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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

**"Take heed that ye be not deceived"**

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**All Communications**

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## HEZEKIAH

We have read in the record of Second Kings of Hezekiah, a king of Judah - one of only a few who sought to walk in God's ways and follow His word. We read in the 18th chapter of II Kings a summary of his life and deeds:

“Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Abi, the daughter of Zachariah.

And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did.

He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.

He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.

For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses. And the LORD was with him; and he prospered withsoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.”

II Kings 18:2-7

Hezekiah's accomplishments were possible because of his trust in God - he looked to God for help and guidance. To “trust” is to lean on or have confidence, revealing that Hezekiah relied on God for direction, not depending upon his own thinking, and therefore he prospered. His trust in God was not only evident to his people but also to his enemies. The king of Assyria sent his army to Jerusalem and threatened Hezekiah and Israel with war. The Assyrian emissaries called out to them in the hopes of intimidation, trying to destroy their confidence in their God:

“And Rabshakeh (of Assyria) said unto them, Speak ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?

Thou sayest, (but they are but vain words,) I have counsel and strength for the war. Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?

II Kings 18:19-20

The king of Assyria's delegates came to bully and discredit their faith in God - to wear down their confidence and belief that He would deliver them from the armies of Assyria:

“Thus saith the king (of Assyria), Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand:

Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern.

Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand?

Who are they among ail the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?” II Kings 18:29-31,33-35

These were cleverly crafted words, spoken in the language of Israel, so everyone would understand - all meant to frighten and erode their confidence in Hezekiah and in the Lord God of Israel’s ability to save. Because of Hezekiah’s stalwart trust in the Lord, so too the people responded in the same courageous manner.

During this worrisome time, the servants of Hezekiah came to the prophet Isaiah to ask God’s counsel and direction in this matter, and he gave them God’s answer:

“And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.”  
II Kings 19:6-7

God’s word through His prophet Isaiah would strengthen their faith and trust in Him, for God gave assurance that He was with them, because of Hezekiah’s trust. The words of king Solomon teach likewise of the need to trust in the Almighty:

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”  
Proverbs 3: 5-6

Trust in God is vital in order to walk before God with obedience and faithfulness. We too must have that same trust in our living, in order to receive God’s care and deliverance from the trials which we face in this life.

Isaiah wrote of the blessing God will grant to those who receive His mercy at the judgment seat of Christ - those chosen to enter into the kingdom of God as His servants for eternity:

“In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.”  
Isaiah 26:1-4

David also had the same faith and trust in God as he encouraged Israel and us today, in the Psalms:

“O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. The LORD hath been mindful of us: he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great.”  
Psalms 115:9-13

We may think of these kings - David and Hezekiah, as powerful men because of their lofty position as captains of Israel, yet these references illustrate the depth of their humility and reverence for God’s guidance in their living. They are faithful examples, preserved through the ages, as an inspiration to those who came after them.

The prophet Jeremiah was another who trusted in God, and who even in the midst of his own grievous trials, taught Israel to also trust in the Lord:

“Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.

For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the Lord is.

For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”

Jeremiah 17:5-8

Here is a contrast between a trust in man and trust in God - a curse compared with blessing by looking to the future end of God’s purpose with hope.

Although Hezekiah trusted in God, he was flesh like any other man, and did fail to walk in righteousness at times:

“Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.”  
II Chronicles 32:31

He boasted to those of Babylon, who came to visit, and in pride showed them all the treasures of his realm - things that were precious to those of Israel, which God had provided - not Hezekiah himself. He forgot all this wealth was not his own personal achievement, but was a blessing given of God:

“At that time Berodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick.

And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.”

II Kings 20:12-13

His pride was lifted up by the praise and admiration of those foreign dignitaries and failed to give God the glory, taking it instead upon himself:

“And many brought gifts unto the LORD to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.

In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the LORD: and he spake unto him, and he gave him a sign.

But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.

Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.”

II Chronicles 32:23-26

We know that in our own living, we too fail in weakness to always trust in Him as we should - just as did Hezekiah. In mercy, God has provided a means of recovery - through repentance and the sacrifice of His Son as our covering grace. With atonement can we once again seek His care and protection and build up a better foundation within ourselves of trust and confidence, praying through our Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, to strengthen us not to fail in the same way again.

M.C.S.

## JHOSHAPHAT - A FAITHFUL KING

Recently we have read of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. Jehoshaphat succeeded Asa, his father, and reigned twenty-five years, taking the throne at the age of thirty-five. Jehoshaphat was considered a faithful king because he sought the Lord God and taught Judah His statutes. The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because of his faith:

“And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; But sought to the LORD God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel. Therefore the LORD stablished the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance. And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD: moreover he took away the high places and groves out of Judah.” II Chronicles 17:3-6

In the third year of his reign he sent his princes, Levites, and two priests throughout Judah:

“And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the LORD with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people. And the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat.” II Chronicles 17:9-10

Even though Jehoshaphat had great faith; he made some strange alliances. One was with Ahab, who was one of the most evil kings to reign in Israel, and Ahab asked for his help to battle the Syrians at Ramoth-gilead. Jehoshaphat indicated that his and Ahab's people would be one in the effort of the war once the Lord was enquired of to see if they should go to war:

“And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of he LORD today. Therefore the king of Israel gathered together of prophets four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for God will deliver it into the king's hand. But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him? And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, by whom we may enquire of the LORD, but I hate him; for

he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil: the same is Micaiah the son of Imla. And Jehoshaphat said Let not the kin sa so.” II Chronicles 18:4-7

Micaiah, the Lord's prophet, was brought forth, and he, too, proclaimed that the two kings should go up to war, because it was the Lord's plan that Ahab be killed in battle. The kings did go up to battle, but Ahab disguised himself, and Jehoshaphat put on his robes. The Syrian army thought Jehoshaphat was the king of Israel, and compassed him about to kill him, but he cried out and the Lord saved him. Ahab did die as prophesied, but Jehoshaphat was saved because of his faith in God.

Upon Jehoshaphat's return to Jerusalem, he was met by Jehu, the son of Hanani the seer:

“... Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD. Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.

And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people from Beersheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers.

And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city,

And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the LORD, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem.

And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart.” II Chronicles 19:2-9

It soon came to Jehoshaphat's attention that some of the Moabites, Ammonites, and others had gathered themselves to battle with Judah; and he once again sought the Lord God:

“And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the LORD:

even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court.”  
II Chronicles 20:3-5

Jehoshaphat sought the Lord and asked for His intervention and protection from the multitude of the invading army, and received the reply of God through, a Levite:

“And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God’s.” II Chronicles 20:15

God not only delivered Judah and Jehoshaphat as He promised, but He also provided a great spoil from the fallen army:

“And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another.

And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped.

And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil it was so much.”

II Chronicles 20:22-25

Not only did God bless Judah with the spoils, but He also blessed them with peace for a time:

“And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel.

So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about.”

II Chronicles 20:29-30

Jehoshaphat once again made an alliance with a wicked king of Israel. He worked with Ahaziah, Ahab’s son, to build ships to trade with Tarshish:

“And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly:

And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Ezion-gaber.

Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.

II Chronicles 20:35-37

Jehoshaphat also allied himself with a further wicked king of Israel - Jehoram, another son of Ahab. Jehoram asked Jehoshaphat to help him battle the king of Moab:

“And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up: I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses.”

II Kings 3:7

So the combined armies marched seven days, but found no water for the troops or their cattle, and Jehoshaphat asked if there was a prophet of the Lord to enquire of. Jehoshaphat was told that Elisha was near and they went to him. Elisha told the kings to dig many ditches in the valley, and water would be provided; for the Lord would deliver the Moabites into their hands. In the morning, the ditches were filled with water, and as the Moabites approached the valley, the sun shown off the ditches. Thus the Moabites were convinced that the kings had fallen upon each other, and the valley was full of their blood. As the Moabites came to gather the spoil, the kings rose up and slew them, and tore down their cities.

Once again God had shown favor to Jehoshaphat, even though he had allied himself with another wicked king of Israel.

We are given encouragement in Jehoshaphat's example, by seeing that God does provide for those who are faithful in seeking Him, even when they surround themselves with circumstances that might seem inappropriate for continued spiritual growth. Jehoshaphat's example demonstrates the importance of faith in God, along with acting on that faith, as a continuing witness to our obedience to the Lord's way, rather than our own.

E.J.M.

## GOD'S WITNESS

Each year in the course of our reading plan, we are privileged to study the last hours of the Lord Jesus, and each Sunday as we approach the Lord's table made possible by His sacrifice, we are reminded of the great struggle there must have been to complete a life without sin, in the same situation we would have failed miserably, and so marvel at His perfect obedience and submission.

We are helped and strengthened in our own circumstances however, as we study His last hours and how He dealt with those without who had no concept of God's Truth. We know that the Scribes and Pharisees brought Jesus to Pilate to be judged, for they could find nothing under God's law of which to accuse Him, so brought Him to be crucified under Gentile law. Pilate's first question as recorded in Mark 15:2 was:

“...Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it.”

A short response, for Jesus knew it made no difference if His answer was yes or no, His accusers had only one end in mind - His death. When we go to the same record of this event in John 18:33-37 we find the Lord Jesus' further response to Pilate:

“...Art thou the King of the Jews?  
Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?  
Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: What hast thou done.  
Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.  
Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

We see in this response that Jesus conveyed to Pilate the true understanding of what had been vested in Him - a work first in Himself and then the promise of a kingdom to come and a work ultimately to be given to His servants who would be part of that kingdom. He confirmed the Word of God and here in the ears of Pilate repeated the essence of the

gospel message. The Lord Jesus knew that the Truth was not to be part of Pilate's life, nor that of the Scribes and Pharisees, (as it should have been). He had full recognition of the work set before him.

John 12 helps further in this regard of understanding Jesus' plight in verses 27-28:

"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father glorify thy name..."

The Lord Jesus' prayer in this record of John was in preparation for the circumstances that would befall Him and lead to His crucifixion. When He was brought before His accusers He said virtually nothing in His defense. He could not say...Father save me, for it was for this cause that He was brought into the world. By saying nothing to Pilate and the Scribes Pharisees, He glorified God knowing He could not seek a means of escape from the suffering that was to come. John 12 tells us further in verses 23-24:

"Then Jesus answered them saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.  
Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit".

How often after a difficult or painful circumstance we say how fortunate we had not known what was ahead. The Lord Jesus knew that ahead of Him was pain, suffering, shame, and ultimately death. Yet with this knowledge He remained steadfast, putting down his natural inclination to escape as He was able to do and instead submitting in obedience to is a her's plan for Him, thus glorifying God.

To those who desire to follow after Him, He has left words of encouragement to help during their times of trial and testing in Luke 21:14-19.

"Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.  
And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.  
And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.  
But there shall not an hair of your head, perish. In your patience possess ye your souls."

The Lord Jesus obviously applied this same advice in His response to Pilate. He did not meditate ahead of time, in fact He said very little, but spoke of the Kingdom of God and of His ultimate purpose with His children. He glorified the name of God by giving a true witness to His word, not fretting to save Himself, but submitting to the hand of God upon Him. We must have this same spirit of obedience within us so that all of our actions are overruled by God's will, knowing that as we trust in Him we will be helped and sustained in our witness to any who may hear.

Pilate did not really "hear" Jesus' testimony, nor did the Scribes and Pharisees, but God heard and those "receiving" the knowledge of His Truth have heard. As we have heard His voice today through the record of the Scriptures and have seen how the Lord Jesus applied the wisdom of God, we too are helped to submit to Him. In John 8:45-47 we are told in Jesus' own words why those without could not hear His testimony:

“And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.  
Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?  
He that is of God heareth God's words:  
ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.”

Many of our words to those without are not heard or perceived in any depth because they are not called of Him and so are, "not of God".

As we hear we must respond to Jesus' words to be able to move and witness in a way which glorifies our Father's name. As we witness then, how careful we must be to contemplate our circumstances and measure our words to assure they glorify only One, our Father in heaven.

**“BE NOT RIGHTEOUS OVER MUCH”**  
**Ecclesiastes 7:16**

Looking at our verse under consideration, it may seem to be a contradiction when viewed on the surface; for we are told in the scriptures to endeavor to be righteous, yet Solomon writes:

“Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise:  
why shouldest thou destroy thyself?” Ecclesiastes 7:16

In the Spirit’s eyes, one over-righteous or over-wise could come to fail by being blinded by their own sense of feeling right within themselves - the thought of self-righteousness which cannot exist along with humility. We look for example in Luke, where the Lord Jesus used a parable to teach of the consequences of one who was self-righteous:

“And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:  
Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” Luke 18:9-14

Here Christ imparts the vital spiritual teaching that one’s regard to oneself needs to be humble for men by nature are all sinners devoid of natural righteousness. The publican realized that and was humble, not filled with self-righteousness as was the Pharisee. He didn’t feel he needed God’s mercy because he thought himself righteous in his own eyes. This is the natural tendency of the flesh, which we must all guard against.

Solomon in this verse, implores a realization of this tendency, in order to not “destroy thyself”. A self righteous attitude will not allow humility to be exercised before God and will in fact lead to one’s spiritual destruction before Him. Solomon goes on to emphasize the sinful nature of man saying:

It is good that thou shouldest take bold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.

For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.”  
Ecclesiastes 7:18, 20

We are not superior to others for all men fail and are sinful in nature, therefore, there is no room for being self-righteous before men or God. At the end of Ecclesiastes, Solomon remunerates the position and duty of man before God:

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”  
Ecclesiastes 12:13

With these thoughts in mind, we are also reminded of the Spirit’s warning to the church at Laodicea:

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”  
Revelation 3:15-19

The Lord Jesus’ rebuke to Laodicea points out the tendency of the flesh to be satisfied with self, rather than recognizing the frailty of man’s flesh nature in need of humility and God’s mercy.

Paul wrote on this same subject in his letter to the brethren at Rome:

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israelis, that they might be saved.

For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Romans 10:1-3

To train our feet in an acceptable spiritual path, Paul goes on in Romans to describe how a servant of Christ should behave:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Romans 12:1-3

Paul is saying we must take care not to walk before God by our own ideas of what we may think is righteous, but by following the example of Christ as shown through His Word.

Also further along in the 16th verse Paul writes:

Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits." Romans 12:16

This word "conceits" is the same thought of pursuing humility in oneself by not seeking after "high things". These were the acts of the Pharisees who viewed themselves as self-righteous that they may appear pious before men in order to garner praise and esteem. But this behavior was abhorred by God for their lack of humility as the Lord Jesus clearly taught:

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you- They have their reward.

But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.” Matthew 6:1-4

The only “reward” that these men could hope for, was the momentary gratification from those who interpreted their actions as pious - they could not hope for any eternal reward from the Almighty for their lack of humility. Their reward was in this life only - from men and not from God.

Solomon’s wisdom relayed in our verse from Ecclesiastes is a warning! If we hope to be found acceptable and receive mercy at the judgment seat of Christ, we must endeavor now in this life to walk with humility after the Lord Jesus’ example -not in self-righteousness, as is the manner of the unrestrained flesh nature - for there is nothing note worthy in our carnal nature that is pleasing to God.

M.C.S.

## SHIPHRAH AND PUAH

We have recently begun reading the book of Exodus, words of the Spirit written by Moses and preserved for our instruction, setting forth the history of the children of Israel while in Egypt. We remember the circumstances of Joseph and how he was guided by God to Egypt so that he could be a saviour for his family, Israel. For several years Jacob and his children sojourned in Egypt and under the watchful care of God they grew and prospered into a great number:

“And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation. And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.”  
Ex. 1:6-7

All those who had seen the deliverance granted by God were now dead and a new generation multiplied so much that the new Pharaoh who knew not Joseph feared for the security of his own country:

“Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people. Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war they join also unto our enemies and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land. Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Rameses.”  
Ex. 1.8-11

The period during which these circumstances occurred was a time of test and struggle for Israel, a time of persecution and hard bondage, but necessary in order to bring them closer to God, to value their place under His protective care. Over the years residing in Egypt, the people had grown prosperous and indifferent, blending into the fabric of Egyptian society by practising idolatry, forgetting that they were to separate people unto Yahweh. This we learn from Ezekiel 20:5-8 where God said:

“...In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up mine hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt...to bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them...Then said [unto them. Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt...But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt.”

God knew that it would take stringent conditions to wake them from their lethargy and make them cry out for deliverance. Only then would He lead them into their own land, a place that would be their inheritance, as promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob before them.

In this attempt to stem their growth, Pharaoh instructed the Hebrew midwives to kill all of the male Hebrew children:

“And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiprah, and the name of the other Puah: And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live. Ex.1: 15-16

How grievous this circumstances would be, not only for those who bore children but for the midwives themselves. Why would God preserve the names of these two particular midwives? Perhaps there is instruction for us for in their testimony; it was said of them in verse 17:

“But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.”

Here was a direct refusal by these two women to obey the king and by their actions revealed that their fear of God was greater than their fear of man. As these midwives came to assist in bringing to birth they would see the miracle of life unfolded time and time again, and because of this they undoubtedly felt closer to their Creator and in reverence for the ultimate purpose He had promised.

They must have greatly feared as Pharaoh called them to appear before him and demanded, verse 18:

“...Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive?”

We can imagine the wrath of the king knowing that these two Hebrew women were thwarting his direct commands. They answered him in verse 19:

“And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them.”

Perhaps they hoped this would seem a likely excuse for their actions, but it certainly was not true in all cases that the Hebrew women gave birth unassisted before their arrival. But their response pleased God for we are told in verse 20:

“Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty.”

They had misrepresented the truth to Pharaoh, but in doing so revealed a righteous spirit, one which esteemed the purpose of God much higher than the king's. Just as the Lord Jesus' instructions were to:

“...Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's” Luke 20:25

Where conflicts occur between man's word and God's a stand must be made as illustrated by Shiphrah and Puah.

To show His pleasure with their courage it was recorded that:

“And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses.” Ex. 1:21

When we look up that word “houses” we find that it refers not so much to a physical structure but more to being part of a household. God left this record for others to know how they feared Him, and if continuing in that fear, had a sure hope in His eternal house.

What can this testimony of these two faithful women mean to us today? We too are tested during our time of probation and if we will fear the God of Israel as they did, we have the hope of being made part of the same ultimate household of God. When we look up the meaning of their names we find that Shiphrah means, “to glisten to be a beauty” and Puah means, “to glitter in splendor”, both names bringing to mind the beauty of precious jewels that scintillate as they reflect the light. As these two reflected the light of Truth, refusing to obey the edicts of Pharaoh, it brings to mind the promise of God to His children recorded in Malachi 3:16-17:

“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.  
And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

Do we as Shiphrah and Puah shine and reflect the light of God in our living? Let us be encouraged to follow in the same spirit revealed by these brave women, to give glory and honor to our Father above all else, as we struggle to obey Him in godly fear.

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS FOR APRIL 2014

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

We are assured by a merciful Father, as we wait in faith and patience for the return of the Lord Jesus, that we will not face more than we can bear in these last days. That God is mindful of all our circumstances should encourage and strengthen us. We rejoice in this understanding with all of our brethren.

M.C.S.

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