

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 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

CANTON, Ohio – Sunday School, Sunday 10:00 AM; Breaking of Bread, Sunday 11:00 AM; Bible Class Tuesday 6:00 PM; at Mayfield Senior Center, Bro. Beryl Snyder, 4095 Prosway S.W., Massillon, Ohio, 44646

“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord” (2 Peter 1:2),

As the river of time flows onward human affairs are drawing ever nearer to the long awaited return of the Lord and the beginning of an age of righteous rule for mankind. We find the Constantinople leg of Nebuchadnezzar's image is flexing its limited muscle while leaning to the Gogien sphere of influence. Meanwhile the unclean Frog like influences of the French Revolution are bearing fruit. The evil released allowing the nature of man, with the me, me, me, my, my, my, I, I, I, attitude coming to the forefront; preparing the stage for the wrath of Deity which is to be manifested in that great day which has been so long desired. The exhortation is to keep our lamps well-trimmed and brightly burning for it is only those who so do that will be permitted to enter in to *“the marriage of the Lamb”* (Matt. 25:1-12; Rev. 19:7). *“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”*

We are pleased to announce that our Bro. Jerry Edwards has been accepted back into fellowship. Our Bro. John and Sis. Mary Phillips spent a week with us while Bro. John was recuperating after some minor surgery. We look forward to that day when we can be released from the influence of the medical establishment. When *this “corruptible shall have put on incorruption,”* (1Corinthians 15:54) *“And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick:”* (Isaiah 33:24) On the Sunday before his surgery brother John gave us the much-needed word of exhortation. Our sister Toots Stocker wishes to thank all those who sent her cards and letters. We have included her new address for those who may not have it:

Josephine (Toots) Stocker
Sterling House
Room 142
1119 Perry Dr. NW
Canton, OH, 44708

Many throughout the brotherhood long for the healing that will come with the return of Christ. The long-awaited call to the virgins, *“behold the bridegroom cometh”* shall soon be heard. Redeem the time, fill the lamps with oil, that we might be ready to go with him to the marriage, and not find out that it is too late, the door was shut. (Matthew 25:10)

Bro. Beryl Snyder, Recorder

HENGOED, Wales

This is just a reminder to the Berean Brotherhood that Hengoed's Ecclesial Gathering for 2012 will be held, God Willing, on the 25th to 28th of May. The Venue is the Ceridwen Centre in West Wales.

The Theme for the gathering is "Eight Lectures on the Apocalypse".

Subjects are:

- (1) An Introduction to the Apocalypse
- (2) Time Periods of the Apocalypse
- (3) The Seven Seals of the Apocalypse
- (4) The Seven Trumpets of the Apocalypse
- (5) Blessed is he that Keepeth the Sayings of this Book (Exhortation)
- (6) The Beasts of the Apocalypse Explained
- (7) The Seven Vials of the Apocalypse
- (8) The Seven Ecclesias of the Apocalypse

The gathering will formally commence on the Friday evening and will finish on the Monday evening after the Daily Readings. Prior to the daily readings on Monday, we will be visiting the town of Newcastle Emlyn followed by a visit to the National Wool Museum of Wales.

Airports:

The nearest airports are Cardiff (approx. 45 mins. from where we live), Bristol (approx. 1hr. and 30 mins), Birmingham (approx. 2hrs. and 30 mins), Heathrow (approx. 3 hrs), Gatwick (approx. 3hrs and 30 mins) and Manchester (approx. 3 hrs and 30 mins).

Ports

For those planning on flying into Dublin (Ireland) and catching a Ferry across to West Wales, please be aware that the Irish Sea is notorious for being rough (not a trip for those who are prone to sea sickness!). There are two options, the first is the fast Ferry (Fast Cats) which takes approx. 2.5 hrs to complete the crossing into either Pembroke Dock or Fishguard, but the ride is bumpier than the larger ferry which takes approx. 3.5 hrs to cross.

If you would like to be collected from a Port or Airport then please let us know and we'll happily arrange for you.

As the gathering is now only a few weeks away, we would be grateful to all those who plan on making the trip to contact us at malesinwales@btinternet.com as soon as possible so that we can make the necessary arrangements for catering and accommodation etc.

A warm welcome is extended to all. We very much look forward to meeting with our brethren and sisters around a study of God's Word on the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ. All plans are subject to our Heavenly Father's Will.

Love in Christ,
Bro. Steve Male

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held Yahweh Willing)

WALES FRATERNAL GATHERING.....**May 25–27, 2012**

Bro. Stephen Male, malesinwales@tiscali.co.uk

LAMPASAS FRATERNAL GATHERING.....**June 9–10, 2012**

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

HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING..... **July 23–29, 2012**

Bro. Mark Braune, 209 Ranger Dr., Buda, TX, 78610, 512-757-3088,
markbraune@gmail.com Study, "Ecclesiastes"

TENNESSEE FRATERNAL GATHERING..... **Oct 6 –7, 2012**

Bro. Jim Rankin, 115 Sherwood Dr., Camden, TN 38320 USA, 731-584-6039,
email jrankin@bentoncountycable.net

GOLDTHWAITE FRATERNAL GATHERING..... **Nov 23–25, 2012**

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

Information available at: www.christadelphian.com/gw/gathering/

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.

Let Us Rise Up and Build Part 4

*“Mourn not, nor weep; neither be ye sorry, nor
grieved, for the joy of the Lord is
your strength—Neh. 8:9-10.*

Nehemiah's next concern (7:4) was with the inhabitants of the City—

“The people were few, and the houses not builded.”

And he says—

*“And my God put in my heart to gather the people that they might
be reckoned by genealogy.”*

We notice that Nehemiah has a single purpose—the *peace and prosperity of Jerusalem*—and he proceeds in an orderly way from step to step. He says so often, “*My God put in my heart*” to do this or that.

All action must be based on prayer and study of the Word of God, seeking guidance—

“It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.”

We must learn, and remember, that as natural, animal creatures we have neither the knowledge nor mental capacity to determine our course of action ourselves. Man, with all his pride, is utterly and

constitutionally incapable of knowing what he should do even from moment to moment, let alone the big issues of life.

For the foundation of his genealogy, Nehemiah first goes back to the record of those who came back from Babylon 100 years before under Zerubbabel. The rest of ch. 7 is this list, which is identical, except in minor detail, with that in Ezra 2.

It is thought more probable that Ezra's list is the way it was when made up in Babylon before leaving, while Nehemiah's is a list made after arriving in the land, with adjustments made for any changes that occurred in between.

* * *

THE WALL was finished on the 25th day of the 6th month, just a few days before the beginning of the 7th, in which the joyful *Feast of Tabernacles* was to be celebrated.

The people were apparently aware by custom and tradition that certain national celebration days fell in this month, but they were not aware of the details. Having completed the wall, however, their minds turn toward God, Who has prospered their effort thus far. What should they do—how should they proceed to arrange their national life?

This is the most encouraging sign in the whole book, and must have given Nehemiah great comfort and satisfaction.

Just how widespread the feeling was, or how long it endured afterward, we do not know, but at this time at least there was a great movement to *seek the Law of God*.

An enthusiastic desire on the part of *all members* for a constant increase of the knowledge of the Word of God is *essential* for any sound ecclesial life—not just a few, well-worn, crotchety points, beaten back and forth, year after year, but a *broad, balanced wholesome study of all Scripture*. This love for, and knowledge of, God's Word is the great distinction between the people of God and the people of the world. Without this we may be very “nice” people, but we have no right to consider ourselves children of God.

* * *

8:1— “*And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street (or broad place—RV: square) that was before the water gate, and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel.*”

God had specifically commanded in the beginning that this Law should be periodically read in public *to all* the people at this Feast of Tabernacles.

ALL the people should *know*, and *understand*, and be *deeply interested*—there alone is safety.

And the command specifically required that “children” be included in the audience. As soon as they were old enough to comprehend what was going on (and that comes quite early), *they were to be there listening*. They were to be considered—they were an important factor—they were mentioned specially—they were not to be forgotten, or just allowed to run riot while their elders worshipped. These early years are vital in laying the character's foundation.

* * *

8:2—*“And Ezra the priest brought the Law before the congregation, both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding— (all old enough to understand) upon the 1st day of the 7th month.”*

This is the first mention of *Ezra* in this book. Up to now *Nehemiah*—the worker, the builder, the organizer—has dominated the scene. But now all the people, including *Nehemiah* himself, call upon *Ezra* to take the lead in reading and explaining the Law of God.

Ezra was a direct descendant from *Aaron* and appears to have been the grandson, or possibly great-grandson, of the High Priest *Jehozadak*, who was carried captive to *Babylon* by *Nebuchadnezzar*.

He was not in the direct line of the High-Priesthood, being apparently a younger son, or son of a younger son.

(One of the ‘chief’, or leading, priests who returned from *Babylon* with *Zerubbabel* was named *Ezra*, and it is a possibility that this was the same person. If so, he must have been quite young at the time of *Zerubbabel*, and he would be very old now—at least 120 or 130).

It is a very strongly established Jewish tradition that *Ezra* was the instrument used by God to compile the book of *Chronicles* and to arrange and complete the canon of Scripture. There is no proof of this, but several facts fit in very well with it—

1. This work must have been done around this time. It could not have been earlier or later for this is the end of the historical period of the O. T., and the sun is descending over the prophets, leaving *Israel* in a darkness that was not dispelled until *John* came as a *“shining and a burning light.”*

2. *Ezra* appears to be the most fitting and qualified for this work, and 150—Berean 2012

was clearly the leader in teaching the Law of God at this time.

3. Ezra had dedicated himself to—

“Seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.”

—and it was for this very purpose of teaching the Law that he had (like Nehemiah later) sought and been granted per-mission from the king to go with authority to Jerusalem.

4. He is spoken of in terms that appear to indicate a special relationship to the law in the sight of God, as—

“The scribe of the Law of the God of Heaven” (Ez. 7:21).

“Ready (skilled, prepared) scribe in the Law of Moses.”

“The scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of His statutes to Israel” (Ez. 7:11).

* * *

WHEN THE people were gathered (v. 5)—

“Ezra opened the Book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people.”

He was on a platform, so they could all see him as well as hear him.

He *“opened the Book in the sight of all the people.”* This is important. The Book must be kept in the forefront. Without this Book we are, like Samson without his hair, *“as weak as other men.”* But in this Book is life and strength—a power greater than any power on earth. When we present it we must always keep it and its words *right out in front*, and ourselves always behind it.

“And Ezra read from daylight until midday, and the ears of all the people were attentive.”

They did not *force* themselves to pay attention—they *enjoyed* it—realizing with marvel and excitement as he read that these were the *living words of the eternal God Himself*, Who had condescended to speak to them and to their fathers.

Other priests and Levites worked with Ezra in reading and explaining the Law—

8:8—*“So they read in the book of the Law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.”*

This again is very important. *There is little to be gained by reading without understanding.* We should never be content to do our readings mechanically without understanding.

What we cannot understand we should ask—ask our brethren, consult the works of the pioneers in the Truth, ask God in prayer.

God is not pleased with a blank, half-hearted, ritualistic reading of His Word, any more than He was with Israel's mechanical thoughtless sacrificing.

* * *

VERSES 9 and 10 are very interesting. When the people heard the words of the law, *they wept.* They wept for humiliation and sorrow and remorse for the condition the nation had gotten itself into after God had been so gracious as to choose and bless them above all people.

But Nehemiah and Ezra said to them—

“Mourn not, nor weep, this day is holy unto the Lord your God.”

It was the first holy sabbath of the joyful Feast of Tabernacles—the last feast of the year, the feast that represented the ingathering of all God's glorious elect—the end of all toil—the swallowing up of death in victory.

It was natural to weep. It was a good and wholesome reaction. But there was a more excellent way to express their deep emotion—*joy and zealous determination—thanksgiving and praise.*

Ezra and Nehemiah exhorted them—

“Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared...”

“Neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

“The joy of the Lord is your strength.” Just what does that mean to us? Surely this is the central message of this book. Here is the secret of Nehemiah's confidence and courage in the face of constant problems, without and within.

Truly joy *is* strength, and the *“joy of Yahweh”* is a sound, glorious, eternal joy. Are we a part of that joy and strength? Jeremiah records (15:16) in words that perfectly fit this occasion in Nehemiah—

“Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by Thy Name, O Yahweh, God of hosts!”

We too are *called by His Name!* Think upon it—glory in it —joy in the strength of it! *Yahweh Elohim—*”He who shall be mighty ones — the glorious Memorial Name!

Nehemiah continues (v. 12)—

*“The people went their way, to **make great mirth**, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.”*

They understood. They had learned more about God. They had approached closer unto Him, for understanding is the basis of all fellowship and communion—

*“This is life eternal, that they may **know Thee, the only true God**” ...
“The joy of the Lord is your strength.”*

They continued to gather day by day to hear the Word read, and they learned that at this time Israel were to leave their houses and dwell in booths made of tree branches to remind them of the free open life they lived when God delivered them from Egyptian bondage, and in these booths they were to rejoice in the Lord seven days.

“And day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the Law of God...”

*“And there was **VERY GREAT GLADNESS.**”*

And so the great feast of Tabernacles ended, after 22 days of celebration.

(To be continued Lord willing next month) —*Bro. G.V. Growcott*

Forgiveness

Jesus said to his disciples: *“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”*

This is “The Lord’s Prayer,” which sadly has been turned into a prayer of vain repetition in many of the world’s churches; *“for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking”* (Matthew 6:7). Here, Christ models acceptable prayer to Yahweh and shows the things that should be on the mind of all true saints. But do we recall Jesus’s next words?

Continuing on, he says: *“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”* (Matthew 6:9-15)

Forgiveness is the very core of our salvation. Yahweh is willing to forgive our trespasses, IF AND ONLY IF we forgive those who sin against us. Do we ever let these verses slip from our mind? This commandment of Christ — forgiveness — is the focus of this address.

The need for forgiveness has been around as long as sin has been present on the Earth. From the very moment that Eve and Adam transgressed and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, man has been in need of forgiveness for his continual sins. Having disobeyed the divine orders, Adam and Eve brought sin upon themselves and all of their descendants; we are their descendants, and this is why we have sinful nature. However, in God’s infinite grace and mercy, he has provided means by which we may obtain forgiveness for these sins.

We can break this topic down into two broad categories — offering forgiveness to others, and seeking forgiveness for ourselves after repentance.

Offering Forgiveness to Others

The first recorded instance of forgiveness in the Bible is in Genesis 50, and it is forgiveness given by none other than Joseph. We remember that Joseph was sold by his jealous and hateful brothers into Egypt when he was of a young age. Though neither Joseph nor his brethren knew at the time, his affliction was part of Yahweh’s divine plan to bring deliverance to the house of Israel. However, this would not become apparent for many years and Joseph suffered through many long and difficult trials before being exalted to be a ruler of Egypt.

How would WE react if we reencountered our brethren who had disowned us and sold us to be slaves? Would we be angry? Would we ever want to speak with them again, much less see them? But read how Joseph treats his brethren after Jacob’s death. We read in Genesis 50:

“And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father. And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and

their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.” (Genesis 50:14-21)

Joseph acted righteously because he chose not to be angry with his brothers. He freely forgave them of their sin against him, and furthermore he provided for their well-being! This is how we are to be. No matter how grievous the sin against us may be, we must think of Joseph – who was in bondage, falsely accused, imprisoned, forgotten — and how he chose to act. We gain nothing by harboring ill feelings towards others; rather, we are apt to lose forgiveness from our heavenly father if we withhold it. We read in Ephesians 4: *“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” (Ephesians 4:31-32)*

But we may ask, how many times can I let my brothers disown me, sell me into slavery and cast me off? Surely not more than once, or at most twice?

“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and

came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” (Matthew 18:21-35)

Jesus could not make it any clearer. No matter how often we are wronged by our brethren and no matter how much suffering we may have had to endure, the commandment is to forgive FROM THE HEART. And how many times should we offer this forgiveness? An uncountable number of times, for when Jesus says seventy times seven, he does not literally mean 490 times, but rather so many times that we cannot possibly keep track or record. Paul writes to the Colossians:

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” (Colossians 3:12-13)

But just how committed to this are we? An example may be easier for us to understand. Suppose you ask to borrow a dollar, and I lend it to you — but you never pay me back. If you come to me and say that you're truly sorry and repent, I will offer you forgiveness. If you ask me for another dollar, because I have forgiven you from my heart I will lend you a second dollar.

This seems simple enough. What if you ask to borrow my car — and you never give it back? Now you come to me saying that you've repented and that you're truly sorry. The commandment is for me to forgive you. If you ask me to borrow a second car, should I let you? I think we can all agree that this is not as simple as lending a second dollar. However, there can only be one answer, one standard against which to test. We read in Luke 6:

“But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same

measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.” (Luke 6:35-38)

No matter what it is, we need to be prepared and ready to forgive. We must also be ready to continue to help our brethren and sisters through their trials. We recall that the scriptures say to be content with “food and raiment” — and with nothing else.

In the extreme case, we know that we must be prepared to lay down our lives for the truth. We are very blessed to live in a time and in a country where there is freedom of religion, and there is generally little to no oppression. However, we know that the time will shortly come when all those who have put on Christ will face increasingly dire circumstances in the world. Perhaps we will be very blessed if we are called away to judgement before this time, but we must also remember that an untried faith is a worthless faith. Be that as it may, we must be ready to turn the other cheek and forgive those who seek to harm us, even if they cause us to be killed. Two prominent examples come to mind. We read in Acts 7 of Stephen, where he says to the council:

“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 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. And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the ecclesia which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havock of the ecclesia, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.” (Acts 7:51-60;8:1-3)

We are probably all familiar with this event, but have we ever thought about the weight of those words, “*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*”? We know that these words were not in vain — look at the transformation of Saul. Saul, who was consenting unto the death of Stephen, went about arresting and killing many members of the ecclesia — and yet, he too was offered forgiveness. Even in the most heinous of crimes and situations, Stephen forgave his murderers.

The other well-known example is Christ. We read in Luke 23:

“And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.” (Luke 23:32-34)

Stephen surely knew that he would not be treated well by the council, but Christ even more so had lived his entire life knowing that his death and resurrection would be the turning point in human history and the crucial event in Yahweh's plan of ultimate forgiveness. Even in this most terrible situation, he is able to say “*forgive them, for they know not what they do.*” Brethren and sisters, there simply is no excuse for not offering our forgiveness to others.

Seeking Forgiveness for Ourselves

As we said at the beginning, the second broad category is that of seeking forgiveness for ourselves. This can be either seeking forgiveness from God, or seeking forgiveness from our brethren and sisters. In some respects, we will find this is more difficult than offering forgiveness.

The gospel according to Luke establishes the divine method. We read in Luke 17:

“Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.” (Luke 17:3-4)

Notice it says, “and if he repent.” In other words, seeking forgiveness is in vain unless it is done with a repentant heart and mind. We cannot approach our brother asking for forgiveness if we are not truly sorry; likewise, we can't expect God to forgive us if our heart is not right.

Therefore, we must repent of our sins. This has been taught throughout the ages but perhaps most loudly by John the Baptist. We read in Matthew 3:

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (Matthew 3:1-3, 7-12)

Bringing forth fruits meet for repentance is not always easy, but it is necessary if we are to be forgiven. As we said before, seeking forgiveness for ourselves is one of the most difficult things we have to do.

At one time or another, we have probably all had something in our life that we know is wrong and displeasing to God. I'll use myself as an example. On several occasions, I have had something in my life that I have known is wrong and that was not after the ways of the spirit. A couple of years ago, I was in high school, and a typical day probably went something like this: wake up in the morning, go to school fairly early, be at school (not the most truth-friendly place) for eight hours. Towards the end of high school, I had a car and some independence — I could do what I wanted to do. I found myself spending time with friends of the world, doing things of the world, and when I would get home at the end of the day, I'd do my homework and go to bed.

Now, what does that leave out? I left out time for readings, time for prayer. I left out time for God. Eventually, I felt that things had gotten so bad and so terribly off track from the truth that I sincerely felt as if I would not or could not be forgiven for my sins. I could only think of the words of Paul: *“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”* (Romans 7:24)

I felt completely helpless and, worst of all, I had all but convinced myself that forgiveness was impossible.

Brethren and sisters, we **MUST NOT** allow ourselves to feel this way. To think this way is to worry and despair, which means we feel as if we have no hope. We have the greatest hope ever set before mankind at our disposal and we **MUST NOT** give up, no matter how bad we think our situation might be. Reading from the book *Selah*:

“There is no good to be done by giving in to failure. Some fall and incline to lie where they fall. This is a mistake. Let them get up and try again. We do not stand where Adam stood. One offence brought ruin to him; he had no High Priest; we have, and we are invited to make confession of our failures and trespasses and try again.” (*Selah*)

Think about Adam and everything that was on his shoulders. He sinned just once, and as a result we are in this situation today with sinful flesh. However, we have opportunity at forgiveness.

We must try again, seek out help, and try again. When we fall down, we must get right back up, repent, and be determined not to commit the offense again, whatever it is. It may be small, it may be large. A sister once told me that it takes only seven days to form a bad habit, but it takes at least three weeks to break that same bad habit. This is the way of the flesh at work. We can't break this bad habit on our own, though, we have to seek out the support of our brothers and sisters. This is not only what we must do, but this is what we are commanded to do. We read in James 5: “*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*” (*James 5:16-20*)

We are quick to latch on to the lusts of the flesh, yet so very slow to return to the ways of the spirit. If we confess our faults one to another and use each other as our support system, we will have a far better chance at successfully ridding our lives of bad habits than if we try to tackle them on our own. We cannot resign ourselves to failure. If we do, we will only be assuring ourselves of trouble in the day of judgement.

But having considered all this, we need not be afraid of our heavenly Father, for he is ready and willing to offer us forgiveness IF we truly repent. We read in Romans: *“For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”* (Romans 4:3-8)

We read in the Psalms: *“The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.”* (Psalm 103:8-13)

And in Micah: *“He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.”* (Micah 7:18-19)

We read in Exodus: *“And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.”* (Exodus 34:6-7)

So what are we to do? We read in Acts: *“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”* (Acts 2:37-39)

Many of us have been baptized, but even for those who haven't, attend to this call: *“Repent, and be baptized.”* This is the way set forth. If we follow after this way, we will be able to say, even as David has

said: *“Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.”* (Psalm 25:18)

“For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.” (Psalm 86:5)

If we have faithfully been baptized and follow after the ways set forth, he will be plenteous in mercy and ready to forgive us.

Something we must be careful of is how we regard others in their search for forgiveness. It is very easy to see something in black and white if we are not the ones in the middle of the problem. When it concerns someone else, we are quick to say, “This is right, this is wrong, this is the solution.” We may even be quick to write off the sincerity of others who are seeking forgiveness, because human, sinful nature makes us think, “How could this person possibly have changed?” Have we ever had that feeling toward another, an almost judgmental feeling of concern and even contempt? Let us take a parable from Luke 15:

“And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things

meant. And he said unto him, *Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.*” (Luke 15:11-32)

It seems as if the goal of this parable is to teach the dangers of riches and the dangerous lusts of the flesh, eyes and the pride of life. However, it is really written for the instruction of the class of people represented by the elder brother. Reading from *Be Ye Transformed*:

“The elder son surely had grounds to feel justified in his suspicions, and to feel that his father was being taking advantage of. But the prodigal was sincere. He was truly humble and penitent. He realized his foolishness, though to the elder brother, who gave his suspicions the benefit of the doubt, the evidence was not convincing because he preferred to think the other way... The father, on the other hand, gave the benefit of the doubt to mercy and love and hope. There was no bitterness or reservations in his forgiveness.

While he was yet a great way off he *ran* to meet him. He did not stand upon his dignity, or remain coldly aloof demanding proof. He did not force an apology. He loved him and he wanted him back and he was willing to forgive the past and hope for the future. He showered every display of affection and attention upon him, in his intense joy at reconciliation. The elder son did not share all this exuberant enthusiasm for the returned sinner. He had his doubts. He was angry and resentful. He doubtless felt the prodigal should be made to suffer a little and be humbled instead of being royally feasted. Most of all he lacked the balancing and softening influence of brotherly love. If, instead of thinking of only himself, he had loved his brother as he should, he too would have been truly glad to see him return, *he would have been only too eager to hope for the best and believe the best*. He would have been overjoyed to know that his brother had been reclaimed in time from his folly. Far better to be found wrong on the side of kindness and gentleness and faith in others, than to be found wrong on the side of

judgement and suspicion. *‘With what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged.’*” (*Be Ye Transformed*, Vol. 3, pg. 134-135).

If we may be quick to think badly of our struggling brothers and sisters when they’re going through times of trouble, let us rather rely on the ways of the spirit and remember that when we go through similar trials we would want them to run to meet us and welcome us back into the fold.

“And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.” (Luke 15:3-?)

All in Need of Forgiveness

We have considered the necessary step of forgiving others for their wrongdoings against us, and we have shown that repentance is of the utmost importance if we are to be forgiven by our Father and have a place in that kingdom soon to be established upon this earth. But let us be warned, we can never let down our guard or ever feel as if we have completely done all that we could.

We are never exempt from our need for forgiveness, because it is our Father in that day of judgement who determines if He will cast our sins far behind His back or not. All are in need of forgiveness, and let us be careful that we do not think that if everything is going well for us that we are going to be ok. Reading from Luke 13:

“There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilæans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilæans were sinners above all the Galilæans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:1-9)

And again in 1 John: *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful*

and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” (1 John 1:8-10)

We must CONTINUALLY seek forgiveness for our sins and ALWAYS be ready to offer forgiveness to others. But we must remember that — after all this — it is our faith and our conviction, not just our works, that will speak volumes of evidence for us — or against us— at the judgement seat. If we do these things with a loving heart and a pure mind, our Lord will be gracious to extend his mercy unto us and forgive us where we may have fallen short.

So, remembering the Lord's prayer that we read at the beginning, we are reminded that forgiveness comes only from God after wholehearted repentance, and forgiveness from God comes only by first offering forgiveness to others. As John the Baptist told the Israelites in the wilderness, we must bring forth fruits worthy of repentance if we are to have any hope of receiving God's mercy. Jesus tells his disciples in Luke 13:

*“A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: **hew it down; why cumbereth it the ground?** And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.” (Luke 13:4-9)*

Brethren and sisters, the warning has been given to us to bring forth good fruits worthy of repentance. When the Lord of the harvest comes to seek fruit on our tree, what will He find? Will He find the good fruit of having given freely to all, offering forgiveness as every situation required and setting our hearts and minds in accordance with His will? Or will He find a tree devoid of all figs, harboring only negative thoughts and reserving true repentance?

Brethren and sisters, the year of probation given by the dresser of the vineyard is quickly coming to a close. Perhaps we are planning to make these changes in our lives and in our attitudes tomorrow, or the day after. If you have trouble forgiving others, commit yourself to offering them this forgiveness; if you are in need of forgiveness, do not slack to repent and approach Yahweh through prayer. Make it a priority above everything else to set these things in order TODAY. It may just be that we will wake up one day, only to find that our Lord has decided that we have had tomorrow enough.

—Bro. Ben Naglieri

Watch Ye Therefore

“Ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye discern the Signs of the Times?”—Matt. 16:3

In Luke 21, Mark 13 and Matt. 24 we read of a discourse that Jesus had with four of his apostles, as they sat on the Mt. of Olives, overlooking Jerusalem. He told them at that time what the signs would be that would portend the end of that world (age), and also the end of the long period known as the Gentile times, or age, in which we live.

What Jesus said on this occasion was prompted by a question they had asked him in regard to something he had told them before they left Jerusalem while they were at the Temple. They had pointed out the Temple to him and said—

“Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here” (Mark 13:1).

Jesus had answered them—

“Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Mark 13:2).

Now as the five of them sat on the Mt. of Olives, overlooking the city, with its beautiful Temple of white marble, their minds still dwelt upon what Jesus had said about the Temple; so they asked him (Matt. 24:3)—

“Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world (age)?”

JERUSALEM'S DESTRUCTION

Jesus told them first of the things of the immediate future that would affect them personally. Terrible judgments were just ahead for Israel. They had about filled up the measure of their iniquity by the rejection of their King: all the blood shed from righteous Abel to that time was to be required of that generation—

“For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations.

“And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:23-24).

Jerusalem was doomed. It would no longer be a place of deliverance for God's people. His blessings and protection were about to be taken away from it. Jesus told them what the signs of its fall would be—

“When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed about with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.”

Then he told them what to do. They were not to stay and fight for their beloved city and land, but (Luke 21:21)—

“Let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out.”

Now it is to be noted from the history of those times that when the Roman armies came against the land, when the “carcase” of Israel was given to the “eagles,” the Christians were forewarned. They knew what was coming; they fled as the Lord had told them to do.

THEY KNEW THE SIGNS OF THEIR TIMES, and were thus prepared to save themselves from the judgments that broke up and destroyed the Jewish system of things.

Are we as well prepared to save ourselves from the impending demolition of the present dispensation? Do we know the signs of our times, and **are we prepared** to escape “the things that are coming upon the earth?”

THE END OF THE AGE

As Jesus spoke to his immediate disciples, as recorded in these three chapters, his thoughts also were of the few who would be living at the end of the Gentile age. They would need to know the signs of these things. He speaks especially to us at the end of Luke 21—

“Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.”

Jesus thus indicated that many in our times would be the victims of the subtle influences of the times so that they could see but dimly (if at all) the dividing line between that which is of the world and the higher things of divine revelation.

It may be noticed, as we draw nearer to the end, as the days and the months go by, that less and less time is being devoted by the many to prayers, meditation and careful and diligent study of the Word of God.

There seems not to be time anymore when with reverence and godly fear, in our quiet moments, we can draw nigh to God in humble supplications in which our minds are purified, uplifted and strengthened—in which the high and holy things of the Spirit glow into flame and lighten the hope and faith that will lift us above the evils of our day.

What did Jesus tell us to do when we see these things begin to come to pass—when we see the fig tree budding and all the trees, and know that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand? These are his words—

“WATCH ye therefore, and PRAY ALWAYS, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”

“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately.

“Blessed are those servants whom the Lord shall find watching” (Luke 12:34-37). —Bro. E.W. Banta

This was Bro. Banta’s last editorial in the Visitor.

Every Thought into Captivity

“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom ye have to do”—Heb. 4:13

THERE is a lesson that we try to impress on our children as we strive to bring them up in the way they should go, and it is this: though we cannot see God, He sees us and is aware of all that we do.

We stress that this teaches us we must be very careful about what we say, and think, and do. This instruction is very plain, so plain that it is not likely that the children will misunderstand it.

Yet, how well have we as adults, baptized into Christ, learned this lesson for ourselves? This lesson, though so elementary that it is taught to the children, is a most serious lesson and all must learn it, for it will be a life and death matter when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Then we will be most interested in the record we have written during our probation, as to what we have said, and thought and done. If the record is good, then we will have occasion to rejoice, but on the other hand we may be ashamed, dismayed, and startled, for there may be things there we had forgotten, or not thought important.

We will realize then with vivid clearness, if we do not realize now, that God is aware of everything that we say, do and think.

Let us ponder a moment on the record we have written in the past—the past few days, or months, or even years, according to time of our
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probation. Have we been careful about what we have said? Have we kept the door of our lips, guarding them lest they speak evil?

All the words of our mouth should be righteousness, and wickedness should be an abomination to our lips. Yet, how often have we opened them to utter foolishness, or carry idle tales, or said things that do not reflect honor and glory to God?

It is recorded that Moses was the meekest of men, but on one occasion, we are told,

“He spake inadvisedly with his lips.”

He was provoked into doing so by the murmuring of the children of Israel, and we might feel that he was justified in being provoked with them. Hadn't he borne patiently many times their discontent and complaints? It was a trial for Moses, and this time he failed.

Did God excuse him because he had been faithful on other occasions; did He ignore this failure because Moses' record had been good up to this time? What saith the Scriptures?—

“He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, and there is no respect of persons.”

We do not point out this failure of Moses to criticize—for this man of God stands out as a wonderful example of faith. We only tell the record as it is written in the Scriptures in order to show that if a man of Moses' stamp and character could fail under trial, what of ourselves?

If God saw fit to punish Moses, then we must never presume that God will overlook or ignore those things we do that are contrary to His will.

It behooves us then, to learn the lesson that God is no respecter of persons and will require each to pay the price for disobedience.

Do we ever speak in advisedly with our lips? How careful and circumspect we should be in our speech, for we are told that—

“Life and death are in the power of the tongue.”

Death, if our words are uncontrolled, and we speak frowardly. Life if we are slow to speak and our words always with grace, seasoned with salt.

* * *

WHAT of the things we think? Often we may hold our tongue and refrain from speaking evil, yet retain evil thoughts in our mind. Paul tells us that we must—

“Bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

EVERY THOUGHT into captivity—do we even begin to obey this command? This shows us how completely our minds must be centered on the Truth; how zealously God requires us to strive that all our thoughts be directed toward Him.

We must put away, out of our minds, all that is unclean, and unsavory, filling them instead with those things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report.

Are these the channels into which we direct our minds? Our minds must be constantly fed and nourished on the Spirit-Word, that we may be spiritually-minded.

How dangerous it is to allow our minds to be drawn away from the Truth, and filled with the unlovely and impure things that the world calls entertainment.

There is no place in the life of saints for worldly amusements—they cannot possibly lift our minds to that spiritual plane that makes them one with Christ. Can our minds contain and be concerned with eternal truths, and the perfecting of the Ecclesia as the Bride of Christ, and at the same time contain the things that will invariably be impressed there when we read, listen to, or look at the things designed to cater to, and entertain the flesh?

We have a choice—either we hearken to the voice of the serpent, which deceives, telling us—

“Go ahead, eat the forbidden fruit, thou shalt not surely die.”

Or we listen to the gentle voice of the Spirit entreating—

“My son, give me thine heart.”

“Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, and mind.”

ALL the mind, not just part of it. We cannot share it with the pleasures and cares of this life—it must be stayed on God. The promise of “perfect peace” is only to those whose minds are “stayed, or fixed, on God.” There can be no peace or real satisfaction from our lives in the Truth if we try to divide our minds between God and the world.

Let us give ourselves wholly unto the service of God, knowing that in so doing—

“The peace of God that passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

—Bro. J. F. Packer

Encouraging Words No. 31

WHAT a strong appreciation of God had David! How that appreciation voiced itself continually in praises and thanksgiving. How he endeavoured, too, to infuse his mind into others. When we search into the cause of David's attitude towards God, we soon discover that it was due to his knowledge and love of the Scriptures. From David's point of view, the highest form of praise was to talk and sing of God's dealings with Israel. An illustration of his mind, and how he sought to impart it to his people, is to be found in 1 Chron. 16.

David bids Israel to "remember" to "be mindful." And what were they to call to memory? Matters recorded in the Scriptures, largely those things which are to be found in our Old Testament readings for the first four or five months of the year. Israel is to remember God's "marvellous works," "his wonders," "the judgments of his mouth," "the covenant" and "the oath" in connection with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the watchful care which God exercised towards these patriarchs in their eventful wanderings. These were the matters recited by David in the ears of the nation as a means of moving it to glory in the name of the Lord. Do we, dear sisters, reflect David's mind? Are we, so to speak, bubbling over with gratitude and appreciation concerning the wonderful works of God as revealed in His Word? When we compare ourselves with the Psalmist, probably we feel cast down at our dulness and shortcomings. His example is given, however, not to cast us down, but to lift us up. Let us, therefore, take courage and strive to make his thoughts our thoughts. The springs to which David took his pitcher still run clearly and copiously. Let us not fail to resort to them.

What means are we taking to approach to the spirituality of this divinely-approved man? With David the Scriptures were a daily, affectionate, delightful study. We know what this means by our own attitude when first we were attracted to the truth. With what eagerness we turned over the pages of our Bibles! How ready were we to talk upon the truth, and what an open ear we turned to those who could enlighten us upon Scripture topics! Is it the same with us to-day? Or do we take up our Bibles listlessly, and look upon our daily readings as an irksome duty? Do we discourage, not to say, resent, conversation upon the great things of God's law? If so, let us think of David, and seek to emulate his ways.

Notwithstanding his efforts to enkindle in Israel a glowing regard for God, David had, at times, to confess that his surroundings were parched and dry. If he were now in the earth, what would he say of our surroundings? How many are there in our day who cares, let alone praise God, for the oath which he swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

Or for God's deliverance of these worthies from ungodly men? Yea, how many are there who so much as believe these things? When voices now are raised in song, the object is more often to praise man than God, to show forth the ability of a composer, or the quality of some particular voice.

In the churches the same thing largely prevails (as those who have attended them can testify), only in these places there is the added insult to the Deity of ascribing to Him attributes that are false, and doctrines which belie His promises. If, perchance, Scripture words are sung, how often are the heart and intellect precluded from responding to their meaning through unbelief engendered by false theology? Of these things, many of us have had personal experience. This we could not help; but now that light has shone across our path we can perceive the gulf that separates these former follies and vanities from the Davidian standard. Our duty now is to strive to reach the Psalmist's high example. As an important step towards it, let us never forget that acceptable worship—that which God invites—must be rendered in spirit and in truth (Jno. 4:24). Further, let us cease to fill our minds with the world's silly ditties, and let us steep our understandings in the themes which both enriched and formed the basis of David's praise.

Sis. C.H. Jannaway—1911

Meditations – Deity's Ways No. 31

DOUBT about any vital Scripture truth naturally means anxiety. But we are not wise if we allow our anxiety to reach the point of despair—despair as of arriving at a satisfactory conviction. A good and honest heart, a heart earnestly supplicating divine help, a heart ready to impartially receive the sayings of God, may always look and hope for success. God may require us to dig deep and search much, but it will not be in vain. This is one of the glorious assurances of the Word (Hos. 14:9; Jas. 1:5; Matt. 7:7; Is. 66:2). How God will guide us to right knowledge we cannot tell, but guide us He will. It was not a matter of chance that Lydia, Apollos, Cornelius, and the Ethiopian Eunuch, were further enlightened in the way of salvation; and it is as easy for God to instruct in a providential as in a miraculous manner.

Let us take care how we read the works of the learned. They are not reliable. Christ forewarned us in the matter—“Thou hast hid these things (the things of the truth) from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” We may cite Archdeacon Farrar as an illustration of this Scripture. The Archdeacon is a great and learned man, nevertheless he is, from a Bible stand-point, a blasphemer. Blasphemy is a speaking against the truth, and this the Archdeacon

does wholesale. Here are three examples: “The steps of Paul trod heedlessly over the volcanic soil of a world treasured up with the stores of fire, *which should hereafter reduce it to ashes.*” “With lingerings of old Messianic *fancies* they had asked him (Christ) whether he would at that time reconstitute the Kingdom of Israel.”—“The Holy Spirit, indeed, was among them then, *as now*, in all gatherings of faithful Christian men: He was with them to guide and to inspire.” The Archdeacon, though a profound thinker, deeply read, highly educated, and a brilliant writer, is yet less enlightened and trustworthy, as regards the truth, than the most lowly brother in Christ. The Archdeacon stands in an analogous position to the learned rabbis of Christ’s day—well versed in useless tradition, but in the things which make wise unto salvation, a dunce. What Farrar says concerning the rabbis we might aptly apply to him. Referring to them, he says that their case might well amaze us if “there had not been proof in all ages that men may entirely overlook the statements of their own sacred books, because when they read these books the veil of obstinate prejudice is lying upon their hearts.”

The Gospel is the Ark which God has devised for saving men and women of Noah’s type. The disobedient may scoff at it, but it will effect the salvation of all who have the faith to commit themselves to it—others God does not require. The Gospel, we are told, is the power of God to Salvation—not half, not three-quarters, not even nine-tenths, but *the Gospel*, even as spirit-endowed Paul said: “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed (Rom. 1:16; Gal. 1:8.) The Gospel, or as it is sometimes styled, “the truth” (2 Thes. 2:13)—“the faith” (Acts 6:7) is composed of certain divinely-revealed items—“the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12). Prior to immersion our attitude towards the Gospel must be one of belief, subsequently we have to be “stablished in the faith,” “steadfast in the faith,” “grounded and settled in the faith,” “striving together for the faith,” giving “earnest heed to the things which we have heard,” examining ourselves “whether we be in the faith” (Col. 2:7; 2 Cor. 13:5; 1 Pet. 5:9; Col. 1:23; Heb. 2:1). To let slip or forget the faith is fatal (Col. 1:23; 1 Cor. 15:1, 2.) We are to adopt the position of those of whom Christ approvingly said “thou hast not denied my faith.” We are moreover required to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3). We are to distinguish between those who are weak in the faith and those who oppose it. The former we are to receive, but not the latter. No marvel that Paul said—” Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”

Bro. A. T. Jannaway— 1890

The Wheat and the Tares

Brother F. A. Gerdes, of Mason, Tex., U.S.A., writes also concerning the parable of the wheat and the tares. He says: "It has no reference to fellowship and withdrawal whatever. If it had, then such a thing as withdrawal would be positively forbidden by Christ in this place, while in another place he, with equal emphasis, enjoins it (Matt. 18:17). The substance of the parable is this: A man sowed good seed in a field, and afterwards another man sowed tares on the same ground. Then the servants of the former desired to pull up the tares. The master forbids this, and his reason for it is: 'Lest while ye gather up the tares ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I shall say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'

"The common interpretation of the whole is as follows: Christ is the man who sowed the wheat; the flesh sows the tares. The wheat are the faithful brethren, while the tares are the unfaithful ones. The faithful want to separate from the unfaithful; but Christ says: Let all remain together until the judgment of the last day.

"Where would this explanation lead us to? The legitimate, in fact the only reasonable conclusion, is that the 'field' is the ecclesia, for it is contended that we have no right to exclude from the ecclesia, or, in other more Scriptural words, to withdraw, although the idea is the same; which, of course, destroys Christ's and the apostles' command to 'withdraw,' to be 'separate,' &c., &c. We should in this case have to fellowship any and all who desired us to do so, if they only *professed* to be in the 'field,' or ecclesia, although they might, at the same time, admit themselves that they were 'tares.' What brother or sister would be prepared to stand by such a result? It would effectually nullify the entire truth, without the possibility of a remedy. Obviously, this is not the interpretation of the parable, and why men, *brethren*, should give such an interpretation, when the author of the parable has himself given us one of his own, I am at a loss to understand, unless fleshly affections blind and overbalance their better judgment.

"Let us hear the author's own interpretation: 'He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man. The field is *the world*. The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. As, therefore, the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world'—viz.: 'The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his Kingdom all things that offend and those who do iniquity.'

“This gives the parable an entirely different aspect. Instead of the ecclesia being the field, it is the *world* that is the field, and the time has not come yet for the world to be cleared of the offenders, and those that do iniquity; but when that time shall come, then the Lord will send forth his angels, and will ‘break in pieces the oppressor,’ in order that the *world*, the territory of his Kingdom may be so purified of all present pollution as to be fit to become the basis of an eternal dominion, for the Creator has said, ‘He that ruleth over men must be just,’ and he will not allow unjust rule to be perpetuated for ever.

“Another feature of the false interpretation is that it makes the ecclesia the kingdom. ‘The son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of *this kingdom* all things that offend.’ They say: Let it all stand together in the ecclesia until the Lord shall separate the tares from the wheat. They are both in the *kingdom*, for from it Jesus says his angels shall gather the offending, or the tares. It is impossible now to do away with the tares out of the *future* kingdom without disturbing the wheat, which is not yet ripe, it being not quite harvest time yet; but when this golden autumn shall come then the work of separation will be done very effectually.

“I should not have written anything on so simple a point only I know by experience how widespread the misconception on it is, and if it be passed over, it must certainly produce the conclusion that there is a contradiction.” *The Christadelphian, July, 1886, p. 318*

THIS parable has always been misapplied by the advocates of loose fellowship, totally disregarding Christ's own interpretation of the field as the WORLD. In fact, a misinterpretation of it is usually a sure sign of an attempt to introduce unsound views of fellowship.

—*Bro. G. V. Growcott April 1981*

Forgiveness

QUESTION: “How can I forgive him unless he seeks my forgiveness, for if I do, I will make myself as great an offender?”

ANSWER: There can be no doubt that acknowledgement is the natural and prescribed condition of forgiveness in all cases of unquestionable personal injury, word or deed. Nothing admits of so clean and sweet and lasting a reparation. It is the lesson of the Law of Moses throughout, and the principle continually exemplified in God's dealings with Israel.

But in the confusions of human intercourse, in the present state of weakness, there arise hundreds of cases in which it is impossible to

apply this law in any strict manner. First, because it usually happens that there are faults on both sides; and secondly, because it nearly as often happens that where one side may be clean-handed enough, the other side is the offending side, not through any intention or desire to do injury, but through a wrong understanding of things.

In such cases, no wise man would insist on the unconditional surrender implied in the request for forgiveness. Even in a clear case, he is too conscious of his own shortcoming to take an imperious attitude. He would run more than half way to meet his offending brother if he saw the least disposition to concede the point.

But as for the idea that forgiveness cannot be granted without confession, and that such forgiveness would be sin, the brother broaching such an idea will be likely to abandon it on full reflection. We are commanded to forgive if confession is made, for this was the point in question when Jesus spoke the words—

“How oft shall I forgive?”

But we are not forbidden to forgive in the absence of confession. We are at liberty to forgive without it if we like—certainly. Jesus gave us this example (Luke 23:34)—

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Paul also (2 Tim 4:16)—

“I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.”

Stephen also (Acts 7:60). All this without confession on the part of the offenders, for they were too dark-minded to know their need for forgiveness.

This is the magnanimity which belongs to the children of God, who can even return good for evil. A man may be within his rights who says—

“I will not forgive him unless he ask me.”

—though marking himself thus as the feeblest of the children of God, if indeed he prove to be among the children, showing thus that **he hath not the spirit of Christ**.

But there is nothing to hinder a man soaring far above his rights and saying—

“This man who has wronged me is too ungifted from God to see what he has done. I will let the matter pass. I will pray God to forgive him; and if He forgive at the judgment seat, the man will gladly see and own his fault then: I can wait.”

The man who applies the rule of confession before forgiveness too strictly is **in danger of having the same measure applied to himself**. So Christ says. And how then? We CANNOT BE SAVED, for we are too dim-eyed to know all our sins; and if those only are forgiven that we see and admit, the unforgiven balance must sink us to perdition.

Another point the offended brother should consider, is whether his state is due to wounded pride or violated righteousness. If he is an expert at self-examination, he will probably find it is the former three times out of four at least; for he discovers that other offences against the law of God do not hurt him at all if they do not touch him.

If so, he will act wisely to hold his hand and be as little exacting with the offender as possible.

On the other hand, the offender, when there happens to be one, should be frank and gracious in his acknowledgements. He rarely is so. As a rule his concession is tardy and ambiguous, and generally takes the shape of an insulting hypothesis—

“If I have given offence, I am sorry for it.”

This is not acknowledgement at all, my friend. It may even be an insulting implication to this effect—

“I am sorry my neighbor has been such a simpleton as to take offense where it was perfectly unwarrantable he should do so.”

If you mean confession, let it be fair and square and handsome—

“I have done this: I ought not to have done it.”

Graciousness on one side will lead to graciousness on the other, and love will flow. But, sadly—this good time has yet to come! But it WILL come, and the children of mercy will prosper and rejoice.

Bro. Robert Roberts—1890

“Charity” In The Right Place

It is a good thing to be “for peace,” and to “exercise charity,” but these must be held in subordination to the conditions which divinely precede them.

God is the pattern. The perfection of peace is the ultimate design of all His procedure; but **never for the sake of peace does He abandon any of the conditions which are necessary to secure it.**

There is no peace to the wicked. God is angry with them. There is no life out of Christ for any, though it might seem “philanthropic” to bestow good indiscriminately.

There is no setting aside the law of God, though God is love. There is no escaping the judgments which are coming on the world, though God intends to bless the world through Abraham and his seed.

“*FIRST PURE, then peaceable:*” this is the divine rule. **First** conformity to God's arrangement; **then** reconciliation, tranquility, and joy. Here is our example. The Word says—

“The Ecclesia is the pillar and ground of the Truth.”

The Ecclesia must therefore maintain the Truth at all hazards. Peace or no peace, we must have the Truth. This is the first consideration. The Word exhorts us to contend earnestly for the Faith. No “charity” can be scriptural which interferes with these functions. The word sent by the Deity to the Gentiles is that—

“The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:15).

Is it a lawful “exercise of charity” to shrink from the maintenance of this proposition for the sake of peace? Peace is lovely, but it must be a lawful peace.

Peace which involves a compromise of the Truth is an unloyal peace. Charity which covers up the Truth is misnamed. It is no charity at all. True charity is more exemplified in pulling a man out of the water by the hair of the head than in letting a boat glide to the rapids unwarned for fear of being uncourteous.

We have no right to be “charitable,” as the phrase goes, where God has spoken. Scriptural charity is confined to a man's private attitude towards his neighbor.

When “charity” inclines us to be craven or feeble in our contention for the faith and faltering in our recognition of the position of men as determined by the Faith, it is time to be getting rid of it as a troublesome weakness which will hamper our spiritual operations through life, and perhaps involve us in the dilemma into which we shall assuredly lead others by such a policy.

The Gospel to be believed before immersion consists of (Acts 8:12)—“*The things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ.*”

Any immersion not on this basis is invalid.

Bro. Robert Roberts— 1892

Christ's Example

It is a remarkable feature of the temptation of Christ that he employed the Scriptures in repelling the suggestions of the tempter. This is a feature worth noting in a day like ours, when the universal tendency is to give the Scriptures a less and less commanding place. With Christ, the fact of a thing being "written" was a sufficient reason for making it a rule of conduct, which is becoming less and less the case in a day when more and more the theory finds favour that the Scriptures are partly or wholly the product of human thought, and subject to human judgment and conscience as to the obligation of its precepts. The implication is obvious that we only stand with Christ fully when we recognise that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and therefore as he said, "cannot be broken" in its truth or authority.

Nazareth Re-Visited Bro. Robert Roberts— 1886

Christ the High Priest and Prince The Apocalypse in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel prophesies that the Dry Tree of Israel, which now bears no fruit, shall be made to flourish in the mountain of the heights of Israel; where it shall shoot forth boughs, and bear fruit; and that under its branching foliage shall dwell all fowl of every wing – ch. 17:22- 24. He tells us concerning that epoch, that the kingdom of Israel shall be given to a man of low station whose right it is; that he shall be a Plant of Renown; That he shall be a David; that he shall be a Prince, or High Priest, of Israel for an Aion; that he shall be immortal; that the Holy Land shall be as the Garden of Eden, or Paradise; that the twelve tribes of Israel shall be a united nation, and form one kingdom in the land; that a magnificent temple shall be built in Jerusalem differing from that of Solomon; that the Dead Sea shall be healed, and become as productive of fish as the Mediterranean; and that from the time of the establishment of these things, the old name of the city shall be abolished— that it shall no longer be *Jeru*, "they shall see," *shalaim*, "peace;" but *Yahweh-shammah*, **HE WHO SHALL BE IS THERE.**

Bro. John Thomas—Eureka Vol 1 Page 43

Hints For Bible Markers

When the life of Christ is studied it becomes very apparent that he was a man well acquainted with suffering. Many places in the Psalms show us his sorrow was continually before him. Psalms 38:17 *“For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me.”* Some forms of suffering are common to everybody, for example illness. Some are unique to the brethren of Christ, such as those necessitated by resisting the flesh. Some suffering comes from advocating the truth and living a life in the obedience to it; such as when a Christian co-worker defames your good name to management because of your proclamation of the Truth; or an employer wants you to lie for the sake of the company. During these trials, although difficult to endure, we can find relief by remembering that our Lord and Master endured similar suffering. Jesus the same trials, some from the flesh, some from the religious body of his day who opposed his teaching, and those from the civil authority brought to bear against him. 1 Peter 4:13 *“But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”*

No improvement can be of any real value unless it comes by obedience to the commandments of Christ. Of course, the predisposition that comes from fleeing youthful lusts while following after righteousness, faith, charity, and peace is one that will be well pleasing to God. The standard is high. It cannot be achieved in a hurry. It is a work of time, of small steady steps. A tree does not show its growth instantaneously but it can be observed over time. It is the same with our development in the truth. Like all things you only get out of it, what you put into it. Conflict with the flesh may appear to be painful for the time being but it can never be as painful as the experiences of Christ in Gethsemane. Look around the human affairs and discern the truth of the words of Solomon Ecclesiastes 1:14 *“I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.”* There is only one way to live, God’s way! All else is vanity and vexation of spirit.

bro. Beryl V. Snyder

The Commandments of Christ

As collected and organized by bro. Roberts

VI. CONCERNING YOUR ACTIONS

If any man suffer according to the will of God, let him commit the keeping of his soul to Him in well-doing, not rendering evil for evil, but rejoicing that he is a partaker of Christ’s sufferings.

Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator. (1 Peter 4:19)

See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. (1 Peter 4:13)

Drive away youthful lusts, but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. (1 Timothy 6:11)

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:22)