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The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia

in opposition to the Dogmas of
Papal and Protestant Christendom

A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

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

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AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD

SAVOUR THE THINGS OF GOD

This morning we have read of Jesus' final hours, for He was soon to die upon the cross as the Victor over His fleshly nature. How He must have rejoiced, as His struggle was about over, at the same time fearing lest He fail to fulfill all righteousness. He had endured much: betrayal by Judas, hated and persecuted by the high priest, the scribes and Pharisees - those who should have been leaders of the people, but were adversaries to Jesus, who was sent by God as their promised Messiah. The law was a schoolmaster to lead Israel to Jesus, but was used against Him. At times Jesus must have felt overwhelmed as He was scorned, blasphemed, denied and hated by those to whom He came to redeem. Yet He endured throughout His life, and was helped along His difficult way.

Recently we have read of God's voice concerning Jesus - first, when He was baptized by John the Baptist:

"And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and he was baptised of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:

And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Mark 1:9-11.

Thus began His work, encouraged by His Father's words. Later, He was transfigured in a vision upon an high mountain; again, the voice of God was heard by Peter, James and John who saw the vision:

"...there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him." Mark 9:7.

There were few who did truly "hear Him" as He taught the gospel concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. Peter, James and John, who were closest to Him, did hear, but did not always comprehend.

Just prior to His transfiguration, Jesus asked His disciples:

"... Whom do men say that I am?

And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.

And he saith unto them (His disciples), But whom say ye that I am?

And Peter answered and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ." Mark 8:27-29.

Peter believed that Jesus was the Messiah. But Jesus taught them:
“...that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and to be killed, and after three days rise again:”
Mark 8:31.

When Peter heard Jesus speak of what God required of Him:
“...Peter... began to rebuke him.” Mark 8:32.

Peter did not fully perceive what was required of Jesus to become the promised Messiah. Jesus rebuked him, saying:
“... Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.”
Mark 8:33.

Peter was an offense (a stumbling block), a Satan (adversary) to Jesus, failing to savour “the things that be of God.” Savour means to examine the mind, set affection on, or be at one with. Peter failed Jesus in His struggle to submit to His Father’s will. Instead of helping and encouraging Jesus, Peter was a stumbling block, and made it harder for Jesus in His battle against His flesh. It must have been discouraging for Jesus, yet He persevered to the end, because He set His heart upon “the things that be of God.”

Jesus was not left comfortless, but was encouraged in His work by acts of faith which He encountered in those who did “hear Him.” On one occasion, as Jesus was addressing questions by the Sadducees, who sought to deny His teachings:

“...one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.”

Mark 12:28-30.

The scribe, steeped in the law, hearing Jesus teach the spirit of the law, replied:

“...Well, Master, thou hast said the truth...” Verse 32.

How uplifted Jesus would be as His words were heard, and replied, when He “saw that the scribe answered discreetly”(with intelligence and understanding):

“...Thou art not far from the kingdom of God...”

Mark12:34.

The scribe had begun to savour “the things that be of God” - bringing encouragement to Jesus in His work.

On another occasion, Jesus saw how the people cast money into the treasury - the rich casting in much! He also witnessed:

“...a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily, I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.”

Mark 12:42-44.

A mite was the smallest coin! Yet two mites were accounted greater than all that the rich had cast in as their offering. Why? She was a poor widow, having little; being in want - or falling short, as the word means. Yet she cast in all her living, trusting that God would provide. She didn't think: What shall I do? But rather; What can I do? She savoured “the things that be of God” and made them her priority. As Jesus witnessed her spirit, which expressed her love for God, He would be sustained and strengthened to continue in His struggle to endure.

Let us move on as Jesus approached the end of His struggle. He came to the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, whom he loved. Indeed, previously He had raised Lazarus from the dead as a witness to God's power. It was two days before the feast of the Passover, when He knew He must die, to fulfill all righteousness. At this time:

“...the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death.

But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.”

Mark 14:1-2.

They sought to “take Him by craft” - by guile, by subtlety: the mind of the adversary, the seed of the serpent. It was in these circumstances that He came to the house in Bethany, seeking solace with those whom He loved. While He sat at meat:

“...there came a woman (Mary) having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.”

Mark 14:3.

Some protested: the ointment could have been sold and the money

given to the poor. One of them was Judas, who was a thief and desired the money (John 12:6). Jesus rebuked those who protested: "...Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying."

Mark 14:6,8.

Mary looked ahead, knowing that Jesus must die, in order to fulfill God's purpose. She knew too that He must rise again from the dead. We are told concerning this faithful work:

"...the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

John 12:3.

Her act of faith was a sweet smell, pleasing to Jesus and to God. She did "hear Him", and indeed she savoured "the things that be of God." As Jesus perceived Mary's faithful mind, He said:

"...Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

Mark 14:9.

Truly her name is written in heaven, as she encouraged Jesus in His last days of struggle. We can imagine how Jesus will greet Mary at the time of His return, to gather those who savour the things of God. His words might be:

"... Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Matthew 25:34.

These faithful ones encouraged and strengthened Jesus as He faced His death soon to come. Their example encourages us also, Brethren and Sisters, as we face whatever God places upon us to test our faith and determination. What do we savour? Do we exercise our mind; is it set upon the things that are pleasing to God? Is it "all (our) living"? Is it a sweet smell? Do we respond discreetly, with understanding, with intelligence of mind? Do we "hear Him"? Do we deny self, take up our cross, and follow Him - as He instructed Peter and His disciples? Do we in love encourage our brethren and sisters, perceive their needs, and stand ready to fill them, to lift up? Do our works fill the house with a sweet smell, edifying that house? As we consider the works of our brethren and sisters of old, can we not be helped to savour "the things that be of God"?

J.ADeF.

ECCLESIASTES

We have recently concluded our readings from Ecclesiastes, written by Solomon the son of David, wherein is contained much wisdom and understanding of God's Truth.

How often throughout this book Solomon examines the affairs of individual life and concludes, "all is vanity" for much that man has put his hand to is merely a distraction and of no consequence in the bigger picture. Yet man was given a work by God when placed in the Garden - he was to dress it and enjoy its bounty and beauty with only one restriction:

"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Genesis 2:16-17

We are not told how long the man and woman enjoyed this idyllic situation until they failed to keep the one commandment given them. In punishment, they were cast out of the garden and the life of ease and beauty they had enjoyed, with the sentence of death placed upon them and their offspring:

"...cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Genesis 3:17-19

No longer would food come handily without effort, for now because of their lack of obedience, they would be required to till the soil in hard labor for not valuing the gift they had been given -much as Solomon in Ecclesiastes warns:

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them:"

Eccl. 12:1

God has called out a people in each generation from the time of Adam to serve Him - those who must remember as Solomon writes further in this 12th chapter of Ecclesiastes:

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

Eccl.12:7

From darkness and mere dust God created life through His voice alone and by breathing into man the spirit of life. Man was

given a prominent position in ruling over this creation as a test of his responsibility and obedience unto the Almighty. Would he remember the Creator and his warning and praise His name through gratitude and obedience? This has been an ongoing endeavor for those who strive to be known as God's children - When we understand that the fate of all flesh is a return to the dust from which it was created, it makes us realise that without God's mercy, man's life is as nothing and "all is vanity".

In the world, devoid of God's Truth, men have created all sorts of erroneous theories to try to explain their creation and eventual death with ideas such as evolution, reincarnation & the immortality of the spirit etc. Yet God's Truth is simple and available for any to comprehend if they but read His Word.

Solomon knowing there is a balance required to living a life pleasing to God, wrote:

"Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die:

Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:

Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."
Proverbs 30:7-9

We can understand why Solomon said "remove far from me vanity and lies", for it was a lie in the garden that caused man to yield to the vanity within his own flesh nature and think he could be equal with God. Solomon with his great spiritual wisdom realised the danger that could occur when one is wealthy and seemingly in need of nothing to forget that God is the Grantor of all gifts. Or to be poor and tempted when in want, forgetting to look to God for help, strength and increase and take matters into one's own hands and break His commandments.

David also prayed for strength to stay in God's way when he wrote in the Psalms:

"Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.

Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.

Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good.

Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness."
Psalm 119:37-40

David asked to be quickened or made alive in God's way, to be rescued from the end of all flesh which is the grave, through the provision granted by belief in God's Son the Lord Jesus. David did not know his greater Son by name, but looked for him through the eyes of faith, believing in the promises given him of God:

"And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever."

11 Samuel 7:12-13,16

Solomon, the son of David fulfilled in part this promise, being appointed king after his father, but his reign did not last "for ever" - only the reign of David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ will perfectly complete this promise made to David, when he returns to establish the kingdom of God on earth at the end of God's purpose.

Jeremiah was another faithful servant who remembered he was but dust and without God's mercy was without hope:

"It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.

It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD."

Lamentations 3:22-26

Let us too remember our Creator as Solomon has instructed, in every word we utter and in our every deed, knowing our days of probation are a time of proving and to be also a time to praise God through obedience, lest we forget that we are but dust.

M.C.S.

A QUESTION FROM AN INTERESTED READER (W.G.)

Referring to the Remnant Magazine (July 2004: page 123)

“Jacob, his wives, children and his extensive flocks quickly left Laban’s house, and journey back to the land of Canaan —Jacob’s promised inheritance. On their way they came to the brook Jabbok, where Jacob sent messengers to Esau, along with gifts from his flocks. He feared lest Esau still waited to kill him, but faced it with trust in God’s promises. He sent his family, his flocks and his herds ahead, while he tarried at the brook. There he was left alone:

“- - - and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.” (Genesis 32:24)

“As they grappled, striving together, Jacob refused to let go; the man, an angel of God, blessed Jacob, saying:”

“- - - What is thy name? and he said, Jacob (supplanter). And he said, Thy name shall be called NO MORE JACOB (supplanter), but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.” (Genesis 32:27-28)

No longer was Jacob called a supplanter, but a prince with God, for he had prevailed, not only with the angel who wrestled with him, but in all those 21 years of submission - truly accomplishing, as his two wives encouraged him:

“--- whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do.” (Genesis 31:16)

Question from W.G.

“Why does the Word itself continue to call him Jacob (as well as Israel) ? Have some ideas myself - but not entirely satisfactory.”

We endeavour to respond to this question, as follows:- First of all, let us look at what the scripture tells us of Jacob at his beginning.

“And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him and Rebekah his wife conceived; And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD.

And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels: and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.”

(Genesis 25:21-23)

God who knows everything from the beginning told Isaac’s wife of an undeniable future. At the birth of the twins there was a very significant sign:-

“And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold there were twins in her womb.

And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau.

And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau’s heel; and his name was called Jacob: (supplanter)”

That remarkable event, obviously had something to do with the parents calling their second son “supplanter”.

The dispositions of the two sons were revealed in time, and God was well aware of their inclinations, as prophecy later testifies:

“- - - Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob,

And I hated Esau- - -.”

(Malachi 1:2-3)

Jacob the younger was not like Esau, who was careless and indifferent. This was revealed when Esau came from hunting for deer in a famished condition. Esau appealed to Jacob for a portion of savoury broth which Jacob had prepared.

“And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom.

And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.

And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?

And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him:

and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink.- - - thus Esau despised his birthright.”

(Genesis 25:30-34)

At a later time came Isaac’s desire to give his firstborn a blessing; to Esau he said:-

“- - - take me some venison; And make me savoury meat - -

- that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die."
(Genesis 27:3-4)

A conspiracy then took place between Jacob and his mother to impersonate Esau, before Esau's return to Isaac. Wearing Esau's clothes, and make his hands and neck to appear hairy, and taking a savoury portion with bread, Jacob insisted he was the firstborn (convincing himself that his previous purchase of the birthright from Esau, gave him the entitlement).

Isaac by this time was an aged, blind man, but he was still alert enough to feel uncertain at the sound of Jacob's voice:-

"And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am.
And he said- - - I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee."
(Genesis 27: 24-25)

So followed the blessing Isaac had intended for Esau, upon Jacob. This was undoubtedly deceit; wrongly working to achieve the beginning of the fulfillment promised, when Rebekah had been told:-

"- - - the elder shall serve the younger."
(Genesis 25:23)

Jacob and his mother did not wait for God's fulfillment; they wanted to help it along, resorting to achieve it by deceit. So in a pertinent way, fulfilled what his name had predicted, he was Jacob the Supplanter. The basic faith of Jacob and Rebekah was of course revealed in their actions, so different from Esau's unfaithfulness. Esau, no doubt, prospered in his unfaithfulness. But faithful ones experience trial and difficulty to form character and improve it.

Jacob's life was now threatened by Esau. Sorrowfully, Rebekah had to send Jacob away:-

"- - - and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee.
Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran;
And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away."
(Genesis 27:42-44)

At Haran, as the prophet Hosea recalls,

“Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep.” (Hosea 12:12)

Here Jacob is referred to as Israel as well as Jacob. But his life in Haran was a great trial. Jacob’s complaint reveals what he had to endure; to his two wives he said:-

“- - - ye know that with all my power I have served your father.

And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me.”

(Genesis 31:6-7)

Jacob, who had previously deceived, experienced great deceit, but endured the trial to his own spiritual improvement. As ultimately he returned towards Mamre, where his father Isaac still lived, he had the wonderful experience of meeting with God’s angel. But another trial loomed, what would Esau do at his return?

In faith, he appealed to the God of his fathers:-

“- - - O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant- - -

Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother - - -”

(Genesis 32:9-11)

The profound assurance of God’s protecting help came. As he forwarded a present before him to Esau, and sent his family over the ford Jabbok, on his approaching the land of his father:-

“- - -Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. - - -

And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

And he said unto him, What is thy name? and he said, Jacob.

And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.” (Genesis 32:24-28)

This was the answer to Jacob’s appeal. Jacob’s desperate holding on in his extremity brought about lenient reaction from the immortal messenger; an assurance of further mercy, and added to this leniency was the blessing of a new name:-

“Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel. - - -”

(Verse 28)

Jacob had assurance that he was "a prince with God". What an encouragement to he who had said, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou has shewed unto thy servant." The Supplanter had become a Prince with God (Israel). The Supplanter had been forgiven, but the lessons leading up to such mercy and deliverance were not to be forgotten. So he is not only Israel but he is also remembered as Jacob (the word of God ensuring this is not forgotten). But note that Esau also had another name.

Esau sold his birthright for "red pottage", the scripture then underlines this reprobate act with the words, "therefore was his name called Edom".

So here is the account of two brothers, Esau's second name recalls his failure. Jacob's second name recalls God's mercy and pleasure towards His servant.

PRUNED SONGS

A recent inquiry by a reader from Australia asked for insight into the interpretation of the Psalms of David as being, "pruned songs" as cited in the July 2004 Remnant magazine, page 133.

"Mizmor" is the original Hebrew word for psalm, meaning a song of praise, which is taken from the primary root "Zamar", to trim or prune (a vine). From a viticulture view, the purpose of trimming a vine is to maximize ripe fruit by removing all the wood that is in excess to achieving this result. This understanding applied to the words of David in the Psalms, permits the mind of the spirit to perceive his inspired words as "pruned songs" -having cut away all that is superfluous. The result of the spirit is then achieved as one recognizes these psalms give the ultimate possible fruitfulness to those exercised by them.

The final words of David found in II Samuel 23:1-5 help us to perceive along with him, life's lesson in our relationship with God:

"Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of

Israel, said,
The spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.

The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.

Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow."

11 Samuel 23: 1-5

How clearly the sweet (agreeable, delightful, pleasant) psalmist (pruner of praise) spirit is conveyed in the culminating words of his life - a man raised up, anointed by God and used by the Almighty to perfect praise. David was described as "a man after God's heart" and valued God's everlasting covenant and the salvation therein possible. He recognized his own dwelling was not sure because of his flesh, but understood God's mercies were. We can see how David humbled himself before God and being given by the Spirit the understanding of Truth, which inspired in him the hope of Israel. It is no wonder that David's pruned songs give ultimate praise to God as we too, along with David, are invited in Psalm 95 to join him:

"O Come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with Psalms." Psalm 95:1-2

M.C.S.

A BIBLE CLASS
"BEFORE YOUR POTS CAN FEEL THE THORNS"

Psalm 58:9

The title of Psalm 58 under consideration is:

"To the Victor, Al-tas-chith, Michtam of David."

Al-tas-chith" means Destroy not, and is also used as to batter, to cast off, corrupt, perish or waste. "Michtam" conveys the thought - to carve or engrave. That which is engraved has a permanence, is not easily erased or worn away - as is true of the engraving of a signet or the carving on a monument. "Michtam" is a prayer expressing one's faith, such as James reveals:

"...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."
James 5:16.

Such prayers are from the heart, and are covered before God through the Lord Jesus who is the mediator of those striving to be righteous.

There are four Psalms, that have titles including "Al-tas-chith." These titles help us to understand David's mind as he cried out, "Destroy not." For example, Psalm 57 is entitled:

"To the Victor, Al-tas-chith, Michtam (a prayer of faith and righteousness) of David when he fled from Saul in the cave."

David was in danger of his life at the hands of Saul, and appealed to the Almighty for help, lest he be destroyed by Saul. His words reveal his trust in God:

"Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful to me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.

I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.

He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up (destroy). Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth." Psalm 57:1-3.

In response to David's fervent prayer, God delivered him from the hand of Saul.

On another occasion, Psalm 59, entitled:

"To the Victor, Al-tas-chith, Michtam of David, when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill (destroy) him."

David cried out:

"Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me.

Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men." Psalm 59:1-2.

These Psalms, along with our Psalm 58 under consideration, reveal David's unwavering trust in His God, expressed in his fervent prayers. He recognized the evil minds of his adversaries, who sought his destruction:

"Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear;

Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely." Psalm 58:4-5.

"Charmers" are those who mumble, cast spells as magicians, enchanters. Jeremiah spoke of such, warning those in the temple gate who professed to be faithful, but whose works were evil:

"For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, saith the LORD." Jeremiah 8:17.

We remember how Eve was bewitched by the serpent in the Garden, bringing death upon all men, because of her failure, and Adam's, to obey the simple commandment of God. David's prayer was:

"Let them melt away as waters which run continually: when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows (to destroy), let them be as cut in pieces." Psalm 58:7.

David's trust that God would keep him from such destruction is expressed to his conviction:

"Before your pots can feel the thorns, he (God) shall take them (the thorns) away, as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath." Psalm 58:9.

Pots are vessels used to boil, as a cauldron. To boil or seethe requires a fire beneath the pot. Thorns are not good fuel for a fire; they quickly burn away without heating up the contents of the pot. Indeed, they are a poor source of heat. Solomon, in his wisdom, wrote:

"It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.

For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity." Ecclesiastes 7:5-6.

The thorns crackle, soon burning to ashes, but giving little heat.

It is foolish to try to boil in a pot using thorns as the fuel. Beyond that, David trusted God would "...take them away, as with a whirlwind" in His mighty power - that his adversaries would be carried away. David further expressed his trust in God:

"The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance (of God): he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked; So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth."

Psalm 58:10-11.

David believed that the vengeance which belongs to God would prevail, on behalf of those who put their trust in Him.

There is a day coming in God's purpose when He will execute His vengeance upon all the adversaries of those striving to be His obedient servants. Zechariah wrote:

"In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD'S house shall be like the bowls before the altar.

Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts."

Zechariah 14:20-21.

Bowls are different than pots. They were used for carrying liquids; pots were used for boiling. For example, the bowls of the altar would be used as vessels by the high priest to carry the blood of the sacrifices to the altar for sprinkling, or for pouring it out at the base of the altar. Also, on the Day of Atonement, he would use bowls to carry the blood for sprinkling the mercy seat. We can think of them as bowls or vessels fit for his use. Paul speaks of those who trust in God as:

"...a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

11 Timothy 2:21.

It was David's prayer and hope that he might be judged worthy of being a vessel meet for the Almighty's use - one which would not be destroyed. Rather, to be a vessel giving glory and honor to his God, and looking to the day of Jesus Christ's judgment of all those seeking to be vessels fit for His use.

J.A.DeF.

CONFESS YOUR FAULTS ONE TO ANOTHER

James 5:16

Throughout James' epistle to his brethren, he emphasizes the understanding that life for one in the household of God is an ongoing struggle for patience in the hope of a spiritual reward at the end. The trials and tests encountered are to prove one's patience while under difficult circumstances - a work that if patiently borne, can lead to righteousness:

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." James 1:2-4

There is not just one trial of faith for it is an ongoing process until our days of probation are at an end:

"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James 4:17

When we know that God requires us to abide by His precepts but refuse to comply, then it is counted to us for sin, for we must be constantly endeavoring to put down our fleshly impulses - those reactions which are not part of His way, but those of the world. Those in the world may enjoy their pursuit of riches, fame, prestige etc. but it will be soon gone, whereas the prize we run after will last for eternity if we can endure until the end.

James goes on to speak of the prophets of old who endured great trials of patience, such as Job saying:

"Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

James 5:10-11.

All in fellowship are working towards the same end, but this requires communication in prayer with God and a close bond one with another. We are all born sick or strengthless because of our flesh nature and in need of spiritual healing:

"Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.” James 5:14-15

Sharing this journey of patience Zionward with one another can build and strengthen as we know others are struggling to endure as well - offering their flesh as a sacrifice to the Lord. As one suffers, the prayers and coming alongside of brethren and sisters is a healing balm. In this struggle, James exhorts those in like precious faith to:

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

James 5:16

To “confess” is to acknowledge that we all come short of doing all we should at all times. If we offend any we must be quick to acknowledge our lack and make amends to the one offended in order to be at one again with God and His Son. We all fail and need forgiveness and have a responsibility as James points out, to help a brother or sister we see in need and to likewise be ready to humbly receive the same help when we err:

“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” James 5:19-20

Paul gave the same spiritual instruction to his Galatian brethren when he wrote:

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

Galatians 6:1

We are our brother’s keeper and it is our responsibility to help one another whenever we see one in danger of perishing or falling from the path of Truth. Cain answered the Lord, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” not perceiving this vital doctrine. Because he would not accept correction from the Lord he was led of his flesh into envy, hatred and finally murder. A somber warning of the progressive evil of our flesh nature if left unchecked.

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”

Proverbs 28:13

The flesh's natural impulse when we fail is to keep quiet and cover up the offence, hoping it will not be noticed. Yet God who sees all, even within the recesses of our heart knows, and will cause it to be revealed.

When David sinned in taking Bathsheba, another man's wife, he tried to cover up his sin of adultery by arranging Uriah's murder in the heat of battle in order to quickly marry Bathsheba so that the child conceived in adultery would be born in the bond of their marriage. Yet God knew and sent Nathan the prophet to jog David's conscience, giving him an opportunity to confess his faults.

Because of his humble spirit, David was quick to realize his error and pleaded for forgiveness. Even though his deeds of adultery and murder warranted death under the Law, he was forgiven of God and his life was spared, though he suffered persecution at the hand of others for many years, even from his own son Absalom.

What an important message James has written for all who endeavor to be part of God's household. If we are endeavoring to control the flesh's impulses, which can result in sin, through the help of the spirit, we must carefully heed the admonition to "confess your faults one to another" to be at one with God and His Son, and to strengthen the bonds of fellowship one with another.

M.C.S.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves - - - disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy. - - -"

(2 Timothy 3:1-4)

What a problem young people are becoming. Note the recent media comment on behaviour.

"It is late on a hot summer Saturday night. - - - People, noisy and boisterous spill out on to the pavements (side-walks). But there, in large sullen knots on every street corner, are the youngsters - some as young as 10 or 11 - with dead eyes of boredom, ready for trouble. Some, well below the legal age for drinking are (on) strong lager. - - - Over-made up girls, little more than 13 and wearing (provocative clothing) - - - smoke greedily (and taunt young men) passing by. - - - Anyone who complains or tries to remonstrate is treated to

a wild outburst of filthy language and threats of physical violence.

These are the feral children who have taken over many parts (of the city) - - -. Many of these youngsters, surprisingly, actually come from respectable homes and have loving parents.

This indictment of the new generation absolutely fulfills the sign which the second letter to Timothy emphatically refers as the perilous times of these last days.

Older people have learned to avoid the "sullen knots on every street corner." What a commentary is the following description:-

"During the summer months in particular, these small gangs can be seen most nights of the week, sometimes late into the night - yelling, bullying passers-by - - -."

What are the parents doing about their children being out so late at night? The measure of the situation is seen in the very recent incident, when a 14 year old boy, riding a stolen motorbike, while on bail for a street robbery - speeding and swerving dangerously, ploughed into a 13 year-old boy, leaving him for dead in the gutter; he died shortly after. What did this young criminal's father do? He complained! Consider his words:-

"I blame the police as much as myself - if they had done something about him we wouldn't have half this trouble."

A media comment was terse about this situation:-

"If his father had taken a firmer hand from the start it is just possible that the son might have been brought under control.

As it is the boy was allowed to run wild - with the result that a 13 year-old is now dead."

Need we say any more? 'This know also, that in the last days, perilous times shall come.'

"For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous - - - disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy- - - .

(2 Timothy 3:1-2)

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS NOVEMBER 2004

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

Sunday: Breaking of Bread: 11:30 a.m.

Sunday Afternoon Class: 1:45 p.m.

Midweek Bible Class: Forestville, Hamburg & Fredonia

Every Third Week: Revelation Study

Correspondence continues with some in Africa and the U.S.A. who are seeking that strait and narrow way that leads to the Kingdom of God. We seek guidance in this work remembering that, "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

As this is written, the politics of a presidential election brings promises and plans which are soon forgotten when the election on November 2nd is over. We know that "the most high ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whosoever he will."

J.A.DeF

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 am.

Thursdays; Bible Class 2.00 pm.

Contacts from far as well as near keep us busy in the Work. As we proceed we realise how greatly we need heavenly guidance because of our own human limitations.