

THE BEREAN CHRISTADELPHIAN ECCLESIAL NEWS

A monthly magazine devoted wholly to the Berean Christadelphian Ecclesial welfare, with the object of providing Ecclesial news, exhortations, articles and information of fraternal interest to the Brotherhood. Defending the original, foundation principles upon which the Truth was uncovered from darkness and upon which the Christadelphian movement was developed. Opposed to the dogmas of papal and protestant christendom. Upholding the Truth as The Berean Christadelphians since 1923.

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

CHRIST IS COMING SOON AND WILL REIGN ON EARTH

Ecclesial News

MILAM COUNTY, Texas

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Aug. 2011

Loving greetings in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

It is with deep sadness we write. We have found it necessary to withdraw fellowship from our brother Carl Hurst for walk and conduct unbecoming a brother of Christ. It is our prayer our brother will soon acknowledge the error of his ways, forsake those ways, and rejoin us in fellowship.

We are glad to report the visits of our Sis. Sarah Brown of the Austin Ecclesia and our Bro. Fred and Sis. Ruth Higham of the Detroit Ecclesia. Our Bro. Fred edified us with the words of exhortation.

May our Heavenly Father guide, guard, and direct our steps on our walk Zionward, and may our Lord's return find us all watching, waiting patiently and faithfully.

With love to you all, on behalf of the Milam County Ecclesia,
Your brother in Christ, Bob Wolfe

LIRA TOWN, Uganda

Hello Bro. Bob. It is great that we have baptised four candidates at Lira Town yesterday and they are: **Bro. Sam Oling** and his sister wife **Betty Akono**, **Sis. Saron Akullo** the wife of Bro. Moses Ocen, **Sis. Evaline Akello**, the baptisms took place at a river called Okole. We are happy that the new ecclesia has now birthed. You may pray for Lira Town ecclesia to be strong. Today we, along with Bro. Epa Wekati, have started our trip to Apac district and it will also take two days Lord willing. Our trips are good because of your prayers. I will let you know more. May the peace of the Lord be with you.

Love in Christ, Bro. Dennis

NAKALIRA, Kenya, Sunday school 9.00 a.m, Memorial service 10.30 a.m., Evening first principles to Bible students, Bible class Wednesday in the homes and Fridays in the hall, Brother Paul Wafula Walukana, PO Box 65, 50216, Kamukuywa, Kenya, phone: +254735191850 or +254714123293, Email: paulwalukana@yahoo.com

Brothers and sisters in the Master's Saving Name.

We are grateful for encouragement letters from brothers and sisters abroad. Since our last ecclesia news, happy events have transpired. We are pleased to announce from Adam's race brother Henry and sister **Jescah Tietie**, brother **Robert** and sister **Celestine Wamalwa**, sister **Everlyn Makokha** and **Everlyn Wamalwa** who gave good confession of their faith on 13th August 2011 before us having the company of

brother Epa from Kumukung'i ecclesia, brother John and sister Caro and Sunday school scholar Delma Simiyu, Mayanja ecclesia. They were immersed on 14th August 2011 in river Kamukuywa. We pray Yahweh to watch over them while walking towards Zion. Signs of the time are showing the imminent return of our Lord is near. May our Heavenly Father help and bless us all. May we hope to hear the word; "well done thou good and faithful servant....enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Mathew 24:21

Work continues to one seeking the Truth.
On behalf of the brothers and sisters of Nakalira ecclesia.
Your fellow laborer in the Lord's vineyard Brother, Paul Walukana.

KWEBSI, Kenya

We just received news from Bro. Moses Kassim and those in the Kwebsi Ecclesia, and they are doing well, despite the drought in the area. The children are all well, Thanks to the Father above and to the generous donation of the brotherhood. They have a good crop of maize, onions, greens and tomatoes. The harvest for October looks very promising, thanks to the irrigation and good farming techniques by the brethren there. Photos of the crops and the children were also sent so please look out for them when the next BCAF newsletter goes out to the Ecclesias. We know and realize that Yahweh is with those that fear Him and He will not leave us nor forsake us no matter what the perils are around us. We just have to understand that all is done on His time, not ours. Please keep the prayers and thoughts going for all in Yahweh's Vineyard whether near or far. May all have a blessed day as we await our Master's return.

Love in Christ, Bro. Bob Bent

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held Yahweh Willing)

CANTON FRATERNAL GATHERING..... **Oct 8–9, 2011**
Bro. Don Miller, 6695 Carriage Lane, North Canton, OH 44721 1-330-494-7717
GOLDTHWAITE STUDY WEEKEND..... **Nov 25–27, 2011**
Bro. Curtis Hurst, 250 CR 517, Mullin, TX 76864, USA. 1-325-985-3868

The BCAA

The Berean Christadelphian Audio Archives, or BCAA for short, has made available a large selection of talks on MP3 online. The address is www.bcaudioarchives.blogspot.com. Please check this link often as we will be updating with new material as much as possible.

The 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.

We are always looking for tapes, and if you have some talks that you would like to share, please email Bro. Craig Kiley (craigkiley@yahoo.com) and we will be happy to transfer the talks to mp3 format and post them.

Offence And Forgiveness

“But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Matthew 6:15

The thoughts of the exhortation are based upon the 18th chapter of Matthew, a very serious and powerful chapter. It describes a way of life, the very opposite of the natural way of the flesh. If we are not living in harmony with it, we not only have no hope of life, but we have assurance of the very dreadful punishment to which it alludes.

It has to do with offences - causing them and dealing with them - and with the spirit of forgiveness to the utmost depths of the heart.

The chapter begins, v. 1, with the disciples asking Christ who will be greatest in the Kingdom. Mark and Luke add more revealing details. From them we learn that they had been disputing among themselves about this; that Jesus knew their thoughts and asked them what they had disputed about, and that they were ashamed and would not say.

They were fleshly enough to dispute about it. They had enough discernment to be ashamed of it before him. They were learning. Only just before (17:23) he had told them of his coming suffering and death and they had been very saddened. Now they are squabbling among themselves like children. These men went on to be mighty, unshakeable pillars of faith. They had deep devotion and love and complete dedication of their lives to him and they grew up, they matured unto him.

Jesus, v. 2, called a little child to him. Luke says he *“set him beside him,”* Mark says *“he put his arms around him,”* - both very significant and very revealing details. And he said to the disciples, v. 3, *“Except ye be converted”* - the word means completely reversed, turned around in the opposite direction,- *“Ye shall not even enter the Kingdom.”*

There must be a complete reversal from fleshly thinking and doing to Spiritual thinking and doing.

How often proud wives or doting parents tell us about their husbands or children being ‘over’ so many people at their work. Being ‘over’ people seems to be such a wonderful thing to be had!- it’s power – it’s glory – it’s success.

But Jesus said, v. 4, *“Whosoever humbleth himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom.”* Any desire to be great and

important and powerful is fatal to the achieving of it. God has no place for that kind - that is the flesh.

A child is not consciously humble. It does not think about humility or deliberately try to act humble. To act humble or talk about our humility is not humility at all - no matter how sincere. That's just well-meaning hypocrisy. Humility is simply recognizing that we are nothing and having no difficulty facing the fact and living with it. We are no use to God until we have accumulated enough Spiritual wisdom to eliminate pride and desire for place and position. Humility cannot be contrived or consciously developed. It must happen to us as a result of learning and wisdom. It comes from seeing through the falseness and emptiness and groundlessness of pride.

It must have been a very little child. As soon as children become conscious of themselves they cease to be humble, the flesh takes over. They become greedy and selfish just like adults. Stupid, foolish boasting and pride begin increasing more and more as the flesh develops and matures.

Christ goes right on to the subject of offenses. This whole chapter is a consecutive, related discourse and it gives more meaning to all the individual parts if we recognize that fact.

We remember that the disciples had pushed little children away from Christ on an earlier occasion. It was part of their unbalanced outlook of their over-importance.

Jesus says, v. 5 , *“That whoso receiveth one such little child in his name, - because of him and his name - receiveth him himself.”* Mark and Luke go further and say that, *“whosoever receiveth such receiveth God,”* who had sent Christ and was in Christ.

It is clear there is now a transition from the literal little child Christ had set before them and had chosen as an example to the seemingly insignificant among the believers. These he begins to talk about now. Those who may not have a deep grasp, and may be in special need of consideration and care. To receive them is to receive Christ; and to offend them is to offend Christ. A dreadful responsibility upon those who consciously and unconsciously think themselves the strong, the capable, the more understanding, as, of course, most of us naturally do.

Verse 6, *“Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”* This is a terrible warning! Have we given it sufficient thought as it applies to ourselves and our actions and our course of life?

The word 'offend' has somewhat contracted its meaning in modern use. Throughout the chapter and throughout the New Testament it generally means to cause others to sin or to stumble, or be discouraged or weakened. This is still the first definition that Webster gives, although not the common one at the present time.

This verse 6 teaches a very dreadful responsibility that we can never fully comprehend. All our actions have a bearing upon others. We either help or hinder them; strengthen or weaken them. And for the results of all our actions or failures to act, we must give an account at the judgement seat before Christ Jesus.

He plainly tells us here that if we are the cause of just one believer, however insignificant, stumbling or being weakened, we'd be far better off if we were obliterated in the sea and did not have to face him at the last day. This is not exaggeration for effect, this is plain, cold, sober fact. We shall, of course, repeatedly fail in this. The flesh is weak. But one of our greatest concerns in life should be to recognize our failures in this and seek forgiveness and as far as possible repair the damage.

Paul said that if meat made his brother to offend, he would eat no meat while the world standeth. This is not a special example of outstanding consideration on Paul's part. It is simply a plain statement of the necessary required working out of this solemn and dreadful warning of Christ to all his professed followers.

If we willfully seek our own pleasure and desires in anything, knowing it is upsetting and distressing sincere brethren and sisters and disturbing to the ecclesia, then we are completely cutting ourselves off from any hope of life. Love of Christ, we are told, is essential to salvation. Love of Christ means love of the Brethren. And love of the Brethren means always putting their welfare ahead of our own selfish pleasure and desires and gratifications. These are not our teachings, they are Christ's. We endeavor to extract them, so we may escape the judgement.

Jesus continues his terrible warning in verse 7. Truly there must be offenses, as he said, and divisions, and ecclesial and personal problems and difficulties. In the wisdom of God, these things are necessary for our development and training that the approved may be made manifest. That His people may be developed and His purpose fulfilled.

But woe indeed, woe indeed, to those who in any way are responsible for these things! How careful and prayerful we should be in everything we do! At best we shall repeatedly fail and need forgiveness, but any selfish willfulness or even thoughtless, self-centered carelessness, is

absolutely fatal, unless thoroughly repented of and purged from our hearts.

Verses 8 & 9 still pursue this solemn warning - If thy hand, foot, or eye offend thee - cause thee to stumble, or to be a cause of stumbling to others - cut it off! Pluck it out! Cast it away. Get rid of it while there is time - for it is better to enter eternal life maimed, than to be cast whole into the latter-day awful Gehenna of Christ's coming judgment.

How can we enter eternal life maimed with some part missing? Actually a lot will have to be missing and amputated. What does hand, foot and eye mean here - that must be ruthlessly cut off and cast away? Anything - however close to us, however useful to us, however precious or desirable to us, that stands in the way of the race for life, or that hinders anyone else in that race, must be cast off and gotten rid of.

Jesus is trying to get us to realize the terrible urgency and importance of these things, for this is life and death and time is short and we are so slow to comprehend this urgency, like a drowsy sleeper in a burning building.

We tend to just comfortably assume that we'll comfortably drift through life; comfortably attend the meetings (unless some worldly matter interferes or for some reason we do not feel like it); and then at last comfortably drift into God's Kingdom, who is so anxious to preserve us in glory forever, even though He is letting the common billions pass away daily into oblivion. What a delusion. What a pitiful delusion. One thing is certain, from this chapter and many Scriptures: if we are not very sincerely aware and concerned about the effect of all our actions upon the welfare and salvation of others, we shall never see life.

Jesus comes back in verse 10 to his little ones, the weak ones, the shallow, easily-offended ones. How easy to lose patience! How easy to feel superior! How easy to just plain forget and neglect! And that - the forgetting and neglecting - is what he is speaking of here.

"Take heed," - verse 10, - *"that ye despise not,"* - think little of - be unconcerned about - *"these little ones. . . . for their Guardian Angels stand in the presence of God."*

Perhaps they won't ultimately make it. We know many will not. Only a few. But woe to us in that day if anything we have done has contributed in the slightest way to their loss, or if we have failed to do everything humanly possible to prevent that loss.

What time or energy, therefore, do we have - or dare we waste - for anything except these urgent, eternal things? How can anyone waste their

time and be comfortable, or say they do not know what to do with it. How pitiful, when there is so much that's crying out to be done and is not being done. What does life in the Truth mean - life in Christ? A dreamy drift or a 24-hour-a-day dedication? Do Christ's words leave any doubt?

Verses 11-14 are about the lost sheep. The concern and exhortation is still about the weakest of the little ones. One of the first - and worst - things that evil man has ever been recorded as saying is, "*Am I my brother's keeper?*"

We righteously and rightly profess to abhor the callous cruelty of Cain's outlook, but how easily, in our pleasure and pre-occupations, we manifest the same selfish disregard and forget we are our Brother's keeper.

Our every act is for good or evil - for ourselves and for others. Nothing is neutral. Nothing is unimportant. Any missed opportunity for help or service is a sin that must be answered for. We are not put here just to fill space or to please ourselves.

Verses 15-17 deal with serious offences within the fellowship of God. Verse 17 makes it quite clear that these verses are within the ecclesial fellowship circle - for the final step, if necessary, is withdrawal.

Christ's first rule here is, and it is vitally important: speak to no one else about it, but go directly and privately to the individual concerned. What crowds, what vast crowds, will be turned away at the judgment seat of Christ just for neglect of this one command alone! How little its urgency is realized! How quick the tongue is to run on about others. How little its spirit is manifested!

And yet ignoring it or treading it down, the spirit of this command is probably worse in Christ's sight than any offense that we may be concerned about in others.

Must this course that Christ outlines here be followed in every case of offense and must it always be carried through to the final step?

There is much practical apostolic example showing that many errors and failures and shortcomings and offences fall short of requiring this serious course outlined here.

The general picture of New Testament instruction reveals that offenses fall into 3 categories -

1. Those that should be lovingly overlooked, yet prayed for.
2. Those that should be lovingly approached with an attempt at correction, but short of disfellowship.

3. Those that must be carried through to disfellowship.

Paul said: - *“Put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy, kindness, longsuffering: forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you.”* (And obviously here he is speaking of legitimate quarrels and concerns.)

John said, *“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death what must he do? He shall ask, that is in prayer of course, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.”*

The Law of Moses said on this subject and these verses come together in Leviticus 19, they are part of a pattern:

“Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer.

“Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart.

“Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor and not suffer sin upon him.”

We find these same 3 basic principles here in this Law of Christ: -

No repeating of the matter to others.

No secret bearing of grudges or offenses.

And a duty to personally and privately attempt to persuade and correct.

On this last point, everything depends on purpose, motive and previous preparation. The previous preparation must have been a consistent course of manifested concern and love. It is hypocrisy to profess that we are rebuking someone in love when we have never previously done anything else for them in love. The foundation of love must have been previously laid.

The pattern of Christ's commands is a solid, consistent, whole-life pattern. Not pieces we can pick out to suit us. We are in no position to rebuke if we have not previously and consistently loved and served. If our pattern is not full and balanced, then our rebuke is merely from the flesh. Let us not add hypocrisy to our neglect, but let us leave the rebuke to someone else, who unlike ourselves, has been faithful and obedient in love and service.

V. 17 “If he neglect to hear the ecclesia (interestingly enough this is the second place the word ecclesia occurs - the first is that very well known passage “Upon this rock will I build my ecclesia), let him be unto thee as a heathen and a publican.” Let us get the whole meaning out of this, but let us not let the flesh go beyond the legitimate meaning. How are we to treat heathens and publicans? Certainly we can have no fellowship or intimate communion or association with them, but equally

certain we must treat them, as we must treat all, with kindness and courtesy and helpfulness and graciousness and Christ-like love - not the love of fellowship, but the love of concern, service and desire for their well-being, as God loves the world.

Vs. 18-20 are a wonderful and unearthly promise, very difficult for us to comprehend the magnitude thereof, but they bring also a tremendous weight of responsibility and accountableness in all we do.

Jesus says: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.

"If 2 agree on anything they ask of God, it shall be given them.

"Where 2 or 3 are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Who is sufficient for these things? Our natural reaction is like Peter's: "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man."

God, through Christ, is offering us, is freely offering us participation and responsibility in eternal things.

It may be argued that since God is all powerful and knows everything from the end to the beginning, that this is actually meaningless. This is a matter of our bringing ourselves into line with what God Himself, from the beginning, intends shall be and shall be done. But there is more to these 3 verses than this. God is not just mocking us with a powerless, puppet-appearance of reality.

We are told that "The fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much" - and not just in relation to himself, but to others. This certainly means that things occur because of his prayer that would not have occurred without it. He has had a real effect on the Divine Plan - an effect programmed in from the beginning by God's foreknowledge. But none the less real and effective.

These verses create a tremendous responsibility, they lift our every thought and action to a much higher level of accountability. We are partners with God in eternal things. Our whole life must be in harmonious conformity with this same high level, or it is a mockery or hypocrisy. We cannot have one foot in these things and one foot in the flesh. If we want to be a part of eternity, we must leave the flesh behind.

We would perhaps prefer a less demanding role in the pattern of eternity, but God gives us no choice. It is this or nothing. The way of life is all or nothing. It must mean everything to us, and permeate every thought and action of our life or it means nothing at all.

V. 21: “Then came Peter to him and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till 7 times?”

Seven times is quite a lot to forgive the same brother for perhaps the same repeated, serious offense. There is nothing really small about Peter's viewpoint here, although it did not begin to be big enough to fit the glorious, spiritual way of life.

Jesus' answer must have been a terrible shock. For Peter felt very magnanimous with his seven times. On a similar occasion when he said they must forgive a brother 7 times in one day, they had cried, “Lord, increase our faith!”

But beginning with v. 23 Jesus gives a parable which, when properly thought through, shows that any reluctance in or restriction of full, eager, uncounted forgiveness by man destroys, for him, the whole way of salvation.

Divine forgiveness is the foundation of salvation, without immeasurable and innumerable divine forgiveness no man can be saved. The Body of Christ - the Redeemed - is pre-eminently the Society of the Forgiven.

If we are in the slightest degree restrictive in our forgiving, then we repudiate the whole foundation upon which our salvation is based.

Jesus makes this very prominent in the “Lord's Prayer” - Forgive us, as - to the same degree, in the same spirit, as we forgive others. We shall receive as we forgive.

We shall receive mercy, as we show it. We shall be judged, as we judge. We shall be forgiven, as we forgive.

Now, the question arises. Are we required to forgive if there is no correction or repentance, and forgiveness is not sought?

I am sure that pondering upon this question can lead to only one answer, for several reasons.

Jesus prayed for his murderers -

“Father, forgive them.”

He knew there could be no divine forgiveness without repentance and confession, but he made his desire and spirit in the matter very clear and put his powerful weight of prayer on the side of mercy. In pity for misguided ignorance he cleared his own spirit of bitterness and resentment. This is our example and it is wisdom. Forgiveness does more for the forgiver than the forgiven. Harbored resentment is a gangrenous, rottenness in the bones. We owe it to our own peace of mind to flush it out of our systems.

To bar the spirit of forgiveness from our heart until forgiveness has been sought is to rob it of 99% of its value and beauty. It is the largest heart that makes the first move.

If forgiveness is not asked, and we consequently carry resentment in our heart to the judgment seat of Christ, does it add to our hope and chances for divine mercy, or detract from them? Surely the answer is obvious.

We are commanded to manifest the spirit of beneficial love toward all. Non-forgiveness toward any breaks the universal pattern of this spirit, and therefore, destroys its meaning and power.

Jesus has told us in this chapter how fatal it is to our salvation to offend, or cause to stumble, the least and weakest of his brethren. He has labored over and over on this point with terrible words and warnings.

In closing this chapter, he has another dreadful warning to any who harbor the slightest, ugly seeds of unforgiveness in their hearts.

He speaks of the very well-deserved fate of the unmerciful creditor, himself so mercifully forgiven --

“Delivered to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due.”

There is an awful and awesome reality to this in the fiery judgment of the last day. “Delivered to the tormentors, till all is paid for.” For some - the critical, the harsh judging, the unmerciful, the unforgiving - there will be many stripes, before final annihilation.

The chapter closes: -

“So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do likewise unto you, if ye from your heart forgive not every one his brother.”

And it is at such a time as this, as we solemnly partake of the New Covenant in his blood, that we more fittingly examine ourselves in this respect, and so partake not to our condemnation.

The calling is high. The associations are divine. The responsibilities are great. The prize is infinite, endless joy. The mind must be holy and spiritual, purged of all the evil of the flesh, lifted up from the animal level to the divine level. Let us live wholly in the atmosphere of the Spirit and the mind of Christ.

—*Bro. Gilbert V. Growcott*

Walking in Newness of Life

Our readings have recently taken us through a momentous period of the world’s history. We have been in the company of Jesus and the

eleven, after Judas had departed, and listened to him as he likened himself to a vine, and the disciples as branches, and the Father as a vine dresser.

In the 15th and 16th chapters of John we have some of the most sublime sayings of Jesus. Verse 4 – *“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.”* And verse 6 – *“If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”*

We listened to Jesus as he paused and addressed the Father in prayer, and then proceeded to the Garden of Gethsemane, where he was arrested and led before Pilate.

We heard the conclusion of his trial and witnessed his terrible death, and beheld the loving hands that carried him to his tomb.

We were thrilled by the news of his resurrection, and walked with him on the way to Emmaus.

We gazed with the disciples as Jesus was lifted up into a cloud and disappeared out of sight.

Then, while about a hundred and twenty of the disciples were together, there came a sound from heaven like a mighty wind, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and we listened to Peter as he gave the first great address of his ministry.

What a week it has been! What sorrow! What amazement! What joy! Surely our hearts must have burned within us as we read our Bibles during this past week, as arranged in the Bible Companion.

But did they? How have we read? Did we have difficulty in finding time to read and then discover that we were very tired and the reading became burdensome—something that we must do each day as a necessary work? Or, was it a constant pleasure because of our great love for the One we are serving and our desire to be approved of Him when he comes?

What did we do during the past week when we discovered that we had some spare time on our hands? Did we turn to the pleasures of this life, or did we turn to the Word of God?

That is the test by which our future is to be determined—whether it will lead us unto life, or death.

Our belief and obedience of the Gospel resulted in our baptism into Christ. What an exalted position to occupy! *“For as many of you as have*

been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:27-29).

Now, says Jesus, *"I am the vine, ye are the branches."* John 15:4—

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine: no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

The important question for us to consider is—Are we abiding in him? Or, are we like those in Ephesus who had lost their first love? *"I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted" (Rev. 2:2-3).*

What more could be asked? What more could they do? They labored with patience. They kept the Truth pure. But what do we find? *"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Rev. 3:4-5).*

Yes, the works, labor, and patience still were carried on faithfully. But something was wrong. They had left their first love. Although they carried on faithfully in the breaking of bread, public testimony, and Bible classes, it was merely being done as a duty, and doubtless some were glad to get away to their summer homes where they could relax and do a little fishing over the weekend. However, they labored faithfully and did not grow weary. Yes, they carried out their ecclesial duties in a very business-like manner, but something was seriously wrong. The solution is found in Rev. 2:4-5. It was all done without the spontaneous pleasure that comes from love.

This kind of service does not please God. He does not want our labor and service if they are done as a burdensome duty no matter how patiently and faithfully they are done.

They did not repent. Things went from bad to worse, until A.D. 431 the 3rd ecumenical council was held there.

The great and eternal Father in heaven has offered us an opportunity to share in the glories of His Kingdom. All He asks of us is our

wholehearted acceptance of the offer. After all He has done for us—what does He ask? All He asks us to do is to choose between Him and the world whenever the choice is set before us. Not as a matter of self-denial, but of love.

Sometimes we hear the question, “Do you think there is any harm in doing so and so?” Why do some ask such a question? Because they have lost their first love.

One might ask, what constitutes first love? It is that love that comes to one as he realizes the Truth of the Gospel and the great salvation offered to men and women. A person thrilled by that first love just wants to serve God whenever and however he can. He meditates daily upon the things of the Kingdom and the Name of Jesus, and gives himself wholly to them. He is always found at his place at the meetings on Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Bible classes, not as a matter of duty but because of his full appreciation of what God has done for him and the joy he experiences in serving Him.

He knows that if he walks after the flesh, he shall die, and he also knows that if he walks after the spirit, he shall live. For, says Paul, “*As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*”

Wanting to walk worthy of God, his desire is to be led by the Spirit, because he knows that if he does not have the Spirit of Christ, he will have no share in him. He knows that the Spirit of Christ is a zeal for God—that it is the spirit of obedience—that it is a spirit of prayer—a spirit of sorrow—a spirit of walking in the Truth—a spirit of standing apart from the things of the world—a spirit of holiness, for without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. He also knows that it is a spirit of faith—a spirit of pure and dignified speech, and everything that is just the opposite to the spirit of the world. The two spirits are the extreme opposite—they are not compatible, and no one can act the part of both.

Christ and the apostles have shown us that although living in the world because of necessity, we are to keep ourselves unspotted by not partaking of the evil that is in it. When we come face-to-face with the evil and must make a choice, let us not ask ourselves if there is any harm in it, but rather is there any good in it?

One who has not lost his first love of the Truth well knows that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and that when he comes he will destroy the system of things that go to make up the world in its present

constitution. Therefore, he will make no friendship with a world that is so full of everything contrary to what he knows and loves.

Paul warned the brethren night and day with tears, calling their attention to the dangers that beset them on every hand. We need that warning just as much today. There is great danger that we may become content to know the Truth about the nature of man, the purpose of God, the necessity of baptism, the promises, the covenants with Abraham and David, and other essentials of the things of the Kingdom, and forget that we are expected to walk in a newness of life that will lead us unto salvation. There is also great danger of being content with our knowledge of the Truth and drift into a careless and indifferent Laodicean attitude that will cause us to think that we have all we need.

Let us carefully examine ourselves daily and make sure that we are truly walking in the Truth. Remember, Brothers and Sisters, we are not our own. As Paul has said, *“Ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s”* (1 Cor. 6:20).

To glorify God is to openly champion all the things that God stands for and to demonstrate before the men and women of the world that walking in the Truth is far superior to walking in the mean and ugly way of the flesh.

We have been, and now are reading much about the Law of Moses. It was a wonderful system in all its appointments, but it was more than a law. The very essence of it was to keep God continually before the minds of Israel. We read in Deuteronomy 10:12-13 – *“And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?”*

Israel, however, failed to observe the purpose of the Law and drifted so far away that in the days of Jesus, they were teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. What was the result? They were so steeped in tradition that they could not understand the signs of the times. When they heard Jesus and the apostles preaching the Gospel, they thought it was some strange religion they were trying to introduce. *“We know,”* they said, *“that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.”*

As we read these things our minds become incensed against the persecutors of Jesus, and we say to ourselves, *“Why could those people*

not see and understand that their Messiah was in their midst? How could they profess to be disciples of Moses and yet be so bitterly opposed to Jesus?”

Well, Brothers and Sisters, it is not so hard to understand as one might think. Even Paul could say, *“I was taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God as ye all are this day.”*

And again Paul says, *“They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge; they go about to establish their own righteousness and do not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God.”*

That is why Jesus could say of them—

“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.”

But you may say, “That couldn’t happen to me.” Oh, yes it could! It could happen to any one of us! Why? Because each one of us possesses an evil heart of unbelief. It is the greatest enemy we have to face. When we would do good, we find that evil is present. It is that continual warfare of the mind of the spirit against the mind of the flesh.

By nature we all possess the mind of the flesh. The mind of the spirit has to be acquired and developed. It is written that every word of God is pure. Therefore, it is the purifying influence of the Word of God that gives us power to combat our natural evil mind. The more we apply our hearts unto the divine ideas, principles, and affections exhibited in the Scriptures the easier it will be for us to walk in the Truth.

We have a beautiful pattern in Psalm 119, from which we have selected a few gems—

10 – *“With my whole heart have I sought Thee: O let me not wander from Thy commandments.”*

11 – *“Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.”*

18 – *“Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous thing out of Thy law.”*

40 – *“Behold, I have longed after Thy precepts, quicken me in Thy righteousness.”*

105 – *“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”*

If our minds become saturated with the Word of God, we will want to read it more and more. We will fully appreciate what God has offered us and what Jesus has done for us. We will want to serve Him in every way possible. No matter what duties come to us—be it presiding, lecturing, or serving as hall steward—we will want to be on the job, not as a matter of duty, but because of our love for God and a deep appreciation of the great salvation He has offered us.

And this is love, says John, that we walk after His commandments. And says Jesus, *“Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.”*

Who wants to be a friend of Jesus? Who wants to meet with his approval when he comes? Who wants to have his body changed and fashioned like unto his glorious body? Who wants to be with Abraham and Jesus in the Kingdom of God?

Surely our presence here this morning would indicate that we all want to attain unto these great things. If so, then let us face the facts, and not forget that the Truth is a serious business; therefore, let us give it all the attention we possibly can, for it is written, *“Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings.”*

The Truth is the greatest business we can set our hands to; therefore, let us be truly diligent in it.

Bro. George A. Gibson

Bowels Of Mercy

“Put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy, kindness, longsuffering: forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you.” Col. 3:12

Sometimes when you write a talk and I am sure some of the brethren have had this experience, it is like a semi going down a mountain with no breaks. It starts flowing out of you so fast you cannot put down on paper. It comes out so much faster than you can get it down. It is hard to stop and take a brake because it is coming out and can't be stopped. Other times when you write a talk it's like that same semi, still with no brakes, being pulled up that same mountain by a Ford Pinto. It is a struggle to get it out. I will leave it up to you to figure out which type of talk this one is.

Whether this talk was one that poured out or one that was a struggle to get out.

Mercy is a very interesting subject. It is a difficult subject when you think about it. Many people are thinking it can't be that difficult because God says that He gives rain on the just and the unjust. But when one thinks about it, why is there rain? God does not send rain for the unjust. God only sends rain for the just, but he does allow it to fall on the unjust. But he doesn't send it for them. In a like manner God's mercy is only for those who want to live, those who want to be obedient to His commands. If we are not willing to put the effort into being obedient to His commands, if we want to walk through life thinking, "I was baptized a Christadelphian, I'm saved," if we want to walk that way, and if we do not want to struggle to obey the things that God commands us to obey, then we are wasting our time. The time God has given us. His mercy is only for those who obey.

That brings us to the title of this talk. When I received the title to the talk I was amazed. I was struck by the terms used. When was the last time you heard someone say, "Open up your bowels of mercy?" Or a brother praying to God asking God to open His bowels of mercy? It is not a phrase that is used today. But the apostle Paul did say it. Why would he use such a curious term as bowels?

Why would Paul choose this word? In times past people felt the bowels were the seat of man's emotions. It had a much deeper meaning to different cultures in former times compared with today. History records its use in ancient writings like the Greek poet, Aeschylus (es-ka le an – long e in le). He would use it in terms of emotion. As a matter of fact, the Greeks regarded the bowels as the home of the more fierce passions. For example anger and love. However, the Hebrews thought of them as the seat of tender affections, especially kindness, benevolence, and compassion. These historical ideas explain some of the reasons we use the phrase "gut feeling" today. The Greek word has a closer connotation as a word used for the principal internal organs, that is all those located in the chest cavity. We can see then, that Paul meant to convey the idea of kindness coming from our very center or core. Something which is deep within us, unfeigned. It may be difficult for some of us to realize the great importance of mercy! Mercy must be an emulation of Godly mercy, not the corrupted form man considers to be mercy. Just as man corrupts everything, man has corrupted the concept of mercy. The only true way for us to understand mercy is through the Scriptures. Because of the

corrupting influence man has had on the concept of mercy it may be difficult for some of us to recognize the true actions and implications of Scriptural mercy. Jesus declared mercy to be one of the more important matters of the law. He said, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.” (Matthew 23:23) Judgment, mercy and faith, these ought ye to have done! No wonder these need to come from deep within us. Jesus declares mercy to be a very important character trait. Possibly a life threatening character trait. A weightier matter when standing at the judgment seat. And Solomon says that “a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” (Ecclesiastes 4:12) Matthew's record places mercy as one of a threefold characteristic we are to possess. The importance of understanding and being merciful cannot be overstated.

When we look at the words translated mercy we find there is more than one Greek and Hebrew word. I am in no way a Greek or Hebrew scholar, so these thoughts on the words must be understood to be my own ideas drawn from the context and various lexicons, dictionaries, etc. I will be using the Strong's numbers sometimes, so I don't have to try to pronounce the Hebrew or the Greek. We find four main words in the new testament which are translated mercy. G1653, G1656, G3628, and G3629. They seem to be paired in two groups. The words in each individual group being related to each other but neither group is related. The Septuagint nearly always renders checed ([ka said] H2617 – *kheh'-sed*) the most commonly used Hebrew word with eleos ([el-a-os] - G1656) the most commonly used Greek word. All the words used do seem to convey the idea of mercy as compassion. Which can be expressed in English as loving kindness which communicates the sense of the Hebrew checed (H2617). As the Septuagint nearly always renders checed (H2617) with eleos (G1656) so this must be the closest Greek word to the Hebrew. It does help us to understand mercy if we do think of it as loving kindness. With a Scriptural understanding of love and kindness.

If we would turn to Hosea 2:19, where the beauty and mercy of the age to come is declared, as the house of Israel returns from it's current Lo-Ammi and Lo-Ruhamah state, to a much happier time as the scene of fruitfulness and joy. In this verse we see checed (H2617 – *kheh'-sed*) translated as loving kindness and racham ([ra l lck am] H7356) as mercy. “And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me

in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness (cheched - H2617), and in mercies. (racham – [rack am] H7356)”

It may seem very strange, but people have many different ideas of what constitutes mercy. The people of the world do not understand mercy. They have a very skewed view of it. There are very diverse and assorted notions of what is mercy and how it is expressed. Just as the Greeks and Hebrews disagreed on the seat of emotions, many people fail to understand mercy. They have developed a very skewed view of mercy. In a public speech a doctor of divinity expressed the idea of what some Christians feel God's mercy is “the three Abrahamic faiths, Judaism, Christianity and Islam...all born in a world of violence.” (paraphrase) coming together for a peaceful coexistence. A world living together in peace and harmony, with all religions too. This was expressed by the Reverend Professor James Haire (with enough letters after his name to write a sentence or two.) AM KSJ MA PhD DD DLitt DUniv, Professor of Theology of Charles Sturt University, in a public speech at the New South Wales Parliament. He actually feels God's mercy will show forth when all the religions of the world will live together on earth in peace and harmony. We do know that all the world's religions will be destroyed at the time when man will be brought low and true religion will be known throughout the earth. And that religion is based on mercy, true mercy, God's mercy.

The fact of the matter is, that all men need mercy. However, most do not realize or acknowledge it. The Law of Moses made man's need apparent. “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.” (Romans 3:19) But why? From the RSV “For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all.” (Romans 11:32) Not to all men, but all those who perform the conditions that make God's mercy a possibility. The cry of the churches of the world is “Lord have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!” For they have done those things that ought not to have been done, and left undone those things which are needful to do. Miserable sinners in whom there is no knowledge, belief, and obedience are not included in the “all” Paul spoke of in Romans 11. Some of the characteristics that are needful are listed in the topic verse, that also is a Commandment of Christ, Colossians 3:12, “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;” The word ‘holy’ in this verse is rendered ‘saints’ in many places. This would make ‘beloved saints’ a better

translation. “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, beloved saints, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;”

It may not be possible to express our deepest sympathys to the unbeliever. Although, when we think of those whom we know and love that do not know Christ we must have a very deep sympathy towards them. Obviously, they cannot understand what or why we would have such a feeling or how to respond to it. But a true saint cannot but help feeling sympathy and therefore willing to show mercy to the unbeliever. Even if they possess the wealth of a Buffet or Gates, the mind of a Hawking or Einstein, or the power of a President, King, or Pope, they still have nothing. Wealth is temporary as the Scriptures declare (Job 1:21), “Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” The mind is useless without knowledge of the Truth. Without God’s instruction we would not even know good from evil. (Ecclesiastes 2:26) “For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy” (Proverbs 2:6) “For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.” Power is an illusion for is not God all powerful and does not the Bible declare (Daniel 5:21) “the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He appointeth over it whomsoever He will”? It is written in Ecclesiastes (6:12) “For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?” It is impossible for a man of God to not have sympathy for those who have no hope! It is mercy that prompts us to proclaim God’s righteousness, as living examples, unto them. That we might, although imperfectly, show forth the beauty of holiness and the way of salvation. For God dwells not in temples made with hands but in the hearts of his worshippers in spirit and in truth. (Ephesians 3:17) “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;”

Now it may cross some minds that James tells us (James 4:4) “know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” Should this cause one to shut up his bowels of mercy to those who know not God? Paul wrote to the (Galatians 6:10) “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men,” Is the Bible at odds with itself? Impossible! There is a big difference between doing good to nonbelievers and cultivating friendship with them. It is our duty to be careful to maintain that difference. We would not wish to hear the words Jehu said to Jehoshaphat after the death of Ahab his friend, “Shouldest thou help the

ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD.” (2 Chronicles 19:2) We can show mercy to the ungodly without joining in on their plans and pleasures. We are to (Colossians 4:5) “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.” Now is the time of the kingdom of men and all the people of the world will have is a brief existence in this, our probationary period, which amounts to nothing.

Although Christ declared, “I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me”, (John 17:9) we see he did have mercy regarding individual sins against him. He asked God to forgive individual wickedness. Such as the prayer recorded in Luke (23:34) “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.” And as in Christ’s example we find Stephen following in like manner. (Acts 7:59-60) “And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. (60) And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” We forgive those who sin against us, when we privately pray for them in the spirit of our Master. A brother who can accomplish this, may heal the wound and remove painful sorrows.

In the verse quoted earlier, when Paul was writing to the Galatians in the 6th chapter 10th verse, Paul also includes instruction concerning the brethren. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” All things already said would also pertain to the brotherhood. We should never pass up an opportunity to do good to a brother or sister when we can. Isaiah 58:6-9 “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? (7) Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? [or sinful nature] (8) Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward. (9) Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;”

The practice of loving kindness towards the afflicted is one of the more beautiful characteristics we are to develop. It is one, however, that is

extremely difficult to cultivate. It is not in our nature to show mercy to those who need it. Our predisposition is to shut up our bowels and go on our way. The only way to overcome this tendency, as with any of our multitude of character flaws, is keeping our heart and mind centered on God and His son, with constant reading, study, and reflection on the Bible. Always remembering the fleeting character of the things of this world and glorious age that has been promised to those who love God.

We get a notion of how God views mercy when we read of Moses, asking to see God’s glory, Yahweh said (Exodus 33:19) “I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.” Paul quotes this verse when explaining in the 9th chapter of Romans (9:15) that being called to a knowledge of the Truth does not imply unrighteousness because God calls one and not another. There is always wisdom and purpose with God’s choice. If men will accept mercy He will give it to them. If they will not He will not show them mercy. Many men say they want mercy but it is as the world deems mercy, not the way God reckons mercy. Keeping in mind loving kindness as the meaning behind mercy we read Exodus 20:6 from the RSV, “but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me **and keep my commandments.**” Therein lies an important precept. Keeping God’s commandments out of love.

We live in an age when, if there is belief in God at all, no one questions whether their thoughts or actions are righteous or not. The prevailing sentiment is Jesus Christ has died for our sins and therefore there remains nothing for us to do, except simply believe on him. To the people of the world it is a wonderful thing. It is a beautiful thing. It allows man to go ahead and do as he pleases. We always try to find ways to justify what we want to do and what we do. It is a terrible thing to try to justify what we do and what we want to do. There is no justification before God. There is only obedience. There is a problem with our minds in which this idea, “Our God is merciful and will forgive everything” can easily creep into our thinking. This is a mental falsehood, a trap that we can fall into without realizing it. We continually think our God is a merciful God and will forgive us our trespasses. We march through life doing as we please, with minimal thoughts of God or His commands. This is not how the Scriptures tell us to live. We must continually be on our guard. (Philippians 2:12) “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Working hard, on our salvation, (Ephesians 6:6) “Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of

God from the heart;” Helping our brethren, whenever possible to achieve the same goal. That is the important concept of mercy. The only true mercy is helping one another get into the kingdom. Having our eyes open to the natural and spiritual lessons that have been provided. Always keeping the Word in our hearts and on our minds, not for one moment surrendering to either our own desires or the pressures of current opinions. It is quite possible for us on the first day of the week, to eat the bread and drink the wine in a spirit not at all acceptable to God. On the other hand, it is possible to partake of the memorial in a spirit that is acceptable. It is up to us, no one else, which spirit we have. It is our choice, no one else can choose for us.

The “weightier matters of the law” “judgment, mercy, and faith,” are so highly valued by God that He even speaks deprecatingly of the sacrifices which He has appointed, **when these things are lacking** “judgment, mercy, and faith.” Christ on two occasions told the Pharisees (Matthew 12:7) “But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.” Jesus is reminding them of God’s condemnation of Judah and Israel in the 6th chapter of Hosea (6), “For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” Christ’s remark shows we must obey and interpret God’s commands with the spirit in which they were established. Think about what the Scriptures are declaring, “I desire mercy not sacrifice, the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” Knowledge, think about that next time when the TV is to be turned on. We have a Bible, READ IT! We have *The Law of Moses*, *Elpis Israel*, *Eureka* READ THEM! They are easily available to each and everyone of us. They should be read. Especially the Bible. Followed by Eureka. God requires knowledge more than burnt offerings. More than sacrifice. That's where our hearts and our minds should be. By means of a spirit of righteous judgment, mercy, and faith. That's what God wants out of us. Righteous judgment, mercy, faith. The development of these attributes is one of the purposes behind the Lord’s commandments. Wisdom shows that only in obedience to these commandments is God’s glory truly understood and honor genuinely given.

There is a sister who thinks she is showing mercy by feeding the poor and taking care of drunks. She is no longer in fellowship. The Christadelphian beliefs were too restrictive, so she now belongs to the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army lets her do as she wishes without restrictions. She thinks she will be rewarded by God, although she ignores His commands, because she shows mercy to the poor, drunken, and

mentally ill. She is now walking through life with total disregard to God's will. I am not saying any of us are doing like things but many of us feel we are going to receive mercy at the judgment. The thinking of the flesh, "I did this wrong but God will forgive me." Or, "Although I deliberately disobeyed God's command He will forgive me." We cannot say that that sin will not be forgiven at the judgment. But we cannot say for sure it will be either. We cannot walk around thinking God will forgive us for deliberately disobeying and disregarding the things God says must be done. God's mercy endureth forever but His mercy is for the obedient. (Matthew 22:14) But Christ tells us "For many are called, but few are chosen." We know that not all the brothers and sisters will get into the kingdom of God. Getting into the kingdom is something we have to work at. We cannot earn our way into the kingdom but that does not preclude working toward that goal. However, we can show that we are willing to accept His mercy by being obedient to His commands. We have to show we are willing to accept mercy for God to extend mercy. The Lord Jesus Christ is the fundamental demonstration of this. He above all others loved God, and kept His commandments. Through the loving kindness of God he has received everlasting life (The Christadelphian, Volume 50, 1913, Page 209). We, by means of him, are able to receive God's mercy on the same conditions, **love God, and keep His commandments.**

Paul tells us through the epistle to the Romans (2:6) God "will render to every man according to his deeds." It is very important we remember this, to keep it on the forefront of our minds. There it is likely to have a desired effect on our minds, keeping us from the temporary pleasures of this world, our minds centered on the glories to come. We will have an impartial, just, and merciful judge. But it is on the present time we will be judged on. Now! Yesterday is over and cannot be changed, therefore we must worry about now. The present is the most important time to us, because the judgment is only a disclosure of the present, a proclamation of how we have used the time God has given us. We know what God commands us to do. If we don't know, we had better find out. It is in the Bible, if we take the time to read it and think on the things written therein. We know that Jesus will be a righteous judge. He will not be any different judge than teacher. Therefore, the standards that he taught as a teacher are the standards he will use as a judge. What he commends as a teacher he will approve as a judge. What he disapproves as a teacher he will condemn as a judge. He will require of us exactly what he says. (Hebrews 13:8) "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

We must consider our actions, the little things that we do. How many of us, on our way here, climbed into our cars and bowed our heads in prayer, asking God to watch over us, keeping us safe on our travels from our various homes to these campgrounds, fully persuaded that God would do this? Let us now create a mental picture, to help us bring an image of our actions to the forefront of our minds, that there may be some disaster going to befall us as we are on our journey. We have just prayed that God would keep us safe. God sends an angel to protect us. We turn on the radio and listen to the offensive sounds coming from the heart of man, something which is opposed to the will of God. The filth of the world pouring into our minds. Like the angel of God wants to hear such nonsense. Why can't we put on an exhortation? Or some hymns? Why would we pray for help and mercy and then do something offensive to God, like putting the filth of the world into our minds? Would these actions be in obedience to God's will.

Through James we learn, reading from the RSV, (James 2:12 – 17 RSV) “So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. (13) For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy; yet mercy triumphs over judgment. (14) What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? (15) If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, (16) and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? (17) So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.” The judgment will be according to our conduct. Jesus Christ, the perfect judge, will not show mercy to an unrighteous life. He will not accept one who has proved himself unworthy. We must redeem (Ephesians 5:16) “the time, because the days are evil.” The time is ours, to use as we wish. Helping each other, waiting on each other, caring for one another, and being hospitable are very simple things, easily done. Mercy can be as simple as letting the other person have the last word even though you do not agree with them, a minor thing that can be done by anyone. It is not the size of the deed that determines acceptability by God but the spirit in which it was done.

We can think back to the Bible story we often tell our children, the time of Naaman. Elisha told him to wash in the Jordan river seven times. Naaman gets upset and declares, do we not have mighty rivers in Syria? It was the simple act of washing himself seven times in the Jordan that removed the leprosy. If we do not understand the symbology of leprosy, we would suggest one turn off the TV and read *The Law of Moses*. It was a simple thing he did. It was not a great act. It wasn't the greatest deed

Naaman could have done. It was not the greatest thing he had ever done. It was a simple thing. Obedience to the word of God. Something we are also to do.

A heart full of loving kindness, will not intentionally be severe in judgment. The more our hearts are filled with loving kindness the less disposed we will be to judge at all. It is extremely important we keep in mind our own need for God's mercy. We must recognize our own faults. In doing so we will become understanding of the faults and weaknesses of others. If it should become necessary to make a judgment, it is essential we judge righteously, not by the world's standard but by the principles and precept laid out in the Word of God. And it will become necessary at some point in our lives. It is impossible to go through life without doing it. Mercy does not mean overlooking or excusing sinful behavior. With the examples provided for us in the Bible we see that with mercy, loving kindness, we should always be prepared to correct that which is wrong. Nehemiah is an example of a man of God prepared to give correction. Nehemiah 3:5 "And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord." Nehemiah 5:7 "Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them." Nehemiah 13:17 "Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?" Nehemiah 13:24-25 "And their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. (25) And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves." Loving kindness is always concerned with correcting what is wrong, with an attitude of understanding and concern. Not to condemn but to correct with love. Mercy should never interfere with obedience to God's commands. We must bear in mind God is jealous of His honor, unchangeable, desiring obedience. Mercy is bringing a person back into obedience to God. The only way into the kingdom of God is through obedience to God's commands and precepts. Disobedience does not help us obtain life eternal. We must always remember God is jealous of His honor. God is unchangeable, and has always desired obedience. His plans of mercy are secondary to the recognition of His own supremacy in loving obedience. He demands as a condition of mercy our best attempts in submission to His will.

Rebelliousness and stiff-necked, willful disobedience He will not tolerate. There are enough examples in Scriptures. That position should be fully understood. It is up to us to realize the only true mercy, the only mercy there is, the mercy that gets us into the kingdom of God. That is our goal. That should be our heart's desire. That is where every effort of our life should be placed.

—*Bro. Beryl V. Snyder*

Encouraging Words No. 23

“LOOK not every man (or woman) on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” This is one of the lessons set for us by Paul. Have we learnt it? Those, for instance, who are given to hospitality, to an extent perhaps to which we could never approach, do we look upon such, and, realising our own inability, do we honour and esteem them for their work?

Do we consider those who, through much patient labour and self-denial, have turned many from darkness to light, and, though we may be able to show no such record, do we rejoice at having such zealous, faithful sisters in our midst? Do we ponder the fidelity of those who, having nought but alien influences at home, yet by their attitude to the truth show greater love for Christ than for father, mother, sister, and brother, albeit the daily cross which these sisters bear is foreign to our experience? Do we think of the sister with few opportunities and mediocre ability, and note the wise use to which she is putting her one talent, remembering that from our possibly larger sphere of influence and greater ability proportionate results will be expected? The application of Paul's lesson could be greatly extended, for have we not sisters who minister to the sick, who cheer the afflicted, who support the meetings, who give away literature, who are forward in every good work? Do we look upon the labours of such in the way indicated by Paul? If so, we can rejoice that we are making progress in divine things. On the other hand, if we are wont to condemn all whose service is not of the same measure and pattern as our own, there is something wrong, and we require to readjust our views.

To master Paul's lesson in regard to looking upon the things of others, is to simplify a still more difficult lesson which the apostle has set, viz., “Let each esteem other better than themselves.” Let us have clear ideas of what Paul intended to convey by this injunction, lest we put upon it a

meaning other than was intended. Does Paul mean that the sister who excels in the art of needlework should look upon one who can scarcely run a seam as better able to conduct a sewing class than herself? Does he mean that a sister who is proficient in music should regard one who is devoid of this gift as better able to perform the instrumental part of a service than herself? Impossible. Paul does not talk nonsense. What he would impress upon us is that the sister of brilliant parts is neither to overlook the service of her apparently less-gifted sister, nor to fail to recognise that Christ, who looks at the heart, may bestow more commendation upon such an one than upon herself, inasmuch as far more effort may have been put forth by the one for the accomplishment of little, than by the other for the accomplishment of much.

By way of illustration, let us suppose our musical sister with her Sundays free. She is able to get to the meetings without difficulty, and the effort it may cost her to preside at the instrument is counterbalanced by the knowledge that she is performing a useful part in the service. Let us next suppose a sister with a husband unfriendly to the truth. This sister receives an unwilling permission to attend the meeting. In order to leave things straight at home, so that the ungracious permission may not be withheld another time, she arrives a little late. That her husband may find no just cause for complaint she hurries off directly the proceedings are ended. Is there any comparison between the respective efforts which these two sisters have put forth in order to show their love to Christ? Unless Paul's two lessons were heeded, might not the one sister be tempted to look upon herself as an exemplary helper of the meetings and therefore of far more value in Christ's eyes than the other sister?

A still more pointed illustration is to be found in connection with the widow's mite. How many who cast their gifts into the treasury would have esteemed the poor widow better than themselves? Let us remember that the principle which underlies Christ's lesson can be applied not only to money but to time, opportunities, ability, yea, to all that we possess.

Sis. C.H. Jamnaway—1908

Meditations – Deity's Ways No. 23

MEN of God walk by faith, men of the world by sight. Walking by faith implies an implicit confidence in the utterances of the Bible, despite appearances, which frequently seem to conflict with these utterances. Without faith no man can please God. Faith is not credulity, but a belief

founded on evidence. A credulous man is a simpleton, and God does not favour such. God would have our minds well furnished with reasons for the trust we have in Him. God has provided the material for forming these reasons. It lies mainly in the miracles of the Bible. To continually keep these miracles in sight is God's will concerning us. "Talk ye of all His wondrous works"—"Remember His marvellous works"—are the exhortations of the Psalmist. Faith will grow where these exhortations are heeded, it will wither where they are disregarded.

Once we have really grasped the truth, the next matter of overwhelming concern is our walk. In view of this, let us never despise exhortation, nor say that we have too much of it. An ecclesia is undoubtedly in a bad way when exhortation does not form a conspicuous feature in its arrangements. Paul's custom was to give "much exhortation" (Acts 20:2.) This is shown in his speeches and epistles. His expositions were always made the basis of a lesson. What Paul did, he has commanded us to do. "Exhort one another daily," said he. Elsewhere he added, "and so much the more as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 3:13; 10:25.) Of a truth that day is now rapidly approaching. In every direction we see something to solemnly impress this upon us: prophetic times expiring, Turkey disappearing, Russia extending, the nations arming, political and social questions complicating and increasing the Jews returning, the masses sleeping, a small community preparing to welcome Christ. Let us not be lukewarm in giving exhortation, nor insensible in receiving it.

The Bible propounds a code of ethics which the best of mankind admires (though unable to fully observe) and the worst opposes. This is a feature of the book which completely precludes the idea that it was written by unprincipled men. The Bible holds out to its faithful followers tribulation and self-abnegation in this life, and reward and exaltation in the next. This also excludes the idea of human authorship. The Bible from beginning to end is in its teaching harmonious. Take, for example, the following subjects: the nature of man, the nature and character of God, the destinies of righteous and unrighteous, the mission of Christ, the ultimate abolition of all sin, and the filling of the earth with the Creator's glory. Surely this harmony forms conclusive evidence of the divinity of the Bible, especially when it is remembered that it was not written by one man or at one time, but by thirty or more men (occupying almost every grade of life) during a period of 1,500 years. It must also be borne in mind

that the teaching of the Bible was directly opposed to the generally received notions of all countries and ages.

The Bible True! How the prophets would emphasise this fact if they could but see the wonderful and minute fulfilment of their predictions. How they would lift their voices in condemnation against the folly of indifference to the admonitions of that sacred book. Consider the burden of Nineveh—the capital of the Assyrian Empire—a city exceedingly great, powerful, influential, wealthy and prosperous. It is recorded that its store was infinite, that it had multiplied its merchants above the stars of heaven, and feared nothing and no one. Where is that city to-day? Nowhere—it has completely disappeared. Two centuries before the birth of Christ (several centuries after the delivery of the prophecies) not a vestige remained, says an historian, to mark the spot where the city stood; this is exactly what the prophets foretold. They said that God—by reason of its wickedness—would make “an utter end” of it (Nahum; Zeph. 2:13–15; Jonah.) There is a sobering thought arising from all this. Nineveh was not the only place doomed to destruction by the Spirit in the prophets. A “full end” is decreed against all nations (Jer. 47:23). “Wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy” (Zeph. 3:8). But the faithful need not be disturbed at this, for the same reliable word has said that “the Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him” (Nahum 1:7).

There is no commandment which would justify the exclusion of the alien from the meeting for the breaking of bread. On the contrary, there is a passage which shows that to admit them is both wise and scriptural—See 1 Cor. 14:23–35. The apostle’s argument holds good now. An interested and sincere stranger would undoubtedly be benefited by witnessing the impressive service of the brethren in showing forth the Lord’s death. By admitting such an one the brethren would by no means be compromising their separate condition. It must not be forgotten that the meeting room is not the spiritual temple. To admit an alien to the latter, by winking at unscriptural practice or doctrine, would be a sin. Let us, however, remember that although the alien may attend, the meeting is primarily for the brethren—for worshippers—and that in all the arrangements (whether for speaking or seating) these should have the first

(if not only) consideration. If a stranger attend, he should be informed, by conspicuous notice, that the meeting is for worshippers. Experience has shown that in a larger and rapidly increasing ecclesia, it is wise to separate the brethren from the strangers. This prevents the unavoidable awkwardness which is shared alike by brethren and strangers when the cup and plate have to be handed to some in the assembly and not to others. It also prevents all possibility of the alien partaking of the memorial feast. Where the brethren and strangers are seated indiscriminately it is impossible for brethren who have been newly immersed and for those from distant parts, to know which are brethren and which are not. It is not pharisaical to make this distinction, but expedient and scriptural. No interested friend who had the truth at heart would be offended at such a regulation.

It should be our constant aim to enkindle in our minds confidence in the unseen God. According to the measure of our success we shall be enabled to walk by faith. Let us strive to enter into Paul's conceptions of the love and power of God. The apostle fully realised that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the knowledge of the Father, that the disciples are of more value than many sparrows, that the very hairs of their heads are all numbered (Matt. 10:29–31). It is profitable to note the allusions in the apostle's epistles to the operations of God. A brother recovers from a dangerous illness. Paul assigns the recovery to God (Phil. 2:26, 27). A brother has a tender and practical regard for the adversity of others. Who created the regard? God (2 Cor. 8:16). A brother has strength to remain steadfast in the presence of a terrible wild beast in human form. Who gave the strength? God (2 Tim. 4:7). A brother has a reasonable and godly desire to visit a certain ecclesia in the interests of the truth. Who possesses the power to fulfil the desire? God (1 Thes. 3:2). A brother in great tribulation is comforted by the visit of another brother. Who bestows this comfort? God (2 Cor. 1:4). A brother has a righteous longing to be emboldened to preach the gospel. Who can gratify the longing? God (Eph. 6:19). These things being true, let us not be slow to recognise God in the affairs—great and small—of our life. Let all our undertakings be subservient to an "if the Lord will," not merely a D.V. on paper, but in heart. Let all our undertakings be accompanied by earnest supplication. God is the giver of every mercy, the author of all comfort, the source of all strength.

Bro. A. T. Jannaway—1889

I Know Thy Works

After the Spirit's introduction of himself by stating certain of his characteristics having some special adaptation to the Star-Angel Presbytery addressed, he forthwith declares to each of the seven, "I have known thy works"—Οἶδα τὰ ἔργα σου; and then proceeds to point them out, and to approve or reprobate them, as the case may be.

None of them seem to have been in so disgusting a state as this of the Laodiceans. The Ephesian was remarkable for labor, patience, and intolerance of evil doers; though they had some "liars" among them, who said they were apostles, but were not. The Smyranean was tribulated, poor in this world, but rich in faith; but not without blasphemers of the synagogue of the Satan. The Pergamian held fast the name, and had not denied the faith; yet had in it the holders of Balaam's teaching and that of the Nikolaitans. The Thyatiran was noted for love, service, faith, patience, and works more abundant than in their beginning: yet they tolerated teachers of the Jezebel type. The Sardian was dead, and the things pertaining to it ready to die; because their works were not perfect before the Deity. The Philadelphian had a little strength, had kept the word, and had not denied the name. All these had something to work upon by which the evils among them might be corrected; for even Sardis is exhorted to "strengthen the things that remain." But in regard to the Laodicean Star-Angel Presbytery it appears to have been in such a perfectly self-satisfied condition—in so thoroughly lukewarm a condition—that there was no possibility apparent of restoring it to health. There is no redeeming excellence cited in its favor. It was lukewarm. In an anti-amen state; unfaithful and untrue; and without zeal for the manifestation of the new creation, and therefore "removed from the hope of the gospel."

Being destitute of these qualities of the true believer, they delighted in the things that perish. Like professors of the nineteenth century, they said that they had need of nothing. They were rich in the wealth of the world, and high in favor with the powers that be. Being rich, they were influential in the state; and being lukewarm, they were not troublesome in bearing witness for the truth against the superstitions of the world. Hence, the world ceased to persecute them, because the world loves its own, and they had become the world's, in ceasing to testify against it.

But, though they regarded themselves so complacently, the Lord the Spirit, who seeth not as man seeth, contemplated them with great nausea

and disgust. He told them that they were ignorant of their true condition; as ignorant of it as our contemporaries are of theirs.

“Thou knowest not,” says he,” that thou art the wretched, and pitiable, and poor, and blind, and naked one.” They were “wretched,” being under condemnation; they were “pitiable,” being really wretched while they deemed themselves in bliss; they were “poor,” and “blind,” being weak in faith and alienated from the life of the Deity through the ignorance that was in them; and they were “naked,” being in their sins.

Bro. John Thomas Eureka Vol. 1 Page 408

A Repentant Sinner

A doctrine that locks the door (in all practical senses) on a repentant sinner - this is a terrible doctrine, an impossible doctrine. It is a doctrine of well-meaning people completely out of touch with life and reality and the true spirit of Christ. It is a doctrine of people who do not understand the whole instructive, developing, transforming, educating purpose of our present existence. It is a panic reaction that the corruptions of the world are going to overwhelm us. This danger is always very real, but the safety and solution is not in new and unscriptural rules, but renewal of our inner life and personal dedication.

If we approached even approximately close to the fulfillment of the divine requirements for the Bride of Christ, we would need have no fear from the danger and example of re-admitted and repentant sinners, however weak in the faith they might be.

We have shut our eyes to reality, to human needs. This is why we have dried up spiritually. When the original living fire and internal first-love strength of a community starts to dry up, it has to raise harsh barriers to keep the world from being sucked into its vacuum.

Sadly, I find very many Christadelphians more ready to condemn and expel than to take the trouble in compassion to disturb their own comfortable little lives and to actually put aside their own interests and pleasures and get out and really try to help the weak, and share their burdens and problems and sorrows. This has been a great source of shame, embarrassment and distress to me.

I thank God we have at least been forced to face this problem, and to perceive the Pharisaism of running away from reality and the problems of others, and “passing by on the other side” of a repentant sinner, just as if we were not all pitiful sinners ourselves, wholly dependent on the boundless mercies of God.

—Bro G.V. Growcott—1940

Hints For Bible Markers

Works are necessary to justify ourselves. (James 2:24) Some works are far more difficult to do than others. Money and time are very important aspects our lives and we will be accountable for our stewardship of both. Jesus has some interesting commands concerning money with which the fleshly side of man's nature has much difficulty. Our attitude towards money and it's use will not be left out of our accounting and could possibly fatally endanger our salvation. When God blesses our labors he fully expects that blessing to be used in the ways directed. It cannot be used for our own vain glory or self satisfaction. The wallet is considered to be the most tender part of a man, yet it is the least important thing in our lives. God is able to give all things that we need, which should be received in gratitude. Remember that God gave His Son for our benefit, a blessing which no amount of money can purchase. All He expects in return is our time, effort, mental exertions, and substance used in His service.

Bro. Beryl V. Snyder

The Commandments of Christ

As collected and organized by bro. Roberts

VI. CONCERNING YOUR ACTIONS

Give to him that asketh, and to him that is in need, visiting the fatherless and the widow in their afflictions; and give liberally and cheerfully, remembering that the Lord loveth a cheerful giver, and is well pleased with such sacrifices.

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. (Matthew 5:42)

Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. (Romans 12:13)

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. (2 Corinthians 9:6)

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7)

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (2 Corinthians 9:8)

But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. (Hebrews 13:16)

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. (James 1:27)

Do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 6:1)

Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. (Matthew 6:2)

But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: (Matthew 6:3)

That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. (Matthew 6:4)

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