

DECEMBER 2004

A Monthly Magazine issued by

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**

"Take heed that ye be not deceived"

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AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD HOPE

We have listened to Paul's words concerning his brethren in Thessalonica:

"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father" I Thessalonians 1:2-3.

Faith, love, and hope were the evidences of his brethren's subjection to God, bringing rejoicing to Paul and to God Himself. This spirit reminds us of Paul's words to his Corinthian brethren:

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity (love), these three: but the greatest of these is charity" I Corinthians 13:13.

It is by abiding in these essentials that we can glorify God. We find that "abideth" involves a continuing, a stand, or remaining in spite of anything that might get in the way of such pleasing attributes. Without these qualities, we cannot endure as we look and pray for a place in God's purpose when Jesus Christ returns to gather His people. Indeed, these qualities can enable us to follow Him as He requires:

"...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Matthew 16:24.

Paul first spoke of the "work of faith." Work involves a putting forth of effort to accomplish a desired result. James makes it very clear how there must be works to reveal faith:

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone"

James 2: 14-15,17

Faith involves employing works by "denying self" and helping others in need. If there are no works, there is no real faith!

"Labour of love" is also an evidence of Truth. Labour involves toil, trouble, weariness, a reducing of one's strength in order to accomplish an end. Where true love is involved, strength is willingly expended for the benefit of others, who may be in need of comfort,

teaching, or coming alongside - all motivated by love. We remember the love the Lord Jesus had for God and for His brethren; He gave his life as a "labour of love."

Lastly, Paul spoke of a "patience of hope." Patience requires a bearing up under circumstances, an enduring - a continuous anticipation of that hope which is one's desire. Hope involves something promised, but not yet achieved, including a confidence that it will come to pass. What is more surely coming to pass than the promises of God to those striving to glorify Him by their "work of faith" - "labour of love" - and "patience of hope"? Because this hope is still in the future, but has been promised by the Almighty from the beginning of His creation, it takes much patience to wait for it. Surely it will be accomplished, but in His time, not ours.

When we think of "patience of hope" our minds go to Moses who led Israel for 40 years in the wilderness, knowing that at the end of that time, the promised inheritance of Canaan would come about. When nearly there, he was provoked by the murmuring of Israel, even by their threat of stoning him. In anger, he failed to sanctify God at the rock and said:

"...Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?"
Numbers 20:10.

After 38 years of enduring under the rebellion of Israel, helped by the hope of inheriting the land "flowing with milk and honey," Moses failed to sanctify God. He took credit to himself and Aaron in bringing water out of the rock, and so lost his privilege of leading Israel into the promised land. He was forgiven by the Almighty and no doubt will be with Jesus when he returns to gather those who have exhibited in their probation, a "work of faith," "labour of love," and "patience of hope."

Let us look more closely to the thought of "patience of hope." In our every-day lives, we hope for things which are in the future: good weather when vacationing, protection from a forecasted storm, a better job. These are things we may long for and which would bring pleasure, help and benefit. Sometimes it is difficult to wait patiently for such anticipated events! Our hope is not for worldly temporal things, but for the blessing of life eternal, when Jesus Christ returns to gather the responsible to His judgment seat, and to be among those at His right hand to whom He will say:

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

Matthew 25:34

What a glorious HOPE is prepared for the faithful since Adam, who are the seed of the woman.

David was one of the seed of the woman, who looked and hoped for the accomplishment of the promises given to him - "the sure mercies of David." In response to such mercy, he exclaimed:

"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation (hope) is from him." Psalm 62:5.

At times David was discouraged, when he was tested of God to see whether he would endure in hope. For example, he cried out:

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted (not at peace) in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."

Psalm 42:5.

"Hope thou" - patiently waiting and trusting - the antidote to a disquieted fleshly mind. How easily we can be discouraged, upset, disquieted - when tested by the Almighty. Hezekiah was one who was so tested, even after his life was extended for 15 years, and Jerusalem was saved from the power of Assyria, in response to his prayer of trust:

"Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon ... God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart?" II Chronicles 32:31.

David had cried out "... Why hast thou forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1). Jesus Himself, while on the cross also cried out: "...why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46) God had not forsaken them - but rather, as in Hezekiah's case, God departed for a time to test their "patience of hope" - their trust in Him. David, Hezekiah, and above all, the Lord Jesus endured in their hope, trusting in God's promises, anticipating that He would sustain and bless them in due time.

Paul in Hebrews wrote of many who lived in "patience of hope":

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1.

"Things hoped for" have not yet been accomplished; those "not seen" but are confirmed by evidence, testimony, divine promises, are yet to come to pass. Noah is an example, who being:

"...warned of God of things not seen as yet moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Hebrews 11:7.

In patience, he witnessed that God was going to destroy the earth with a flood, and that the only hope of salvation from such a disaster was in the safety of the ark, which he was diligently building. He was ridiculed, condemned by those who heard. Ultimately only eight souls were saved in the ark - those who had the "patience of hope," the longing, the desire for the promised salvation.

Hope has to do with that which is not seen, and requires patience in waiting for His word to come to pass. Paul helps us as he wrote to his Roman brethren:

"... even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption (placing as a son), to wit the redemption of our body.

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

But if we hope for that we see not (but anticipate), then do we with patience wait for it." Romans 8:23-25.

Paul endured much tribulation, danger, and ultimately was killed for the hope set before him, as he said to the Jews in Rome where he was a prisoner:

"... for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."

Acts 28:20.

What sustained him? Was it not hope of deliverance, salvation, freedom from pain and death which the Almighty has promised to all those who serve Him? Paul revealed this hope as he further wrote to his Hebrew brethren:

"...God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:...

Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil (most holy place):

Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

Hebrews 6:17,19-20

An "anchor" is that which firmly holds a ship in the midst of a storm - thereby saving the lives of those who rely upon it. Hope is that anchor, confirmed by an oath of God, and foretold by the entrance of Jesus into God's presence. He mediates there for all those who have the "patience of hope."

How blessed we are, Brethren and Sisters, to have the security

and protection of the promises of God. In such we place our hope, patiently waiting - like an husbandman who plows and plants seed, working hoping, and patiently waiting until it bears fruit, the promised bountiful harvest.

Let us remember David's words of so long ago:

"I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope." Psalm 16: 8-9.

"Here is the patience of the saints" - the "patience of hope" set before us!

J.A.DeF.

CONTENTMENT

We have recently read in Paul's letters to Timothy his words of encouragement in the work of witnessing. We read in the 6th chapter the emphasis Paul places upon keeping the purity of that word:

"O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:

Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen." 1 Timothy 6:20-21

This was foremost in Paul's mind as he began his letter to Timothy in the same vein in chapter one:

"Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.

Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do." 1 Timothy 1:2-4

Paul obviously sensed that those at Ephesus were being swayed by fables and false doctrines which drew them away from the purity of the Truth, for he writes to Timothy this warning:

"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the

doctrine which is according to godliness;
 He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions
 and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings,
 evil surmisings,
 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute
 of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such
 withdraw thyself.” 1 Timothy 6:3-5

Through Paul’s experience in the work of teaching the gospel
 of Christ, he knew how easily the thinking and traditions of men
 can enter in and corrupt the purity of God’s doctrines, which are
 intended to keep one on that strait and narrow path to life. To
 counteract this thinking and cultivate godliness, Paul instructs
 Timothy:

“But godliness with contentment is great gain.

For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain
 we can carry nothing out.

And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.”

Timothy 6:6-8

A certain contentment can be achieved as knowledge and
 understanding is received and applied in one’s living. One must be
 aware of and acknowledge the privileged position of knowing God’s
 Word - accepting it in its purity, not wresting it to conform to man’s
 thinking and desires. David also valued this attribute of contentment
 and speaks of it in the Psalms:

“A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches
 of many wicked.

For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD
 upholdeth the righteous.

The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their
 inheritance shall be for ever.” Psalm 37:16-18

The key to the gospel message of which both David and Paul
 wrote, was the hope of an inheritance laid up for those approved at
 Christ’s judgment seat. This gift more valuable than any worldly
 riches, and the path towards achieving it begins with contentment.

David looked in faith to God’s promises. In many of Paul’s
 letters he too spoke of the knowledge of God’s Truth which when
 applied upon the flesh can create a meek and quiet spirit, the
 beginning of contentment.

“Let your conversation (way of life) be without
 covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have:

for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Hebrews 13:5

To be content, one must be "without covetousness" - a characteristic of the flesh as one yearns and desires for all manner of things, riches, prestige, power etc. One cannot be content and satisfied with what the Truth brings when there is within a constant yearning desire for what the world offers.

As Joshua was given the work of leading Israel after Moses' death, we read of God's encouragement to him:

"Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them.

Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest."

Joshua 1: 6-7

As Timothy, Joshua was given a work in witnessing to God's Truth. His mission was to lead the nation of Israel into the promised inheritance after the death of Moses. His conviction that God would be close by to guide and protect gave him courage and contentment to face whatever came and his example inspired his brethren also to walk in righteousness. At Joshua's death his own personal example of godliness is preserved in these words:

"And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel."

Joshua 24:31

How true that contentment can allow us to control our fleshly thinking - to not worry needlessly about the aspects of everyday life, for all is under God's hand. We too dwell in a wilderness but if we will be guided, by yielding our life to Him and following His precepts, He will care and protect us in every way.

To this end, Paul goes on to encourage Timothy:

"If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable

unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” 1 Timothy 4:6-8,12

Paul was himself an example of godliness and contentment to his brethren as is seen in his letter to his brethren in Philippi:

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

Philippians 4: 8-11

Paul had learned to be content, being grateful for what God had provided and so instructed his brethren at Phillippi, as well as Timothy in this same wisdom. This same spiritual contentment can help us today if we apply God’s Word in our living, looking not to our own selves, nor worrying needlessly, but leaning on him for care and guidance.

M.C.S.

DR. JOHN THOMAS'S GREAT EFFORT (1848)

Our audiences were drawn neither from the high nor low, but from the odds and ends of Edinburgh, who in every city are the most independent and Berean of the population. We addressed them some ten or a dozen times, mostly at the Waterloo Assembly Room, in Princes Street, a spacious and elegant apartment, and capable of seating some thousand to fifteen hundred people. The impression made upon them was strong, and, for the time, caused many to rejoice that providence had ever directed our steps to Edinburgh. Our expositions of the sure word of prophecy interested them greatly, causing our company to be sought for at the domestic hearth incessantly, to hear us talk of the things of the kingdom and name of Jesus, and to solve whatever doubts and difficulties previous indoctrination might originate in regard to the things we teach.

Our new friends had but little mercy upon us in their demands upon our time. They seemed to think that premeditation was unnecessary, and that we had nothing to do but to open our mouth, and out would fly a speech! Of our two hundred and fifty addresses in Britain, all were extemporised as delivered. There was no help for it, seeing that we had to go oftener than otherwise from parlour conversation to the work before us in the lecture room. Indeed, our nervous system was so wearied by unrest that we could not have studied a discourse. Present necessity was indispensable to set our brain to work. Certain subjects were advertised, and had to be expounded. We knew, therefore, what was to be treated of, and happily, understanding "the word of the kingdom", we had but to tell the people what it taught, and to sustain it by reason and testimony. In this way we got along independently of stationery and sermon studying, which would have broken us down completely, and would have absorbed more time than our friends allowed us.

(John Thomas)

After visiting Edinburgh, Doctor Thomas set out for London via Harrogate (where he spent a week): there he would have necessary relaxation, though he did have several discussions with friends. On arriving in London he wrote the following:-

"Having completed a tour of nearly five months, I again found myself in London, with health considerably impaired from the fatigue I had undergone. Recuperation was

therefore the first thing to be attended to. Rest of mind, and a LITTLE medicine (for however professional it may be to prescribe much, I have a very great aversion to the conversion of my own interior into a receptacle for the quantities usually exhibited on the placebo-principle) to restore the cerebro-organic equilibrium of the system, effected this in two or three weeks; so that by the beginning of the new year I was enabled to commence the composition of ELPIS ISRAEL. I did not allow the grass to grow; but worked while it was called today, and much of the night also."

The enterprising doctor, therewith, produced the manuscript of Elpis Israel, in a matter of four months.

It is a great example of zeal for the Truth; testifying to the wonderful witness of the Word from Heaven.

A BIBLE CLASS

“FOR SATAN HIMSELF IS TRANSFORMED INTO AN ANGEL OF LIGHT.”

11 Corinthians 11:14

This subject raises a question: How can Satan be transformed into an angel of light? Obviously it is not possible! When we look at the Diaglott, we find the verses are translated as follows:

“And it is not surprising, for the adversary (Satan) himself transforms himself into an angel of light.

It is therefore no great wonder, if his servants also transform themselves as Servants of Righteousness; Whose end will be according to their works.” 11 Corinthians 11:14-15.

It is not God who transforms the adversary (Satan - sin in the flesh) into an angel of light, but the adversary himself seeks to appear as an angel of light, rather than an adversary to all who are seeking to be servants of light. His methodology is to deceive, to seduce, to beguile.

The adversary appeared to Eve in the garden. The word of God tells us:

“Now the serpent (Satan) was more subtil than any beast of the field... And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

Genesis 3 :1

The serpent sought to cause Eve to doubt the commandment of God - that Adam and Eve could eat of every tree except the one in the midst of the garden. Having prepared Eve’s mind:

“... the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.”

Genesis 3 : 4.

The serpent sought to make himself an angel (messenger) of light, but became the messenger of death, having deceived Eve into disobeying God’s word.

In our chapter in 11 Corinthians, Paul, as a messenger of light, warned his brethren concerning the subtilty of the serpent:

“For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ,” II Corinthians 11:2-3.

Corruption of mind involves a change from the "simplicity that is in Christ" to the tangled web of the flesh which leads only to death. Simplicity involves singleness of mind, sincerity - as Paul warns:

"For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear (put up with, be deceived by) with him." 11 Corinthians 11:4.

Paul continued his warning against those who seek to corrupt: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

Therefore it is no great thing if his (Satan's) ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

II Corinthians 11:13-15.

By their works they shall be known. If good works, then blessing; if evil works, as angels of darkness - death.

How can we discern whether they are messengers of darkness or messengers of light? John helps us:

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try (test, prove) the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

And 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; and even now already is it in the world.

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."

1 John 4:1-4.

Jesus did come in the flesh, born of Mary, and was tempted - as is all flesh - but He never succumbed to sin, thereby glorifying God. Many false prophets teach otherwise, seeking to deceive, seduce, or corrupt from the true teaching of the word of God. Paul taught this so clearly:

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;
One Lord, one faith, one baptism,
One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”
Ephesians 4:4-6.

This is “the simplicity that is in Christ” - the singleness of God’s purpose found in His word, and taught from the beginning of His creation:

John wrote:

“... God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever (in the world) believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world: but that the world through him might be saved.

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”

John 3: 16-21

Since the time of Adam, there has been the enmity between the messengers of darkness (Satan, sin in the flesh) and the messengers of light, who rejoice in the light; for it is a light to their path, showing the way that leads to the hope of salvation.

Are we children of light, little children, in “the simplicity that is in Christ”? It is that strait and narrow way which leads to His promised kingdom. There are adversaries, Satans, who would put stumbling blocks in the way; but help is granted to those who heed the warning of Paul;

“... I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” 11 Corinthians 11:3.

J.A.DeF.

THE FOLLY OF JUDAIZING (R. Roberts 1898)

The mechanical sanctities of the tabernacle and its service have been misapplied in the ecclesiastical corruption of the gospel that set in after the apostolic age, through the influence of the Judaizing class that arose in the very days of the Apostles through the circumstance that the bulk of gospel believers in the first place was composed of Jews under the law, and included even "a great company of priests" (Acts 6:7).

It is a practice of "the church" to "consecrate" buildings and cemeteries and water and vestments and bells and many other things; and it is a tradition of the people that such things are "holy" and cannot be familiarly used without desecration. The mechanical and ceremonial holinesses of the law have been brought forward into the exercises and applications of the gospel, with a result that is truly disastrous as regards the saving work of the gospel. Men are enthralled in a ritual system as truly lifeless and superstitious as the worship of the heathen; and their minds are diverted from the true holiness inwardly appertaining to the true house of God - "the church of the living God" - "whose house (and temple) we are, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope steadfast unto the end".

ON UNCLEAN MEATS (R.R.)

While the law was in force, the distinctions between clean meats and defiling meats were real, and constituted part of the "righteousness which is of the law" touching which Paul was blameless. The question which the mind is concerned to probe is - what spiritual principle was allegorically involved in the distinction made between clean and unclean beasts? We are aided somewhat in this quest by the vision which was thrice shown to Peter to prepare him for a divinely-purposed message apparently inconsistent with the previous commandment of the law to stand apart from the Gentiles. By this vision, we see the unclean beasts stood for persons. The features of the vision are familiar to all who are familiar with the Scriptures. - - - Peter doubted at first what this vision should mean; but when afterwards by the Spirit's direction he stood in the presence of a company of Gentiles in the house of Cornelius, to whom he was sent to open the door of faith he understood. He said,

"God hath shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean." (Acts 10:28).

The beasts, then, stood for men, and the peculiarities constituting them clean and unclean respectively, were but typical of qualities in men that make them suitable or otherwise for divine use. That those peculiarities should be associated with and resultant on certain states of flesh rendering them fit or unfit for use as human food, is an added excellence to the type, but the type is the main thing for us to consider.

The physical qualities of the flesh rejected as food are very secondary. A good digestion can assimilate almost any edible substance to the requirements of nutrition. It was the divine law in the case that was the material element. Now that the objects of the law have been accomplished in Christ, the law has been taken away. It was nailed to his cross (Col. 2:14). It "stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed till the time of the reformation " and "could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience" (Heb. 9:10). But the lessons taught by the law remain.

THE REMNANT'S COMMENTS.

Paul says: "Now the Spirit speaketh EXPRESSLY, that in the latter times some shall depart FROM THE FAITH - - -. Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats - - -. (1 Timothy 4:1-3) Has this happened in our experience? Did some cause difficulties over prospective marriage? and do they now uphold a doctrine of abstinence from what they describe as "unclean meats"? We see how such thinking is a deterioration from the sound counsel as penned by R.Roberts. And there is also another thought. Peter was caused to alter his attitude "not (to) call any man common." A style of superiority in manner arose against those not of THE FAITH, among those no longer in fellowship with ourselves. As we look back - what a revelation it is to us.

COLOSSIANS

From our Daily Portions, we have recently finished reading Paul's letters to the Colossians in which he instructs his brethren in faith to read his message in their gathering and also to pass his letter on to those of Laodicea:

"And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea." Colossians 4:16

We do not have that epistle written to Laodicea today, but know that Paul's desire in all his writing, was to strengthen the bonds of fellowship between brethren, in order that the understanding of the Truth grow and flourish. Paul did not personally visit those cities for he wrote:

"For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;" Colossians 2:1

However, there were faithful brethren established in each ecclesia to help and strengthen, such as Epaphras in Colosse:

"As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ:

Who also declared unto us your Love in the Spirit".

Colossians 1:7-8

Paul's letters were a coming alongside to strengthen and teach, lest those newly established in the Truth be pulled away by the lusts of the flesh and the distractions of the world:

"And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Colossians 2:4-5,8

He warned that they must guard against the things that the flesh naturally gravitates towards - those things that the world freely embraces. There were also former Jews now converted and in the fellowship, who once steeped in the Law, were having difficulty in leaving it behind - unable to grasp the victory of Christ as fulfilling the Law. Regarding these Paul writes:

"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." Colossians 2: 16-17

Again, beware of those things that appeal to the flesh - which are not part of the One Body:

"Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances.

(Touch not; taste not; handle not;

Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh." Colossians 2:20-23

The traditions and self-made doctrines of men, especially those that were created by the Jewish elders, were not of God, even though they may have seemed to possess a form of godliness on the surface. Paul explains the only true basis for salvation:

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

Colossians 2:6-7

How can we walk in Him? Paul goes on to explain:

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

When Christ who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

Colossians 3:1-5

Paul's instruction to those in fellowship was very clear - restrain those natural impulses of the flesh nature and in their place, develop fruits pleasing to the Almighty and His Son:

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

And above all these things put on charity (love), which is the bond of perfectness.

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful .“

Colossians 3:12-15

To develop these attributes is to quench the fleshly tendencies that lie within each one and walk after those qualities which build up the spirit man and are pleasing to the Father. If we ask ourselves before any task, “am I doing this for Christ or for my own pleasure?” we are able to determine if we have set our affections on things above or on the earth. Christ taught the same lesson to his disciples when he said:

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other - Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

Matthew 6:24

Christ taught that when one can set their affections on “things above”, God will provide for whatever else is needed:

“Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?”

Matthew 6:26

We all need food, clothing and shelter and God knows this and will provide if our walk and total focus is upon Him and His ways.

Paul goes on to teach how one who wishes to be one of His should walk and speak:

“Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”

Colossians 4:5-6

If we set our affections on those things which are above, we can be lightstands, making a witness to any whom we come in contact with, mindful to be ready with an answer to any who would question the details of our faith.

How privileged we are Brethren and Sisters to know the Truth and understand the hope that is held out for any who will yield their life to Him. This hope is a gift we have contemplated at the Table this morning - the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, bought with His blood. Only through belief in Him can we hope to be saved, by keeping our eyes and our walk focused, not on earthly things but on those above.

M.C.S.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

“- - - when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.” (Isaiah 25:4)

What terror now stalks the earth! When it came it was unexpected, but now the question is, where will it strike next?

September 11th 2001 saw the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York and also the attack on the Pentagon. Another horrible incident came to Bali where on October 12th 2002, Nightclub bombings took place. Later came the Madrid train bombings (March 11th 2004) which led to the fall of the Spanish Government. And now at the time of writing (September) there has been the obscene slaughter of children and parents at the Russian school in Beslan-North Ossetia. One significant report stated:-

“There was evidence that a large group of the terrorists were not ethnic Chechens, as had been believed, but Arabs!”

The terrorist organisation Al Qaeda was behind the outrage, having support from some Chechens working for an independent Chechnya. Obviously, then, the violence is not solely for independence, but also for fundamentalist Islam.

The development of Al Qaeda was taking place before September 11th 2001. Incidents took place which should have alerted the world, but actually did not register sufficiently to warn the nations. On August 7th 1998, the Nairobi and Dai-es-Salaam United States embassies were blown up (which killed 223, and wounded many more) and on October 12th 2000, there was a suicide bomb attack on the United States destroyer Cole in Aden, Yemen.

Britain along with the United States, is in the frontline for attack, being blamed for oppressing Muslims around the world. Intelligence agencies are endeavouring to find out the identities of veteran terrorist militants, but even as counter measures against such continue, new young recruits are joining Al Qaeda. These are drawn by the religious veneer that covers over their very evil work, and in this respect they are given names from the Koran and the Bible; the code which is used to help them communicate, not only

with others of Al Qaeda, but also with other organisations of similar aim. It does not seem that mankind will find an answer to this bombing blight which stalks the nations. Modern explosives are more powerful than ever before, and with men prepared to blow up their own bodies to ensure the success of their aims, the situation is desperate with an outlook likely to get worse.

Where will it all end?

God, in His holy record, shows that He will eventually correct the evil, Ezekiel declares:-

“--- though they caused their terror in the land of the living
--- they shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen of the
uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell with their
weapons of war: and they have laid their swords under
their heads, but their iniquities shall be upon their bones,
though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the
living.

Yea, thou shalt be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised.
and shalt lie with them that are slain with the sword.”

(Ezekiel 32:26-28)

God has the power to deal with terrorists in an unexpected way. Though confident in their secretive machinations, the time of their overthrow will certainly come, and from the heavenly, righteous power, whose Truth they have despised.

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS DECEMBER 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

Contacts with those seeking the way of life continues. Help is granted in this work through counsel with our brethren in Manchester.

As this year draws to a close, we can look back with gratitude to God for His guidance and help in many circumstances.

We do not know what the future may hold, but look with hope for the return of Jesus Christ to bring about God's purpose with this earth, as it is His will.

J.A.DeF

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 am.

Thursdays; Bible Class 2.00 pm.

Endeavours to help those who seek unto us from "far and near" continue.

We pray to our Heavenly Father for help and guidance in this work; the ability to do this gives comfort and assurance.