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A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

and a warning against the deception in the last days
foretold by Christ

"Take heed that ye be not deceived"

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AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD

“LITTLE CHILDREN”

We have listened to the words of the Apostle John, whom Jesus loved, John’s words were written about 90 AD, almost 60 years after Jesus’s death, His resurrection and ascension to His Father. An evidence of Jesus’ love for John is revealed as He placed His mother Mary in John’s hands, as He hung on the cross.

“When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by (John), whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.”

John 19:26-27.

John stood by Jesus to the end of His life, bound with bands of love. Because there was a mutual trust, Jesus chose John above the others to care for Mary, as John would for his own mother. This is reflected in John’s writing to exhort and strengthen his brethren:

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ.

And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”

I John 1:1, 3-4.

John, knowing his life was nearing an end, wrote these words for his brethren, and for ourselves today, that we may be as close to Jesus as John was, joined in that same bond of fellowship, to the end that:

“... the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

I John 1:7.

Who could better write of Jesus than John — the disciple Jesus loved, for he stood by Jesus, he handled Jesus, he saw Jesus, the “Word of life” — and sought to pass on his knowledge and love to his brethren who did not know that privilege. John expressed this desire:

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin (and who does not?), we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

I John 2:1-2.

John addressed his brethren as “my little children.” They were not little children, babes, but grown-up brethren and sisters. The word

used for “little children” comes from a root meaning to be born, to bring forth. John spoke of his brethren as “born ones.” Those in fellowship with Jesus through baptism are “born ones” — being buried into His death and raised from the water as new creatures — born — as Jesus said to Nicodemus:

“... Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” I John 3:5.

Those who are truly baptized are indeed born of water and also of the Holy Spirit, as they rise from the waters as new “born ones.” They are children of God, having the hope of being eternally His children, if they can grow in the spirit of Jesus Christ. They may fail, but can be forgiven through Jesus’ propitiation. John makes this clear:

“... hereby we do know that we know him (Jesus), if we keep his commandments.

... whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, as he walked.” I John 2:3, 5-6.

Why do little children walk in obedience to their father? Is it not because of the bonds of love which exist in such a family relationship? Is it not the same bond which motivates His “little ones” to walk in obedience to their Father’s commandments?

John further addressed his brethren:

“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.” I John 2:18.

John experienced many adversaries during the years since Jesus’ ascension to His Father. Indeed, he was in exile on the Isle of Patmos “for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:9). John spoke of these adversaries:

“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” I John 2:19.

They were not “little children” — obedient to their Father, walking in the way Jesus walked; they were manifestly antichrists. We are in the “last time” — perilous times — and there are still adversaries persecuting, seeking to hinder the walk of His “little children.”

Desiring to encourage his brethren, John reminded them:

“But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” I John 2:20.

What is an “unction”? The word is also used as an anointing, granted of God to those who are truly baptized — born of water and of the Holy Spirit. John experienced such an anointing on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon him and the other apostles:

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord (united in mind) in one place.

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the house where they were sitting.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

Acts 2:1-4.

By God’s power, the apostles were enabled to preach the gospel to the other nations, also, they could do miracles as a witness to God’s hand upon them. John would never forget this gift. We, Brethren and Sisters, are born of the Spirit at baptism, enabling us to do the work of the Almighty. We cannot perform miracles, but as John reminded: “ye have an unction” — knowing all things needed to walk in that Spirit, and to follow Jesus’ example.

John continued his help for his brethren:

“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that . . . remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.

And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.”

I John 2:24-25, 28-29.

How are we to do righteousness? Is it not in striving to follow Jesus, who fulfilled all righteousness by His complete, unailing obedience to His Father’s will, even unto His death on the cross? He gave instruction to His disciples:

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”

Matthew 16:24.

Jesus perfectly said NO! to all temptations and agonizingly put

away the lusts of His flesh nature. It was not easy, but He could cry out in victory as His life ebbed away on the cross: "It is finished" — a cry of triumph, as He fulfilled all righteousness.

We, as brethren and sisters of the Lord Jesus — baptized into His death, and born of water and of the Holy Spirit — are striving to put down our own lusts, and so honor our Father. John gives us further help:

"Behold, what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God . . .

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

I John 3:1-3.

What great blessing lies ahead for those who have "an unction from the Holy One" — a means of overcoming the man of flesh and strengthening the man of spirit, in the hope of life everlasting at His judgment seat, as the sons of God for eternity! Again John, from his own experiences, shares with us:

"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

I John 4:4.

Great is our privilege, Brethren and Sisters, even as we agonize to abide in Him until He returns to gather His "little children" to Himself.

John concludes his letter:

"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

John 5:19-21.

What are idols? John describes them for us:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

I John 2:15-17.

There are many things pleasing to the flesh. We are surrounded by them, enticing us away from the obedience that a loving Father seeks in His "born ones" — those who are born of the Spirit, not of the flesh. Let us remember John's words, the words of one who loved Jesus, and Jesus loved him, as John stood by as He hung on the cross:

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God (becomes a little child), and knoweth God.

He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love.

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

I John 4:7-10.

Let us then as "little children" reflect that love, and strive to glorify Him that sent His Son, even as Jesus Christ did so perfectly. We fail, but we have an "unction" whereby propitiation, atonement, forgiveness is made possible for those who are struggling to be sons of God.

J.A.DeF.

MY FOOT STANDETH IN AN EVEN PLACE

For several weeks during the year, as we follow our daily Bible reading schedule, we are privileged to read David's words penned in the Psalms. Through them we are able to discern not only his spirit but the spirit of his greater son, the Lord Jesus Christ and thus be helped to further understand what is required of us by the Almighty.

Throughout the Psalms, David shows us the contrast between the ungodly and one who endeavours to walk after His precepts as he says:

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." Psalm 1:1-2.

One who seeks God's blessing, uses His word every day, meditating upon it and applying it in his living, that he may nourish the man of spirit within. Of such a man David writes:

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

Psalm 1:3.

What a beautiful figure is painted here by David. A tree planted by life sustaining water, not marred or withered by disease or drought, but green and vibrant, bringing forth fruit abundantly. The ungodly on the other hand, are portrayed as dry lifeless chaff — a product of no use to the husbandman, and discarded at harvest:

"The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous."

Psalm 1:4-5.

There is no place reserved for them in God's purpose — no blessing or hope because:

"... the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish." Psalm 1:6.

This is a simple understanding but one put to the test each day as the thinking of the flesh and the spirit collide. This message is repeated time and time again, not only through the Psalms, but all through God's word, for it is the embodiment of the gospel message.

Psalm 26 is entitled "A Psalm of David" — a pruned song with all which is superfluous removed. In the 12th verse David writes:

"My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD." Psalm 26:12.

Also in Psalm 27:11 he writes a similar thought:

"Teach me the way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies." Psalm 27:11.

Both of these words "even" and "plain" as used in these two psalms, come from the same word meaning "to be straight, upright or righteous". David recognized in gratitude this "plain" or "even" place — a place with no variance of understanding wherein God had led — the straight and narrow path that through His word will lead to life.

We know it is not easy to walk this path — there are pitfalls and distractions along the way that try to tempt and lure us off the straight and narrow path. Yet focused on the blessing that has been promised, we can hope to endure until the end, as David writes:

"One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple". Psalm 27:4.

David had just one focus in life — not a multitude of interests and distractions, but a singleness of purpose, so that when he was in trial and testing or when he at times failed, this hoped for end brought him back to his original goal:

"For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock." Psalm 27:5.

A "rock" is a symbol of an unmovable strength — much like the "even place". The sure foundation that David had was from God's word, through the promises granted to him of a Son who would fulfil God's purpose, and who would be a Rock of Salvation for all who looked to Him in faith.

David had many enemies during his lifetime, those who were jealous of his success and position as Israel's king, but the greatest was from within — his own flesh. Even in the midst of trial and testing, through faith he could see beyond the momentary affliction and look to the blessing promised if he just remained steadfast:

"And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

When thou saidst, seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee,
Thy face, LORD, will I seek." Psalm 27:6-8.

The sound of rejoicing and praise comes when the spirit triumphs, even if only momentarily over the flesh's demands. David said, "the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous", and with this in mind, those endeavouring to be found righteous before Him, must respond with a joyful heart for His care and mercy, even in the midst of sore trial and testing as they endeavor to overcome the enemy within. If we remember to do this, our spirit man within will grow in strength and stability.

How merciful is our God that He should preserve these words of David as a source of inspiration and spiritual strength for us today. David knew that only by walking in God's way — in that straight and even place could he hope to reach the journey's end to stand at the judgment seat of Christ and be among those selected to stand at His right hand.

"My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways". Proverbs 23:26.

Is this not what God asks of us today as well? To give Him our heart, to purge it of our own fleshly thinking and walk only in His understanding and wisdom — that we might walk those straight and even paths which lead to life eternal.

The scriptures are a history of many who allowed the word of God to influence their walk by turning from their own thinking into paths that glorified Him.

Paul was one who once walked in error, persecuting the church of Christ, but who after this was revealed by Christ in vision, repented and dedicated his life thereafter to the work of the gospel of Christ. Because of his earlier errant walk, he could then encourage His brethren to choose the straight and narrow path which leads to life:

"... make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;" Hebrews 12:13-15.

We too hope to walk in that "plain path" and stand in that "even place" in the hope of pleasing God now and one day if found approved in His mercy, to stand before Him and His Son with others like David, whose words have encouraged and inspired us today.

M.C.S.

DR. J. THOMAS' REPLY TO W.W.S. ON THE SUBJECT OF UNCONDITIONAL SALVATION. (1834)

What is the faith? "The confidence of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen." Then the faith is a belief of the things testified of by the Apostles and Jesus, concerning the future and the past. The question then is what have Jesus and the Apostles testified? Jesus testifies that he that believes the gospel and is baptized shall be saved. Gospel is good news. What is the good news to be believed? That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God: — that he died, a just person, for unjustified men, and that through his blood remission of sins was procured for every son of Adam that will believe upon him; that he was buried, and rose again on the third day for the justification of believers; — Now here is the matter of joy; — that whosoever shall believe these truths and be baptized shall be pardoned for all past offences, and be introduced to a coheirship with Christ Jesus of that glorious inheritance to be revealed AT HIS COMING; and which is emphatically called the Hope of the Good News or gospel.

My conviction is, that no one believes in Jesus unless he obeys him; IN SO FAR I consider faith and obedience as synonymous, for in relation to salvation they are inseparable. There is the "LAW OF FAITH", as opposed to the LAW OF MOSES, and there is the "OBEDIENCE OF FAITH" as contrasted with the OBEDIENCE OF LAW; therefore, the Law of Faith to be of any benefit to you or to me, must be followed up by the obedience of Faith. Do you not now understand? Will you continue to pervert language by calling the obedience of Faith, works of the Law, whereby we think to PROCURE Salvation? Alas, alas!! that you should not, or will not, distinguish between things that differ. Will the mere fact that Christ died save you? If you say yes, then, my dear friend, you are the veriest Universalist upon this continent. "I make", you say, "obedience the effect of salvation, or pardon." — If you say that the obedience of Christians is the effect of pardon, I meet you there. It is love to Christ for the pardon they enjoy makes them continue obedient; and not a fear of (condemnation) for "perfect love casts out fear" — there is no love in fear. They continue obedient, having their eye fixed on the recompence of reward. Will you say that a Christian will partake of the first resurrection without continued obedience? If you do, then, we may all live as we list. If you do not, then continued obedience is a condition of a resurrection to eternal life. If you say that a sinner obeys, BECAUSE he believes that Jesus HAS PROCURED pardon

for all who obey him, I accede to this likewise. But if you affirm that a sinner is pardoned before he obeys, and that his obedience flows from a belief in that assumed fact, I ask you what need is there for his obeying at all, seeing that he is already pardoned? Oh, you reply, his obedience is necessary TO PROVE the sincerity of his faith! Once more, if you can show me how a man can believe, repent, and be baptized without obedience, I will agree with you, that obedience is not the condition of enjoying salvation. To believe is to obey. To repent is to obey. To be Baptized is to obey. Surely you will not say, that a man enjoys salvation without faith, without repentance, and without baptism? If then you maintain, that he enjoys salvation WITHOUT OBEDIENCE, and seeing that faith, repentance and baptism are obedience to commands, you must have arrived at a sort of Quietism, which says, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" — yes, STAND STILL, the very climax of your do nothing system.

THE BETRAYER OF CHRIST

A Christian scholar, a New Testament University professor from Canada, recently made comments about Judas Iscariot, as follows:-

“--- the Church has unfairly stigmatised the disciple who betrayed Jesus. I’m not saying Judas is a saint, but we owe him an enormous debt for having helped Jesus to accomplish God’s will. --- Why the Church has turned against him so terribly badly is a mystery to me.”

This was not a jocular comment. He has written a book entitled “Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?”

We ask the question how could a University professor of New Testament studies come to such a conclusion? What Bible has he been looking at? Or even, has he been looking at the Bible record at all?

The Scripture rightly condemns Judas in no uncertain terms.

“Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.

And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them.

And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.

And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.”

(Luke 22:3-6).

Judas betrayed Jesus for money, even though over several years he had benefitted from Christ’s wonderful example that had eschewed greed. Where is there the slightest mitigation for Judas in the divine record? Jesus had prophetically lamented Iscariot’s coming failure.

“The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.”

(Matthew 26:24).

The Psalms, speaking in the spirit of Christ, clearly declare of Judas:-

“--- mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his hand against me.”

(Psalm 41:9).

The Apostle Paul looking back to that terrible event commented:-

“Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been

fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry - - from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." (Acts 1:16-17 & 25).

To say Judas "helped Jesus to accomplish God's will", is the expression of a cold, calculating, educated mind, in the wisdom of this world; which is so coolly technical, it has not thought of the deep anguish of Jesus, that his close friend of years of preaching the gospel, should have so much lost his love for Christ, that he could go to the hateful religious ruler enemies, the chief priests of the Jews, to bring about such a shameful death.

**R. ROBERTS LOOKS FORWARD TO THE CULMINATION
CONCERNING THE JEWISH QUESTION (1865)**

The coincidence of the restoration of Israel with judgment upon the nations being obvious, it is for us to find out the connection, if connection exist, between the two things. In attempting to do this, it will help us if we glance for a moment at the present position of the Jews. We behold them scattered up and down the earth as strangers where ever civilized man is to be found, sojourning as isolated individuals, subject to the authority that may exist where they are, unconnected by any political tie, without a national policy, without any organization, except the organization of the synagogue. How shall a nation so powerless be redeemed? What force shall be brought to bear to gather them from their scattered homes, and reunite them as one nation? A voluntary movement in times of peace might be effective enough as regards England and America, but even that would be prohibited in other countries where the Jews only recently admitted to the barest privileges of citizenship, are held as a sort of national property to be utilized in various ways for the national benefit. If there would be a difficulty in times of peace, there would be an absolute impossibility in times of war. Recent events in the freest country on the face of the earth show that the liberty of even the privileged citizen vanishes before the exigences of a government at war. The waste of warfare calls for men, and the tardiness of voluntary enlistment necessitates conscription, and conscription compels the interdiction of departure from the country on the part of the inhabitants liable to the conscription. Now it is certain that the approaching redemption of Israel occurs at a time when war is rife throughout the earth, and when therefore the Jews will universally be held in the grasp of military necessity just the time when a humanly-originated scheme for their restoration would be impracticable. This is said to be the time of Jacob's trouble, "Alas! for the day is great. It is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it; for it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of Hosts, that I WILL BREAK HIS YOKE FROM OFF THY NECK, AND WILL BURST THY BANDS, AND STRANGERS SHALL NO MORE SERVE THEMSELVES OF HIM." (Jeremiah 30:7-8).

This being so, it is interesting to enquire what steps will be taken to effect their release? Doubtless the summons will go forth a second time, "Let my people go that they may serve me." This would appear from the statement, "I will say to the south GIVE UP, and to the north KEEP NOT BACK: bring my sons from far, and my

daughters from the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 48:6). This message to the nations is substantially identical with the proclamation mentioned in Rev. 14:7 which issues by an agency there symbolised as an angel: "Fear God and give him glory, FOR THE HOUR OF HIS JUDGMENT IS COME." Those that fear God will give him glory by hastening to deliver his people, and facilitating their transport to the Holy Land, by every means in their power; but this will not be the immediate result. The nations will not respond to the call before the hand of God's judgment is laid heavily upon them. They will ask like Pharaoh of old, "Who is the Lord that we should obey him?" The religious education that the royal personages of the present order of things receive, will be no bar to this attitude, because that education is not of a kind to prepare them for the political development of Jehovah's purposes in the latter days. They are taught to associate God and religion with ghostly regions unknown to which they also confine the jurisdiction of Jesus. Hence when he returns to the earth and interferes in the "temporal" affairs of men, they will never dream that God is in it, but will suppose that the demand addressed to them, is the impertinence of some fanatical religious faction, bent upon realising the crotchet of Jewish restoration, and they will doubtless reject it resentfully. - - - (But) not a Jew will be left ungathered. The testimony of Moses is "IF ANY OF THINE BE DRIVEN OUT UNTO THE UTMOST PARTS OF HEAVEN, FROM THENCE WILL THE LORD THY GOD GATHER THEE, AND FROM THENCE WILL HE FETCH THEE." (Deut. 30:4). And the testimony of Isaiah is, "Ye shall be gathered ONE BY ONE, O ye children of Israel." (ch. 27:12) --- their departure for the land --- will have become the centre of events unparalleled in history.

A BIBLE CLASS

“THE SERVANT OF THE LORD MUST NOT STRIVE”

II Timothy 2:24

Paul wrote these words to Timothy, his “dearly beloved son” in the faith. This epistle is the last recorded writing of Paul prior to his death in Rome during the reign of Nero. In love, he exhorted Timothy:

“... that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

II Timothy 1:6-7.

Paul further exhorted Timothy:

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. . . . watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”

II Timothy 4:2-5.

In his desire to help Timothy in this ministry, Paul instructed from his own experiences:

“... follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.

And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”

II Timothy 2:22-26.

Paul makes very clear that a servant of the Lord must go about the work given by his Master in a way that pleases his Master, not himself. In this regard, he wrote to Timothy:

“... if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully (according to the rules).”

II Timothy 2:5.

The word used for “strive” is *athleo* — from which comes the English word *athlete* — one who contends in a race or other athletic event. Paul used this example as he wrote to his brethren in Corinth:

“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one

receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain."

I Corinthians 9:24.

All run, but only one obtains the prize! We further read:

"... let us lay aside every weight (hindrance), and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Hebrews 12:1-2.

All who seek the prize, strive to the ultimate to put aside all hindrances, looking to Jesus who alone was the Victor.

There is another form of striving which we must avoid as one of the hindrances:

"... charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers."

II Timothy 2:14.

"Strive" used here is a different word, involving a dispute about words, which obviously does not help those who are listening.

In our subject under consideration, we are instructed that "... the servant of the Lord must not strive." Here the word "strive" implies a war, a quarrel or dispute, involving violence, and is used to fight or strive. In writing to Titus, Paul warned similarly:

"... avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings (warrings) about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain."

Titus 3:9.

Returning to II Timothy 2:24, Paul reveals how we must go about the work given by the Almighty:

"... be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient.

In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves . . .

That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

II Timothy 2:24-26.

Do not these qualities of the Spirit reflect the character of the Lord Jesus?

Gentleness— Paul in writing to the Thessalonians, helps us to be gentle as he was:

"... we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children."

I Thessalonians 2:7.

A nurse is one who brings up, feeds, or nourishes as one who cherishes; or as the word means—to brood, to warm, to foster. Why?

Is it not because of love, even as God cherishes those who seek to honor Him?

Apt to teach — able to teach, even as one has been taught, motivated by love; to share the blessing of being a servant of the Lord.

Patient — the word used here is made up of two words: (1) to endure, suffer, or bear with; and (2) evil, harm, wicked. It is difficult to bear false accusations; but we remember how Jesus bore up under such reproaches, and we strive to bear His reproach.

Meekness — Paul asked his Corinthian brethren:

“What will ye? shall I come (to correct) unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?”

I Corinthians 4:21.

How best could he help? Obviously by love and meekness, seeking their good. He instructed his Galatian brethren in this respect:

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault (sin, trespass), ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

Galatians 6:1.

How easily one can feel self-righteous when correcting another taken in a fault, forgetting that he himself at times is in need of forgiveness.

If one is striving to gain or help another in difficulty or fault, how much more effective it will be if done with gentleness, in patience, and in meekness, as Paul continues:

“... if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”

II Timothy 2:25-26.

Paul's words guide us in the work, in the privilege of being servants of the Lord, striving to serve Him, not self, and thereby having the hope of serving Him forever, when Jesus Christ returns to gather those who will be kings and priests in His kingdom.

J.A.DeF.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

“And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: --- and they shall be --- lifted up as an ensign upon his land.” (Zechariah 9:16).

The Hebrew word, rendered ensign in the above verse, means to “GLEAM”. The prophecy also refers to Israel becoming as “the stones of a crown.” The land of Israel and its people is far from such a description at the present time. The hatred, and the bloodshed as a result, sullies the situation in a beautiful and prosperous land.

The Palestinians are their own worst enemies; they retard prosperity by their actions, but complain of their poverty as a result.

In an interview recently the British Foreign Secretary explained that the U.S. President is committed to implementing the Middle East “road map” for Palestinian statehood by 2005. Speaking about his own feelings on the matter he said, “This is something the Prime Minister and I feel strongly about. If you want to point to a single factor that causes profound anger among people in the Arab and Islamic world, it is the plight of the Palestinians.”

At the time of writing the Palestinian leader, who had previously been obstructive, agreed to a new Palestinian Cabinet to pave the way for the “road map” to peace, as mentioned by the U.S. President. The U.S. and Britain immediately praised this diplomatic improvement. The American government said it looked forward to working with Israel and the Palestinian prime minister-designate, who has now become acceptable to the leader of the Palestinians. In exchange for Arafat’s co-operation he has been promised that his personal travel ban, imposed by Israel, will be lifted. A U.S. State Department spokesman made the following statement:-

“We welcome the announcement the Palestinian prime minister-designate has formed a Cabinet list.”

“We look forward to working with him and the Israelis as they begin the hard work of ending the violence and returning to a process that can achieve two states — Israel and Palestine — living side by side in peace and security.”

But even as this was going on, a suicide Palestinian bomber killed an Israeli guard, and injured a number of other people. Certainly peace is needed; can this be achieved? With American influence and finance a degree of alleviation of the situation may result, but there cannot be a certainty of this continuing.

Note the following comments in letters that have been published giving a Jewish perspective:-

"--- arguments that (Israeli) settlements (in Arab territory) are an impediment to peace is as debatable as is the portrayal of them as illegal. The territories and the settlements are a consequence of Arab belligerence in 1967. Since then Israel's policy has always been that it would relinquish territories and settlements in exchange for genuine peace (just as it did with Egypt when it returned the whole of Sinai, its oilfields and its settlements.)

The Palestinian leadership want the territories but not the peace. Until such time as they do, and for so long as they retain their threatening posture, settlements are required for security, not conquest."

Another comment reads:-

"(Syria) defends suicide bombers - - - (but) there is a fundamental moral difference between genuine freedom fighters who fight for life, liberty, property and the pursuit of their own happiness, and those "freedom fighters" who fight for the right to subordinate the individual to their race, class, culture, state or god."

And there was another comment, which looked at history:-

"There has been a Jewish presence in Hebron for several thousand years and the cycle of violence in that city commenced with the massacre of scores of Jews, by Islamic terrorists, in 1929."

Governments hope to get a settlement in Israel, now that the Iraqi dictatorship has been subdued. But God's word shows there can be no permanent settlement by men.

The only answer to this vexed situation is from God, who has declared through His holy word:-

"- - - no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee. - - -

The LORD of hosts shall defend them. - - -

And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people. - - -" (Zechariah 10:8-9 & 15-16).

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS

HAMBURG, NEW YORK, Corner Southwestern Blvd. and Pleasant Ave.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.30 a.m.

Sunday Afternoon Class 1.45 p.m.

Midweek: Bible Class: Forestville, Hamburg and Fredonia

Every Third Week: Revelation Study

We rejoice at the baptism of Martha White on April 19th after a comprehensive confession of her faith. May she be helped in her hope of eternal life when the Lord Jesus returns to gather His people to judgment.

Monthly witnessing to the general public continues with encouragement in interest though few in numbers.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

We rejoice with our Brethren and Sisters across the seas in the increase that has come to their Ecclesia.

The joy of this event is a reminder of the sublime reality referred to by the Lord Jesus, that in the first place "joy shall be in heaven" over such an event.