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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"

FORGIVENESS AND MERCY
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SPEAK EVIL OF NO MAN
SIGNS OF HIS COMING
NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS

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FORGIVENESS AND MERCY

As we study the Book of Judges, we learn it was the history of Israel from the death of Joshua, after they entered the land, through many judges - the last being Samuel. After they entered the Promised Land, Israel again disobeyed God, therefore God sent the surrounding nations to vex them as a punishment for their failure to follow after Him. Yet when Israel cried out to Him for help, because of persecution from these nations, He in mercy heard their cry and sent a faithful man as a judge and leader to destroy their enemies. These nations were the remnants of people left in the land - those who Israel failed to destroy as God commanded them. They rose up as a thorn in their side, reminding them of their previous failure to do as He commanded. An angel of the Lord came to Bochim and told them:

“And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?

Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.” Judges 2:2-3

The place where this was spoken to Israel was a place called “Bochim”, which means “weeping”, for there the people lifted up their voice in weeping when they understood how they had failed once again to worship God in truth and obedience. They realised that these nations would be left to remind them of their unfaithfulness. What a sad situation they found themselves in. They had been given a land flowing with milk and honey but was now also filled with their despair.

God in His mercy provided them with judges after the death of their faithful leader Joshua, to lead them:

“Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.”

Judges 2:15-16

How typically this describes the working of the flesh, ever offending, yet in longsuffering God provided aid and forgiveness.

As they cried out - He had pity and would provide a judge to deliver them. This pattern went on for over four hundred years true to His covenant promise - if they would turn to Him, He would turn to them.

After Joshua's death, Israel mingled themselves with the nations left in the land - taking their daughters for their wives and giving their sons to them in marriage and worshipping their false gods. Because of their disobedience and idolatry, God's hand came upon them in punishment:

"Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushanrishathaim eight years.

And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother." Judges 3:8-9

The scriptures further tells us that God's spirit was with Othniel and he judged Israel faithfully and delivered them out of the hand of their oppressors of Mesopotamia and there was peace for forty years. Yet when Othniel died, their flesh rose up to guide them once more, instead of learning from the history of their past.

Fifteen judges throughout the years were provided to save Israel from their perishing state after they had sinned and offended the Almighty. Yet God continued to forgive in mercy when they acknowledged their transgressions and turned to him in repentance.

He sought to teach His people that as He forgives, so too should they one to another in the spirit of love. Yet how slowly this is grasped - a lesson fortified by the Lord Jesus when teaching His disciples:

"Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." Matthew 18:21-22

The Lord Jesus went on to illustrate this thought with a parable of a servant who was brought before the king owing him a great debt of "ten thousand talents". Because he had no money to pay he begged for mercy and time to repay this debt. The king having that

compassion forgave him the debt, displaying great mercy. However, this same servant went out and found a fellow servant owing him "one hundred talents" - a paltry sum in comparison. When the debtor begged for patience (as he had done to the king) he showed no mercy but had him cast into prison. Others knowing of his uncharitable action told the king who called him forward to pass judgment:

"Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." Matthew 18:32-35

Paul in the same manner taught the fruits of the spirit to the Galatians, that they might emulate them:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

Galatians 5:22-25

That merciless servant walked after the power of the flesh - exacting every penny that was owed him, rather than showing the same spirit of love and forgiveness that had been bestowed upon him, of which Paul spoke.

Christ himself who lived in the Spirit of love taught the lesson of love, mercy and forgiveness when He taught His disciples to pray:

"...When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

Give us day by day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil."

Luke 11:2-4

Paul again goes on to repeat Christ's message as he writes to the Ephesians:

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:
And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."
Ephesians 4:31-32

This record of the Judges stands out as an example of God's mercy given when His people cried out for His help and forgiveness. We too must cry out to Him through the sacrifice of His Son the Lord Jesus for help and forgiveness, believing in His mercy and longsuffering towards us as we strive to walk in the spirit of love, displaying mercy and forgiveness in our daily lives.

M.C.S.

THE EXAMPLE OF JOSHUA

From our recent readings in the Book of Joshua, we are reminded of Joshua's strong, faithful character — exactly why he was chosen by God to lead Israel into the Promised Land after Moses' death.

The first mention in the scriptures of Joshua is seen in the book of Exodus chapter 17 where on the journey from Egypt to their inheritance, the nation of Amalek confronted Israel:

"Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand." Exodus 17 :8-9

The record goes on to state that while Moses held up his hands with the rod, Israel led by Joshua, prevailed in battle. But when his arms grew heavy and he let down the rod, then Amalek prevailed. To come to his help, Aaron and Hur had Moses sit down upon a rock and they each helped to hold up his arms all day long to ensure Israel's victory.

"And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.” Exodus 17:13-14

This incident would strengthen Joshua in the years to come as he remembered the help given of God to give them victory, when they followed His directives and were united as brethren to do His will.

Much is remembered of Moses going up into Mount Sinai to receive the Law written by God on the tables of stone. But how many remember that Joshua accompanied Moses there as his minister and the future leader of Israel?

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.
And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God.” Exodus 24:12-13

While they were in the mount, the people in their absence made a golden calf to worship and sinned grievously against the Lord. Because of their idolatry, the Lord was ready to consume them:

“For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.” Exodus 33:5

Because of Moses’ intervention the Lord stayed His hand in mercy:

“And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp.
And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, that all the people rose up, and stood every man at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle.
And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle,

the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses.

And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door.

And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle." Exodus 33:7-11

Those of Israel who realized what a grievous sin had been committed were to show their remorse and seek forgiveness by coming out to the tabernacle set up without the camp. Joshua had been with Moses in the mount so was not party to their wrongdoing, yet because he was part of Israel came out as well to show contrition, as verse eleven tells us.

Joshua's esteem before God was evident as he was chosen as the leader of his tribe Ephraim - their representative when a man from each tribe was sent to spy out the Promised Land and bring back a report to the rest of Israel. Only he and Caleb from the tribe of Judah brought back a positive report, faithfully believing that God would be with them and help them to conquer what obstacles they had witnessed in the new land. The other ten representatives saw the same things, yet lacking in faith and reliance on God were fearful and likewise instilled fear in the rest of Israel, causing them to lack in faith:

"And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature.

And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." Numbers 13:32-33

It was a difficult time for the two faithful spies — Joshua and Caleb, the only two who gave a good report, full of faith in God, who they knew would deliver the land into their hands. As a consequence of their faith and belief, they were the only two members of the congregation to enter the Promised Land after the forty years of wandering which the Lord placed as a judgment on

the rest of Israel over twenty years of age:

“Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me.

Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.

But as for you, your carcasses, shall fall in this wilderness.”

Numbers 14:29-32

God in His infinite wisdom chose a worthy successor to Moses in Joshua, as Moses’ parting words before his death told Israel:

“...I am an hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: also the LORD hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan.

The LORD thy God, he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them: and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the LORD hath said.

And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage; for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it.

And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.” Deuteronomy 31:2-3,7-8

This record of Joshua’s life reminds us of the strength of the LORD that will be present in the lives of those who strive to be faithful and obedient to His word, after the example of Joshua if they remember that, “he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.”

M.C.S.

**“A CRUEL MESSENGER SHALL
BE SENT AGAINST HIM”
(Proverbs 17:11)**

Our subject like all of the Proverbs, contains God’s wisdom as recorded by Solomon for our help and understanding - praising the pursuit of godly knowledge while warning of the danger in disobedience. Our consideration is one facet of That wisdom:

“An evil man seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.” Proverbs 17:11

An evil man, one of the flesh, searches out rebellion - looking for trouble not trying to avoid it but going out of his way to find it.

This word rebellion is translated from the Hebrew word marah, meaning bitter, disobedient or to provoke. What is a rebel? Help is found as we read God’s instruction to Israel when they wanted a king:

“If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God:
But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers.”
I Samuel 12:14-15

Rebellion is opposition to the word of God, displaying a disobedient spirit, one not willing to humbly submit to his instruction. Rebellion is part of an evil man’s make-up, and to such a man our verse says, “a cruel (or merciless) messenger shall be sent against him”.

God’s message to those who perceive it, those with the knowledge of his word and thus responsible to it, speaks of a just recompense to the cruel evil doer:

“The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward.
As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death.” Proverbs 11:18-19

David’s words recorded in Psalms are a similar help:

“Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone,

and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup"
Psalms 11:6

"Snares and brimstone" is similar in thought to what a cruel messenger might bring - God's wrath poured out without mercy in judgment upon evil. His word is just and unchangeable; thus through disobedience, an evil man wipes out his own hope of life, bringing destruction upon himself at the judgment seat of Christ.

The word messenger in our consideration means angel or ambassador, one sent from God to carry out His word. Saul, in jealousy, sent his own cruel messengers to kill David, but was prevented from causing harm because of God's overruling care for his servant:

"Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning; and Michal David's wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to night, tomorrow thou shalt be slain.
So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped.
I Samuel 19:11-12

Here was a wicked man determined to destroy one of God's little ones, but because of his righteousness, David was protected and spared the king's rage, while a cruel messenger was sent by God to Gilboa where Saul died at the hands of the Philistines, a just recompense of reward.

God is just in both reward and judgment sending hard messages to those who rebel against His word, both now during probation and at the judgment to come. The humanist today finds it hard to believe that a God of love would visit punishment upon mankind. Yet our verse under consideration proves this is just another deception promulgated by fleshly minds ignorant of the Spirit's teaching.

At the Lord Jesus' judgment seat, those responsible to His word will stand before him to answer for their actions. To those who have followed his example and endeavored to show care, love and obedience to God's word He will in His mercy say, "come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you". While to those placed on His left, the disobedient, He will seem as a cruel messenger in saying without mercy, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire". To such, the words of Isaiah apply

"Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with

wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it." Isaiah 13:9

Let us follow after His example Brethren and Sisters, reflecting God's word with love and compassion, serving Him with obedience, in hope of receiving that gift of life eternal, knowing that to the disobedient and rebellious will come but one just end - a cruel messenger from which there is no escape.

A BIBLE CLASS

"... NOT HAVING MINE OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS..." **Philippians 3:9**

Paul's words to the Philippians speak of the hazards of allowing our own perceived righteousness to get in the way of having faith in the righteousness of God. In Paul's time there were many who relied on their works in the law and counted them as righteousness, rather than understanding that it is the fulfilment of that law by the Lord Jesus and our belief in Him that is God's righteousness.

Paul had been a Pharisee and was an example of those who perceived themselves as righteous, but were seen by Jesus as just the opposite:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

Matthew 23:27-28

This is the class of people of whom Paul speaks in the third chapter of Philippians:

"Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision."

Philippians 3:2

"Dogs" was a term often used to describe an unsavory character, because dogs were not considered as pets like they are today, but scavengers wandering the streets looking for scraps to eat. "Concision" means to cut or to cut off, and refers to the practice of circumcision. Circumcisions were still performed by the followers of the law after Jesus had fulfilled it. This is an example of man's doing something that he considers a work of righteousness, but is actually lack of faith by not seeing the spiritual significance of the cutting off of one's flesh. Paul continues and displays his spiritual understanding:

"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

Philippians 3:3

Paul as a Pharisee, had confidence in his righteousness, but after his conversion, he had no confidence in his flesh or its righteousness based on works. While a Pharisee, Paul was convinced that his ways were right, and believed that what he did was the way of God. Paul expresses that his past confidence in the flesh was well founded in his eyes:

“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.

Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

Concerning zeal, persecuting the church, touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”

Philippians 3:4-6

Paul uses himself, and his previous actions, as an example to show how a man can justify his actions because he feels that he is righteous in his cause. This is also seen during that period of time just prior to his seeing the light on the way to Damascus:

“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

And as he journeyed, he came near ‘Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven; And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.”

Acts 9:1-6

Paul then realized his life as a Pharisee was one of falsehood; and within days he was preaching Christ in the synagogue. Paul had learned the righteousness of God through the workings of the Spirit upon him. Paul also learned that his previous righteousness, which he had valued greatly, was now worthless as he sought the

righteousness of God through faith in Jesus.

“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.

And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”

Philippians 3:7-11

The experience of seeing the light and hearing the words of Jesus while on his way to Damascus, showed Paul that he was wrong to rely on the works of the law. Paul learned that he must humble himself to have faith in Jesus, who had fulfilled the law, so that all who seek Him might attain unto the hope of the resurrection of the dead. The righteousness of the law that Paul had before his conversion, was counted to him as a loss (or detriment) to him after his conversion - as is the righteousness of any man who has not the righteousness of God:

“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf~ and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”

Isaiah 64:6

We are unclean, and our righteousness based on works is as a filthy rag. A rag is used to clean up a spill or a mess, but if it is already dirty, it just leaves further stains upon the thing that needs cleaning. So if we rely on our own righteousness, we do ourselves no good in the eyes of God. It is only through humility in the Lord, as Jesus showed perfectly, and by following His example, that we have any hope of attaining the righteousness of God through Jesus. Without humbleness, we rely on ourselves, rather than God, and the Wisdom of man is nothing in the eyes of God:

“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the

weakness of God is stronger than men.

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And the base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

That no flesh should glory in his presence.

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." I Corinthians 1:25-31

So let us remember to remain humble as we seek the Lord. Let us seek Him and acknowledge Jesus as our path to righteousness, rather than letting our own works be substituted for the true righteousness that only comes from God.

E.J.M.

**“CONTROVERSY WITH JUDAH”
(HOSEA 12:2)**

The promise of the Heavenly Father through His prophet is:

“And I that am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast.

I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions and used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets. And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved. Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.”

Hosea 12:9-10,13-14

These words of scripture have a resonance with events in our own times. Reports in the news media illustrate this point very well and a particular example comes from a news correspondent for Channel 5 News who had been visiting the Middle East entity of Gaza.

“In one of the most crowded places on earth the main streets were deserted. Normal life was on hold in Gaza because no one knew when or where the next strike would hit. Around every corner was evidence of conflict. Our driver took us past burnt-out cars, and and craters where houses once stood...They were taking in so many... casualties they were running out of space...many of the exhausted doctors and nurses hadn't been home in a week...this is a sombre situation ...Israel said talks would be handled through an international liaison team.”

Efforts are being made internationally to bring about peace to the area. But the Biblical prophecy, because it is divine through Hosea, will come to pass - a correction from Heaven to Israel, to the countries in that region and to the wider world.

So looking at the current news media, we see coming to pass the fulfilment of what has been declared from Heaven through the overruling of our holy Heavenly Father. Let us therefore take courage through faith . World events are sombre but over it all is the great Eternal Creator. Through His Word we have the Assurance that at the appointed time Jesus Christ will return to us from Heaven in fulfilment of the wonderful promises of HIS TRUTH.

“...SPEAK EVIL OF NO MAN...”

Titus 3:2

Paul’s letter to his brother outlined Titus’ continuing work with those in Crete:

“To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:” Titus 1:4-5.

He was reminding Titus of the need to encourage those in Crete in the ways of Christ, and our Bible class consideration is part of that message:

“Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.” Titus 3:1-2.

Paul was exhorting those in fellowship with God and His Son to conduct themselves in a manner befitting His children and specifically to “speak evil of no man”. The word evil means impious, intending to defame, defile or injure. The import of Paul’s message is that speaking evil of another causes harm and is an act of the flesh, whereas the brethren must strive to be Christ-like, acting in a godly manner, harming no one. The same word for speaking evil was used by Peter:

“For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, then we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banqueting, and abominable idolatries:

Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:

Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.”

I Peter 4:3-6.

Peter speaks of those who were reproached by fleshly men

because they did not share in their carnal excesses - just as the Lord Jesus was reviled by the high priest, offended by His teaching so contrary to theirs. Christ's assessment of such fleshly behavior is clear:

"O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, he shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Matthew 12:34-37.

From Jesus' words there is no question that evil speaking will bring condemnation from God.

Thus Titus was to teach of the spiritual deportment required in those striving to be brethren of Christ and shows us as well the danger of speaking injuriously of another. He was also told by Paul to:

"...let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful" Titus 3:14.

What are necessary uses? Witnessing by faithful living that here are people called by God, but who in times past:

"...were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared." Titus 3:3-7.

This calling to be children of God is an opportunity to witness by good works that we endeavor to bring forth fruits of the spirit which precludes speaking evil to cause injury to another. The flesh speaks hurtfully in order to pull down others and consequently make self appear better. Paul told Titus to "put in mind" these thoughts, not lecturing in a strident or boastful manner but speaking quietly with care for the feelings of others.

In a similar manner Paul wrote to the Colossians:

“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:

In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

Col. 3:3,5,7-10

Speaking evil is part of the old man of flesh that is to be put away - crucified. To think carefully how we speak is needful for the flesh is inclined to be impulsive.

‘This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

Without natural affection, truce-breakers false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”

II Timothy 3:1-5.

This describes the world’s manner of every age and today where many show a form of godliness but deny its power in their living. That power is the restraint to put down the flesh’s inclinations and refrain from speaking evil but rather show forth a new man of spirit.

It is interesting to note that Paul was one who originally spoke and did great evil against the people of God:

“As for Saul, (Paul) he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.”

Acts 8:3.

“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.”

Acts 9:1-2.

We know in that journey to Damascus he saw a vision and being touched by God’s light was converted. Thinking back upon those earlier times he may have thought of himself as sometimes foolish and disobedient”.

Also one of the thieves who was crucified with Christ lashed out against Him:

“And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.”

Luke 23:39.

This word “railed” is the same as “speak evil”- a characteristic of uncontrolled flesh. Yet it is that control that is the work and duty of every child of Christ. If that struggle for control is not there, the man of spirit is extinguished and the hope of ever overcoming dies.

“Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

Romans 12:17-18.

The work of overcoming is understandably difficult and when one speaks injuriously of another he takes away the peace that is between them.

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men

Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.”

Titus 2:11-15.

These words of Paul are essential for our spiritual wellbeing as we endeavor to deny such ungodly behaviour as evil speaking and strive to live peaceably in this present world and hope in His salvation to come.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

"Take heed that ye be not deceived:"

Luke 21:8

The signs of Jesus' return are varied and many in number. Jesus' reply to His disciples question in Matthew 24:3 is a warning:

"Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

His answer was general in nature so as to promote an overall awareness to certain conditions and events that would be evident in the world around them.

His reply given back then to His disciples puts us likewise on notice of the same signs in our time so that we too may be watchful. This is of critical importance, since there is no single event, which can provide us conclusive proof of His near return. With these many signs spoken of by Jesus, time has been given for us today to develop preparedness prior to His return. This has been done in God's wisdom, just as the exact time of His Son's return has not been specifically revealed in order to allow opportunity to exercise one's faith and patience. As Jesus said:

"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is."
(Mark 13:32-34)

We see that Jesus initiated His answer to His disciples in the form of a warning: "Take heed that no man deceive you." Why? - He goes on to explain:

"For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."
(Matthew 24:5)

Likewise in Matthew 24:11:

"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many."

Further in Matthew 24:24,

“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”

That deception of which Jesus spoke, has been operative since the fall in the garden, where the subtle serpent deceived the first man and woman by telling them,

“Ye shall not surely die:
For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”
(Genesis 3:4-5).

What greater sign is there than the deception seen today in the various Christian churches and others who claim they speak for Christ, yet are deceiving their followers with falsehoods. Look at the great deception of faith healers, mediums, spiritualists and TV evangelists who for filthy lucre boast their actions as if they had the power of Christ. Or of the many who preach that their departed followers are now in heaven and still alive, looking down on them and guiding their living. Yet the God’s word teaches that all flesh dies alike, turning to dust in the grave. While those responsible to His Word have the hope of resurrection to a judgement when Christ returns:

“For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity.
All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.”
Ecclesiastes 3:19

And..

“For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know

they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten." Ecclesiastes 9:4-5

As we look at the increasing evils in the world today, our need is to take heed that we are not deceived, as Timothy was warned by Paul, that: ". . .evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

II Timothy 3:13

M.C.S.

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS FOR DECEMBER 2012

HAMBURG, NEW YORK

Sunday: Breaking of Bread 11:30 am

Thursday: Bible Class 3:30 pm; Forestville, Hamburg and Fredonia

Every Third Week: Revelation Study

Our fall witnessing to the general public through a postal flyer has begun. Each month three to four thousand direct mail solicitations are sent out focusing on the uncertainty man faces in this perplexing and dangerous world. We point out there is a way to eliminate this perplexity and uncertainty through God's word - His ultimate plan for the earth and mankind. We invite the reader to return a coupon to receive free articles or to log onto our website for more information on this important subject.

Our prayer is for God's guidance in this work.

M.C.S.

MANCHESTER

Sunday: Breaking of Bread 11:30 am

Thursday: Bible Class 2:00 pm

Again comes the time for the News communication via our magazine to our Ecclesial Brethren and Sisters. Ecclesial fellowship is very precious. Oh how we can rejoice! People of prayer, who pray for us, even as we pray for them. Undoubtedly Heavenly help comes and in its so doing what comfort and assurance comes to our hearts and minds.

For more information or to read our literature, log onto:

www.remnantofchristsecclesia.com