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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"

THOU ART THE MAN

SEEK THE PEACE

TURN TO GOD

A BIBLE CLASS - LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN

FOR THOU SHALT HEAP COALS OF FIRE UPON HIS HEAD

PATIENCE

IT IS THE GLORY OF GOD TO CONCEAL A THING

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THOU ART THE MAN

We have read from II Samuel of David's indignation when Nathan the prophet came to him with the report of a rich man who killed a poor man's only lamb. This parable was presented to David as an admonition for taking Uriah's wife and orchestrating his death in battle:

“And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.

And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?

And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.

and the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.”

II Samuel 11:2-5

David committed adultery with another man's wife and when it was discovered that she was with child, he thought to cover up his sin by bringing home her husband from the battle, thinking he would sleep with his wife and no one would question the paternity of the child.

However, Uriah's mind was nobler than David's, for when he was brought home from the battle, he would not comfort himself by visiting his wife and home while his fellow soldiers were battle weary and sleeping under rough conditions:

“And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from thy journey? why then didst thou not go down unto thine house? And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.”

II Samuel 11: 10-11

When David realized Uriah would not be persuaded to visit his wife Bathsheba, he sent him back to the battle with a note for Joab, instructing that he not survive the fighting:

“...Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die”.

II Samuel 11:15

Upon Uriah's death, David formally took Bathsheba as his wife, thinking he had covered his sin from everyone. Perhaps to many he had - but not from God. Therefore, God brought judgment against the man after His own heart, who had lost his way, following instead the lure of his flesh nature.

God sent the prophet Nathan to rebuke David for his actions, recounting the story of the rich man, who through callous disregard of his poor neighbor, stole his one ewe lamb to feed a travelling visitor, rather than take from his own abundant flocks.

“...There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.

The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds:

But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die:

And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.” II Samuel 12:1-6

David's angry reaction to this parable was natural to think this rich man could be so cold hearted towards his neighbor. How shocked he would be to hear Nathan say - “Thou art the man”.

Because he had taken his neighbor's wife, and then orchestrated his death, the Lord passed judgment upon him for these sins:

“Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.

For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.” II Samuel 12:11-12

How David would be chagrined to realize how grievously he had sinned before God. The saving grace of his character is seen in his quick repentance:

“And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD, and Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die
Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.” II Samuel 12:13-14

David’s future persecution from within his own family, and the death of the child he had conceived with Bathsheba was a sore punishment to remind him, and to us today of how far the flesh can lead even a man after His own heart.

In the garden when Adam and Even disobeyed the commandment of God, Adam’s immediate response when confronted was to blame the woman, and Eve to blame the serpent:

“And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.
And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? and the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” Genesis 3:12-13

Both knew they were wrong and had disobeyed - enticed by the serpent nature within themselves to grasp more than they had been given:

“For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” Genesis 3:5

Adam, Eve and David all knew what God required - as do we today, yet how easy it is to be beguiled by our own fleshly thinking. David took matters into his own hands destroying a man’s life - one who did him no harm and who looked up to him as his king.

We may say, how could he do such a thing? Yet we are all failing creatures with no right to self-righteously judge David - for judgment of another is flesh-driven. “Thou art the man” - we are ALL the man who sins, even as we profess a love for God. There would be no hope for any, save for the grace given in the covering of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Mediator.

God is not a respecter of persons - He loved David but rebuked him sharply when he failed. We do not have preference just because we are privileged to know God’s word, for we daily come far short of what He looks for in His children.

Even David passed a judgment of death upon the rich man of the parable, yet God in mercy did not require his death, because he repented. He did punish David, yet showed compassion and spared his life.

The Lord Jesus never failed or despised God's word, but fulfilled it perfectly. Never could it be said of Him - "Thou art the man". As the unblemished Lamb, He alone was worthy to become the covering for sin for all that believe on Him and endeavor to walk after His example.

M.C.S

SEEK THE PEACE

Recently, while reading in Jeremiah, the Lord instructed Jeremiah to tell the people of Judah, that He would bring judgment upon them because of their disobedience:

"... Because ye have not heard my words, Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations.

Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle.

And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years."

Jeremiah 25: 8-11

Later God, through Jeremiah, tells the nations surrounding Israel that they too will come under the hand of Babylon:

"I have made the earth, the man and beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.

And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him.

And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him.

And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.” Jeremiah 27:5-8

Even after speaking the words of warning and destruction to the entire region, including Israel, God gave them hope. The words that He spoke to those of Judah who had already been captured and taken to Babylon, might have seemed a little strange, seeing they had already been removed from the land promised to them:

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon:

Build ye houses, and dwell in them, and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them;

Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.

And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.” Jeremiah 29:4-7

The word **peace** comes from the Hebrew word *shalom*, which means to be safe (in mind, body, or estate). God wanted those in captivity to live in safety, even in those foreign surroundings, being ruled over by a king that was not their own. The important part of obtaining that peace is praying to the Lord for it, as the verse says. By praying for peace in that strange land, the people demonstrated their faith in God, that He does indeed rule and overrule in the affairs of man. God stated that He had given Nebuchadnezzar, His servant, the rule over the land, and that He would take it away in the time appointed.

The words of Paul to Timothy also emphasize the importance of prayer in the quest for peace within our lives. Paul states that prayers should not be just for ourselves, but for others, including those who rule over us in this world:

I EXHORT therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.
Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the
knowledge of the truth.”
I Timothy 2:1-4

Paul indicates that our prayers, of all types, should be for those around us; our friends, our enemies, our neighbors, and even for our leaders; because if all those we pray for are influenced by God, then our lives also will become more peaceable with those associations. When we think of Joseph while he was in Egypt, for example, he obviously prospered greatly while there. Even though he started out as a servant, he became second only to the Pharaoh. Daniel also was in a similar situation during the same time period as Jeremiah. Daniel came to be a great man in Nebuchadnezzar's reign, even though he was a captive in Babylon. God has always placed the world leaders so that His perfect plan for this earth will be fulfilled!

The Lord Jesus recognized that God's plan would be completed, and told His disciples that they would not soon see Him, because the “prince of this world” was coming:

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

Hereafter I will not talk much with you; for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise let us go hence.”
John 14:27-31

“The prince of this world” likely spoke of fleshly power in the earth at that time and its dominion to come. Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus told us not to be troubled or afraid because He would return when God appointed it — for His Father was greater than Himself.

Even with all the Lord Jesus' struggles at the end of His life, He was able to maintain a peace within Himself, which He passed on to His followers. Jesus' peace came from His love and faith in His Father, that God's will was being done. The rulers that were in place at the time of His death were placed there so that the events would occur as God wished them to occur. So let us seek the peace of the Lord God, no matter where

we might be or what the circumstances are around us. True peace comes only from the Lord, as our faith in Him assures us that His will is being done, even when everything else around us feels foreign.

E.J.M.

TURN TO GOD

As we study the Book of Zechariah we read his words, but more specifically the words of God, for throughout this writing he says, "... again the word of the Lord of hosts came to me". In this book we learn of the prophecy given to Israel regarding the work of restoration. Zechariah was contemporary with Ezra, Nehemiah and Haggai. His exhortation brought to the children of Israel the recognition of their need to turn to God — an exhortation to obedience which pleads with man to consider his position in regard to God and the hope held out to him.

We remember the promises made to Israel of old, looking forward to the kingdom when old men and old women would dwell in the streets of Jerusalem—a time of peace and safety:

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very “age”.
Zechariah 8:4.

This prophecy speaks of things which will be, but we must put our minds to the task of what we must do now to maintain this hope. How important it is to turn the mind to God as Zechariah in chapter 1 verses 2-3 reveals:

“The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers. Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you...”

How needful it is for all to realize that without earnestly seeking the help of God, there can be no true building in hope to please Him. How fitting are the prophet’s words, reminding that we must use our strength to serve God acceptably. In chapter 6:15 we read:

“And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of

the LORD, and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.”

A simple but forceful message—that God will bring together to do His work, those who will diligently obey His voice and apply this knowledge in their living. If this is done, the 7th and 8th verses of Zechariah chapter 8 tell us:

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.”

At the time of Zechariah, the children of Israel were not living in truth, but had been swayed by the hardness of their own hearts. Zechariah’s work was to turn their hearts around, bring them back onto the path of salvation. We read in chapter 2: 1-5 of the vision given Zechariah when he was undoubtedly a young man:

“I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand.

Then said, I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof.

And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.”

How difficult it must have been for one young in years as Zechariah was, to do what God required of him, for this work of witnessing to Israel was a grave responsibility on his shoulders. What helped such a young man to carry out this task faithfully? God had called him, for He knew his heart — knew he was one who looked to Himself as his only source of strength.

The words of David help us to see this same spirit, as he writes in Psalm 70:1:

“Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD.

Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion that desire my hurt.”

The title of this psalm is translated as, “To the Victor, (or one who overcomes), a Psalm of David, To Bring To Remembrance -When we look up the meaning of Zechariah’s name we find it is, “whom God remembers”. Because of his experiences under God’s mindful care, Zechariah remembered that God would indeed be with him if he put his heart upon Him. All the faithful are tested, just as David and Zechariah were, confounded by the adversaries around them as well as by their own fleshly thinking. The 4th verse of this psalm of David however, gives the spirit of those that look to God:

“Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified”.

To magnify means to make large. Zechariah did this and the words of the Lord came unto him to relay this message of hope to his brethren in Israel and to us today. Could Israel make God large in their lives—magnify Him—can we? David’s desire was to truly make God large in his living as he said in Psalm 34:3-4:

“O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.”

The flesh is full of fear, yet as David and Zechariah and all the faithful of old recognized, if the help of God is sought, trusting and submitting, there will be deliverance given — and strength provided to do His work.

Can we then value that word in our living and apply it and receive help and encouragement? We must have hearts which can be touched by that word—must be steadfast and be inspired to build those things which magnify Him. Zechariah 8:6 says:

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts.”

A meaningful question as we look within ourselves to see what our endeavors are. We must remember that as God looks upon us, He seeks to help us build. As the 9th verse goes on to say:

“... Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these

words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built.”

We hope to be that dwelling of God — that temple now in formation that will be perfected in the kingdom age when God will be universally magnified, and where all will recognize Him. Verse 12 promises:

“For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.”

Let us then in hope of that promise strive to magnify God in our living, by remembering His grace and mercy in the world given to us, a few, that we may do His work faithfully as did Zechariah.

M.C.S.

A BIBLE CLASS

“LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN”

The subject under consideration is taken from Matthew 5:16 and reads in its entirety:

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, who is in heaven.”

These words were spoken by the Lord Jesus as He taught the multitude that followed Him. In verse 17 He tells them that He is not come to destroy the law, but rather to fulfil it. In an effort to do just that, Jesus sought to convey the spirit of love found in the law to the people who had been schooled only in the letter of the law by the scribes and Pharisees.

This message was also directed to His disciples, for He says in verses 14-15:

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hidden.
Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.”

The disciples were called and chosen because God knew they could receive that Word and apply it in their living to serve as a witness and testimony to others. They were to be lights to the rest of the world as they went about illuminating the gospel message after the Lord Jesus' death.

Several places in the Scriptures speak of the Lord Jesus as the light of the world, the One whose spirit shone forth bright and clear in such contrast to the darkness of the world in which He lived.

“Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”
John 8:12.

Simply put, that light can only be seen in the followers of the Lord Jesus by the display of good works in their living. As the Word moves one to good works, it serves as a positive and appropriate witness to whoever may observe them. As the Lord Jesus revealed God's Truth, he left an example for all to follow—a clear steady light, much as a lighthouse which beckons to safety from the darkness.

Reading in Geneses 1:3-4 of the creation of light it says:

“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.”

The division of light and darkness in the beginning was pointing forward to the separation there must be between the things of the spirit and the flesh—or the world. As mentioned in I John.

“This then, is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth;

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.”

It is critical for the children of God to have this Word within them, for only then can they have fellowship with God and His Son. Not only is

it to be within, but that Word must also shine forth in their living, witnessing that there is a difference or separation from the darkness of the world and its wickedness. The words of James in James 1:17 reveal the same message:

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

The source of God’s light is the Word and the only way it can shine forth in us is to be displayed each day in our living. Soloman in Proverbs 4:18-19 understood the need for this light when he said:

“But the path of the just is like the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.
The way of the wicked is like darkness; they know not at what they stumble.”

The “path of the just” is what the Lord Jesus followed as an example to all, exhorting in His teaching that the life of those desiring God and His Word must shine forth with the light of His Truth.

**“FOR THOU SHALT HEAP COALS OF FIRE UPON HIS HEAD
(Proverbs 25:22).**

In order to understand this particular verse in Proverbs, it is helpful to read the preceding verses to see the context in which they were written. Verses 21 and 22 read as follows:

“If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:
For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.”

Here is an exhortation to show kindness to one considered an enemy. It is necessary to first ask, who is an enemy? When we look up this word we find it means to hate, to be a foe, to be odious.

Reading in Galatians 5:19-20 it is revealed that hatred is one of the works of the flesh.

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these;

Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,”

Could one who is striving to be of the spirit show hatred to another? The characteristics of the spirit are recorded in verses 22-25 of this same chapter:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

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

Going to Romans 12:17-21, the words of Paul promote the values of the spirit which one must cultivate in hopes of being a child of God:

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

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Therefore if thine enemy hunger feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Here is the same thought, put forward by Paul, of overcoming evil with good. There must be a diligent effort to guard against the fleshly thinking of vengeance and recompense when one is injured by another, and allow instead the spirit to rule. If this is done, as the words of Paul go on to say, “the LORD shall reward thee”. What is this reward? It is the hope of eternal life.

In Matthew 5:43-46 the spirit of the Lord Jesus was characterized not by the letter of the law but by the spirit.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?"

Under the law it was said an "eye for an eye" was just recompense, but Jesus illustrated the further and necessary aspect of its spirit. This spirit of love was there in the law, but how few saw it. David for example, was one who perceived in the law the need to refrain from doing evil against the enemy. David's restraint is recorded in II Samuel 22:1-4:

"And David spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul:
And he said, 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."

David trusted in God and so in essence poured coals of fire upon the heads of his enemies, because he left the matter of vengeance in God's hands. Solomon no doubt knew of his father's circumstances, and perhaps wrote the words of this chapter in Proverbs, bearing in mind the deliverances granted to David. The same thinking is also expressed by Solomon as he said in Proverbs 24:17:

"Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth:
Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him."

How far from fleshly thinking this is, for it is natural for the flesh to gloat when an enemy is tripped up, yet how uncharitable and displeasing this must appear to God.

To put trust in one's own strength is to recompense evil for evil, but to wait upon God to deliver is the keeping of oneself from evil. David knew great persecution, yet he was patient and trusted in God. He cried to God for help as recorded In Psalm 140:1-4 when he no doubt was tempted to take things into his own hands:

"Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man; preserve me from the violent man; Which imagine mischiefs in their heart; continually are they gathered together for war.

They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips. Selah.

Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man; who have purposed to overthrow my goings”.

and verses 12-13

“I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor.

Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name:
the upright shall dwell in thy presence.”

How difficult it is to put hatred away showing love and pity for those who may cause hurt. To do so evidences that the fire of the Spirit is consuming in ourselves those fleshly attitudes, even as under the law the fire consumed the flesh of the sacrifice. If we allow these spiritual coals to govern our response to the evil doing of the enemy, are we not in effect heaping (taking) the power of the spirit of God's word to confound the schemes of the enemy, remembering God has ordained that any vengeance is His.

PATIENCE

In our portions in James, we are reading his epistle to the brethren. This message which came to fortify those of old, also comes to help us today, as we struggle toward that same hope God holds out.

In James chapter 5 we see his message concerns the need for patience, as he says in the 7th verse:

“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”

The need for patience in all of our endeavors is indeed important. We can talk of obtaining faith, meekness or charity, all fruits of the spirit, but these attributes are acquired ever a period of time and this is where patience is needed, as we struggle to make these qualities part of our character. In the 1st chapter of James verses 2-4 we read:

“My brethren count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;
Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.
But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and
entire, wanting nothing.”

James’ message to his brethren conveyed the thought that if they could attain unto patience, they would have achieved a perfect work — wanting nothing more. However, one must have a good understanding of what God requires, in order to show this Patience in one’s living.

The word patience means to be “long spirited or forbearing” and comes from a prime root which means “to have a long or enduring temper.” We know that God looks for a spirit which can be applied to overcome the temptations of the flesh, a long process which continues during our entire life. This is why in chapter 5 verse 8 James says:

“Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”

As we daily face struggles to put down our flesh, and recognise that the Lord Jesus’ return is near, we need to perfect our patience before He comes.

James said, “stablish your hearts” — a key to truly showing patience. To “stablish” means “to set fast or turn resolutely in a certain direction,” as one would when setting the heart upon attaining a particular goal. We can understand why it is necessary to have the heart established — focused in one direction. We are helped towards this particular quality as we read further in James 1:5:

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”

What is this wisdom that only God can provide? It is the understanding of how to apply the Truth, having our hearts become established, perfecting our desire to be singular in mind and purpose. We are helped to see this as we read Paul’s words in 11 Thess. 2:16-17:

“Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and stablish you in every good word and work.”

The thought here is that the heart can only be established in every

good work and word, by serving God in the hope of grace. Only God can help one be determined to move in a spiritual direction. This establishment we must recognize is to show the patience that God looks for. How can we do this? Only as we allow our thinking to be influenced by the wisdom of God, and then applying it to our living, can we hope to serve Him acceptably. In II Thess. 3:3 Paul continues:

“But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.”

Only through the Lord’s mercy and grace can we be kept from evil — as we recognise God’s gift of His Son the Lord Jesus and seek to be joined in fellowship with the Father and His Son.

James reminds us in James 5:7:

“...Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter, rain.”

In a practical application, a husbandman knows that nothing can be done to force the ripening of the fruit until the tree, vine or plant is ready by its internal natural process to bring forth. James compares those planted in the house of God as this precious fruit, commenting that time is needed to bring out in them the spiritual fruits God looks for. As James says in the 8th verse; “...the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” The return of the husbandman who will deliver that fruit to God is surely near and as that harvest time approaches, how important it is with patience to fix our hearts on God’s word.

David knew of this need as we are told in Psalm 112:7:

“He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.

His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies.”

A heart that is fixed is one that is determined to put confidence and trust in God and what He provides. The enemies which David spoke of no doubt were literal adversaries like Saul, but these enemies can also be our own flesh, which needs to be put down. The fixing of one’s heart can help to do just that as we also employ our own earnest efforts. We see why James says “count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations,” only

through testing can it be proved if the heart is truly focused upon God. As God looks upon our hearts, He sees if we are teaching ourselves to be patient, knowing that the rewards are great if we can overcome, as I Peter 5:10 tells us:

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”

This is the reward that God holds out to His children — the hope of eternal life and an exalting in due time. But there is time needed to first see if we will use our years of probation to apply His wisdom in our living as Job did:

“...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.”
(James 5:11).

We know of Job’s integrity and perseverance under trial and the reward held out for him is the hope of eternal life. When we think upon patience, we must recognise that the patience God looks for is “long spirited,” meaning that the spirit is applied each day over a long period of time to the overcoming of the flesh, in hopes of becoming acceptable to our Father. James says in the 10th verse of chapter 5:

“Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.”

During our time of probation, we will suffer affliction as did our bretheren of old. Do we count it all joy as James exhorted? We should, knowing that these trials can work in us the patience God looks for.

“IT IS THE GLORY OF GOD TO CONCEAL A THING”

Proverbs 25:2

This subject is from Proverbs, the wise sayings of the Spirit by which:

“A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.” Proverbs 1:5.

With this goal in mind, let us look for the spiritual help provided by the particular facet of God’s wisdom under consideration. The question may well be asked: Why is it to God’s glory to conceal a thing? To conceal, coming from a root to cover, is also used as to keep secret or keep close. What are the “things”, or as the word means, that which is spoken, which contribute to God’s glory? Help can be found in the words God commanded Moses to speak:

“The secret (concealed) things belong unto the Lord our God: ...“
Deuteronomy 29:29.

These hidden things are a part of His wisdom, His glory, and are jealously guarded by Him. However, He does impart to those who, searching diligently, seek to glorify Him by honoring His word, as the balance of the verse reads:

“... but those things which are revealed belong unto us
... that we may do all the words (things) of this law.” Verse 29.

God revealed His law, His things, His spoken word to a people joined by covenant to Him. We remember too, that Jesus taught in parables, with hidden meaning, saying to His disciples:

“... Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.”
Luke 8:10.

Those who did not seek to glorify God could not comprehend what Jesus was teaching. Those who yearned to honor their Father had their eyes opened to what Jesus was revealing.

The last part of the verse under consideration opens our understanding to what God requires:

“... but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.”
Proverbs 25:2.

To search out gives the thought of penetrating, getting to the heart of, implying a diligent effort. It is the “honour of kings” to do this. Those who search out, who put that searching first in their available time, are helped toward enlightenment and, even more wondrous, they can contribute to God’s glory. In His word there is revealed the way which can lead to the kingdom promised, and to the very special privilege and honor given by the Lord Jesus at His return. For He will have:

“... made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” Revelation 1:6.

All of this will give glory to God. Those who have searched out His word and glorified Him by obedience will look back with gratitude on their lives, under probation to the Father, but so marvellously helped as they have given their hearts and minds to Him, for His glory. They will be honored as His kings and will spend eternity with Jesus, ever to please Him — never to fall again.

Let us with this hope enhanced by our studies here, rededicate our days. In all we do, let it be first to Him whose glory it is to conceal—studying, reasoning, searching for those hidden treasures which can make us His creatures for ever, to His everlasting glory.

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