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The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia

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"

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A GOOD SOLDIER OF CHRIST

As we read the letters of Paul to Timothy, we are helped to perceive his mind and spirit and his interest in helping and building up Timothy's strength and confidence. We read in I Timothy chapter 2 verse 1:

"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

These words "strong in grace" bring to mind the basis of God's purpose - the means of our confidence to do whatever is required, because of dependence on Him. We remember that Paul was imprisoned, no doubt enduring hardship, yet he wrote encouraging words to Timothy as he says in verse 3:

"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

This message reaches across the years to all, reminding that we need to endure hardness or affliction, as Paul goes on to say in I Timothy 1:8:

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord..
.but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God."

Paul with these words was teaching that affliction is not something rare or infrequent in the Truth, but rather can be expected, as part of the proving of our faith.

When affliction comes, it sets the stage for the proving of the spirit versus the flesh - which will overcome? There is no real proving of our faith when we are blessed with good health and find ourselves in comfort. Yet when troubles and tests come, our flesh cries out; it hates the restrictions and discomfort. Paul tells us how we can subdue our flesh when found in these circumstances, in Ephesians 6:10-11:

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

Here is the same message - the need to be strong "in the Lord" and recognise that the whole armour of God can withstand anything that the flesh may put in its way.

Paul was not ashamed to suffer the afflictions and trials that came in bearing the reproach of Christ, knowing that when he overcame the flesh, spiritual joy and strength was increased. He knew that his time of probation was nearing an end and was concerned that the work continue through Timothy. His strength of faith is plain for all to see as he says in II Timothy 4:6-8:

“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

How could Paul endure under the trials and afflictions he now faced in prison? Was it not because he had faced many smaller trials as they came, one by one, and with overcoming, was able to grow in spiritual strength, more able to meet the next test of his faith? He tells of his afflictions in II Corinthians 11:23-28:

“Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep.

In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”

When buffeted by circumstances and his flesh, he learned to look back to past experiences and remember the help and deliverance granted in each case. Paul looked upon his afflictions and sufferings as gain, and knew that in the weakness of his flesh was the spirit made strong, so that he could say in II Corinthians 12:9-10:

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“...Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, than am I strong.”

Also II Timothy 1:12:

“For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

Paul’s faith confirmed his belief and he was truly persuaded that God’s word would come to pass. If we can have that mind, how strong in faith we could become.

The Lord Jesus agonized to overcome, and Paul knew that he too would have to suffer to follow after Him. Yet when we think of both the physical and mental sufferings that Christ endured, we know how far short Paul felt he came, and likewise how far short we too fall in meeting His mark. But as each time the flesh is put down, no matter how small the victory, the spirit is strengthened, and God is glorified by our struggles. Paul was weak in the flesh, but grew stronger in spirit at each overcoming. He wrote these words of encouragement to Timothy and to us today, knowing that as we suffer, we are brought closer to the image of thee Lord Jesus. We must value this understanding given us, which was held by Paul and recognize the provision of strength available in our mediator the Lord Jesus. Let us take to heart Paul’s words and make them a power in our living each day, to strengthen and sustain us as we meet whatever trial or affliction may come upon us.

“Thou therefore, my son be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”
II Timothy 2:1-3.

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THOU HAST DONE WONDERFUL THINGS

As we read the book of Isaiah, we have a glimpse of the mind and spirit of that prophet as he reconfirmed to Israel their relationship with God - a help to us also as we strive to move subject to His overruling care in our living.

In Isaiah 25:1 we read the prophet's words as he reminds the rebellious house of Israel of God's mercy and care:

“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 goes on in verses 4-8 of this chapter to tell of some of the wonderful blessings that God had given and would provide again if they but turned unto Him:

“For thou has 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.
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 or marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.”

God has done many wonderful things for us as well, and thinking of them can help us to struggle on.

David spoke in Psalm 103:2 with a similar understanding:

“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:”

David enumerates several of these blessings as he goes on in verses 3-6 to say:

“Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.”

The key here is to “forget not” all the wonderful things God has done. Why did David stress this aspect? Was it not because he realized that it is easy to forget when other distractions get in the way? This happened to Israel who forgot the blessings granted and were now in the sad state of rebellion.

In Joshua’s time, as always, God’s promise to His people was faithful and righteous as it is recorded in Joshua 21:43,45:

“And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand.

There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.”

All of the wonderful things that God had promised had come to pass, yet after coming from Egypt through forty years of wandering, only two men remained to hear these words - Joshua and Caleb - two who had not forgotten. Israel had been warned by Moses in Deuteronomy 6:12 of this very danger:

“Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.”

We know from the scriptures that they had forgotten, and had murmured while in the wilderness, not remembering the relief granted from the slavery of Egypt.

Here then Israel was, years later with God’s condemnation spoken by Isaiah in Isaiah 1:2:

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.”

This has been the history of God’s people - the tendency of the flesh to turn away from God, forget His kindness and rebel against His ways. Yet, the mercies of God are sure, even in the midst of rebellion, if one can turn back, and this was the work of Isaiah to bring Israel to repentance.

The knowledge of these benefits from God can be a help to make us realize the wonderful things granted by a loving Father - blessings that can help us hold fast when other distractions try to tempt us away from His paths. David helps us to value our position as he questions in Psalm 116:12:

“What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?”

This is a logical question if one is striving to be a child of God. What can be rendered in return for all His benefits? David tells us in verse 13-14:

“I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.

I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.”

How important it is to value this “cup of salvation”, the provision granted through God’s word made flesh in a savior, the Lord Jesus, and perceiving this to call upon His name. This is what Isaiah was conveying when he said:

“... I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name;” (Isaiah 25:1).

Isaiah’s name translates as, salvation of God, and he was given the work to instill this need for salvation into the minds of a wayward Israel. David knew the value of the end of God’s salvation when he praised God in Psalm 116:16-19:

“O LORD truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.
I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.
I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the LORD’s house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.”

David’s words of praise went beyond the time at hand, looking forward to God’s purpose to be accomplished with His people, and his desire was to move in God’s ways, not his own.

If one forgets God’s ways, His benefits, how easy it is to fall away, just as it was for Israel in Isaiah’s time. Let us be reminded again of what

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is necessary on our part in order to keep alive the hope of God's salvation through Isaiah's words in chapter 25:9:

“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.”
(Isaiah 25:9).

These words spoken by Isaiah to Israel must apply to ourselves today. We must remind ourselves- to wait, to praise His name for all His benefits during all our time of probation, even though trials may come to prove our resolve. In James 1:14 we are reminded:

“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.
My brethren, count it all joys when ye fall into divers temptation;
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.”

Patience is the bearing under trial as we strive to return to God what He requires of us for all His blessings granted. He will provide all that is necessary for us now, but only as He sees a spirit of waiting in patience, valuing our place in His sight. Let us not forget then all His blessings and strive to have the spirit of Isaiah who said:

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

M.C.S.

MERCY AND TRUTH

We are helped once again by the God inspired words of Solomon as we consider our portion in Proverbs. In the 16th chapter the 6th verse we are told:

“By mercy and truth iniquity is purged ...”

A casual reflection upon these words provides us with a basic understanding of God’s mercy and truth and the basic knowledge by which we can hope to overcome and to attain unto the end of God’s purpose. However, the fact that the combination of mercy and truth is used both by Solomon as well as David in many instances, respectively in the Proverbs and the Psalms, prompts us to consider more carefully the practical meaning for ourselves.

In returning to the original meaning of the word mercy, we find that it means kindness, and comes from a prime root meaning to bow. The word truth means stability, coming from a prime root meaning to build up or to support. Our verse could then be paraphrased: “By God’s bowing down (mercy) and by His building up (truth) is iniquity purged.” This speaks of God’s mercy and truth but also speaks of the reaction of His people as they are to use that mercy and truth.

We find additional help from another reference where mercy and truth are mentioned together in Proverbs 14:22:

“Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.”

To devise good is more than the surface application of how we might view goodness. For, as His mercy and trust is received and valued - further such devising requires thought, reflection and a seeking to apply mercy and truth in a consistent manner with His greater plan. We need to be circumspect when good is done to one who might be in need, as there is a striving to help another to be built up in the household of God. To do this we must put ourselves in another’s shoes - the good done is a help only if it is in line with God’s mercy and truth.

Solomon further reminds us in Proverbs 3:1-4:

“My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments; For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck;
write them upon the table of thine heart:
So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of
God and man.”

These words give critical focus to the consideration that we are not to forsake mercy and truth. What is important to discern is that mercy and truth can be forgotten, if we are not applying them in our daily living. Solomon’s words say to bind them about the neck and write them upon the table of our heart. How is this done? By keeping always in mind the mercy and truth extended to us by God.

More help on this subject is given as we go back to our verse in Proverbs 16:6:

“By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil”.

The fear of the Lord is tied into this thought of keeping mercy and truth. The fear of doing anything which would displease God can help one move to think differently during his time of probation. This characteristic has been a hallmark in all who have sought God. They had a fear that God would forsake them and thus they would lose His mercy and truth. David recognized this need not to forsake the giver of mercy and truth as we read in Psalm 25:10:

“All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep - His covenant and his testimonies.”

David must have instilled this thought in his son Solomon who initially sought God’s covenant and walked in God’s paths when he asked to have wisdom so that he might apply mercy and truth as he judged Israel. We can see how important it is that mercy and truth always be valued so that they are not lost, as they ultimately were to Solomon.

As David fled from Saul, he prayed not to be destroyed and we see the trust he placed in God as he said in Psalm 57:1-3, which is entitled: “To the chief Musician (Victor) Altaschith Michtam (I pray do not destroy the pure gold-like faith) of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.”

“Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me. He shall

send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of Mm that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.”

As he was pursued by Saul and must have known great fear for his life, where did he put his confidence? In God. He knew God would save him as he said “Selah” which means value it considering the end. David was looking to the end of God’s purpose when release would come from all persecution and fleshly fear. God does send from heaven His mercy and truth to those who seek it through His help. We can be strengthened in our trials and tests only as we call upon Him for help as David’s example in Psalm 61:6-7 tells us:

“Thou wilt prolong the king’s life: and his years as many generations.

He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him.”

Here mercy and truth are tied to the thought of preservation, which David recognized he needed even as king. How did David call upon God for mercy and truth? By thinking of his past experiences and trials, remembering how he had sorely needed God’s strength and help and how it had been provided. His desire was to seek after it and this kept him in favour with God.

“But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid.”

“Turn unto me, and have mercy”, - If this is our desire, we can be helped as we know David was on many occasions. He failed at times and came to realize the same mercy and truth was there to forgive and lift him up and help him be at one again with God.

This mercy and truth we are to think upon then is more than a reception of God’s love, it is the application and reflection of these traits in us that can help us “depart from evil”. If we allow God’s mercy and truth to permeate our living, causing us to bow down and look to God to stabilize and build us up, we can be helped in many ways as the 7th verse of Proverbs 18 goes on to say:

“When a man’s ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.”

We need to be at peace with our enemies, both those who surround us in our everyday life, as well as the greater one within our flesh. Only as mercy and truth are valued and used in our living can there be peace within us now, with the hope of this peace eternally.

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“THAT I MAY KNOW HIM”

Philippians 3:10

Paul in Philippians chapter 3 is speaking to his brethren in Philippi, explaining to them his position in the sight of God - a position in which the hope of salvation was possible not only to him but likewise to them as well. He confirms his background as a Hebrew from the tribe of Benjamin and a Pharisee under the law, who persecuted with zeal the church of Christ. He further relates how he had to make his past living conform to the new standards shown to him by the example of Jesus Christ. He says in verses 7 and 8 of this chapter:

“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord:

for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,”

Paul counted as loss all things which were of necessity to be given up in exchange for the knowledge and need to conform to the Truth. All those things once of great value to him were counted as worthless now that he “might win Christ.”

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”
(Phil. 3:10-11).

Paul’s desire was, “That I may know him” ... these words “to know” quoted here mean to be aware of, to be sure, perceive or understand so as verse 14 further relates it is possible to:

“press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Paul realized that each day of his life he must value the mark or the example made by the Lord Jesus, in order to follow after Him.

The importance of striving to know Him is further emphasized in John 17:3 as the Lord Jesus spoke of Himself and His purpose in God’s plan.

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

Paul in his desire for eternal life recognized the need to be closer to this ideal as set forth by the Lord Jesus, he wanted to truly “know” Him. Those who like Paul are called by this knowledge of God are to be separate from the world and the influences of the flesh. Paul was using himself as an example to the Philippians illustrating how one called from the world must conform his background, his living, to the ideals set forth by the Lord Jesus.

This same thought of knowing Christ is also stated by John in I John 5:20:

“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”

and also in I John 4:7-8:

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and *Knoweth* God.
He that loveth not *knoweth not* God; for God is love.”

How can one know God and His Son Jesus? To know Him is to reflect this same love in one a own living and to one another. Out of love

God provided His only Son as an offering for sin, and in that same love Jesus submitted His living in obedience to become the perfect sacrifice.

Seen in these few words of Paul is a summary of what life in the Truth should be. Having been granted a knowledge of Christ's perfection and His love for His Father, the requirement is to struggle to reflect that same spirit in one's living. No one can ever fully "know" Jesus, but there can be growth in perception as one dedicates his living, time and strength to conforming his ways to His example. Paul had pressed toward the mark of knowing Him for thirty years and was still learning, making this his life's work. It must be the life's work of all, who mindful of the Lord Jesus' example, struggle to know Him and attain unto the hope of resurrection.

SIGNS OF THE TIME

We read in Matthew chapter 24 of the signs of the coming of the Lord Jesus. In relation to events today in the world, we question as did the disciples - when will it be? The entire twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew focuses on that time of return. Jesus gave the parable of the fig tree - an example of common sense that when the leaves push forth we know that summer is at hand. Likewise, when we see these signs spoken of in Matthew chapter 24 occurring in the world, we know that His return is near.

We need to be mindful of the circumstances heralding His return since no one knows the time or the hour:

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”
Matthew 24:36.

This time will come as a thief in the night, without fanfare or advance warning. We are given these signs as a warning only of the approximate time. As we read on in the chapter we are told His return will be as in the days of Noah, a time when there was little regard to the word of God (as today). No one listened to Noah during his one hundred and twenty years of ministry. They were not concerned with changing their ways, their minds were full of their own activities.

“And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.”
Genesis 6:12-13.

At the time of Noah there was little technical sophistication compared to the wonders of today when we see how the effects of one nuclear reactor accident in Russia poses danger for the entire world. This world has advanced to a stage of sophistication that makes man capable of destroying himself. Of course the signs of His coming do not specifically mention nuclear disasters, but other signs do tell of His imminent return. We know the message of His purpose, that the earth is to be inhabited during the kingdom age and will be given as a legacy to His people. Therefore common sense tells us that God will not allow man to destroy it.

Jesus' message is clear, we must watch or be on guard, as that word means, alert to the signs about us.

“Watch, therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of man cometh.”
Matthew 25:13.

More importantly we must look within us to see what is there.

“Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”
Matthew 24:44.

We are helped when we look up this word ready, to see that it means to be fit or adjusted. The thought of adjusted is significant, for this means to make modifications - we must be adjusted to suit His purpose. What does He desire? Simple belief as verses 45 and 46 of the chapter confirm:

“Who, then, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

Those who believe and are wise in the ways of God adjust their hearts and minds and are prepared, striving to be found fit at His return. What happens then? Verse 46 goes on to tell us:

“Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.”

What is it that they are doing? They, by being faithful and wise are striving to apply the word of God in their living.

The danger today is to disregard the signs about us, yet we are reminded in Matthew chapter 24 of the evil servant who had no perception of the signs around him of his lord's return. What did he do?

“But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;

And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of.

And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 24:48-51.

A hypocrite is one who pretends to be what he is not. He does not look within himself and see the adjustments needed. If we can watch and be ready or be adjusted we will be helped. When the Lord Jesus preached, He often rebuked the scribes and Pharisees as being hypocrites. They knew the word of God but did not adjust and apply the spirit of it in their living.

In Matthew 25 we have the parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins. What was the end result of the five wise virgins who had watched and were prepared?

“And while they (the five foolish) went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut.”

Matthew 25:10.

In I Thessalonians 5:2-8 Paul fortifies this same message:

“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 children of light, and 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. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that are drunken are drunken in the night.

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.”

We see summarized here the same message - that there is the need to be a child of light and to be aware of the circumstances about us that we may be ready - sober. To be sober means to be of sound mind, self-controlled. This thought is similar to being adjusted or ready with control over ourselves.

In a natural sense, the breastplate is worn over the heart to protect. In this saying we must have our heart on the things of God - and the helmet as a protection that the mind and the heart be joined in purpose on God's ways? What are we to be ready for? Revelation 19:7 tells us:

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”

This thought is identical in essence to the Lord Jesus' words in Matthew. The lesson here is to fortify us to be ready, for only those who are ready will be suitable to be the bride of the Lamb. This is the promised blessing of the saints, but readiness must be displayed now in this life in those who would hope to be found approved. It is easy to overlook this need, for the flesh is prone to grow complacent.

We know the signs in the world about us and can see within our hearts the signs of our own flesh that must be adjusted or controlled. Let us make sure the hope of salvation is always before our eyes, for in that hope alone is the blessing of everlasting life.

CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART

We read the words of Moses in Deuteronomy chapter 4 as he rehearses the law again in the ears of Israel - food for thought as he says in verse 9:

“Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but teach them to thy sons, and thy sons’ sons;”

He was reminding them of their privileged position as he says in verses 7-8:

“For what nation is there so great, who hath God as nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?

And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments as righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?”

Moses’ words told Israel of their blessed state. They were given God’s law to instruct in the ways of righteousness which could ultimately lead them to the kingdom. Why did God instruct Moses to speak to Israel in this manner? Was it not because he knew they would fall and overlook all the blessings granted? He knew they would forget His covenant and join themselves to the idolatry of the nations surrounding them. Yet, His mercy was held out still as the 29th verse says:

But if from there thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.”

These words were also a reminder that if they failed and turned to God, He would be there.

Israel was a special people, given the law and a covenant by God, but their importance was not in their name or the number of their blessings, but how they viewed themselves in their heart. This was true likewise in the time of Lord Jesus, and we read in Mark 7 of how these sons of Israel had failed to keep the law and neglected to see the Messiah that this law spoke of, who was in their midst. Instead, they replaced the commandments of God with the traditions of man - really circumventing God’s law. In Mark 7:20-23 the Lord Jesus told them to remember that that which comes from the heart was more important in God’s sight than the traditions of cleanliness they had established:

“And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.

All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.”

This reminds us that only out of a circumcised heart, one in which the flesh has been cut off, can there be a serving of God.

Paul also speaks of this need to circumcise the flesh, in Colossians 2:8 reminding the brethren there of the same dangers as Jesus spoke of:

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

And ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power; in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; Buried with him in baptism, in which also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead”.

In these words, Paul brings to mind the mercy and grace of God in providing the Lord Jesus—the fulfillment of the law given to Israel, which was then extended to any Gentiles who desired to become spiritual Jews. The need is to recognize Christ as the covering - the fulfillment of Moses’ law and thus follow His example to circumcise our hearts.

Paul goes on to help his Colossian brethren further as he says in Colossians 3:10-13:

“And have put on the new man, that is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him;

Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Put on, therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”

The end of the law was love. This message repeated by Moses, the Lord Jesus and Paul was written to remind us of the need to recognize that love. Only by circumcising our heart of its fleshly tendencies can we reveal that love to God, fostered by a fear of not wanting to displease Him. Paul in Romans 2:28-29 speaks further of this circumcision of the heart:

“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh;
But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

Here is the same message that Moses gave to Israel, who given the law, were to apply it in the spirit of love and not in the letter. We wonder how many of the thousands of Israel were not truly Jews, because they had not circumcised the heart even though they were circumcised in the flesh. Proof of circumcision is seen in the study of reactions. Whose praise is sought - man or God's? All we do in our daily living, is it done in praise of God, or is it done to please ourselves? Paul gives us some help in this question as we read in Philippians 3:3-6:

“For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath reasons for which he might trust in the flesh, I more:

Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee:

Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”

Paul used himself as an example, he of all men had the name of an Israelite, but what was the end result - praise of Paul and the traditions of men, or of God? He had no confidence in the flesh, did not allow it to rise up, but humbly served God in hope of being preserved unto the kingdom age.

How important then is the circumcision of the heart as the Lord Jesus tells us in Luke 6:45:

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“A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil; for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”

These words of the Lord Jesus remind us that what is in the heart will be reflected in one's living - whether good or evil. When we think of a righteous person we think of the virtuous woman described in Proverbs - the bride of Christ it says of her in Proverbs 31:31:

“Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.”

What works would praise her? Works that would be consistent in praise and building up of her husband - Christ. When we read through this proverb we see that all her efforts are done to strengthen and give comfort to her husband and His house. Again, it is the same message given by Moses to Israel, to recognize the need to circumcise the heart and be diligent in striving to seek Him, praising Him with our living.

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