

“Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps, set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest” (Jer. 31:21)

The Living Way

Volume 1: Issue 11

July 2024

Upholding the Original Christadelphian Faith concerning:
The Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12)

<i>“There is None Good but God”</i>	2
<i>Saul - the Failed King</i>	9
<i>Aaron and Christ</i>	14
<i>Israel’s Prayer for Deliverance</i>	19
<i>The Significance of the Cross of Christ</i>	24
<i>“Ho, Everyone that Thirsteth</i>	27
<i>Haggai - Consider Your Ways (2)</i>	31
<i>Dealing with Personal Offences</i>	35



“I saw, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat up on him had a bow: and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer” (Rev. 6:2)

“There is None Good but God”

“... one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (Mat.19:16-17, Mrk.10:18, Lu.18:19).

Some time ago, one of our adversaries cited this verse as an alleged contradiction in the inspired record. The Bible does describe other people as being “good,” so how is it that the Master states that “there is none good, but one, that is, God”? And if others can be good, how is it that Messiah himself is not good? We are thankful to our correspondent for raising the issue, as it opens to us a profitable line of enquiry, which can only enhance our appreciation of the Goodness of God.

Firstly, we need to consider how that the Bible does state some people to be “good”:

Of Joseph of Aramathea it is said that “he was a **good** man and a just” (Lu. 23:50). Of Barnabas it is said that “he was a **good** man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith” (Acts 11:24). And of Dorcas, it is written that she was “full of **good** works and almsdeeds which she did” (Acts 9:36). At a more general level, Jesus taught that God “maketh his sun to arise on the evil and on the **good** ...” (Mat. 5:45). Matthew 7 records the Master’s metaphorical use of trees to represent men: “a **good** tree cannot bring forth evil fruit” (Mat. 7:18). Again, he speaks of how “a **good** man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things” (Mat. 12:35, Lu. 6:45), and the class of the faithful are commended “well done thou **good** and faithful servant” (Mat. 25:21, 23). The parable of the Sower speaks of how the seed of the Word is sown in “an honest and **good** heart” (Lu. 8:8, 15), and those who are granted a better resurrection are “they that have done **good**” (Jno. 5:29).

As well as people, the Scriptures speak of certain works as being “good”. The following is not an exhaustive list, but serves to illustrate the point:

“... to them who by patient continuance in **well** (same word), doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life” (Rom. 2:7).

“... glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh **good** ...” (Rom. 2:10).

“... let us do **good** unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).

“... being fruitful in every **good** work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10)

Here then is the crux of the issue, the apparent paradox: how can it be said that certain people and their works are “good” whilst Jesus taught that there is “none good” except the Creator Himself? To address this question we need to examine what Goodness actually is, and where it originates from.

The first reference to *Goodness* in Scripture, is in the Genesis account of Creation:

“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. and God saw the light, that it **was good**, and God divided the light from the darkness” (Gen. 1:3-4).

There are a number of points to note here about Goodness:

- It was a consequence of the Word of God being sent forth
- The goodness was created by God
- That goodness in the first instance, was light

So it is that the quality of Goodness was brought into existence by God, particularly in His Creative Activities. Even the first human pair were part of this goodness, being created morally upright (Eccl. 7:29). Sin had not yet sullied the Divine view, and all things were as God created: good - indeed, “very good” (Gen. 1:31).

But the narrative proceeds to describe how that the serpent tempted Eve to disobey her Creator, and convinced her to eat of the forbidden tree - and she in turn gave to her husband, and he ate of it also. So it was by this means that; through the subsequent curse (Gen. 3:19), the Law of Sin and Death (Ro. 8:2) entered *physically* into world society: thus “death passed upon all men ...” (Rom. 5:12). A consequence of sin entering into the world, was that the goodness of God was denied. Whereas man was originally part of a “very good” creation, once that he had fallen from Grace, (cp. Gal. 5:4), that goodness no longer existed within him. Hence Jeremiah wrote: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and **desperately wicked**: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). Paul knew it, and was therefore able to say: “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth **no good** thing” (Rom. 7:18).

This is a fundamental point: human nature is inherently evil, and is **not** “very good”. Hence, left to its own devices, it can only produce trespasses, transgressions, sins, and iniquity. As Messiah himself taught: “... for **from within**, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man: (Mrk. 7:21-23).

From these considerations, we can begin to see the point of the Master’s words: God is Good, and there is “no good thing” existing in man following the Fall. To look into these matters further, we need to consider:

THE GOODNESS OF GOD REVEALED

In Exodus chapter 33, we read of Moses’ petition to Yahweh, and His Response:

“... and he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make **all my goodness** pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of Yahweh before thee ...” (Ex. 33:18-19).

From these words, we see that the “glory” and “goodness” of God are synonymous. Hence to see the Glory is the same as being shown His Goodness. But what followed was that the glorious goodness of God was expressed in words:

“... Yahweh passed by before him, and proclaimed, Yah, Yahweh 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 fourth generation” (Ex. 34:6-7).

Again, in this we see that the glory/goodness of Yahweh consisted of not so much that which was seen, but the attributes that were expressed in words. And we see these principles emerging in the New Testament record concerning the Lord Jesus Christ:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”

Again, the record continues:

“... and **the Word was made flesh**, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth”

And again,

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (see John 1:1-18).

So it is that whilst Moses asked: “shew my thy glory”, the Apostle writes: “we beheld his glory”. And that glory was seen in those attributes described in Exodus 34, being embodied in a man, the Lord Jesus Christ with power (Acts 10:38) - as John says “the Word was made flesh”.

These considerations weave together the principles we can discern in operation even from the time of Creation: the Word, the Light, and the Goodness of God.

But these words in John 1, refer not to the Genesis creation, but to a new Creation in Christ Jesus. It draws upon principles of the Genesis record to describe the founding principles of a New Creation. Hence, the Apostle Paul - who himself was converted by seeing a great Light and hearing the spoken Word (Acts 9:3-4) - wrote accordingly:

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

Moreover, he continued the association between the Goodness and the Glory, by saying:

“... If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the **glorious gospel** of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them ...” (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

Notice the language used here: the word “Gospel” literally means “good news” - hence we have the glorious “good” news of Christ revealed to man. That good news is able to shine into our hearts, illuminating them with the goodness of God. Christ “is the image of God” - that is, he perfectly displays all of his Father’s glorious and good attributes, and these are the attributes to be revealed by the believer in His Son.

The principles of the New Creation are instigated by God Himself:

“all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ ... **God was in Christ,** reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them ...” (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

This is a key point in understanding the subject at hand: Man has no intrinsic goodness, but can be filled with the glorious good news of the Word, like light shining in a dark place. God is the One doing the filling: “it is God which **worketh in you** both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). And he does this through the agency of the spoken Word: “... the word of God, which **effectually worketh** also in you that believe” (1 Thes. 2:13). The recipients of this grace extended to them can say: “we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto **good works,** which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). We shall return to this shortly.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS ON “GOODNESS”

It is written that: “Most men will proclaim everyone his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?” (Prov. 20:6). The natural man, being unable to receive the things of the Spirit of God, (1 Cor. 2:14), does that which is right in his own eyes - which is very different to that which is right according to God’s Goodness. A related word is “righteousness” - that which is good is righteous, as seen by the following verses:

“the desire of the righteous is only good: but the expectation of the wicked is wrath” (Prov 11:23).

“Evil persueth sinners, But to the righteous good shall be repayed” (Prov. 13:21).

“for scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die” (Rom. 5:7).

This is the way of the natural man: “there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12). The carnally minded will put good for evil and evil for good (cp. Isa. 5:20).

This is what the Apostle has to say about the natural Jews of his day:

“they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish **their own righteousness** have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:3).

Here is the point: men desire to establish their own righteous goodness, and not that which comes from God. Paul himself differed from this. His desire was to: “be found in him, *not* having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, *the righteousness which is of God* by faith” (Phil. 3:9).

Again, this is another key point: goodness and righteousness can only come from God: it cannot be accomplished by works.

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

Returning to our opening quote, we read:

“... one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (Mat. 19:16-17, Mr 10:18, Lu. 18:19).

It is sometimes claimed that the Lord was inherently righteous of his own self, and that he earned his way into immortality by his personal goodness. Hence it is claimed:

... He did not need a “sacrifice” *as such*, in the shadowy, typical sense of the term, and nor do we. We need, as he with us needed, the flesh-cleansing, sin-condemning, grave-opening perfect-life-and-shed-blood-death REALITY that God’s holiness and wisdom demanded from one man for the salvation of any of the race.

Starting *within* the condemned, defiled, Sin-and-Death-cursed race, he - with God’s strengthening - *earned* his way out of it. That work was his “sacrifice”.

... Christ’s actual Sin-destroying accomplishment - his overcoming, his self-perfecting-is the reality and substance of which baptism and breaking of bread, sacrifice and circumcision, are representative rituals.

Someone had to righteously win his way out of the Sin-Constitution, in the way God appointed, with whom God could deal as the race ...

*(Redeeming the Race, from
The Purifying of the Heavenly, pages 98-99 G Growcott)*

Here is the claim presented: Jesus “earned his way out of” the curse. This is repeated in page 96:

“He, by total devotion to God, lifted himself out of this universal Sin-Constitution: cleansed himself from it in the “sacrificial” way and method that God had appointed from the beginning”

Notice, the emphasis here is what Christ is said to have done for himself, cleansing himself: he won his way out of the Sin Constitution by being righteous.

A FLAW

The reason why this is flawed thinking, is that the Scriptures always present the work of Salvation as being that of God, and not of Jesus himself. As we saw earlier:

“All things are *of God*, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ ... ***God was in Christ***, reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

Again, we read that the condemnation of sin in the flesh was a work of God:

“What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, ***God*** sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, ***condemned sin in the flesh ...***” (Rom. 8:3).

Whilst “Most men will proclaim everyone his own goodness” (Prov. 20:6), this was not so with the Lord Jesus Christ. Whilst the Jews went about “to establish their own righteousness,” the Lord Jesus Christ did not. He was rather the means whereby God would establish His Righteousness instead - indeed, this point is vital to our salvation:

“... all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom ***God*** hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. ***To declare, I say at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*** Where is boasting then? It is excluded ...” (Rom. 3:23-27),

God is the prime mover in the entire system of salvation: “we are ***his*** workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2:10). Whereas, we have seen, man is naturally void of goodness, the Good Light of the Word of God can illuminate the hearts of those who would receive it. In Christ, His Righteousness was declared, He was “in Christ” to bring about reconciliation. It is all of God, and not of Jesus himself. Jesus did not declare his own righteousness - there is no verse which states this. Rather, God righteously condemned “the law of sin and death” in the flesh of His Son (Rom. 8:2,3).

The situation as presented by the churches, is that Jesus came and died to be punished in our stead, and pacify the wrath of God. But the situation as presented in Scripture, is that God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to condemn [Katakrisis = Judge against] sin in the flesh, and establish His Own Righteousness (by righteous judgement) in so doing. This being so, there is a basis of Righteousness exhibited by God through His Son, to be the foundation of our forgiveness.

Mankind (sons of Adam) cannot redeem themselves through personal righteousness: the situation is by Grace, lest **any man** should boast (Eph. 2:9). Not even the Master himself could boast of his own accomplishments: “... the Father that dwelleth in me, ***he*** doeth the works” (Jno. 14:10). The Master did not seek his own glory, but that of God. So he testified: “I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth” (Jno. 8:50). And again, “So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee” (Heb. 5:5).

In Christ then, we do not see one who “earned his way” out of condemnation into life. Rather, he was given, and also displayed his Father’s Righteousness:

“**Give** the king thy judgments, O God, and **thy righteousness** unto the king’s son.” (Psa. 72:1).

Again:

“Who shall ascend into the hill of Yahweh? Or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. **He shall receive** the blessing from Yahweh, **and righteousness** from the God of his salvation” (Psa. 24:3-5).

Both of these passages confirm that the Master was *given* Righteousness: he did not earn it by good works (cp. Rom. 4:4). The entire system of salvation was that the Righteousness and Goodness of God, taken away by Adam, was restored (Psa. 69:4) in Christ, that He would be glorified for His Grace, in the salvation of Adamic men.

SUMMARY

Having considered the principles above, we are now in a position to address the challenge of our adversary. God only is good, there is “none good” apart from Him. But His Goodness can be demonstrated by mortal men. That goodness is not their own, but is a consequence of God’s Word sent forth as a Light to illuminate their darkened hearts. The Goodness of God is seen in His Glorious Array of Attributes, revealed to Moses, and “manifest” (1Tim.3:16) in Jesus, as the “word” “made flesh”.

Even the Master himself did not seek to establish his own righteousness, but gave all glory to the God who performed works through him. And “how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!” (Zech. 9:17). He did not “win” salvation by good works, but obtained it by the Mercy of his Father. He was granted “a golden crown” (Rev. 14:14), having overcome by the Father working in him. And we can also look forward to the future in the hope of also being given a crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8) that fadeth not away. We can become constituent parts of the New Creation that displays the goodness of God that was denied in Eden. Well might we rejoice with the Apostle: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1:3).

Christopher Maddocks

“What have you done?” and not “What have you professed?” will determine the acceptance of the saints. If their doings are resolvable into mere words that cost nothing but a feeble effort to pronounce them, they can have no part in the Kingdom of God and Age to Come. “Thus saith the Lord”; therefore let no man be beguiled by vain deceit.

John Thomas

Saul – The Failed King

Acts chapter 13, and verse 21 records how the people “desired a king, and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years”. Saul then, was a king given at the request of the people. He was the kind of a man that the people would have rule over them, being “from his shoulders and upward” higher than any of them (1 Sam. 9:2). They saw in him a man of war, who would be able to lead them into victory against their adversaries.

That this is so is evident from the Old Testament record. 1 Samuel chapter 8 recounts the desire of the people, saying:

“we will have a king over us, that *we also may be like all the nations*; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, *and fight our battles*” (1 Sam. 8:19-20).

Here then, were two stated reasons for the people seeking a human king. Firstly, it was that they wanted to be like other people – and in this we have a warning for ourselves. Wanting the acceptance and approval of our peers is endemic to all generations. We also can be motivated by the desire to be like everyone else, so that we don’t stand out too much, as being an oddity in today’s society. But the Scriptures are clear. Consider the following testimonies:

“*be not conformed* to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind ...” (Rom. 12:2).

“come out from among them, and *be ye separate*, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor. 6:17).

“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, *an holy nation, a peculiar people*: that ye should show for the virtues of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9)

“whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world *is the enemy of God*” (Jas. 4:4)

It is inevitable that those who follow the way of Christ will stand out as being different from those around them. As Peter wrote of the response of men of the World to the behaviour of men of God: “they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you” (1 Pet. 4:4). The natural response to this treatment is to minimise the difference between them and us. This can be seen in a whole variety of ways, from the practice of some to refer to the ecclesia of Christ as a “church,” and to the individual members thereof as simply “Christians” – when neither term is reflective of the truth, and both carry a doctrinal baggage which true believers want nothing of. But by using terms recognised by the majority of men, the aim is to lessen the difference between them and us.

The people made a democratic decision to have Saul reign as a human king, replacing the role of Yahweh as their king (1 Sam. 8:7). The second reason for this, is that their king would “fight our battles”.

In fact, Samuel comments on this later on as recorded in 1 Samuel chapter 12:

“when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when Yahweh your Elohim was your king” (1 Sam. 12:12).

It was because the people no longer had trust that Yahweh would be their King and Deliverer that they sought a human king. The Psalmist wrote that: “it is better to trust in Yahweh than to put confidence in man” (Psa 118:8), but the faithless people trusted in the flesh to save them instead.

THE DIVINE PURPOSE WITH SAUL

Even though the people had dubious motives in seeking a king, nevertheless when he was granted to them, Yahweh gave him certain tasks to attend to. It was in the Father’s purpose to raise up a Captain of Salvation, to deliver his people from the hands of the enemy. So Samuel was told: “thou shalt anoint him to be **captain** over my people Israel that he may **save** my people out of the hand of the Philistines” (1 Sam. 9:16). In this work, Samuel’s role was reflective of that of Messiah, Yahweh’s Anointed. Jesus the Christ is described by the Spirit as being “the captain of their salvation”, the “their” referring to his brethren (Heb. 2:10). So it was, that Yahweh’s warfare against the Philistines is likened to Messiah’s contention against the flesh – a theme that we will investigate further shortly.

The time when Samuel came to present Saul before the people, is characterised as being a time when Saul was humble. Rather than to boldly stand in front of all the people, Saul hid himself among the stuff (1 Sam. 10:22). Commenting to Saul about this later, Samuel said “When thou wast little in thine own sight, was thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and Yahweh anointed thee king over Israel?” (1 Sam. 15:17). In this, Saul provides a model example of humility before his God, an example that seems to be alluded to by Messiah himself:

“when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, **Friend, go up higher**: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and **he that humbleth himself shall be exalted**” (Lu. 14:10-11).

Saul was such an example of one who humbled himself, and was subsequently elevated to being king over Yahweh’s people. Interestingly in connection with these words of the Master, we read in 1 Samuel 9 of Samuel and Saul: “Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and **made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden**, which were about thirty persons” (1 Sam. 9:22). Saul then provides an example of one who was exalted in humility.

But tragically, Saul also provides an example of unbelief, in his failing to obey the voice of Yahweh. Speaking of a particular matter that we shall not consider here, Samuel had occasion to rebuke Saul saying: “Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of Yahweh thy Elohim, which he commanded thee: for now would Yahweh

have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: Yahweh hath sought him a man after his own heart, and Yahweh hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which Yahweh commanded thee” (1 Sam. 13:13-14). Because Saul refused the commandments of Yahweh, so Yahweh rejected him. Though he started well as a man of faith and humility, he fell through weakness and human pride.

The failure of Saul stands in Scripture very plainly in the matter of the Amalekites. 1 Samuel chapter 15 records how Yahweh appointed a specific matter for Saul to take care of:

“Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass” (1 Sam. 15:3)

Here was the command: to declare war upon, and smite utterly the power of Amalek, leaving none remaining. But instead of doing this, we read that Saul was very selective in those things which he destroyed:

“But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, **and would not utterly destroy them:** but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly” (1 Sam. 15:9).

HUMAN NATURE

Here we seen Human Nature exemplified. It is easy to cut out of our lives those things which seem not to confer any benefit, or which we take no pleasure in. But those things that seem to us to be “good” are much harder to remove. “Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom. 13:14) is the Father’s Command, and by the very definition of what those lusts are, this will inevitably mean removing from our lives some of those things that we find ourselves attracted to, and which we desire. Saul desired those things that Yahweh had appointed to destruction, in a manner not dissimilar to that of Achan (Josh. 7:21) who desired the riches of Jericho. But he even went so far as to impute a religious motive to his actions:

“... the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice unto Yahweh thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed” (1 Sam. 15:15).

It is possible to use a religious reason to justify disobedience. The commandment was to utterly destroy everything to do with Amalek, but Saul saved the best alive, with the claim (whether true or otherwise) that the intention was to use them in service to Yahweh. Again, we can find a parallel of our own experience: it is possible to convince ourselves that a sin is acceptable if we can use it as part of our service to our God. Like the one who reasoned that gambling is not wrong, so long as we give all our winnings to the Lord’s service. The point is that Yahweh has decreed certain things to be destroyed out of our lives, and we are wrong to keep them alive under the guise of using them to serve Him.

So it was, that Saul was rejected of Yahweh, who said to Samuel: “it repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for **he is turned back** from following my commandments ...” (1 Sam. 15:11). Saul turned back into perdition, and so lost the kingdom, and in the final analysis, his life. So the writer to the Hebrews spake:

“Now the just shall live by faith: but **if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him**. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb. 10:38-39).

The lessons for us in this matter are obvious.

By contrast with Saul, king David was a man after Yahweh’s own heart. Saul’s purpose as we saw earlier was to defeat the Philistines. Yet, through his faithlessness and lack of obedience, the Philistines defeated him instead. But David was a man of faith and courage, being prepared to overthrow Goliath, the champion of the Philistines. Goliath was the great man of Philistia, being “six cubits and a span” tall, and Saul was head and shoulders above all the people of Israel. It fell to Saul then, to fight against the Philistines, in obedience to the mission Yahweh had given him. But he did not have faith:

“the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together. When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, **they were dismayed and greatly afraid**” (1 Sam. 17: 10-11).

Saul, then, was “greatly afraid” and dared not contend against the giant. David, however, was not, even though he were but a youngster, a “stripling” (1 Sam. 17:56). Whilst “the Philistine cursed David by his gods”, David responded: “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of Yahweh of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom thou hast defied” (2 Sam. 17: 43-45). Goliath came with an arm of flesh, but David in the Name of Yahweh. David knew, and trusted in the fact that the warfare was Yahweh’s (cp. 1 Sam. 17:47) against the power of sin, and that He would confirm the victory.

PSALM 8

In this context, it is appropriate for us to consider Psalm 8, which seems to draw upon the incident involving Goliath and David in its prophecy concerning our Master, Jesus the Christ:

“out of the **mouth of babes and sucklings** hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, **that thou mayest still the enemy** and the avenger” (Psa. 8:2).

The allusion here appears to be to David, a “stripling” who stilled the enemy Goliath.

“what is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the Son of man, that thou **visiteth him?**” (Psa. 8:4).

This seems to draw on Samuel visiting David, to anoint him to be king.

“thou hast put all things under his feet: *all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field ...*” (Psa. 8:6-7).

Those things of Amalek that Saul refused to destroy: sheep, oxen etc, will all be subjected to Christ.

“O Yahweh our Adonai, how excellent is thy name *in all the earth*” (Psa. 8:9).

This cites 1 Sam. 17:46, where David describes the consequence of his victory: “that *all the earth* may know that there is a God in Israel”.

The point of these connections appears to be this: David’s slaying of Goliath pointed forwards to the work of Christ in overcoming Sin. Goliath epitomised the flesh in all its rebelliousness and antipathy to Divine things. There were two stages in his death: firstly, David threw a stone, which sank into his forehead (1 Sam. 17:49) causing him to fall to the ground. This seems to point towards the smiting of Israel’s enemies in the future: “God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one that goeth on still in his trespasses” (Psa. 68:21).

The second stage in the slaying of Goliath also points forward to the work of Messiah: Goliath was slain by his own sword. His sword was the power of death that lay in his hand: with it he thought to slay David, Yahweh’s beloved. But instead David took that sword (1 Sam. 17:51), and slew him with it – using sin’s (Goliath) own weapon against itself. Even so we read of Messiah: “that *through death he might destroy him that had the power of death*, that is, the *diabolos*.” Just as Goliath was slain with his own weapon, even so the Sin’s power is destroyed through death, so that it can be said of the Master: “thou hast ascended on high, *thou hast led captivity captive ...*” (Psa. 68:18).

When we come to consider the examples of Saul and David, we find two contradictory personages. Saul started off very well, in humility and with a Divine Commission to destroy the Philistines. But through his lack of faith in Yahweh, and disobedience to his commands, the Philistines destroyed him. There is a lesson in that: if we don’t faithfully engage in the warfare of faith against Sin, Sin will destroy us at the last.

What a contrast between Saul and David! David was not afraid to war against the enemy, and so doing this he is typical of how Messiah would overcome that which held the power of death, even by utilising death itself. We must, therefore be like David, a man after God’s own heart, a man unafraid of the enemy. But we can also find exhortations in the life of Saul, being both a good example in the way he began, but also an example of unbelief at the end. In considering these men, we are brought to our Redeemer, Jesus the Christ. He is our Captain who shall lead us into victory against the greatest enemy of all, even sin itself. In memorialising his sacrificial death, we remember his great victory – which victory will be ours, if we hold fast to the faith without wavering, and certainly without turning back.

Christopher Maddocks

Aaron and Christ

“Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” — *Jesus.*

Yahweh (that is, I shall be אהיה *ēhyēh*—Exod. 3:15,) said to Moses, “See that thou make what thou wast caused to see after their pattern shewed thee in the mount” — Exod. 25:40: which things, Paul says, are only “the image and shadow of heavenly things,” as God said to Moses: and elsewhere he says that “the Jews have the model of the knowledge and of the truth in the law.” From which, and other passages that can be adduced, it is evident that the following proposition is true, namely,

That the Mosaic System of Righteousness is symbolical of the Righteousness of God in Jesus Christ.

Definition. — By “Mosaic System of Righteousness” is meant, All that was necessary to sanctify to the purifying of the flesh, but which could not free the conscience from sin. To impart this carnal purification to the worshipper a High Priest and his Household, distinct from the other classes of the Jewish nation, legally inaugurated and sanctified, were necessary; also a tabernacle, sacrifices, washings, &c., &c.

Definition. — By the “*Righteousness of God*” is meant, *A justification from all past sins devised and enjoined by God*—a purification of the heart, or conscience, without the necessity of obeying the law of Moses (which since the Destruction of Jerusalem cannot be kept) but attested by that law and the prophets—a justification through Jesus Christ’s faith *δια πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* *dia pisteōs Jēsou Christou*) that is, through belief of what He and his apostles preached concerning the Kingdom of God and his Name (Acts 8:12): in other words, *through belief of the Gospel* to all that shall put on Christ—Gal. 3:27.—The “*Righteousness of God*” is the “*Gospel of the Kingdom,*” sometimes called “*the gospel of Christ,*” and often simply “*the gospel,*” which Paul says, “is the power of God for salvation of every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and then to the Greek,” or Gentile.

Nothing can save Jew or Gentile but “the power of God.” The power for that special purpose is the gospel only; so that *saving power* and *the gospel* are but different phrases for the same thing.

LOVE, THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW

Look into these sayings narrowly—“Jesus became the author of eternal salvation *to all them that obey him.*”—Heb. 5:9. “If ye love me *keep my commandments.*” “If a man love me he *will keep my words.*” “Ye are my friends if ye do *whatsoever* I command you.” “He that rejecteth me, *and keepeth not my words* * * * the word *that I have spoken,* the same shall judge him in the last day.” “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” Hence, *love* and *obedience* in Scripture language are but two words for the same idea, or thing: so that God in Jesus Christ admits of no love, or professions of devotion and attachment, that are unaccompanied with a child-like obedience to “*whatsoever*” he commands. Where obedience is not, there love does not exist; and where there is no scriptural love there is no obedience in word or deed; and where these are absent the spirit of love, which is “the spirit of Christ,” is wanting. “Love suffers long and is kind; it envieth not;

it boasts not itself (not full of wordy professions); is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not its own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but *rejoiceth in the truth*; beareth all things, *believeth all things*, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

To persons in whom such a disposition has been created, the precepts of Jesus are, *He who believeth the Gospel of the Kingdom, and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth it not shall be condemned*. Here the gospel is that proposed for *faith*; and baptism, the thing prescribed for *obedience*, that the believer may show or prove whether that faith hath worked in him a true and genuine love to its author. Baptism is only for such believers; for baptism is “*the obedience of faith*,” so that where belief of “*the truth*” does not exist, there can be no true obedience.

THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

When Jesus came to John he demanded to be buried in water that he might come out of it an immersed man. With a view to this he said, “*Thus οὕτω, outo, (in this way) it is proper for us to fulfil all righteousness*,” and the apostle adds, “When he was baptized, he went *up* straightway *from* the water;” clearly evincing that he must first have gone *down* into it. And now, mark this well—*After he had done this*, God acknowledged him as His son, and declared himself well pleased with him.—Mat. 3:13–17. Jesus had been God’s most excellent Son for thirty years, but He withheld His acknowledgment of him till he commenced a course of obedience in being baptized.

Jesus was a Jew under the law of Moses. When, therefore, he spoke of the “all righteousness” to be “fulfilled,” he spoke of the necessity of *doing what was signified* by the propheto-symbolic institutions of the Mosaic Law.

Jesus being the Anointed Seed long promised of God, was therefore the High Priest who was to arise after the similitude, likeness, or order of Melchizedec, and to sit upon his throne as a priest upon his throne, and to bear the glory (Zech. 6.). This being so, he would have at some future time to occupy the place formerly held by Aaron; and as the Aaronic Inauguration was representative of the Melchizedec, Jesus had to be consecrated after the same example or type, that in so doing he might antitypically fulfil the representation of the law.

AARON

Aaron was forbidden to enter into the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle without being adorned and glorified with garments of splendor and holiness, and therefore styled, “*Holy Garments*.” Nor was he permitted to enter even when habited with these, *unless he had been previously baptized*, upon pain of death. The law said, “*He shall wash his flesh in water, and so put them on*.” He was not permitted to officiate as high priest in his ordinary attire. He must “*put off*” this, and “*put on*” the Holy Linen Robe; and had he put this on without bathing his flesh in water, and proceeded to officiate, this unbaptized High Priest of Israel would have been struck with death. When legally invested and arrayed the Aaronic High Priests were “*Holiness to Jehovah*,” and the representatives of the Holy and Just One in his character and priestly office; though oftentimes, as in the case of Caiaphas, by practice unjust and wicked men. The symbolism relative to the high priest was the “*righteousness*” to be fulfilled by Jesus before he could enter

upon his functions by “the power of an endless life” as High Priest, first over the Household of God, and afterwards over the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

John the baptizer, a greater prophet than Moses (Luke 7:28,), but not so great as Jesus, preached and administered “*the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.*” Jesus came to him to be baptized of this baptism; for as Moses baptized Aaron and his sons, so the greatest of all the prophets was appointed to baptize Jesus and his brethren. But some may object that Jesus had no sins to be remitted, and had no need of repentance, and was therefore not a fit subject for such a baptism. It is admitted without reserve, that he had no sins of his own, having never transgressed the law: nevertheless, as the Sin-Bearer of the *Abrahamic Covenant* through whom it was confirmed (Rom. 15:8), Jehovah made the iniquity of all “the children of that covenant” to meet upon him, that by his bruize they might be healed.—Isa. 53:5, 6. He was not the Sin-Bearer of every son of Adam that ever lived; but of the true believers from Abel to the Day of Pentecost, and of the obedient believers of the truth constituting his Household, separated by “the obedience of faith,” from Pentecost in the year of the crucifixion to his future appearing in Jerusalem; and of the living Twelve Tribes when their transgressions shall be blotted out as a thick cloud at their ingrafting into their own Olive Tree; and of that family of nations of which Abraham is the constituted father when they are made righteous; so that the sins of the whole of that world, which shall dwell upon the earth in the postmillennial eternal ages, and which will all of it have been separated from Adam’s race by “*the obedience of faith*”—will have met upon Him, and been borne away into everlasting oblivion. This is the world so beloved of God, “that he gave his only begotten son, * * * that through him it might be saved.”

But to return. Jesus, with the sin of the world thus defined rankling in his flesh, where it was to be condemned to death when suspended on the cross (Rom. 8:3), came to John as the “*Ram of Consecration,*” that his inwards and his body might be washed according to the law.—Exod. 29:17, 22. But these representations of the law and the prophets could not have found their antitype in Jesus, if, in the days of his flesh, he had possessed a holier or purer nature than those for whom he was bruized in the heel. His character was spotless; but as being the Seed of the Woman, of whom no clean flesh can be born, (Job 25:4,) and Seed of Abraham, which is not immaculate, be it Virgin or Nazarite, His nature was flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14), which Paul styles “sinful flesh,” or flesh full of sin, a physical quality or principle which makes the flesh mortal; and called “sin,” because this property of flesh became its law as the consequence of transgression. “God made Jesus sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”—2 Cor. 5:21.

In this view of the matter, the Sin-Bearer of the world indicated, was a fit and proper subject of John’s baptism of repentance for remission of sins. The holy and undefiled disposition of Mary’s Son was granted to him for repentance in fulfilling the symbolical righteousness of the law when he descended into the Jordan to enter into the antitypical robe of righteousness with which he must of necessity be invested before he could enter into the Most Holy as High Priest after the order of Melchizedec. In being baptized he commenced the development of a character distinguished by perfect faith and obedience. This character was his holy raiment, and was without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. This was the “fine linen, clean and white” with which he arrayed

himself; or “*the righteousness of the (king of) saints.*”—Rev. 19:8. It was the antitype in part of Aaron’s holy garments; and he had to put it on in the same way that Aaron did, “by washing his flesh in water, and so putting it on.” He was baptized of John into a holiness of his own, which began with obedience in the Jordan, and ended with obedience in death on the cross. “He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that every tongue should confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” Had Jesus yielded to John (supposing the thing to have been possible), he would have stood before his nation as the High Priest of Israel, claiming to officiate in the Most Holy Place without baptism, a spectacle it had never seen before, nor ever will while the world stands.

But the symbolic righteousness of the Mosaic law not only required the High Priest to put on the Holy Vestments by having his body baptized, but it also commanded his Household to be baptized into theirs also. The law reads thus: “This is the thing Jehovah commanded to be done: and Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water. And he put upon Aaron the coat, &c.; and he put coats upon his sons, and girded them with girdles, and put turbans upon them, as Jehovah commanded.”—Lev. 8:5, 6, 13; 16:4. Here, as I have said, Moses performed the part of John the baptizer to Aaron and his sons, who were to be rulers and priests in Israel. Aaron and his family were their nation’s priestly household; and it was the office of the High, or Chief, Priest to make atonement, or reconciliation, first for himself, then for his household, and lastly, for all the congregation of Israel; but admission into the Holy and Most Holy places, was only permitted to the baptized; they must bathe their flesh in water and so put on the holy garments. Hence, all Israel’s priests were immersed persons; and so also all that shall be their priests and kings in the Age to Come, and have power over the Gentiles, must be immersed likewise.

THE ANTITYPICAL HIGH PRIEST

Jesus, the Melchizedec High Priest of Israel, has a Household as well as Aaron had. A proof of this is found in the words of Paul. In writing to certain Hebrews who had believed the gospel of the kingdom and name of Jesus, and had obeyed it in having their “bodies washed with pure water,” he says, “Christ is a Son over his own house, whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope (Acts 28:20; 26:6, 7) firm unto the end.”—Heb. 3:6, 14. Now, Jesus speaking for himself and others, said, “Thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness.” It is therefore necessary for all “his house” to do as he did, but with this modification of the significancy of the deed, namely,—He was baptized as the initiative of his own holiness, sacrificial and priestly; they must be baptized into His and into a development of their own conformable to his; and with this induction for a beginning, thenceforth “continue patiently in well doing” that they may be holy as he was holy in the days of his flesh; as it is written, “Be ye holy because I am holy.”

Jesus and his Household are the future kings and priests prepared of God to rule Israel and the Nations for Him. The law and the prophets which attest the righteousness of God require them all to put on that righteousness by bathing. Jesus commands the same thing, and says, “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” Therefore he said to his apostles, “Go and preach the

Gospel to every creature;” and “teach them who receive your proclamation to observe whatsoever I command you.” By virtue of this saying the apostles became the depositaries of his commands; so that in the words of Jesus, “He that heareth them, heareth him; and he that despiseth them, despiseth him; and he that despiseth him, despiseth Him that sent him.” Now, Peter, who was one of these plenipotentiaries of Christ, commanded Cornelius, “*a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house; and gave much alms to the people (Israel), and prayed to God daily,* —Peter, I say, “*commanded*” this company of pious Gentiles, who believed the word Jesus began to preach in Galilee, “to be baptized in the name of the Lord.” The apostolic style of address was, “Children of the stock of Abraham, *and whosoever among you feareth God,* to you is the word of this salvation sent.” A man’s supposed piety did not exempt him from the necessity of believing and obeying the gospel of the kingdom, or, as Paul styles it, “the word of this salvation.” Peter went to Cæsarea to tell pious, god-fearing men, “*words whereby they should be saved.*”

But, however pious they may be who are ignorant of these *saving words*, they are alienated from the life of God through that ignorance (Eph. 4:18). Piety in general has so little to do with an understanding of the word of the kingdom and the obedience it enjoins, that it has passed into a proverb, that “ignorance is the mother of devotion.” In a certain sense this is true. *The most ignorant are for the most part the most pious, and the most intolerant of the truth and its obedience.* This is *Pharisaism*, whether it flourish in the first, or in the nineteenth century; and in reference to which Jesus has said, “Except your righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of the heavens.” Pharisaists “appear to men to be righteous;” but men uninstructed in the gospel of the kingdom are incompetent to distinguish the counterfeit from the true.

A man in this century will have no more ability to enter the kingdom of the heavens, if his righteousness exceed not that of contemporary churchmen of the strictest sect, than would those addressed by Jesus whose righteousness might be on a par with the pietists of his age. Shall it be said that it was necessary for the Melchizedec High Priest, who was innocent of transgression, and who for thirty years had enjoyed the favor of God and man, to be immersed in a baptism of repentance for remission of sins; but that it is not necessary for the pious who would compose his household, who are sinners by nature and practice? Nay, if it were indispensable for Jesus to be buried in water that he might begin a career of holiness to Jehovah in coming up out of it, it is infinitely more so that all should tread in his steps of perfect faith and obedience, who would be invested with “robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb,” having their loins girt around with the girdle of truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and their feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; and on their heads the helmet of salvation. An immersed High Priest requires an immersed household. There is one law for both, as there was one baptism for Jesus and his apostles; on whom as upon all others of the household, the necessity is imperative to fulfil all the righteousness foreshadowed in Aaron and his sons. There is no discharge from this necessity for Jew or Gentile; “for *thus it behoveth us to fulfil all righteousness.*”

*John Thomas Herald of The Kingdom 1855
Vol. 5, pp. 49–52*

Israel's Prayer for Deliverance

From the prophetic Word, we understand that there is a “time of Jacob’s trouble” to come upon Israel, when the nation shall be brought to their knees by the afflictions of an invading power. Zechariah speaks of this:

“it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith Yahweh, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my Name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people, and they shall say, Yahweh is my God” (Zech. 13:8-9).

So it will be that in the depths of despair, the people shall turn to Yahweh who fought for them in the days of old, calling upon his Name and worshipping Him as their God. Isaiah chapter 30 also describes this cry of Yahweh’s people, and His response to them:

“Yahweh is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee” (Isa. 30:18-19).

The chapter that we have as our Old Testament reading for today describes this “cry” in more detail, outlining the prayer of Israel for deliverance at this terrible time. Isaiah chapter 63 describes the advance of Messiah towards Jerusalem, carrying out the judgments of the Almighty upon those who will not accept the righteousness of his rule, and who refuse to submit to the dictates of His Son. Then we have the prayer of Israel for deliverance from the hand of the oppressor:

“Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies towards me? Are they restrained?” (Isa. 63:15)

This cry to Yahweh to “look down from heaven” picks up an expression from Deuteronomy chapter 26, and the words which were to be spoken when the tithes were given: “... look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swearest unto thy fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey” (Deut. 26:15). Here was the implicit recognition that Yahweh was their provider, that he had given them the land, and all the blessings associated with it. The paying of a token ten percent of their produce was a recognition that all of it belonged to Yahweh, and that he was permitting them to enjoy his blessings. Even so, we must trust in the living God “who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17). In Isaiah 63, we have the people entreating their God in repentance, recognizing Him as the source of all things, and desiring the blessings to be given once again.

BOWELS AND MERCIES

The source of Divine blessing is described as being “bowels and mercies”. That is, the innermost thought and desire, and the extension of grace as a consequence. The phrase

is used in a number of other places:

“if there by any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Phil. 2:1-2).

“put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels and mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering ...” (Col. 3:12).

The bowels and mercies then, speaks of the merciful relationships between those of like precious faith: an innermost desire, manifested in the grace extended between saints. By contrast, to shut up one’s bowels is not to show grace to the brethren, and not to provide for their mutual needs:

“whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? (1 Jno. 3:17).

The call to Yahweh then, is to extend love and mercy in meeting Israel’s need for deliverance and subsequent blessing in the land – and that principle is something that Christ’s brethren must perform towards each other in their relationships today.

THOU ART OUR FATHER

It is sometimes thought that the Fathership aspect of Yahweh is a New Testament concept, yet this Old Testament passage shows otherwise. The people here plead their case on the grounds that Yahweh is their father, and they his children: “Doubtless thou art our Father ... thou, O Yahweh art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting” (Isa. 63:16). The language here is from David’s blessing at the inauguration of Solomon:

“Wherefore David blessed Yahweh before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou Yahweh God of Israel our Father, for ever and ever. Thine O Yahweh, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Yahweh, and thou art exalted as head above all” (1 Chron. 29:10-11: see also Mat. 6:9-13).

Israel were the national Son of Yahweh: (cp. “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt” (Hos. 11:1)). As children, they partook of the blessings of their Father, and it is upon the basis of this family relationship that they plead their cause once again before the Head of their family. The Family Name “is from everlasting”, and speaks of the greatness of the family head – even the Almighty Father Himself.

The prophet Jeremiah also foretold of those days to come:

“But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? And I said, Thou shalt call me My father; and shall not turn away from me” (Jer. 3:19).

Notice, the proclamation “my father” is the answer to a question. That question is, How shall the blessings be given: i.e. a pleasant land, and a goodly heritage? The answer is, “thou shalt call me My father” – that fact is the basis for the giving of blessings upon the people, even as a father does his son.

“WHY HAST THOU MADE US TO ERR?”

The cry of Israel continues:

“O Yahweh, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servant’s sake, the tribes of thine inheritance” (Isa. 63:17).

Quite remarkably, this verse presents Yahweh as making his sons to err: but how is this so? And why is this so? It is written that “God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (Jas. 1:13), so how is it that He can harden the hearts of His people?

A possible answer emerges from the consideration of the principles that lie behind another passage: 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. This chapter describes “them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause, God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thes. 2:10-12). Those that perish are those who “believed not the Truth”, and who do not love the Truth. God has sent them a strong delusion to “believe a lie,” and similarly hardened the hearts of those who did not believe the Truth taught by his holy prophets, making them err. Again, the exhortation for us is to do the reverse: to love and believe the Truth, having pleasure in righteousness and not the indulgence of our sinful human nature.

“THEY WERE NOT CALLED BY THY NAME”

One of the themes of Isaiah 63, is that of the Name of Yahweh. Verse 12 describes how the Almighty divided the water at the Exodus “to make himself an everlasting Name”. Verse 14 describes how that He led his people “to make thyself an glorious Name”. Again, in addressing Yahweh as their Father, Israel are portrayed as calling upon their Redeemer and saying: “thy name is from everlasting” (verse 16). Verse 19, under current consideration describes the enemy: “thy were not called by thy Name”, and again verse 7 of chapter 64 laments: “there is none that calleth upon thy Name”. The Name of Yahweh, literally meaning, “He shall be” encapsulates the purpose of the Almighty to become manifest in a great company of sons and daughters. Those “residue of men” (Gentiles who embrace the hope of Israel) who “seek after the Lord” are those “upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord”. They are from the Gentiles, taken out to be “a people for his Name” (Acts 15:17, 14). Israel were originally ordained to declare their Father’s glory and Name amongst the nations, and in their state of repentance, they will seek to attain to that position once more. By contrast, those who had the mastery over them were never called by His Name, being unbelieving Gentiles, who had their own motives for crushing Yahweh’s People. They will be blown away like the chaff from the summer threshing floor, whilst Israel will be restored under the auspices of Yahweh’s Son.

A REVELATION OF THINGS NOT SEEN

Verse 4 of Isaiah 64 is a passage often misunderstood, or at least, misquoted:

“For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him” (Isa. 64:4).

This verse is often cited to show that the best of the blessings of the Kingdom are not known by mortal man: he cannot know them, as they have not been revealed. However, the Apostle cites this verse in a contrary manner:

“as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit ...” (1 Cor. 2:9-10).

It is true that man can naturally know nothing about the things of God, and it is also undoubtedly true that there will be aspects of life in the coming kingdom which is not made known to us. But the point made by the apostle is that the things which were formerly hidden, are now revealed. “we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory” (1 Cor. 2:7). These things concerning the Name of Jesus Christ were not known until the revelation made by Him, and his Apostles - and since that time, believers throughout the ages have known them, rejoice in their understanding of them.

FILTHY RAGS

Another passage often misquoted is the next verse:

“but we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we do all fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isa. 64:6).

So it is said that this is our present condition: dressed in filthy rags before our Creator. But this is contrary to the teaching of Scripture elsewhere: all our righteousnesses are not as filthy rags, according to Revelation 19:8, speaking of the Lamb’s Wife:

“and to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints ...” (Rev. 19:8).

The righteousness of saints then, are not “filthy rags”, but fine, white linen. The description in Isaiah 64 is Israel lamenting their state of sin before God. We, by grace, are not in that state: we have been cleansed by washing our garments in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14). We must not confuse our position with that of the “miserable sinners” of the Gentiles, but be thankful for the cleansing that we have in Christ. We must seek to bring others into that same relationship that we share, taking heed that we do not defile our garments once again: “others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hat-

ing even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 23). Filthy garments are worn by those outside of the sanctifying power of Christ, and are to be “hated” as we seek to save others with fear.

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

In their cry for deliverance, Israel shall come once more to accept Yahweh as their provider, and deliverer. And in so doing, they recognize that they are but vessels in the hand of the potter, Who will make all things according to His Will: “But now, O Yahweh, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we are all the work of thy hand” (Isa. 64:8).

We are told elsewhere that it is through much tribulation that we shall enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22), and the word used there signifies pressure. We are but vessels in the hand of the potter, who will apply whatever pressure is needed to develop us into a splendid vessel, suitable for the Master’s use. Another passage which describes the same idea is Jeremiah chapter 18:

“O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? Saith Yahweh. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand O, house of Israel” (Jer. 18:6).

Again, in this cry for deliverance, there is an implicit trust in the pressure that is brought to bear for the development of an appropriate vessel, fit for the master’s use.

FORGIVENESS

The next principle in Israel’s prayer, is that Yahweh will not be angry for ever:

“Be not wroth very sore, O Yahweh, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people” (Isa. 64:9).

Here is a fundamental principle, also expressed in Psalm 30:

“For his anger endureth but for a moment: in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psa. 30:5).

Though we may do things that warrant the wrath of God, we can trust that he will turn from that wrath, and give us the joy of a new day, marked by the rising of the Sun of Righteousness. His anger is but for a moment, especially when compared with the eternal joyous vision of the kingdom that he has provided us with. Again, another Psalm is comforting in this regard:

“If thou, Yahweh, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mightiest be feared” (Psa. 130:3-4).

In conclusion then, we see that in Israel’s prayer for deliverance, we find many aspects and principles which are brought to bear for our own deliverance from the bondage of sin and death. We implicitly trust in our Father for all that we have, and have the confidence that He is a wise potter able to make us suitable for His use. And we therefore

look beyond the time of His anger, to the time of consolation, when the kingdom shall be restored to Israel, and by His grace, we might be included in that day of great joy and rejoicing before the Lord in glorious immortality.

Christopher Maddocks

The Significance of the Cross of Christ

THE crucified and risen Christ is the highest and latest form of the wisdom of God towards men. “God was in him, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” In Paul’s day, he was a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the philosophers: but he was none the less, as Paul alleged, “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” To others who have risen since, the cross has become the theme of folly and the subject of profanation. Superstitious men have made it the symbol of implacable Deity: superficial men have proclaimed it a meaningless accident of a martyr’s life, and others have construed it as a transaction of mechanical law between God and man, in which the subject has been profaned by the importation of “claims” and “obligation” and “rights.”

The one element in the case that gives it its whole character, and apart from which it is inexplicable, is the one element that the carnally-minded are least capable of taking into account, viz., the kindness of the living God of Israel, operating of His own initiative, to bestow His favour while conserving His supremacy. It is forgotten, if ever realised, that the whole arrangement is God’s own arrangement and an arrangement of “grace” (favour)—not of law or works or rights. Whenever the death of Christ is looked upon as the satisfaction of a debt or the enduring of a vicarious punishment, grace is clouded, the forgiveness of sin made impossible, and the judgment seat of Christ disestablished. The following propositions define the matter as it is scripturally testified:—

1. That the work of God in Christ for the salvation of men, is a process of grace or favour from God, and not of works or obligation.

“The *grace of God that bringeth salvation* hath appeared” (Tit. 2:11).

“After that, *the kindness and love of God towards man* appeared” (3:4).

“He hath predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of *the glory of his grace*, whereas he hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Eph. 1:5, 6).

“Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life” (Rom. 5:20–1).

“If by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace” (Rom. 11:6).

2. That its operation is by free forgiveness of sin and not by obtaining any satisfaction in the sense of the payment of debt.

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, *not imputing their trespasses* unto them” (2 Cor. 5:19).

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to *the riches of his grace*” (Eph. 1:7).

“Through this man is preached unto you *the forgiveness of sins*” (Acts 13:38).

“Be baptised for *the remission of your sins*” (Acts 2:38).

“That they may receive *forgiveness of sins* . . . by the faith that is in me” (**Acts 26:18**).

3. That nevertheless, the death of Christ was necessary to lay a foundation on which the forgiveness of sins could be offered in love without compromising the supremacy of God.

“Christ died for the ungodly. God commandeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:6, 8).

“Christ also hath suffered sins; the just for the unjust that he might bring us unto God” (1 Pet. 3:18).

“The Son of Man is come to give his life as ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28).

“It behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations” (Luke 20:40).

4. That the purpose served by the death of Christ was the public declaration of the righteousness of God in the condemnation of the sin of the world in its own flesh, and that the flesh of mortal nature might be repudiated as a rule of action before God.

“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of the sins that are past through the forbearance of God” (Rom. 3:25).

“God sent forth his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3).

“Our old man is crucified with him that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:6).

5. *That in order to accomplish this result, it was necessary that Jesus should have the identical nature that is under sin, that in him it might be redeemed: otherwise, his death would not have been a righteous death, and the salvation accomplished not a salvation for us.*

“In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren” (Heb. 2:17).

“For as much as the children are partakers of flesh and blood he also himself likewise *took part of the same that through death* he might destroy that having the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14).

“The seed of David according to the flesh” (Rom. 1:3).

“Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come *in the flesh* is not of God, and this is that spirit of Antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come” (1 Jno. 4:3).

6. *That for all these reasons our sins are considered as having been laid on him and taken away by him, and nailed to the tree with him.*

“Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world” (Jno. 1:39).

“The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Is. 53:6).

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body to the tree” (1 Pet. 2:29).

7. *That by a similar figure, we are considered as “washed in his blood,” because our sins are forgiven for his sake, that is for the sake of the acceptable obedience he rendered in submitting to the declaration of the righteousness of God in the shedding of his blood on Calvary.*

“He hath washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Rev. 1:5).

“God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32).

“Obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him” (Phil. 2:8, 9).

“It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, and having made peace by the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself” (Col. 1:19, 20).

From all which it follows that the resurrection of Christ, after suffering for sin, was an act of God’s grace, granted freely in His kindness, because of His pleasure in the acceptable submission of His son to what He required at His hands in vindication of His way with man, preparatory to the manifestation of His kindness in the bestowal of eternal life through him. It was not a thing that any claim could be made for, or which God was under any obligation to bestow. It was God’s own act

in God's own grace because of the righteousness of Christ that pleased Him whom He sent to open the way thus for the manifestation of His kindness in our salvation on our submitting to him. In Christ crucified, God was exalted and man humbled in the dust. This relation of things, heartily and humbly recognised, is the basis of all God's kindness to man. The result is, as yet, limited to Christ, but is afterwards to be extended by Him to all who obey Him. It is the grace of God, the favour of God in Christ. In him only can men have access to this grace. Apart from him, men are still in their sins, and without hope, whatever their creature peculiarities may be. By grace are we saved through faith; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. In the doctrine of the cross, rightly seen, it is "grace that reigns *through righteousness*, unto eternal life," the righteousness being Christ's perfect compliance with the will of God, and our compliance with the will of Christ as expressed in his commandments.

RR The Christadelphian 1893 page 84-85.

"Ho, Everyone that Thirsteth"

From speaking of the sufferings of Messiah (Isa. 53) and the glory of the kingdom to follow (Isa. 54), the prophet Isaiah sets forth an invitation to those who hunger and thirst, to partake of a spiritual feast of sumptuous things:

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price ..." (Isa. 55:1).

It is evident that this thirsting and the satisfying thereof speaks of something more significant than the natural desire for water and its physical nourishment. David in the Psalms also speaks of this:

"as the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psa. 42:1-2).

"O Yahweh, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is ..." (Psa. 63:1).

There is, then, a particular category of men who desire to partake of the benefits of Messiah's kingdom: only those who hunger and thirst after spiritual things. The natural man has no interest in spiritual nourishment, and does not know his state of deprivation of those things. This is the Laodicean attitude: "... thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17). By contrast, the man of the spirit seeks first the kingdom of God, and His Righteousness with a strong longing, comparable with the innate desire for food and water. Just as natural food and water is essential

to sustain a mortal existence, even so the bread of life, and the water of the Word is essential to sustain the “new man” which is fashioned after the image of his Maker. It truly is a blessing to receive these spiritual things: in Samuel’s day, we are told, there was a scarcity of the Word (1 Sam. 3:1), and Amos describes how that in his day, there was a spiritual famine:

“Behold, the days come, saith Adonai Yahweh, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Yahweh: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of Yahweh, and shall not find it” (Amos 8:11-12)

In our day, like Samuel’s, there is no open vision. The only source of moral guidance and knowledge of the Almighty is contained within the pages of Scripture alone. True, Creation itself testifies to the greatness of its Maker, but it does not describe His Moral attributes, or His Purpose for the earth. In one sense, there is a dearth of the Word in our day, in that there are few who uphold it’s teachings in spirit and in truth: it’s meanings and teachings are hidden before all, save for that small remnant who earnestly seek after the narrow way which leads to eternal life. But paradoxically, in another sense there is an abundance of the Word in that Bibles are readily available in most countries of the world. This contrasts greatly with the situation in the not too distant past, before mass printing came into being. Being rare in those days, it was treasured more, and men were willing to lay down their lives to ensure that it was translated into the vernacular language. In our day, there is no shortage of Bibles, yet it’s message is hidden from the masses, through their indolence and refusal to open its pages, and study its contents. Only those who thirst after righteousness will take the trouble to familiarize themselves with it, and become wise unto the salvation it offers.

Our Master spoke of the blessedness of this latter class of men: “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Mat. 5:6). There is no limit to the nourishing effect of the Oracles of God, when understood and believed. Here is the promise to the faithful: “they shall be filled” with the righteousness which they seek. To quote again from the words of Christ to the woman of Samaria:

“whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (Jno. 4:13-14).

Here, the source of spiritual water is identified. Jesus himself is the fountainhead of the Water of Life, able to permanently quench the thirst of his brethren with living waters. His word is nourishing and healing. He proclaimed himself to be “the bread of life”, saying that “he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (Jno. 6:35, Cp Jno. 7:37). Only in Jesus can we find true sustenance, and true satisfaction for all of our needs.

“He that hath no money”

James informs us that God has “chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him” (Jas. 2:5). The appeal of

the Spirit through Isaiah is to those who are lacking in material things:

“... he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price ...” (Isa. 55:1).

In spiritual concerns, the lack of finance is no hindrance to salvation. The Waters of Salvation cannot be purchased by natural means: it is just not possible to buy these waters in the same way that natural commodities might be obtained. Simon the sorcerer found this out, attempting to buy the Holy Spirit gifts – So Peter rebuked him: “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money ...” (Acts 8:20). There is a tendency in our day to regard men of means as being ‘successful’ and somehow better than the poor who lack daily provisions. This is the short-sighted view of the flesh, for our salvation can be obtained by grace alone, and not of our own means, as it is written: “by Grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8).

But there is another sense in which the spiritual waters must be bought. Not with money, as in a natural transaction, but there is something else that we must give in order to obtain it. Notice the words of Isaiah 55: “Come ye, buy, and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price: (Isa. 55:1). There is a buying involved, but which is not to do with the giving of money.

Matthew chapter 13 describes the Word in terms of a treasure, or a pearl that is found:

“the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Mat. 13:44-46).

Notice that here, something must be given in order to obtain the treasure, or the pearl: “all that he hath”. Here is the principle: we can only partake of the spiritual benefits, if we are willing to give our all to obtain them. In the words of Paul, we must be willing to present ourselves as “a living sacrifice,” laying down our entire lives in service to our Master.

There are a number of allusions to Isaiah 55 in John chapter 6, where Messiah identifies himself as being the “bread of life”. In this chapter, we read of how the multitudes had followed our Lord into the wilderness to be taught by him. However, they lacked physical sustenance, and so Jesus provided for their needs by feeding the thousands with 5 barley loaves and 2 small fishes. The bread was multiplied in their partaking of it, ensuring that all were satisfied from their hunger. Jesus then taught the spiritual principles being displayed in these things: Just as they had received food without paying for it, so the bread of life was freely available as a gift:

“Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you” (Jno. 6:27).

“Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never

hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (Jno. 6:35).

Again, there is a contrast with the provision of Manna; physical bread provided to sustain the nation of Israel in their wilderness wanderings:

“Verily, verily I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world” (Jno. 6:32-33).

And again:

“... so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever.” (Jno. 6:57-58)

There is a limit to the nourishment that natural food can give: even when Divinely provided, like the Manna from heaven. But to feed upon the Lord Jesus Christ is to eat of bread which sustains life forever.

BREAD THAT SATISFIETH NOT

By contrast to the Bread of Life, the natural bread offered by the world cannot satisfy the searcher of Truth. Speaking of this, Bro CC Walker writes:

“The word of truth says, “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear and your soul shall live.” The perverted word in the mouth of the clergy says your “soul” (meaning thereby a phantom unknown to the scriptures” doth live whether you incline your ear and “hearken diligently” or not. It must live eternally. “O the value of one ‘immortal soul.’ Countless worlds cannot be placed in the balance with it”! And so forth, in the style which is only too familiar.

Does this “satisfy”? Some of them say (without much favour or certainty) that it does. But in truth it “satisfieth not,” as many can truly testify who have tried it. See them over a dead body or a grave, and their sorrow (or rejoicing) is that of ignorance and hopelessness. The sham gospel sends a phantom to heaven apart from resurrection and judgment, in the face of the plainest testimonies that both are indispensable before eternal life can be entered, and that heaven is forbidden to men, and that the Lord Jesus is returning to cause the righteous to inherit the earth forever, and further that these things relate not to a ghost or phantom, but to men and women of angelic bodily nature such as the Lord possesses, and such as he revealed to his disciples after his resurrection”

(The Ministry of the Prophets)

The prophet exhorts us to “buy wine and milk without price”, and this is picked up by Peter, in describing the blessedness of those babes who are nourished by the milk of the Word: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow

thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious ..." (1 Pet. 2:2-3). The Word is able to provide for all our needs. To begin with, it contains milk for the nurture of spiritually newborn babes, and it also provides solid food for those who grow into mature adults. For those who hunger and thirst, it is satisfying, and is eagerly devoured in order to obtain the benefits thereof.

PARTAKING OF CHRIST

We meet together each week to partake of the emblems of bread and wine: a spiritual food and drink, which edifies us as we consider the sacrifice represented by them. We come to the emblems thirsting with a thirst that the world cannot know. As we saw earlier, the Laodicean apostasy is ignorant of its impoverished state, as it is insensitive to the Truth of Scripture. We however, come to Christ for full satisfaction, even as he taught: "Whoso eateth of my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (Jno. 6:54-57). Regardless as to our position in society, or our possession of this world's goods, we come to Christ laying down our lives in service before him, buying meat and drink without money and without price, to find eternal salvation at the last.

Christopher Maddocks

Haggai - Consider your Ways (2)

CHAPTER 1

As we saw in our last article in this series, the immediate effect of the words of the prophets, was that Zerubbabel, and Joshua were stirred up to lead the people into action. In Haggai chapter 1, we see that perhaps the reason for this, was that the first prophecy was delivered to these men first, and then to the people. The word of Yahweh came by the hand of Haggai, drawing attention to the condition of the people.

"THE TIME IS NOT COME"

"Thus saith Yahweh of hosts, saying, This people say, the time is not come, the time that Yahweh's house should be built" (Hag 1:2). This is what the people said in their hearts, "the time is not yet come". They were familiar with the prophecies of Jeremiah, given just before and after the Babylonian invasion. He prophesied that in addition to the seventy year period of servitude, there would be another seventy years during which the Land would be desolate (2 Chron 36:21).

To the faithful, such as Daniel, the promise of a restoration after 70 years of destruction was something to long for. We know that Daniel understood "the number of years, whereof the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem" (Dan 9:2). And toward the end of this

period, we have the marvellous prayer of faith that he gave, earnestly beseeching the Lord to “cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary which is desolate” (v 17).

This was the prayer of all the faithful, that the restoration would come, that the mercies of God would once again be in abundance upon His People.

But, it would appear that the people had worked out that the 70 years were not yet ended. That the time had “not yet come”, there were a few years left. And so they concluded that there was no need to work yet. They had begun to do the work of God, but opposition had arisen, and they had to stop. What further proof did they need, that the time had not yet come? When the time came, surely the opposition would cease, and they would be able to continue?

Such is the reasoning of the flesh. How subtle, how logical to the natural mind, which finds no satisfaction in the work of God. Yet, how contrary to the mind of the Spirit. What a contrast this is to the response of David, who earnestly desired to build the original house (Ps 132:3-5, 2 Sam 7:2).

THE EXAMPLE OF DAVID

David was commanded by Yahweh through Nathan the prophet that he could not build. The time for the house to be built would not come until David slept with his fathers, and the reign of Solomon had begun. But David did not use this as a reason not to engage himself in the work. Although he could not actually build the house, he set himself to work in preparing all the materials necessary (1 Chron 22:14-19). And so, when the time came for the temple to be built, Solomon could start immediately, everything being ready, and prepared.

But the Jews of the restoration said, No, the time to work “is not yet come!” (Hag 1:2) But then came the Divine Rebuke: “Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? Now, therefore, thus saith Yahweh of hosts; Consider your ways.” (Hag 4:5)

APATHY AND SELF INDULGENCE

They dwelt in “cieled houses”. The word means “to cover over”, and refers to the wood panelling they had covering the interior of their houses. The word is used in Jeremiah 22:14 speaking of those “that saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is cieled with cedar, and painted with vermilion”.

And so rather than to build God’s house, they built their own houses! But even worse than this, the cedar panelling they used came from materials originally prepared for use in God’s house!

We read of this wood being given in Ezra 3:7, “cedar trees from Lebanon ... according to the grant that they had of Cyrus, king of Persia.” But now, in their apathy, and self-indulgence, they had stolen the wood for use in their own houses. Truly they needed to consider their ways. The fact that they used the wood, indicates a lack of belief that the time would come. They thought the wood would never be needed. But, the command

came for them to get more wood: “Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house” (Hag 1:8). They had brought additional work upon themselves by their own foolishness.

A WARNING FOR US

But how easy it is for us to do likewise. We live in the last days before the return of our Lord, when there will be a second, greater restoration. But yet in truth, that time has not yet come. How long remains, we do not know, but what are we doing?

Are we diligently striving to overcome all opposition, in our efforts to build up the House of God? Are we like Daniel, earnestly desiring that day to come soon? Like David, labouring in preparation for that great day? Or are we like the people who were concerned only with their own affairs, in making their lives more comfortable?

Let us not say within our hearts, “the Lord delayeth his coming” (Mat 24:48), or “the time has not yet come”, using this as an excuse to engage in fleshly pursuits. But let us rather be stirred up to action by the word of the prophets, that we might be ready when that day comes.

CURSES FOR DISOBEDIENCE

After speaking of the failings of the people, the prophet focused on the hardships they had endured in the land: “Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but you have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.” And then again came the call: “Thus saith Yahweh of hosts; Consider your ways” (v 6,7).

Under the Law, when the Children of Israel entered the land under Joshua, they were given promises of blessings for obedience, and curses for disobedience (Deut 28). The prophet Amos spoke of the adversity which the Lord had brought on Israel to cause them to repent. Yet, he lamented five times in one chapter, “Yet have ye not returned unto me” (Amos 4).

And the Jews in Haggai’s day were not better. They lacked faith in the ways of God. Their ways which they were to consider, were not in harmony with His ways (Is 55:8,9). We cannot expect the blessings of God, if we forsake Him, only cursings. They sowed much, but reaped little. The scarcity of food brought famine, and rising prices. The high cost of food meant that they could not have enough. They could not afford sufficient clothing to keep warm. In short, those who earned wages found that the money went very quickly, like putting it into a bag with holes in. And all “because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house” (Hag 1:9). And so, the people needed to seriously consider their ways.

CONSIDER YOUR WAYS

This is what we must do, if we would be partakers of Yahweh’s blessings. Speaking of the Memorial meal of fellowship, the apostle wrote: “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.” (1 Cor 11:28) At the time when

we unite together to consider the perfection of our Lord, we must examine ourselves. We must consider our ways, whether they are Yahweh's ways or not. And we must resolve to repent from all evil works, that we might be acceptable to him.

REPENTANCE AND BLESSING

After hearing the message of the Prophet, both the leaders and the people did consider their ways, and repented. In verse 12, we read that Zerubbabel and Joshua "with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of Yahweh their God ... and the people did fear before Yahweh". What a marvellous response this was! Notice that Haggai used no sign, no miracle to achieve this – simply an uncompromising declaration of the Word of God.

Upon their repentance, the next message to the people through Haggai was short, yet full of meaning: "I am with you, saith Yahweh" (1:13). Previously they had faced opposition and uncertainty. But now, they were given an assurance of Divine aid. The work would continue, the house would be built, for Yahweh was with His people. As the apostle declared, "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

The builder of the first house, Solomon was moved by the Holy Spirit to write: "Except Yahweh build the house, they labour in vain that build it (Ps 127:1). This had been the situation previously. The people, building under their own strength were hindered, and the work ceased. But now, they recognised that God's blessing upon both themselves and their work was contingent upon obedience. They were building in God's strength, and so they would succeed.

THE RETURN TO WORK

And so we read in verse 14, that "they came and did work in the house of Yahweh of hosts, their Elohim". The immediate, and long term effects of these actions are recorded for us by Ezra.

What they were doing, in recommencing the work was against the decree of the king, and therefore illegal – and punishable by death. In Ezra 5, we read of how the adversaries of Israel commenced their opposition once more. But, "the eye of their God" was upon them, that they "could not cause them to cease" (Ezra 5:5).

And so, they wrote another letter to the king, questioning the legality of the matter. "Let there be a search made ... whether it be so, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build the house of God at Jerusalem ..." (Ezra 5:17)

A search was made, and the decree of Cyrus was found (Ezra 6:7). And Darius ratified it with another decree: "Let the work of this house of God alone" (Ezra 6:6-12) he commanded, and gave details of how provision would be made to assist the work.

The way in which the opposition was removed is very instructive for us to consider. It was a direct consequence of faith in action. It was a direct result of the people resuming their work as the prophet had commanded, that the events just described took place, leading to the rebuke of the adversary (Zech 3:2).

Thus it is that when we meet adversity and opposition in our labours in the Truth, there is no place for complacency. We cannot just sit back and wait for deliverance. We must act, for as Bro Roberts wrote, “human action is the basis of divine supervision. Without it, the Angels have nothing to work upon”.

When the Israelites were to enter the land, the Divine promise came, “I will give you the land”. But, if the people had just waited at the border for it to have been given to them, they would never have possessed it. They were to go in, and to fight. And so, likewise, if we would inherit the blessings of Yahweh, we must be active in faith. And so it will be that the Lord’s ministering spirits (Heb 1:14) will guide events in our lives to deliver us from all evil (Ps 34:7), and prepare us for that great day to come.

(To be Continued)

Christopher Maddocks

Dealing With Personal Offences

“Moreover if thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the ecclesia: but if he neglect to hear the ecclesia, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican” (Matthew 18:15-17).

Following our periodic reviews of various publications which entail the exposing of doctrinal error, a few correspondents have expressed the concern that the principles of the Lord Jesus as expressed above have not been upheld. It is felt that rather than to give a public refutation, the procedure outlined by our Lord ought to be followed, that reconciliation might be found with our erring brethren and the matter be laid to rest. To give open rebuke to those who lead folk astray from the paths of wisdom and life is allegedly “unChristlike.” Far better, we are told, to follow the procedure outlined by Christ, and approach the offender quietly and alone to resolve things.

But however attractive such a proposition might sound in an age where it is greatly frowned upon to adversely comment upon the beliefs of another; when mutual toleration and respect must be shown by all to all, to follow such counsel would not be to rightly apply the Word of Christ. In the passage cited above, it is important to note the circumstance in which our Lord states the procedure should be followed: “if thy brother shall trespass **against thee**”. The case is to do with personal offences, either open or private, whereby a brother has committed a trespass in whatever form against another brother. This is not the same as when affronts are made against the Truth by the promulgation of false doctrine. This is a different circumstance; and the Scriptures indicate that different procedures should be implemented.

An example of where a brother began to lead others astray can be found in Peter, who out of fear of the Jews, disassociated himself from the Gentiles. The consequence of such action was that “the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barn-

abas also was carried away with their dissimulation” (Gal 2:13). What was to be done? A highly respected brother – one of such great standing as Peter the Apostle was actually causing the brethren to be “carried away”! To follow the advice of our critics, Paul should have taken Peter to one side, and had a quiet word with him in private. That, however is not what he did. What good would that do to those who were being “carried away?” How would it deal with the damage already done? No, his actions were far better; he gave a public and open repudiation: “when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, if thou, being a Jew livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?” (Gal 2:14). He “withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed” (Gal 2:11). He did not follow the procedure outlined by the Lord Jesus – because it did not apply. It was a different set of circumstances, when a different form of action was required. As Paul, under inspiration, wrote to Timothy, “them that sin *rebuke before all*, that others also may fear” (1Tim 5:20). This is a precedent in Scripture for dealing with such situations – and is the divinely appointed procedure which we endeavour to follow.

APPLYING MATTHEW 18:15-17

But what then of the words of the Lord Jesus? How should they be applied? A point to be noted, is that they are not given as mere advice – optional guidance which a person might follow if we so wish. It is a command which must be followed when major personal differences arise. “If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother”. Notice here also, the Master does not stipulate that the trespass must be private – in the event of any personal trespass, either public or private, he has appointed this procedure to be followed. These are personal differences or grievances, not the open promulgations of false teachings.

The first point therefore – a point often made, but seldom heeded, is that before the offence is spoken of to even a single person; the offender must be seen first, alone (see also Prov. 25:9). Then, ideally, the situation may be resolved between the two parties, without the need for any outside involvement. All too often people air their personal grievance without actually approaching the offender first – a practice to be avoided at all costs. Notice that in the Lord’s command, there is no provision for such – at all. “Speak evil of no man” (Tit 3:2) is the way of Christ, whether there is factual evil to be spoken or not.

Notice this also – the whole point of the exercise is not to “thrash out the issue” – but specifically to find reconciliation. To gain one’s brother who has been lost to us by the nature of offence. Again, it is not uncommon for brethren to discuss their differences with the motive of personal justification, rather than a desire for reconciliation. That I might show myself to be right – and that my brother might recognise that I am right! Such is *not* the purpose of the exercise. The offence must be pointed out for the benefit of the offender, that he might repent, not for the offended that he might be vindicated. Finally, even before this procedure be implemented, the gravity of offence needs firstly to be determined. The end result shows this – the issues are important matters of fellowship. The ‘trespass’ is one so great that if the offender refuses to hear, it warrants his expulsion from the ecclesia.

But there are times when it is far better to exercise forbearance, and let the matter drop altogether. “Above all things have fervent love among yourselves: for love shall cover the multitude of sins” (1Pet 4:8). That is the way of Christ, and the way of his brethren: “grudge not one against another” (Jas. 5:9), and extend love, not condemnation - if the issue is actually not that serious, i.e. a personal slight, or some other minor issue.

There is also the situation where people - even members - behave maliciously towards brethren who are upholding the Truth. When doctrinal differences emerge, it is easier to engage in “character assassination” than to use the Scriptures to demonstrate error. This is a common approach: an endeavour to discredit the contender, attacking them personally, instead of reasoning from the Scriptures. The example of David is relevant here, speaking of those who opposed him:

“... they also that seek after my life lay snares for me; and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. ***But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.*** For in thee, O Yahweh do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God” (Psa. 38:12-15).

Notice how David dealt with those who spoke “mischievous things” against him: How did he respond? He ignored them, as if he had not heard their slander. He did not issue a railing accusation against them, or try to justify his position in any way - he remained silent, and committed himself to God in whom he put his trust. This was also the example of Moses (cp. Num. 16:1-4) - and it was also the example of the Lord Jesus Christ:

“... Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Pet. 2:21-23).

Here is the supreme example of loving one’s enemies (Lu. 6:27, 35). Messiah was despised and rejected of men, yet his example of graciousness towards his accusers powerfully illustrates how his brethren should deal with their enemies.*

But similar principles need to be applied vice-versa by those who know that their brother has a grievance against them: “if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Mat. 5:23-24). Notice that the whole point of the exercise is to “be reconciled”. All things must be done decently and in order, to the glory of God, not the vindication of man.

Christopher Maddocks

* The present writer has always held that if the debate is brought to a personal level, or a personal attack, the issue ceases to be important. Unless a matter of Scriptural teaching or practice is being denied, personal issues are not relevant. Rather than to engage in such debates, we must use the shield of faith to deflect the fiery darts of the wicked (Eph. 6:16), and disregard them as irrelevant to our walk in Christ.