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in opposition to the Dogmas of
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A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

and a warning against the deception in the last days
foretold by Christ

"Take heed that ye be not deceived"

WATCH

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All Communications

M. C. Steiger
836 King Road, Forestville
New York 14062
U.S.A.

WATCH

From the record of Matthew we learn of the Lord Jesus' prophecy to His disciples, foretelling of His second coming:

“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”
Matthew 24:1-2

The disciples were puzzled and concerned, knowing He spoke of the end of God's purpose so asked that He explain further:

“And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the of the end of the world?”
Matthew 24:3

In answer, the Lord Jesus went on to speak of the general state of the world at the time of His return, without giving any specific time frame:

“...Take heed that no man deceive you.
For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.
And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.
For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.
All these are the beginning of sorrows.”
Matthew 24:4-8

Since the time that He spake these words, history has recorded nations and kingdoms at war with one another almost continuously, great times of famine and pestilence all over the world - yet He has not returned! And we must believe this state of chaos will remain until He does, because the flesh rules in the kingdoms of men. He has left instructions how those that believe on Him should carry on until He comes saying:

“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”
Matthew 24:13

Knowing His own time was nearing, He took the disciples to the

mount of Olives to find a quiet place so that He could pray for strength to endure what He knew lay ahead - betrayal, pain and death.

“And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.
And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;
And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.” Mark 14:32-34

This word “watch” means to keep awake, be vigilant, alert to dangers or trouble. The Lord Jesus knew there would be trouble and great affliction during their time of probation and for all those who look in hope to His return.

From His words in Matthew chapter 24, we are reminded:

“...Take heed that no man deceive you.
For many shall come in my name, saying I am Christ; and shall deceive many.” Matthew 24:4-5

Many wars, persecution and deaths have been exacted throughout history upon mankind by those who claim to be Christ’s followers, yet deny the power and spirit of love of which He taught. The Papal Inquisition which started at the end of the 12th century and carried forward into the middle ages to many European countries, followed by the dreaded Spanish Inquisition created in 1478 and which lasted almost 400 years is such an example. It is hard to comprehend people being tortured and even killed in an attempt to make them accept Christ’s sovereignty -that is far from the spirit of His teaching. The Inquisitions may seem a long time past, and so they were, but yet even in our time we have seen the hatred and bloodshed evident between north and south Ireland for the same cause.

It only goes to prove how deceitful and wicked is the nature of man’s flesh nature and how we must be vigilant and “watch” lest we too are deceived.

Paul tells us of how we should conduct our “watch” ,as the time of His coming seems so very near:

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.
For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction

cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” I Thessalonians 5:1-6

Paul goes on to speak of the armaments of faith that a follower of Christ must wear:

“But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet! the hope of salvation.”

I Thessalonians 5:8

These are defensive or protective armaments (helmet and breastplate) used to protect the body against attacks from an opponent’s spear or sword - they in themselves are not meant to cause harm. Our faith in Christ and in His love, is to be used to ward off those that would deter us from our endeavors to follow after Him. There is no guarantee of salvation but that helmet is to protect and keep our minds in the forward progress of righteousness.

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.” I Thessalonians 5:9-11

This understanding that God has not appointed us to wrath but to salvation is meant to comfort and sustain us as we work to edify, or build up one another to grow more spiritual day by day, that we not lose sight of the hope of salvation we have been given through Him.

What a comfort to be protected by these spiritual armaments meant to shield us from the harm all around us. Therefore, we are reminded to apply faith, love and hope in our living in a manner that Peter explains can bring about God’s care and protection upon us:

“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrari-the

wise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?"
I Peter 3:8-13

M.C.S.

THE LORD'S WORK

In the twenty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, the prophet's words help us to see that God has a plan, and that plan will be brought to fruition. The Lord's work, with this world, is beyond our scope, but we can praise and thank Him for showing us parts of His plan, as He has made them known to us:

"O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth."
Isaiah 25:1

God's plan will bring down the powers of the earth, as He prepares the earth for the setting up of His kingdom. He will destroy the great cities, and the mighty will fear Him:

"For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built.
Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee."
Isaiah 25:2-3

God will give strength to those who need it, as He dismisses the power of others as easily as a cloud can quench the heat of the dry land:

"For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat,

when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.” Isaiah 25:4-5

Moses' words, after safely crossing the Red Sea and witnessing the destruction of the Egyptian army, praise God for His deliverance of Israel in a similar way:

“... I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and the rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.” Exodus 15:1-2

The Lord's work will continue on His holy mountain, Jerusalem, as He prepares a feast for all people:

“And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.” Isaiah 25:6

Those people who partake of the Lord's feast are those who worship the Lord Jesus in the kingdom given Him by His Father, as seen in the words of Daniel:

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” Daniel 7:13-14

Isaiah's words continue and tell how the Lord will eliminate death, by destroying the cover that acts as a veil to all men - **sin**:

“And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.” Isaiah 25:7-8

The deliverance provided by God that destroys the veil covering all men is the Lord Jesus. Jesus' perfect offering of Himself to God, gives all hope of escaping the wages of sin, because death will be swallowed up:

“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

I Corinthians 15:54-58

We all wait on the Lord to finish His work of salvation, as we anticipate the setting up of His kingdom, as is seen in the words of Isaiah:

“And it shall be said in that day; Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

For in this mountain shall the hand of the LORD rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill.

And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim: and he shall bring down their pride together with the spoils of their hands.

And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust.”

Isaiah 25:9-12

Unlike man, we know that God will complete His work, and deliver on His promises. As the words of Balaam make clear:

“God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”

Numbers 23:19

David's song of deliverance praised God, as he recognized that God would protect him in order that the promises given to David would be fulfilled:

“... The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;
The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the

horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour;
thou savest me from violence.

I will call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be
saved from mine enemies.” II Samuel 22:2-4

We know that God has a plan for the earth - a plan for His people - and has provided a method for all to be delivered from death; this has been His work since the first day of creation. Our responsibility as children of God, is to trust in Him, that He will finish the work He has begun. We do this by opening ourselves to Him and loving Him with our whole heart; allowing Him to reside in us, so that His love may shine forth to others. This is what Jesus did! His perfect love for God provided the strength and peace He needed to overcome His flesh, so that all who seek God have a hope of seeing the Lord's work completed in this world.

E.J.M.

THE LORD GOD OF THE HEBREWS

In the Book of Exodus, we find God's instruction to Moses, as he was told to approach unto Pharaoh and deliver Israel from bondage:

“Then the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.” Exodus 9:1

Pharaoh was to know that this command came not through Moses or Aaron, for they were only messengers of the Lord God of the Hebrews, who demanded His people be released from bondage in Egypt.

A pestilence was to come upon Egypt and the Lord commanded Moses to warn Pharaoh of its sure arrival:

“...I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth.

For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth.”

Exodus 9:14-15

God knew Pharaoh was a hard and stubborn man and in fact his obstinacy was the very reason that he had been raised up as ruler in Egypt at this particular time, so that all His wonders might be revealed. Being ruler of all Egypt Pharaoh would not easily bend in humility to anyone - not even the God of the Hebrews, as evident by his haughty reply to Moses:

“...Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither wilt I let Israel go.” Exodus 5:2

Pharaoh was proud and would not submit to demands from the Hebrew’s representative or their God, and when his magicians were allowed to duplicate some of the wonders exhibited by Moses, his heart was even further hardened against their cause.

“And Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.

And the fish that was in the river died: and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river: and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments: and Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them; as the LORD had said.” Exodus 7:20-22

To release the Israelite slaves would be a blow to his pride and prestige as supreme ruler, but in a practical sense, he would also lose his captive work force and the glories he had planned to be built in his name in the cities and monuments they were to build - a legacy in stone built to honor him throughout the ages.

When Moses first saw the wonder of the burning bush on Mt. Horeb and heard God’s voice commanding him to go back to Egypt and deliver His people from their bondage, God made a promise to him - a token that His word would be fulfilled:

“...Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.”

Exodus 3:12

To hear the voice of God and see the miracle of the bush that was burning with fire but not consumed, would fill Moses with fear and terror, knowing he was in the presence of the One God - the God of Israel. He was fearful of the task appointed to him and knowing his brethren may not believe him, asked:

“And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your father’s hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?

And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.”
Exodus 3:13-14

We find “I AM” comes from a prime root meaning, “to exist or be”. God clearly was the only One who could claim this name, being the only Eternal who exists forever more, the all powerful spirit being.

In the bigger picture, not only Israel was to be delivered from Egypt but it speaks of the deliverance of the flesh for all of God’s people throughout the ages, if they believe in the “I AM”. For just as surely as He had delivered Israel from bondage so would He deliver from the bondage of sin and death all who believe on His name. There was no question of what God had planned for Israel:

“...I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.

And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will

do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.”

Exodus 3:17

God wanted them to know that His purpose would be fulfilled just as He promised and Egypt would know that He was the I AM and all the earth was under His hand - not the man-made idols of Egypt or their Pharaoh who claimed divinity. He would confound the Egyptians, their priests and show their gods to be worthless idols made by man, for Israel would be delivered and would leave Egypt laden with their wealth of jewels, silver and gold:

“And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters: and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.” Exodus 3:21-22

From their existence in poverty as slaves, they would leave Egypt under God's direction clothed with fine raiment and jewels - gladly given by the Egyptians to see them go and an end of the plagues brought upon them by Israel's God.

As they were delivered from Egypt by the hand of God, they would remember how Egypt's man-made gods and their Pharaoh had been humbled to instill in them a devotion to the One true God and Creator:

"I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

Exodus 20:2-6

Receiving His commandments on the mount, they were to perceive there was only One God in all the earth - the I AM - the God of Israel, and they were to serve Him alone. If they would keep His commandments and worship only Him, then they would know His love, care and mercy. If they did not walk circumspectly before Him, without care in their walk or speech, then they would experience the penalties of disobedience.

Paul when writing to the Ephesians, reminded them and us today of the same dangers:

"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."

Ephesians 5:15-17

We are given an understanding of how to walk before Him in faith and what the risks will be if we fail to do so. The days have always been evil since the time of the garden and we have to be circumspect using the knowledge of His word that we have been given, in order to worship the one true God - the I AM, in spirit and in faith.

M.C.S.

FELLOWSHIP

John's first epistle or letter is a help to us today as we struggle to keep our hearts fixed upon the purpose of God. John's intent in writing this letter is evident in the first chapter, verses 1,3 and 4 as we read:

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”

With these opening words John sets forth his reasons for writing, that he might declare the name of Jesus Christ as the only basis of fellowship with the Father to any who would share in that union.

The end of the purpose of God we know is to be accomplished when the Lord Jesus returns. As we contemplate the nearness of that return our thoughts naturally turn to what our position will be then. Will we be found in that one true fellowship, that we may know the joy that will be bestowed upon His children? John tells us in the 4th chapter verses 2-3:

“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God:

Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come: and even now already is it in the world.”

At the time of John there were evidently false teachers leading some astray, but John clearly makes it known that fellowship with God and His Son can only be possible if it is acknowledged and believed that Jesus came in the flesh. How important this truth is, for without that understanding there can be no recognition of God's purpose, love and grace extended through His Son. Jesus was indeed flesh, born of a woman, but overcame all carnal impulses and has there opened the way into the Kingdom of God for His brethren and sisters. In confessing this truth, each believer is impelled to manifest that he strives to do after the example of Jesus by struggling against every impulse of that flesh nature.

John further writes in verse 15 of chapter 4:

“Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.”

This is true fellowship -a dwelling with God, with His Son and with a people who contemplate the same hope, sharing a covenant relationship with the Father. God made known this covenant from the beginning - a means of life made possible. In Deuteronomy He spoke of that covenant through His servant Moses in chapter 30 verses 19-20:

“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:

That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

This is the essence of the covenant which speaks of the blessing of life that can be known by those who obey His voice and have fellowship one with another through His Son, confessing their allegiance to Him above all else. The Lord Jesus’ own words attested to this as He instructed His disciples in Matthew 10:32

“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.”

How much we need to cherish the mercy of God extended, valuing the covenant relationship offered by our Father. This requires heeding the words of the Lord Jesus to confess Him in our living by putting down the impulses of our flesh natures just as He did perfectly. This is difficult to do, for it causes hurt and humiliation to stop the flesh in its headlong rush to be gratified.

Paul tells us how important this confession is in Romans 10:9-11:

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.”

To confess Him with our mouth is not enough -it must be done with our whole living, so that our every word and deed is a testimony to Him. As we endeavour to confess His name, let us value the fellowship we are allowed to share with our Father through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ and through this great mercy, one with another.

THE ADVERSARY

Very shortly we will again be studying the Book of Job in our daily reading plan. We are familiar with the record of Job and his strength of character, though not much information is given of his time or place. The world thinks of Job as an example of patience under suffering. For us there is more to be absorbed, for we admire the fact he was spoken of by God as, “perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil”, - all characteristics we would like to possess. Even though Job was tested sorely, we know he was a man who struggled to resist the temptations of his flesh.

It is perhaps surprising when we look up the meaning of Job’s name, to find it means hated, and comes from a prime root to hate an opponent or one from another tribe, an enemy. We know there was one who did hate Job—the adversary as we read in Job 1:6:

“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan (the adversary) came also among them.”

It would seem that this Satan, or adversary as the word means, was among the Sons of God, perhaps one of the same assembly as Job. Yet here was one who fell short, and was obviously jealous of Job’s righteousness and position of prominence. Had he tried to imitate Job and failed, so that his previous admiration turned to jealousy and hatred? Jealousy is such a natural tendency of the flesh, and we can see the effects of this hatred in verses 9-11 where the adversary says to God:

“... Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou has blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.”

As is typical of the flesh, the adversary made unjust accusations. His thought was why shouldn’t Job serve God, he has everything he needs, he has been blessed beyond measure. But if God removes the goodness and blessings that surround him then all will see the real Job.

God did allow testing and tragedy to come upon Job - his livestock, servants and even his children were destroyed, yet what was his reaction? We read of Job’s words in verses 20-22:

“Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and

fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away, blessed be the name of the LORD.

In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.”

Job went from being greatest in the East to perhaps the least. All that he loved and treasured, his family and possessions were gone, yet he did not lay the blame to God, but recognized that all had been given by the Almighty in the beginning. He was circumspect—he looked beyond his immediate circumstances and subjected himself to God's hand. His circumspection is brought out in verse 5 where we read he gave offerings for his children:

“And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.”

As he gave offerings for his children he was attempting to cover them, that not only he but his whole household might serve God and be sanctified.

Job struggled to resist the adversary just as I Peter 5:8 exhorts us to do:

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

Job was sober and vigilant, yet his adversary was as a “roaring lion”, a ravenous beast who preys on others, a devourer ready to destroy. This adversary may be found within ourselves or may be any we come in contact with. How easily this kind of thinking can take hold if we are not on guard against it. As we can see in Job's day there were two classes of worshippers - those who devoted themselves entirely to the service of God (like Job) and those who, like the adversary, were on the fringes, their service was nominal and likewise so was their belief and faith. Can we see the danger this presents? Is our service and worship of God marginal or does it entail all of our living?

Even after Job's faithfulness under trial, the adversary still wasn't satisfied, - his answer was; Job hasn't been hurt enough yet “touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face” (2:7). God then brought sore boils upon Job that covered him from the sole of his foot to

the crown of his head. His wife added to his misery; she was no spiritual helpmeet but encouraged him to renounce God for the anguish He had brought:

“Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.” (Job 2:9).

Job’s answer is read in verse 10:

“...Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.”

We read in Habakkuk 1:3-4 a similar situation to Job’s as the adversary encompassed this prophet he asks:

“Why dost thou shew me iniquity and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.”

Why does God allow this to happen? He answers in verse 5-7:

“Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling places that are not their’s. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves.”

The Sabeans and Chaldeans took Job’s possessions, and here in Habakkuk’s day the prophet was told by God that He would use this same nation to bring retribution upon Israel for their wickedness. In many instances God used the nations surrounding Israel as adversaries against them to bring about His judgment. We are surrounded by adversaries within and without. Will we forget or renounce God when this happens?

In Jude the adversary is again described (verses 4 and 10):

“For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace

of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.”

The adversary at Job’s time said the same things, for he likewise knew not God. Like brute beasts - roaring lions, concerned only with destruction and death. He hated Job for his strong character and his endeavor to be righteous. God said Job was perfect and upright, not that he didn’t fail. He was perfect perhaps in his understanding of God and His purpose and what these trials were to produce in him. Yet at the end of his trial we read of an even greater perception on Job’s part when he says in Job 42 5-6:

“I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

Here was a repentance - or thinking differently by Job, as he perceived more fully the need to move in righteousness.

We are helped as we read the words of Job, Habakkuk and Jude, which all speak of the adversary and the need to guard against it, moving always in integrity in God’s sight.

James speaks of Job’s example in the 5th chapter verses 10-11:

“Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.”

We see the end of the Lord in the example of those like Job who fought against the adversary, seeking God’s help in times of affliction. We can more fully rely on God and look to His mercy as we remember the words of David in Psalm 9:9-10:

“The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.”

GOD'S GRACE

With remarkable clarity Paul speaks in Hebrews of the place and purpose of the Lord Jesus in God's great plan. He speaks of the hope made possible through God's provision of the Lord Jesus, and through His word by ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation. Paul brings to mind those in trial that the word of God has spoken of the gospel and the kingdom of God through the name of the Lord Jesus.

Paul reminds in chapter 2 verse 1 of the responsibility there is in that calling:

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.”

We must give more earnest heed to that word and the application of it in our living, for we are warned in verse 3:

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;”

Through God's word we are helped to consistently value and not neglect what it reveals. Paul gives a greater understanding of this in Acts 20:32':

“And now, brethren I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

This brings attention to the word of God as a means of attaining to the inheritance, by those valuing it and covered by it. We often speak of the grace of God or favor, as that word means. The Hebrew translation of grace means to bend in kindness to an inferior and is the means held out to us in help to overcome our inferior state. This is grace, that God would condescend to help man overcome his flesh nature which is so abhorrent to Him.

Back in Hebrews 2:6 Paul quotes David's words:

“... What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?”

David could see God's grace when he said these words in thanksgiving. Also Noah a man who sought to walk with God was one of

few to find God's grace in a time of great wickedness, as we read in Genesis 6:5-8:

“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

But Noah *found grace* in the eyes of the LORD.”

The record here in Genesis speaks of how God looked upon the earth and repented that He had made it because of the wickedness of the flesh. Yet one man kept God's word, witnessed to it and was allowed as an inferior, the kindness of God because he was striving to be just. How did he do this? Was it because Noah applied God's word in faith in his living to make him move differently from those around him. He sought the grace of God and the kindness of the Almighty. Noah must have recognized that the only means of overcoming was through the kindness of God which spoke of the Saviour to come. And so, by grace Noah was saved.

Paul further speaks of this grace in Ephesians 2:4-8:

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Here we see the working of that grace fulfilled in the Lord Jesus through faith - not only our faith, but through the One who applied it perfectly in His living - His gift and favor to us.

In the midst of test and trial we may forget this grace in trying to be relieved of our hard circumstances. Paul had felt this way too as he says in II Corinthians 12:7-9:

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, *My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness...*”

Here was a revealing of the grace provided by God, “it is sufficient” was the message to Paul. The favor granted was abundant, Paul had to believe in what was provided. We too must look beyond the infirmities of the flesh which trouble now, to the greater glory of the inheritance held out in hope. Paul came to a better understanding of God’s grace for he said in II Corinthians 12:10:

“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”

Again in Hebrews 4:15-16 we read:

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

From these words we can perceive that the grace of God takes on perhaps a fuller meaning. What does God look for in us when we are under trial and testing? It is not to see if we will turn to Him and seek His favor, revealing a confidence in Him to help us put down the flesh and glorify His Name? Do we remember to do this? There is a danger here if we do not, for we may lose the hope of that great salvation. In Hebrews 12:25 this thought is confirmed:

“See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:”

With these thoughts in mind, Brethren and Sisters, let us strive to

grasp the grace of God. How? This can be gained only as we perceive the kindness of God extended to us and serve Him in a way to seek His favor, being mindful of His condescending to us and valuing His presence with us as a Father. Can we as Paul, recognize that His grace is sufficient for us? Let us remember not to neglect the salvation held out in grace and apply His word in our living, valuing God's favor and kindness to us in our struggles to overcome.

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