trumpet to sound. This was to affect the sea. "A great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures that were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed." We have already had to notice the mixing of the literal and symbolic as a characteristic of the scenes of the Apocalypse. The sea used symbolically stands for the populations of the earth (Rev. 17:15): but here, the sea is used geographically as indicative of the section of the Roman Empire next to be affected, viz., the maritime parts all along the coasts of the Mediterranean. Further on, the Euphrates is used symbolically of the power occupying Euphratean territory, and yet its employment is a literal indication of the territory where the power is to be found. In this there is mixture without confusion. The public are accustomed to it in the political cartoons of the day. Mr. Gladstone digging a grave for religious texts within sight of the Houses of Parliament in the background, is a picture misunderstood by none, though blending the literal and symbolic in a very marked manner.

The symbolic mountain of the second trumpet was to be cast into the literal sea. The "sea" of the Roman Empire is the Mediterranean Sea. What mountain was cast upon this sea with the destructive effects exhibited in the symbolism? The next page in the history of Roman troubles supplies the answer. It brings before us the Vandal nation which, under the first trumpet, had settled in Spain. This was the mountain as the sequel will show. It is no uncommon thing in the prophetic Scriptures to employ a mountain in this political sense. Babylon is styled "a destroying mountain" (Jer. 51:25):

the kingdom of God a great mountain filling the whole earth (Dan. 2:35-44). The Vandal mountain was thrown upon the Roman sea in this way. In Spain, where the Vandals were established, jealousy broke out between two of the leading generals of the Roman army. This led to war between the two sections of the army owning their respective leadership. In the conflict that ensued, one of them enlisted the aid of the Vandals, who, becoming thus aware of the weakness of Rome, formed the purpose of subverting the Roman power in Africa. In execution of this purpose, the Vandals crossed the Straits of Gibraltar. The breadth across is only fifteen miles. Across this narrow neck of sea, Genseric, the Vandal leader, led his people, and proceeded with wonderful rapidity and vigour to overthrow Roman power all along the Mediterranean margin of Northern Africa. His career was a most successful one and mostly maritime. He formed a large navy, with which he scoured the coasts and islands of the entire Mediterranean, almost without opposition. His devastations were widespread and grievous. He carried horses and horse-soldiers in his ships, and wherever his ships came to anchor, these were landed, and carried fire and sword in all directions. Tidings of these grievous visitations reaching Rome, Rome attempted to stop them by fitting out a rival fleet, and sending it to Carthage to attack Genseric's fleet, which lay there on a certain occasion. Genseric heard of the approach of the Roman fleet, comprising hundreds of ships. He got ready fire ships, which were let loose among the Roman ships on their arrival. The Roman fleet caught fire and was destroyed amid scenes of terrible confusion, aggravated by the attacks of the Vandals. The Romans got together a second fleet, but Genseric anticipated their movements by sailing to Rome, and subjecting it to calamities of a like nature with those inflicted by Alaric. All these evils affected the Roman third of the empire. They involved the sweeping of all Roman ships from the sea and the destruction of all Roman opposition to the Vandals, within the maritime area of the Vandal triumph. Such events could not better be symbolized than by the precipitation of a burning mountain into the sea, to the destruction of the ships and souls. They occupied a period of twenty years, and bring us to the middle of the fifth century, and the sounding of

THE THIRD TRUMPET

When the third angel sounded, "there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers and upon the fountains of waters. And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters because they were made bitter." Ordinarily, a star falling from heaven means the fall of an eminent personage from power: but that cannot be the only meaning in this case, because of the effects following the fall. It fell upon a region described as "the third part of the rivers and fountains of waters", with the result of inflicting great and fatal bitterness on the populations of the country so described. This does not usually follow as the result of a fall from power. Therefore, it is the military motions of a political personage, who inflicts great suffering before disappearing from view, that are exhibited to us — not only a star but a great star, a blazing meteoric body — not fixed in the regular heavens, but having a wandering and short-lived place in the heavens — a powerful military leader of brilliant but brief career. These features exactly answer to the case of the next chapter in Roman history: when the woes of the second trumpet had subsided, Attila, the king of the Huns, established in the Illyrian third of the Roman Empire, with the recognition of both the eastern and western sections of the empire, became a terrible scourge to the Roman or western third. His devastations were principally inflicted on the Alpine regions of Northern Italy, to which the description "the rivers and fountains of waters" is peculiarly applicable. As a characteristic description, it could not apply to any other region of the Roman Empire. The earth is cut up in that region as it is nowhere else with multitudinous rivers and streams, forming a complicated network covering the land. These are fed by the inexhaustible supplies descending from the eternal snows and glaciers of the Alpine mountain range. On these "the rivers and fountains of waters" in the Roman Empire, Attila's hand descended heavily. It is needless to recount particulars. Repeat the history of Alaric, and you have substantially the story of Attila. He made war on the Roman Empire on a formidable scale and with terrible effect. Success everywhere attended the march of his barbarian hordes, and desolation marked their track. Several provinces were depopulated by his armies. The only exception was on the eastern frontiers of France, where the Roman troops and their Gothic allies inflicted a check in the obstinate and bloody battle of Chalons. It was merely a check, however. It diverted the course of Attila's victories, but did not put a stop to them. It was necessary perhaps to give them the right direction. It sent him into Italy, where his work particularly lay. Here his power was irresistible. Wherever he went, according to an historian, "all was flight, depopulation, slaughter, slavery and despair."

Figuratively, he made the waters of public and private life bitter everywhere, with fatal effect to the drinkers. Wormwood was an appropriate name for the agent of such effects. But there seems a geographical reason for this name in addition. Wormwood (Apsinthos) is the name of a river in the Illyrian region ruled by Attila. This river would therefore be as characteristic of Illyria and the Illyrian ruler as the Nile is of Egypt or the Thames of England. It is a happy combination which in the same name gives us the local origin of "the great star" and the effect which his movements would produce on the western Roman third. When his work was done, his power and family disappeared. He was a great star while on the scene, but only a wandering star — not a fixed luminary in the political heavens — a meteor, which rushed and blazed with destructive brightness, and then disappeared in the midst of the destruction he caused.

Though, the destructive "great star" of the third trumpet thus twinkled out, the effects of its course were not of this meteoric character. The Roman Empire was going to pieces under these repeated blows. The successive inroads of the Goths and Vandals, Huns, etc., were disintegrating the empire of the Roman iron, and introducing the clay of the image feet. And they were laying the basis of the modern system of nations. In this respect, they fulfilled an important purpose in the plan of Providence. It was not the purpose of God that there should be another universal empire. The triumph of a succession of barbarian leaders, besides inflicting merited retribution on the destroyers of His word and His people, prevented the continuance of power at one centre. It broke up the vast fabric of human power erected by Augustus, and scattered the energies of the human race over a wide area, with the result of forming numerous centres of industry and refinement in the various capitals resulting from the subdivision of power. Thus was more effectively promoted that work of subduing and replenishing the earth as a necessary preparation for the kingdom of Christ. If we contrast the world of

that age with the world of this, we see what has been done. The countries of Europe were at that time largely covered with forest and uninhabitable; now, they are ripe and ready for transfer to that government which is to break in pieces all human governments. It is another among many illustrations of the diversity of purposes served by one and the same divine instrumentality.

The 12th verse of chapter eight introduces us to what every reader of the Apocalypse has felt to be the obscure symbolism of,

THE FOURTH TRUMPET

“And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.” The meaning of this apparently impenetrable enigma is to be found in a contemplation of the events succeeding to those of the third trumpet. Those events involved the eclipse of the Roman sun, moon, and stars, in a third part of them: that is to say, a third part of the Roman Empire — the western third — was extinguished, and its place occupied by the kingdom of the Goths.

The events of the first, second, and third trumpets, as already remarked, had reduced the power of Rome to the last extremity — the semblance of empire, but with none of the vigour that had for centuries controlled the world. There was still an emperor in Rome, but the barbarians whom the first three trumpets had called into the empire were the virtual masters of the State, and soon became its nominal and actual masters. The Emperor at this period was in fact a nominee of the barbarians. He was the son of one of Attila’s ministers — Orestes, the foreign secretary, and placed on the throne by that official. The name of this shadow of an emperor — this last of the emperors — was Romulus Augustulus. He was a weak man, and a mere tool in the hands of the barbarians, who finally disposed of him in this way. The barbarians demanded that the third part of the revenue of the country should be divided amongst them. To this, Romulus Augustulus and Orestes his father, would not consent, whereupon the barbarians revolted under the leadership of one of themselves, named Odoacer, in the war ensuing upon which, Romulus was overthrown. Romulus was then compelled by Odoacer to send his resignation to the Roman Emperor of the Eastern third (Zeno, reigning at Constantinople); and at the same time, to make request that “the throne of universal empire should be transferred from Rome to Constantinople”, and that Odoacer should be appointed the representative of the Eastern Emperor in the west. This resignation and petition were accepted, and for fourteen years Odoacer, king of the Goths, reigned in Rome as the representative of the Eastern Roman Emperor.

But even this lingering light of Roman imperialism in the west was to be extinguished as the symbols required. Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, made his appearance from the north, and in a succession of battles, overthrew the power of Odoacer, on whose assassination, A.D. 493, Theodoric set up the kingdom of the Goths in total independence of the Eastern Emperor. The Roman Empire then ceased to exist in the western third. The result was a state of things exactly answering to the symbols. The Roman sun, moon, and stars were shining in so far as the Roman Empire continued to exist in other parts; but they were under eclipse in the western third, which, historically considered, was the principal third, and therefore these bodies, considered as political symbols of the system, shone not for a third part of the Roman day and night. Plainly speaking, the fourth trumpet foreshadowed the extinction of the Roman Empire in the west, in a manner intelligible enough when it is recognized that a political system is considered as the figurative counterpart of the natural universe of sun, moon, and stars. The Roman system in the third part was brought under total eclipse by the events following on those of the third trumpet, which is the key to the otherwise dark symbols of the fourth.

The first four trumpets having accomplished their work in the west, attention was drawn to the remaining three, in words of foreboding which were amply justified by the terrible events that harassed and afflicted Europe for many centuries after the darkening of the third part of the Roman day and night. John “beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound”. The meaning of this it will be our duty to consider in the next lecture.

Berean 2009-35

Arranged from the writings of Bro. Robert Roberts by Bro. Bob Widding

Hints For Bible Markers

Loving each other is a commandment. Failure to do so is falling short of the obedience required. It is easier to love those who are like minded in the truth. Even easier when they are true brethren in obedient action to Christ’s commands. It is harder when we don’t understand the reasons behind another’s words and deeds. Even harder when we feel we have been confronted or chastised. But we are instructed to “*love one another.*” We will find it easier to be obedient servants if the love of Jesus is strong in us. We cannot love anyone without knowing them. Therefore we must get to know the brethren, especially those whom we do not care for, which is harder than getting to know those whom we are more comfortable with. The secret to success is in knowing Christ. To know Jesus well, to come to love him sincerely and deeply is through knowledge. That knowledge can only come by spending as much time as possible with the bible in hand and mind. Nothing the world provides will do it. It will only take us away from the love of God. (Proverbs 7:1-3) “*My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. (2) Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. (3) Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart.*” Bro. Beryl Snyder

The Commandments of Christ

As collected and organized by bro. Roberts

III. CONCERNING BRETHREN AND SISTERS

Love one another with a pure heart fervently.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. (John 13:34)

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; (Romans 12:10)

And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour. (Ephesians 5:2)

And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. (Colossians 3:14)

But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. (1 Thessalonians 4:9)

Let brotherly love continue. (Hebrews 13:1)

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: (1 Peter 1:22)

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)

(14) We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

(15) Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. (16) Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (17) But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? (18) My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. (19) And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. (1 John 3: 14 – 19) Berean 2009-36