

JUNE 2014

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"

MALACHI

HAGGAI'S MESSAGE

FOR UPON ALL THE GLORY SHALL BE A DEFENCE

A BIBLE CLASS -
NOT HIDDEN FROM THEE

JUDGE NOT, THAT YE BE NOT JUDGED

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MALACHI

The prophet Malachi was contemporary with Nehemiah, another prophet who counselled the Jews after their return from exile in Babylon.

God's word was sent through Malachi, as a reproof to His people and especially to the priests, for their failure to serve Him faithfully. They did not honor Him, but were careless and disrespectful, especially in the manner of their offerings:

“A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?”

Malachi 1:6

In answer to their question, God replies:

“Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible.”

Malachi 1:7

They were offering sacrifices not acceptable to God, as outlined through the Law of Moses. The sacrificial offerings were to be healthy and without blemish. Yet in contempt, they offered the blind, the lame and sickly animals. Malachi goes on to ask them....

“...offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person?”

Malachi 1:8

If the governor would not accept these sacrifices as gifts because they were inferior, why did they think God would? Should not gifts offered to the Almighty be the very best one had to offer, out of respect and fear for His majesty and power?

The sacrifices offered under the law, were to teach them of the One who would be offered as a perfect sacrifice to cover their sins - the Messiah & Savior - He who would become a Mediator between God and man. His life was blameless - without blemish or sin, therefore, their sacrifices should reflect the same, as a sign of their deeper understanding of what they stood for.

“Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.

But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.”
Malachi 1:13-14

Malachi goes on in the second chapter to further explain God’s rebuke, especially to the priesthood:

“And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart.”
Malachi 2:1-2

They would be cursed by God because He was not first in their heart when they offered substandard sacrifices and failed to see that they pointed forward in faith to the future Messiah:

“Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it.

And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.”
Malachi 2:3-4

Levi was chosen to serve in the work of God’s tabernacle and temple. Malachi goes on to remind them of their father Levi, in order to spur them on to obedience:

“My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name.

The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.

For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.”
Malachi 2:5-7

The tribe of Levi was given the privilege of working in God's house as priests. They were also given the responsibility to teach His people the Law, which pointed forward to the hope of salvation promised through the Perfect Sacrifice (the Messiah) who would become the High Priest and Mediator between God and His people. A faithful priest who lived, walked and taught God's law faithfully, would be a help to His people - yet those of Malachi's time, were not living up to their calling. Their relationship with God, which they should have valued, was put aside, because the priests were not teaching of Him as they should.

“But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.

Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.”
Malachi 2:8-9

The act of tithing as outlined in the Law of Moses was given to support the priests and their families, so they did not have to toil with crops or livestock and could devote their time solely to the service of God's house.

“And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel. And, behold I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.”
Numbers 18:20-21,23-24

Yet the priests were not properly teaching the people of the need to tithe as an offering unto God for the work of His house.

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. but ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.”
Malachi 3:8-9

We can see what a chain reaction this refusal to give God tithes would create. Without the proper crops and animals offered as sacrifices, the priests were accepting inferior offerings in order to have something for themselves and their households to live on. It was a vicious circle - all based on a lack of understanding and a disrespect of God's word.

If they obeyed and taught the people how important it was to respect God with tithing, blessings would follow:

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouses, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”
Malachi 3:10

If they brought acceptable sacrifices and tithes, He would bless them so there would be no more room in the storehouses to contain all the bounty.

This message was sent to Israel in Malachi's time, but has been preserved for our help and admonition as well today. We at times may feel wearied and tempted not to carry out all we know should be done in our own living or in the work given us to do in His house. As a remedy, Malachi instructs God's people to pray and seek His help:

“And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts.”
Malachi 1:9

The answer is to pray, seek God's forgiveness and turn to Him and He will be gracious and provide what is needed. He is steadfast and changes not - He does not forget the covenant He has made - even when we do - He is ever there to hear our prayers and extend help and succor if we will repent and walk in His ways. This message is pertinent to us as well today!

“For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”
Malachi 3:6

For those throughout the ages that hearken to His word and fear His name, the promise and hope for salvation has been extended:

“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.” Malachi 3:16-17

The Book of Remembrance is still being written - containing the names of all those that endeavor to please and serve Him, from the time of Adam. That same hope of being known as one of His “jewels”, is offered to us today, as long as we hearken to Him in faith and obedience, displaying a reverence and fear of Him each day in our living.

M.C.S.

HAGGAI'S MESSAGE

Recently our readings have brought us to the book of Haggai. Little is known about this minor prophet, but we know he was the first prophet to prophesy in Israel after a remnant returned from their captivity in Babylon. He did prophesy during the same period as Zechariah, and by their combined efforts of encouragement, the temple was rebuilt. The words that he was given to speak were conveyed in four messages.

The first message was a plea to rebuild the temple:

“Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD’S house should be built. Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?

Now therefore thus saith the LORD of host, Consider your ways.”
Haggai 1:2-5

The words from the Lord clearly indicate that the thoughts of the people were not towards the building of God’s house, but rather to build their own cieled houses. The word “cieled” means to cover or overlay, and gives the impression of a panelled interior or a finished house, compared to the house of God which still lay in ruins. God’s words instruct to

“Consider your ways” as their priorities were not towards God, but to their own comforts. God’s words indicate that Israel was hampered because of their ways:

“Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Consider your ways.

Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.

Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.”

Haggai 1:6-10

Those words obviously caused the people to consider their ways, because the temple was soon started:

“Then spake Haggai the LORD’s messenger in the LORD’S message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD. And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people, and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God.”

Haggai 1:13-14

Haggai’s second message speaks of how the house of the Lord might seem less than it was, but that it will be even more glorious in the future, as he asks who remembered the house of old:

“Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?”

Haggai 2:3

Haggai’s message promises that God will be with them, and that the glory of the latter temple will exceed that of the previous:

“... be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts:

According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.

For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;

And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.

The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.”
Haggai 2:4-9

The third message from Haggai also spoke of God’s withholding bounty from the people, but promised blessing:

“And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD: Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD. Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the LORD’S temple was laid, consider it.

Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you.”
Haggai 2:15-19

In his fourth message, Haggai speaks to Zerubbabel, and tells him that God will bring down the heathen:

“And I will overthrow the throne of the kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, everyone by the sword of his brother.

In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts.”

Haggai 2:22-23

Haggai's words spoke initially to the returned exiles, but like all prophets, their words also speak to a future people and regard events that were foreshadowed in the original prophesy. In the first message, Haggai asked the people to consider their ways and rebuild the Lord's house. The message to us is to consider our ways also, as we recognize that we are the spiritual house of God:

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”

I Corinthians 3:16-17

Paul's words continue with a similar message, telling us that we are members of Christ and, as such, should not be joined in actions of the flesh. It is through Jesus that we have been redeemed by that membership.

“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.

What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God's.”

I Corinthians 6:15-20

The second and third messages of Haggai speak of the building of the temple and the blessing that will come about after it is finished. This speaks to us by affirming that the spiritual temple will not be finished until the kingdom is established. Those who are part of that temple will partake of the greatest blessing known.

The last message from Haggai was given to Zerubbabel, the governor, and promised him the fall of the Gentiles. These words remind us of Jesus who is our King and our Redeemer, who perfectly considered His ways, and by whom the Gentiles will fall. It is through Jesus that all who are

faithful will be sealed, and be given a place in the finished temple of God. So let us heed Haggai's words, and consider our ways, and our place in the eyes of God, as we hope to be part of that spiritual temple whose corner stone is our Lord Jesus Christ.

E.J.M.

“FOR UPON ALL THE GLORY SHALL BE A DEFENCE”

Once again the simplicity of God's Word is brought to light as we read from our daily portions found in Deuteronomy, Isaiah and Galatians. In each of these portions is revealed instruction to those who would lay hold on the hope He holds out. The first in Deuteronomy records the Song of Moses given to the children of Israel prior to their entering into the land of promise. The second in Isaiah, records the words spoken by this prophet to Israel during the captivity brought about because of their failure to serve God. The third is taken from the writings of Paul to his Galatian brethren reminding them of what God's word and its fulfillment should mean to them in their living.

After Moses finished reiterating to Israel all that the Lord had done and would do for them as recorded in Deuteronomy chapter 32, he reminded them in the 46-47 verses to:

“...Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.

For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life: and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.” Deut. 32:46-47.

How well Moses must have perceived the spirit of that word, for he had served as a deliverer for God's people. However, after this speech God came to him to tell him he must suffer greatly for his failure at the waters of Meribah. He could not enter the land but was allowed only to see it from the top of Mount Nebo before he died. As a man of spirit, this glimpse would have satisfied him as he looked beyond the circumstances of the day, accepting and setting his heart to the eventual hoped for promised passage into God's kingdom:

“See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me:
I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any
that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven,
and say, I live for ever.” Deut. 32:39-40.

Here is the power of the Almighty spoken for all to witness as the only means of deliverance from death. The essence of God’s word sets before all the opportunity for life and blessing or death and cursing. The Song of Moses spoke again of this for all to hear and heed as he said, “Set your hearts”. How easy it is to agree verbally, yet the history of God’s people has been one of a few faithful but most failing to obey and walk in the spirit of that word.

In the time of Isaiah we see the children of Israel had again failed and God’s wrath had been poured out upon them. Yet in the midst of that woe hope was still held out as we read in Isaiah 4:4-5:

“When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence.”

Who, hearing these words, would not want this? Yet how easy to fail as man’s flesh confuses the simplicity of God’s promise. The flesh has caused conflict from the beginning between the right spirit of God and the evil ways of man. Amidst the confusion at the time of Isaiah however, hope was expressed that if they would turn back to God and to His ways deliverance would be granted. To help those in captivity, Isaiah explains their disobedience in a parable of a vineyard:

“...My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:
And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.” Isa. 5:1-2.

Every care and precaution had been taken and much labor expended to insure a fruitful vineyard, yet it was all for nought for it brought forth nothing profitable. What was the end of that vineyard?

“...I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and breakdown the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel...he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.”
Isa. 5:5-7.

God’s word spoke of blessing and life or cursing and death - the goodness and severity of God which He has always made known to His people. Goodness if there is a struggle to put down the flesh and severity if there is a disregard for His way. God is long suffering for He spoke to Israel through Moses and Isaiah to remind them to value these words of life.

Turning now to Galatians, Paul questioned his Galatian brethren after the time of fulfillment by the Lord Jesus. He rebuked some who had now decided to reinstitute the law which could not bring life but only bondage. As Israel had done to God, they were in effect turning their backs, on the Messiah who by giving his life as a perfect sacrifice had fulfilled the law releasing them from its bondage. The 9th verse of Galatians 4 tells us:

“But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?”

Yet even here God revealed His care through Paul’s words, “ye are known of God”. How merciful is God that He knows the “frame” of His people and will provide help if there is a turning to Him. Those at the time of Paul needed to learn this and to seek His mercy and grace just as Isaiah revealed this same thought saying:

“And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence.”
Isa. 4:5.

This word defence is defined as canopy in the sense of a shield or shelter. This glory will be the ultimate of God’s protection and care to those written in His book of life when the Lord Jesus returns.

Further Paul's message to the Galatians told them to value their freedom from the law and so walk in the spirit of His word. We see the spirit of God's truth exhibited for our help in Psalm 85 entitled, "To the chief Musican, A Psalm for the sons of Korah", or as translated, "To the One who overcomes, a song for the sons being made smooth":

"Lord, thou has been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.
Thou has forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou has covered all their sin. Selah."
verses 1-2.

This speaks of the frailty of the flesh along with the mercy of God provided even when there is failure. The hope of dwelling in that promised land must have been central in David's thinking for he knew that mercy and the visible manifestation of God's presence with him.

All that are called of God have seen a measure of that glory and known that mercy, but have they moved in ways that show their appreciation? All of God's people who submit will be shown His way, as Moses reminded Israel, and as Isaiah reminded of that captivity which would turn again unto hope. Likewise Paul's words to the Galatians and to us today reminds of the need to value the glory of God, the earnest of which can dwell with us now to sustain our hope to see its fulfillment when the Lord Jesus returns. For then it shall be as Isaiah says in chapter 4:6.

"And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain."

We can know that defence and mercy now but only as we open our eyes to see the glory of God to show us the way leading to life.

A BIBLE CLASS

“Not Hidden From Thee” Deuteronomy 30:11

Our verse under consideration was spoken by Moses, as the law was repeated in Deuteronomy - conveying the promise of the covenant established between God and Israel. The law contained their life's instructions to keep them on the path of righteousness as they went in to possess their inheritance in Canaan. His covenant promised a Father's care and protection if they would walk before Him in obedience:

“If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.” Deuteronomy 30:10

His word was not difficult or hard to find - it was not reserved for the learned only, nor a secret - but was as close as the law given - accessible by all:

“For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.” Deuteronomy 30:11

The Bible margin gives the meaning of that word “hidden” as “not too hard”. Therefore, His word was not too hard for anyone to heed.

They had the understanding and the means of being at one with God, based on obedience to His word. Even when they failed, if they repented and turned back to Him, He would hear and forgive.

Right from the beginning, God made known His word as the means of salvation to those who feared and respected Him - it was nigh to them and to be the very fabric of their daily lives as outlined in the law. Every facet of living was addressed, so they knew what was displeasing and would result in an alienation and curse upon them and how through obedience and faith they would be blessed:

“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.”

Deuteronomy 30:19

Paul in writing to his brethren at Rome, gave the same message, applicable to Israel, but also to any who embraced the hope of Israel:

“For Moses described the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

...The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Romans 10:5,8-9

Paul used that same understanding that the word of God was known to Israel through the law, and now through belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the end of that law through faith, is the same promise extended.

This is not unlike the message delivered by many of the Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah who wrote:

“But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.

For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else.

I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.”

Isaiah 45:17-19

His word was made known to Israel that they may walk before Him in obedience and enjoy the covenant relationship given to none other but themselves.

“Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me.

Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.” Isaiah 48:16-17

Isaiah was a prophet sent by God to warn Israel - for they were

turning away from Him - even though that word was ever before them in the law. The way to salvation was not hidden, it was easily available, yet they chose not to hear.

David depended upon God's word to lead and guide him, knowing He was close at hand and in the same spirit wrote:

“Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.
O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.
Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.
Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths.
‘Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.’ Psalm 25:1-5

He desired to walk in God's way but did fail, and with repentance came before God to confess his iniquities in the fear of losing God's mercy and grace.

Solomon in his wisdom likewise spoke of God's covenant with the righteous as a “secret” between them:

“Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways. For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his secret is with the righteous.” Proverbs 3:31-32

His promise of salvation is not a secret to those that desire to seek Him - it is not hidden from them, for the path to life is clearly wade known for them to follow.

In the record of John, the Lord Jesus spoke of His place in Cod's plan and His relationship to His people:

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.
Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”
John 15:13-15

Again, nothing is hid from those that desire to be His followers - whom He has called to be His friends.

The Lord Jesus was the fulfillment of God's word - even though the Jews refused to recognize Him as the Messiah, choosing rather to follow their own traditions and the commandments of men. The way to salvation through Him, was not hid from them for all the law and the prophets spoke of His coming.

Even before the law, Adam and Eve in the garden knew what God's word commanded. The way of life everlasting was not hid from them, yet they succumbed to their own temptation and disobeyed God's precepts. Yet in His mercy He provided a covering for their sin through blood shed - again the way to salvation not hid but pointing forward to the sacrifice of the Savior to come, the only means of attaining unto the promise of life for those that believe on His name.

Right from the beginning, He made known His word and those that desire to be known as His children, have that knowledge available that they may attain unto the promise of life and salvation. It has never been hid, but is nigh to them, even to this day.

M.C.S.

“JUDGE NOT, THAT YE BE NOT JUDGED!”

If we were to look at our verse under consideration taken purely by itself we might be confused by the intent of the Lord Jesus as He spoke these words. However when taken in context with His preceding discourse we see that He spoke something very different to the multitude before Him, as opposed to what they had heard before. As an example of this He began his teaching in Matthew 5:21 with the words, -“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time....”. Jesus used this phrase time after time to introduce the true spirit of the word of God to them. The people prior to this had been taught by the Scribes and Pharisees who were steeped in the letter of the law and the traditions of men. They were astonished to hear the real spirit of that law, which is its true fulfillment.

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”

Matthew 5:17-18.

Because of the power of His words it was recorded in Matthew 7:28-29:

“And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:

For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes!”

In this context then we see the Lord Jesus was teaching the true spirit of the law when He says:

“Judge not, that ye be not judged.

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”

(Matt. 7:1-2)

To measure as used here conveys the thought of an honest measure - a just weight in the spirit of doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. The Lord Jesus goes on to illustrate this lesson of judging saying:

“...why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.”

Matthew 7:3-5.

The hypocrite referred to in this parable by the Lord Jesus is attempting to remove a small speck or mote out of this brother’s eye, while being blinded by a huge beam in his own. How could one with such a large and obviously unrecognized fault be able to help another with a lesser problem? The Lord Jesus mentions in John 7:24 a similar thought:

“Judge not according to the appearance,
but judge righteous judgment.”

The whole picture to be perceived here is that the judgment must be a righteous one applying the wisdom of God's word, not man's thinking. Jesus makes this connection in John 12:47-49 saying:

“And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.”

In Jesus' relationship to God and the work given, He said that the word itself would judge, and any of His followers would want to adhere to the same pattern. Judgment must be made in righteousness, not according to the flesh. Thus the beam in the eye of the hypocrite was to be cast out first so vision could be restored and then true righteous judgment could then take place. If we judge by the flesh we are not walking in accordance to the ways of the Spirit of God.

Many have fallen into great danger by using this verse as proof that they are not to judge, but rather leave it to the Lord Jesus at the judgment seat. If this were true, Jesus would not command the hypocrite to first clear his own vision so that he could then cast out the mote in his brother's eye. Instead we are instructed by the Spirit to:

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”

Matthew 7:15-20

The point made here is that a man with an orchard can judge his trees well by what they bear. If they are unfruitful they are hewn down.

When we think of fruits of the spirit and flesh we think of Galatians 5:19-23:

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelling, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that the which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

If we see these evil fruits being done, we are judging not by our own standards but by the words of the Spin as written here. There is no law written against the peaceable fruits of the Spirit because they are good - they do not cause harm or sin as the fruits of the flesh do

If we see characteristics good or bad as defined by His word in a person, it is easy to then discern what that person is like, and to judge accordingly. In this manner we are judging not after our own standards, but by the measure of His Word.

It is much easier undoubtedly to overlook wrong doing and not judge against one whom we may love. But to do so destroys the fabric of unity within His house and the bond of fellowship between brethren and sisters. Without judgment or restraint, all will perish. To leave such a matter for the Lord Jesus' to judge at the judgment seat is to leave it too late. If faults are not corrected during the time of probation while time remains, there is no hope of being found approved before Him as He judges. Is this not why we are instructed to judge ourselves and others in accordance with the spirit of Matthew 18, looking at the fruits of the mind and spirit to see if they are good or evil?

The adversary has always cried “don't judge me”, just as Moses tried to intervene when two Hebrew brethren were fighting:

“And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?”

And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?...

Exodus 2:13-14.

Was this a right spirit to say, “who made thee a judge over us?” Moses could rightly judge by this man’s works. The flesh does not want to be judged by another and so the cry has always been from the adversary, “don’t judge” and is still heard today.

Solomon when asked by God to ask for a gift said:

“Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. I Kings 3:9-10.

Solomon knew how difficult it was to judge and asked for God’s wisdom to judge righteously and this pleased God. In his position as king Solomon was expected to judge, but not as a man, for he could fail, and so needed God’s help. Thus we must judge ourselves daily to see if we are following God’s commands and when required to judge another, must do so in a spirit of mercy, judging them as the Spirit directs, by their fruits.

“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?.” I Cor. 6:2-3.

Here too was a definite command to those in the ecclesia at Paul’s time to judge within themselves and not go to law without the body.

As we consider Jesus’ words spoken here for our edification, are not helped to value our need to judge righteously by the spirit of God’s word and then guard against the unrighteous judgment of the flesh?

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