

SEPTEMBER 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"

GLADNESS OF HEART

A VESSEL FOR GOD'S LIGHT

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A BIBLE CLASS

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GLADNESS OF HEART

In Psalm 100 David directs our attention to the need of giving praise to God, for this Psalm is entitled, "A Psalm of praise". This word "praise" means to adore or glorify God and David recognized God only was worthy of such praise, as he reminds us in verse 3:

"Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us,
and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his
pasture. Psalm 100:3

God as the Creator gave life to all in the world and being good, so
to was all that He created:

"For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth
endureth to all generations." Psalm 100:5

His mercy is everlasting for it has existed from the beginning in the
garden to this day and will reach beyond to the kingdom age when His
purpose with man and this earth is fulfilled. This should invoke praise of
Him within us and cause our hearts to rejoice and be grateful for all He has
provided, as well as promised to come.

David explained what our demeanor should be in this regard when
he wrote:

"Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with
singing." Psalm 100:2

The prime root of this word "gladness" means to brighten, to be
cheerful in a spiritual sense of well-being, thinking beyond our daily life
to a higher spiritual level without the flesh's interference. To show gladness
is to show appreciation for God's kindness and care. To be glad says we
value His Word and the knowledge of His Truth which lives in our heart. If
we serve Him with gladness of heart, He will be pleased and provide what
is needed to sustain and strengthen our spirits. We look at other references
for gladness, for example in Psalm 4 entitled: "To the Victor on the harp of
praise, a Psalm of David".

"There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? LORD,
lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.
Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that
their corn and their wine increased.
I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD,
only makest me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:6-8

We can be joyful when the increase comes after harvest - bringing bounty and financial increase to the farmer - but David says his gladness goes beyond that. His gladness came from the shining forth through God's word that gives an understanding of His plan for man and this earth. This alone should make our hearts glad that we have been privileged to know such a wondrous hope.

"Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper.

Thou has turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness;

To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent.

O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever."

Psalm 30:10-12

David perceived his mourning would be turned into gladness or brightness if he attained unto the end of God's promised blessing in the kingdom age - with the hope of resurrection from the grave - from flesh to a spirit creature, free from the curse of sin and death. His response was to sing praise and thanksgiving to God in return.

David believed that as God delivered Abraham and Israel, so too would all who trusted in Him be delivered in the day His kingdom is established on this earth:

"For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant. And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness:

And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people;

that they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the LORD."

Psalm 205:42-45

In faith and obedience, Abraham moved under God's direction to a place he had not known before - far away from his homeland and all that was familiar, along with his household and herds to a land that God had promised. He had faith in God's word and so obeyed with gladness of heart.

There is a danger when one's brightness or spirit is diminished that there can be a falling away, as did Abraham's descendants following his death. God left a record of what would occur to those who left His covenant of care and turned their backs on His way, thus losing the gladness of heart to serve Him acceptably:

“Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee.” Deuteronomy 28:47-48

There were blessings promised for obedience and cursing for disobedience to those of old, as well as to us today, if we too refuse to serve God with gladness and joyfulness of heart, with gratitude for all He has provided. Not looking to just the material benefits granted in this present life, but also for the knowledge He has uncovered that will lead us to the hope of salvation and a resurrection after death to life anew in His kingdom.

Paul wrote to his Ephesian brethren, reminding them to wisely use their time of probation, that their hearts be filled with the melody of the Spirit in praise of God:

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;” Ephesians 5:15-20

That melody of gladness with brightness of spirit can help us to keep God’s word -to serve Him with a cheerful demeanor, revealing our thankfulness for His guidance and care to the end promised.

The hope of the righteous is redemption in God’s purpose - hoping for His mercy to be bestowed in His kingdom to be established. This is the reward held out to all those who can keep that gladness of spirit alive within their heart now.

“The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.
The way of the LORD is strength to the upright: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.
The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.” Proverbs 10:28-30

M.C.S.

A VESSEL FOR GOD'S LIGHT

As Paul wrote to the brethren in Corinth, in II Corinthians chapter four, he expressed a theme of the light from God. This light is the same light that was part of the creation on the first day, as He separated light from darkness. This was not the light provided by the sun, but the light of His word that gives hope to man. Paul understood that the light represents the Lord Jesus and our hope through Him:

“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” II Corinthians 4:3-6

God does not give the light to all, but hides it from those who will not respond to it nor respect it. The darkness in those who allow the things of this world to rule them is just lack of the light of God within them. The words of John help to confirm that Jesus is the light sent unto the world:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God.

All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” John 1:1-9

Those, like Paul, who had the power of the Spirit working in them, were vessels for the light of God. All those who are vessels for God's light must remember the privilege of the gift of that light. We are reminded each day by the infirmities of our earthly vessels that we cannot measure up to God and His perfection:

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.
We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair.
Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down but not destroyed;
Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.”
II Corinthians 4:7-10

As we think about an earthen vessel, like a clay pot, we think of something that does not allow the light to shine through it, and is brittle and easily broken. Those who have the light of God within them, can look to God for sustenance. We will be troubled, but because of God’s light within us, hopefully we will not be distressed. We might be perplexed, but despair can be held back. With the light of God within us, He is our strength and protection:

“The LORD is my light and salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”
Psalm 27:1

We are earthen vessels and will still fail, even with the light of God within us. The Lord Jesus, who while still an earthen vessel, lived His life perfectly. He was the Word made flesh, and gave His life to His Father so that we may become a spiritual vessel, as He is now. The light of God helps us to understand that the things of this world are what can keep us as earthen vessels. We must seek God in faith to attain that which is spiritual:

“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.
For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;
While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”
II Corinthians 4:16-18

By recognizing that we are but earthen vessels, we should strive to become a better receptacle for God’s light. The imagery in The Revelation shows us what we have hope to attain, if our struggle is deemed acceptable:

“And the building of the wall of it was of Jasper, and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.” Revelation 21:18,21

The above reference speaks of new Jerusalem, the capital of God’s established kingdom on earth. Jerusalem is where God’s house will be built, and spiritually represents the assembled and perfected followers of God, in perfect alignment to the Corner Stone, the Lord Jesus. **The pure gold like clear glass** represents the pure and perfected faith of the saints during the kingdom age. This is our goal: to become the perfected vessels of crystal, allowing the light of God to shine through us. As further evidence, we look again to The Revelation, and how there will be no night in that kingdom, due to the light of God being present everywhere:

“And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:
And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.” Revelation 22:3-5

It is the light from God, His word made flesh, that gives us hope to attain to this Kingdom. It is that same light that opens the way to become a perfected vessel to display that light. To become a creature of the light we must look to the things eternal, rather than being blinded by the temporal desires of this life.

E.J.M.

SONGS OF DEGREES

In the Psalm portions recently read, we have studied those entitled “Songs of Degrees”. There are fifteen of these, from Psalm 120 to Psalm 134. Four of these are entitled, “A Song of degrees of David” and one, “A Song of degrees for Solomon”. In most of them there is mention made of Zion and a looking forward to the hope held out for those who are struggling now to be the children of God.

When we look up that word “degrees” it helps us to better understand the intent of these psalms. The word degree means elevation, with the thought of a journey to a higher place. The thought of projecting the mind to a higher plane also comes from the prime root of this word which means,

to ascend. Perhaps these Songs of Degrees are to be looked upon as songs of ascent, not only of a going to Zion or attaining unto the hope God holds out, but also the need to place one's mind on a higher plane now during our time of probation. These psalms also bring out various aspects to be contemplated in our living as we walk now in hope of one day receiving the blessing promised to those found worthy. This ultimate hope may be achieved only as we move toward that higher elevation in mind and spirit each day of our living. Let us examine these Songs of Degrees to find the spiritual help they can afford.

When we look at Psalm 120, the first of the Songs of Degrees, we see that it speaks of the need to seek God's help in times of distress, for David says in verse 1:

“In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me.
Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.”

Here is the essence of one's relationship with God revealed, that in distress there is a need to look for help through prayer to the Almighty, and to know with confidence that He is always there to answer, as David said—“he heard me”. To ascend to a higher plane, away from the distress and putting down of the flesh is so very needful and can be done by seeking God through supplication.

Perseverance in calling unto God is also a requirement in the struggle to overcome as verse 1 of Psalm 121 says:

“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.”

also verses 7-8:

“The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.
The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.”

How well these words of David put into perspective the understanding that God knows those who are His, and is aware of their circumstances at all times. It however, requires perseverance and trust to keep this thought in mind during times of trouble and uncertainty and to remember that it is only God who can deliver us from these trying circumstances. David knew

from his own experiences that he would be protected and preserved by God, and we too, should think back upon our own tests and trials and remember how He has preserved us as well. As He has delivered in the past, so will He do again if we call upon Him.

To those whom God cares for is held out the promise of an everlasting peace and prosperity, free from the worries and tribulations which beset us in this life. Psalm 122 speaks of this longed for time as in verses 6-8 we are told:

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
they shall prosper that love thee.
Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.
For my brethren and companions’ sakes, I will now say. Peace be
within thee.”

We know that the Kingdom of God will be a place of peace, ruled in righteousness by the Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ. However, even now to those who are seeking that eternal dwelling, there is granted a peace of mind as there is an understanding of God’s will regarding them. “Peace be within thee” - this will be true in the time to come when peace will pervade the entire earth, yet a measure of that peace can be attained within us even now if we allow our hearts and minds to rise above the thinking of the flesh.

Psalm 123 particularly speaks of the need to seek God’s mercy as verses 3-4 brings out:

“Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are
exceedingly filled with contempt.
Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are
at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.”

We need the mercy of God and His help to strengthen our resolve to overcome the contempt that the flesh holds for the things of the spirit. The first verse of this psalm and the 8th verse of Psalm 124 indicates once again where this help is to be found:

“Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.”
(Psalm 123:1)

“Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and
earth.”
(Psalm 124:8)

Again we see the thought put forward of lifting one's thoughts in prayer to a higher place - to the heavens from whence the help of God can come. The flesh looks for deliverance in other directions or minimizes the true help that can be granted from the Father of all mercies. How can we avoid falling into this doubting trap? Psalm 125:1 brings out an aspect which can help - the need for trust:

“They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.”

How important this trust is in time of trial and testing, for to “be as mount Zion”, one's thinking must rise above, ascending the problems of this world with its inherent evil, and instead focus upon a higher plane of righteous thinking. Only those who struggle to walk uprightly, moving in ways pleasing to God can hope for His help and mercy. If we can please Him now in this life, there is the hope of redemption held out as Psalm 126:14 explains:

“When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, the LORD hath done great things for them.

The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.
Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south.”

The ability to escape from that captivity of death that the flesh places on us is only possible as God's hand works to redeem from the bondage of the enemy within each one of us.

The title of Psalm 127 is different in that it is a Song of Degrees for Solomon, written by David perhaps to give fatherly advice as verse 1 says:

“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.”

If this was advice for Solomon, was it in contemplation of the house he was to build, that care was to be taken that it conform completely to the builder's purpose? The example of Solomon perhaps speaks of God's purpose - that it cannot be frustrated, for only those who hold onto that word and conform to it have a hope in that heavenly building. For though he was the son of promise and was given great blessings, he squandered

the eternal hope held out to him for the momentary satisfactions that his flesh craved. His example should strike fear in us, lest we too do not conform to the example set forth by the cornerstone of that temple, the Lord Jesus.

Psalm 128 sets forth the blessings that will be given to the man who does conform and fears to offend God in any way as verse 4 says:

“Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD.”

God’s righteousness will prevail and Psalm 129 speaks of it and of those that are afflicted in verses 4-5:

“The LORD is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.

Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.”

Nothing will prevent God’s purpose from being accomplished and those seeking to be part of it. However, the flesh can confound our purpose if we allow it to control our thinking. Psalm 130 summarizes what our character must be like during our time of sojourning. Do we display the gentle spirit of David as expressed in verse 5 of this psalm?

“I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.”

Waiting upon God to provide that help which His word speaks of takes patience. Those promises given to David took time to come about as he waited for them, and some will only be fulfilled when the Lord Jesus returns to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

As there is a journey Zionward there is bound to be failure because of the flesh, yet the message of God is clear. The need to recognize that redemption is possible but only through a patient, persistent conforming to His pattern set forth in the example of the Lord Jesus.

Psalm 131 speaks of a yielding to that hand of God and the need for humility in aligning ourselves with the standard of His Son, as verse 1 says:

“LORD my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.”

As we contemplate the road before us, humility is needed as we travel along in order to value the help and mercy of God as David did. How much we can learn from David - and especially to remember that God works only with those who are His.

Psalm 132 reminds of the covenant relationship granted only to those who please Him as verses 12-13 explain:

“If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore.”

For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation.”

As we are privileged to understand the purpose of God, we must value this relationship granted, as children of a loving Father. It is sometimes difficult to keep it always in the forefront of our thinking, yet David came through the same tests of the flesh that we experience today and wrote these Songs of Degrees as a reminder of the lofty calling which is ours. Let us then endeavor brethren and sisters to always keep our minds and spirits ascending to that hope that is set before us -a hope only granted to those who can put away the flesh’s influence as they walk Zionward together in the spirit of Psalm 133 verse 1:

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”

United in that one hope, the concluding 134th Psalm summarizes for us the uplifting thoughts of mind and spirit that we are to embrace as the children of God:

“Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD.

Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and bless the LORD.

The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.”

M.C.S.

A BIBLE CLASS

“THOU SHALT NOT SEETHE A KID IN HIS MOTHER’S MILK”
Exodus 34:26

The context of this chapter in Exodus was the remaking of the tables of stone, given from God to Moses for the children of Israel. Moses had destroyed the first set of tables when he came down from the mount and saw the people worshipping the golden calf they had made in his absence. This was then a repetition of the law given by God on Mount Sinai and new tables were given:

“The first of the first fruits of thy land thou shalt bring unto the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not see the a kid in his mother’s milk.”
Exodus 34:26

Also is this same instruction recorded in Deuteronomy:

“Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien: for thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not see the a kid in his mother’s milk”.
Deuteronomy 14:21

In all places where this command is recorded, it seems to stand alone -unconnected-with accompanying verses.

The question arises what is the meaning of this verse and why did God bring it to Israel’s attention several times? Was there some dietary restriction that would make this combination unhealthy? It does not seem so, for Abraham offered the same foods to the messengers sent to him by God:

“And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth.
And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetcht a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it. and he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.”
Genesis 18:6-8

This occurred before the law was given through Moses, but we have to feel that God’s teachings would have been known to those like Abraham, Noah, Jacob etc. who were called out to be His.

This particular verse under study may not be directly part of the context of the law given, but rather an added lesson to teach of compassion and kindness. A respect and consideration that originated with the care of their animals and ultimately would spill over to how they treated one another and all their affairs of daily life.

Even though the doe or ewe would not know it, nor her offspring dressed for eating, that it was cooked in his mother's milk - yet the one preparing the meal would know. Was it considered by God an act of callous disregard or unnecessary hard thinking? The mother's milk was given to provide nourishment and life for her offspring and to use that same milk to cook the kid after death, seems unfeeling. Even when earmarked for a sacrifice, a young kid or lamb was to remain with its dam for at least seven days:

“When a bullock, or a sheep, or a goat, is brought forth, then it shall be seven days under the dam; and from the eighth day and thenceforth it shall be accepted for an offering made by fire unto the LORD.

And whether it be cow or ewe, ye shall not kill it and her young both in one day.

And when he will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the LORD, offer it at your own will.”
Leviticus 22:27-29

A kindness again that both the mother and offspring were to remain after birth for at least seven days, after which it could be used as a sacrifice - giving seven days for the mother to nurture her young.

It is a common sight when visiting a country livestock auction to see young bull calves brought into the ring for sale on the day of their birth, - obvious by their still new umbilical cords and sometimes still damp from birthing fluids. They have no monetary value to the dairy farmer so are hauled for sale to the livestock auction as soon as they are delivered of their mother. What a jarring note to the senses it is to see these day old calves being roughly herded into the barns perhaps without even having the comfort of nursing from their mothers. God knows the hardness of man's heart and perhaps this is why these commandments were given - to instill a care and kindness even for one's livestock, where normally none may be present without His guidance.

Also another example is seen in Deuteronomy 22:6:

“If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young:

But thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.”
Deuteronomy 22:6-7

The practical application appears that if both eggs or young and the mother are taken, then here is a diminished chance of future birds to be hatched, and soon they may die out of existence, depleting the gift given by God for man’s use.

This was another kindness pointed out by God, that man in his stewardship of the earth should care for it and all its creatures wisely in order to increase their numbers, but also to care for them in kindness. God is merciful and loving and expects His children to be so likewise.

From history we learn that seething a young animal in its mother’s milk was a common practice in Egypt. The milk we are told would then be sprinkled upon plants or crops in the hope for increased fertility for a future harvest. Israel would no doubt have observed this while in Egyptian bondage for many years and may have brought this custom with them after fleeing under Moses’ leadership.

Since all references of not seething a kid in his mother’s milk, seem to stand alone, we must ask ourselves if this was again God’s intention to install a loving and kind spirit within each one - to replace the naturally cruel and unfeeling nature born of the flesh?

Mankind has been granted the gift of stewardship of this earth and all its inhabitants and even though all given for his use, they must be treated with respect and kindness, even when intended for his sustenance and nourishment.

M.C.S.

THE RED HEIFER AND THE WATER OF SEPARATION

When studying the book of Numbers, we see that God in His kindness revealed in the law what His children needed to know in order to serve Him acceptably. He made plain how abhorrent the flesh was to Him, and through His law helped Israel to recognize that anything associated with the flesh was unclean, and would eventually result in death.

In the 19th chapter of Numbers we read of the red heifer and the water of separation and what it was to teach Israel. God gave instructions that anyone who touched a dead body, the bone of a dead man, a grave, or the tent where death had occurred, was to be unclean and in need of cleansing before he could rejoin the congregation. However, many of these situations were unavoidable in the everyday routines of life. To cleanse those who had defiled themselves in such a manner, God instructed that a red heifer, without spot or blemish and which had never known a yoke be sacrificed by the priest. The entire animal was to be burned and the ashes gathered into a clean place. The ashes were then mingled with running water to be used for the purification of any who were unclean because of their contact with a dead body.

“And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel:

And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead or a grave;

And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even.

But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the LORD: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean.”

This would speak to Israel in a spiritual sense of the separation needed between those that are clean and those that are unclean. How carefully they would try to avoid, if at all practical, any who were unclean, knowing they would cast themselves into the same defiling state. As in the natural way, so too would the spiritual application of this law be perceived by the sensitive mind.

David as an Israelite would have been taught of the provision of the red heifer. When he had sinned in the matter of Bathsheba, he cried unto God seeking forgiveness, no doubt thinking of the cleansing aspect of the water of separation when he referred to a purging with hyssop in Psalm 51 verses 2,3 and 7:

“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

Paul speaks of another perspective of separation in II Corinthians 6:14-17:

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?
And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?
And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.”

This makes so clear how needful it is that we be mindful of our place in the sight of God. If we can be careful to keep that separation, Paul goes on to explain what our relationship with God will be:

“And (I) will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (II Cor: 6:18)

The natural tendency of our flesh leans toward corruption and uncleanness, and it is only with a struggle that we can put away the inclination to unrighteousness that is inherent in each one of us. The admonition from Paul in II Corinthians 7:1 is clear:

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

In these few words, Paul brings to bear the whole understanding of the purpose of God - that we are naturally alienated by our flesh natures from the Almighty and need to cleanse ourselves in our attempt to “perfect holiness in the fear of God.” This word perfect means “to fulfil further” or “to complete”. To be holy means “to be blameless” and comes from the same prime root as the word “saint”. Under the law, the water of separation which was sprinkled upon any who were unclean was made from a heifer, without blemish or spot, and spoke of the One without sin, whose blood would be shed in order that others might be cleansed - it was as a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ.

How important that we too value this provision of God as we struggle to be cleansed through our association with the Lord Jesus Christ and endeavour to be holy as He was holy.

“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.

In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.

If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven;...”

(Colossians 1:21-23)

Paul being a minister of that gospel, again reminds his brethren to continue in the one faith, continue to cleanse themselves, struggling to be holy as set forth by the example of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In another instance Paul speaks to his Roman brethren in the same vein, when he said in Romans 12:1-2

“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.”

Only as there is a transformation or renewing of one’s mind from the ways of the flesh to the ways of the spirit, can there be any progress towards the “perfection of holiness” that Paul spoke of earlier. Under the law, the same end was desired-that the practical applications before their eyes would work in their mind a change, to help them perceive the abhorrence of sin

and the need to be cleansed from it. How mindful we too must be of this process - that we can overcome the flesh and be cleansed from its filthiness, but only as we recognize what imperfect dying creatures we are.

In Revelation 15:3-4 we are allowed to see the end of God's purpose when those that are accounted worthy are gathered into an immortal army of saints, privileged to help carry out the final cleansing upon the earth:

“And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou in o saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only are holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.”

We can see that in this vision given to John in Revelation, the process of perfecting holiness is now complete for those allowed to be part of that glorious army - those now granted the opportunity of singing the song of the redeemed, having faithfully struggled during their time of probation to be holy as He is holy, valuing the provision of the Lord Jesus' example - all for the purpose of perfecting the saints in the fear of the Lord.

“BUT I WOULD HAVE YOU WITHOUT CAREFULNESS...”
I Corinthians 7:32

The verse under consideration in our study was written by Paul to his brethren in Corinth, in answer to their questions regarding the relationship of a husband and wife in the Truth. In his reply, Paul gives practical as well as spiritual help. Paul was not married, primarily because he was so occupied with the work of the Truth he felt it necessary to remain single, thereby freeing himself from the cares and responsibilities that a wife and family would entail. However, the relationship between a man and woman was ordained from the beginning, a part of God’s plan as the Lord Jesus taught when He said in Matthew 19:4-6:

“...Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let no man put asunder.”

In Ephesians Paul uses the relationship of a husband and wife as a type of the Lord Jesus and His church:

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it”
(Ephesians 5:22-25)

Paul’s own personal preference was to remain single, but he realized this was not a natural state, for without marriages there would be no children and no seed to inherit the promises God has extended.

When we look up the meaning of these words “without carefulness” we find they come from the same word meaning, “to be secure” and “not to be anxious”. To be without carefulness then is to be free from care or worry. Paul’s desire for his brethren was that they be not over burdened with the cares and worries that family life could bring, for the time of their probation was short as he says in I Corinthians 7:29 and 31:

“But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;

And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.”

The life span of man is relatively short and should be a time of proving our love for God in word and deed, free from the distractions that can pull us away. There is a danger that the natural cares we may have regarding family, career, wealth, prestige, could prove to be a stumbling block if they absorb too much of our time and energies which should instead be directed towards an edifying of ourselves spiritually. The Lord Jesus taught of the need for balance in these matters when he said in Matthew 6:19-21:

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:
But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:
For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

The example of Job is helpful as it is remembered that he likewise, had great responsibilities and wealth, many children, servants, and flocks. Yet when they were all removed by the Lord, he did not mourn their loss, but instead sought to be right with God and to keep his integrity. Because he had proved these earthly treasures were not his first care, twice as much was added to him at the end of his trial.

Paul’s advice to his Corinthian brethren is a real help to call attention to the struggle there must be in achieving a harmonious balance between the spiritual and the practical in our living. How important not to give too great care to the worries of everyday life, but rather to put first those spiritual riches, knowing God will then add unto us whatever is needful. Paul’s words in Romans 12:1-2 are helpful in this regard:

“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.”

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