

*Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps, set thine heart
Toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest (Jer 31:21)*

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN WAYMARK

Volume 7

Issue 8

**Devoted to the Defence and Proclamation of the Way of Life
in Opposition to the Dogmas of Papal and Protestant Christendom**

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*“I saw, and behold, a white horse; and he that
sat upon him had a bow; and a crown was
given unto him; and he went forth conquering,
and to conquer” (Rev 6:2)*

*“The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable ...” (Jas 3:17)
“Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3)*

Mortify the Deeds of the Body

“They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5).

“To be fleshly-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace . . .” (Rom. 8:6).

“If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:13).

Paul makes it very clear in these words that there are two ways of living, two kinds of character and disposition—the natural and the spiritual; and further, that one leads to death and one to life.

One way takes no effort, no knowledge, no ability. It is just acting naturally, pleasing ourselves, doing what we want to do, following nature.

Because men’s interests and capacities and backgrounds differ, the way of the flesh takes a wide range of courses, some, in fact, very good and commendable from a natural point of view. But all come under the general heading of the will of the flesh, and all end in eternal death at last.

The other way is to realize, from the Word of God, that the whole range of the way of the flesh, from worst to best, leads only to death, and to thankfully accept the life-giving way of the Spirit. This way involves setting the whole life to the task of learning and applying the instructions God has given, and constantly seeking His help in absorbing and fulfilling them—constantly examining ourselves: our hearts, our motives, our desires.

The greatest enemy to our salvation is taking it for granted, being satisfied with ourselves, seeing nothing wrong.

Baptism, and membership in a Christadelphian ecclesia, is no passport to final acceptance. They are just the barest beginning. We are warned that the way of life is narrow and hard and mortifying to the flesh, but that in the infinite mercy of God it is within the reach of all who give their whole lives and energies to obtaining it.

God does not mock men by requiring impossibilities, but—neither does He permit men to mock Him by presumption and complacency. He presents Himself as infinitely tender and eager to help where His help is sincerely and wholeheartedly sought, but a consuming fire against the double-minded, the careless, the worldly and the insincere. He is a terrible, destroying God, and a wonderful, loving, compassionate God.

And He is no respecter of persons. The Christadelphian name will awaken no response and recognition with Him, if the Christadelphian character—the mind of Christ—spiritual-mindedness—is not present.

Writing to the Galatians, chapter 5, Paul gives two lists of characteristics which are in direct contrast to each other—the “works of the flesh,” and the “fruits of the Spirit.”

We need not dwell on the first list. They are the negative, natural aspect. They do not come under the description of “whatsoever things are lovely, pure, of good report,” etc., which we are exhorted to meditate upon—to feed our minds upon. If we concentrate on absorbing and developing the beautiful fruits of the Spirit, the works of the flesh will be choked out and put to death.

Let us then, briefly, once again consider the fruits of the Spirit, one by one, remembering that the apostle is here spelling out the “living according to the Spirit” which is essential to obtaining salvation.

Let us constantly remember that these are not just beautiful and desirable and pleasant-to-think-about things. The Scriptures warn us repeatedly that they are vital and essential things—not just hazy ideals but definite requirements—that there is no hope of life without this spiritual character. Let us call to memory the very striking and searching expression of the Spirit to Ezekiel, concerning those who crowded to hear him—

“They sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them, for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.

“Lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear Thy words, but they do them not” (Eze. 33:31-32).

They got so much satisfaction and enjoyment and relief from sitting piously before Ezekiel and listening to all his teachings and warnings that they could go out for another whole week and live according to the flesh before they need to come back and ease their conscience by dutifully sitting and listening to him again.

They would have been terribly hurt and offended to hear the Spirit’s evaluation of them. They would say, as so many of the flesh say when presented with the true facts, “How discouraging!”

James gives the same picture when he speaks of a man looking at himself in the searching mirror of God’s perfect law, and then going right out and forgetting what he saw. Forgetting is our great problem. We see everything so clearly and beautifully when we sit listening to an exhortation, and then we go and straight-way forget and act like the rest of the natural, fleshly human animals of the world.

We need helps to our memory. We need systematic daily, even hourly, reminding. At the turn of each hour we should stop for a quiet moment and get our spiritual bearings, check up on where our minds and interests and attitude have strayed.

There are nine of these fruits of the Spirit that Paul lists in Galatians 5:22-23—three threes. That’s a simple, easy pattern to remember—

| | | |
|-------|---------------|------------|
| Love | Longsuffering | Faith |
| Joy | Gentleness | Meekness |
| Peace | Goodness | Temperance |

The last should be, more properly, not “Temperance” but “Self-Control.” We should memorize this list (as we should many important lists in God’s inspired Book of Life)—go over it often in our mind—check our characters and actions repeatedly on each item in order. This is a matter of life and death, like finding the way out of a burning building while precious seconds remain.

Aid the memory by some phrase using the initials, as—

“Let Joy Prevail: Let God’s Grace Fill My Thoughts.”

When Jesus came to the fig tree and found no fruit when there should have been fruit, he cursed it, and it shrivelled to the roots, as a terrible and impressive lesson to all his professed servants. When the divine husbandman in the parable came seeking fruit on his tree, and found none, he said (Lk. 13:7)—

“Cut it down! Why cumbereth it the ground?”

And when the vine-dresser examined the vine and found branches not bearing fruit, he cut them off, and had them gathered and cast into the fire and burned. All will depend in the end upon whether or not we are found bearing fruit: these Fruits of the Spirit.

Let us then, with sober earnestness, realizing the dreadful issues involved, constantly check ourselves against this list of spiritual fruits on which our destinies depend. Peter says that if these things be in you and abound they make you that ye shall be “neither barren nor unfruitful.” If these spiritual qualities do not “abound” in us—that is, not just be present, but overflow and dominate our whole being and course of life—then we are guaranteeing our own rejection as surely as if we were writing our death-warrant.

LOVE

Love is the first and greatest. It is the power and spirit of them all. It must radiate like light from us toward everyone and everything. In defining what love is, and how it acts, John lays the very clearly-defined foundation which we must constantly keep in mind:

“This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” (1 Jn. 5:3).

If we get away from the commandments, we are not loving in the scriptural and acceptable sense, however affectionate our feelings or good our intentions. There

must be a careful adherence to divine commandments to keep love in a sound and healthy path.

But there is far more to love—ininitely more—than a cold, technical compliance to command. In our necessary opposition to the wishy-washy sentimentalism of the world's religion, we may tend to lose sight of some of the immeasurable depths and beauties of love.

Love is far more than any technical definition can encompass. Love is a transformation of the mind from the cramped self-centeredness of the natural man to the universal beneficent goodwill of the man of God. Love is complete and glorious newness of life.

In our defence of sound doctrine, in our condemnation of evil, in our opposition to looseness and laziness and compromise and declension, let us never—never—belittle or betray love.

Let us never crush love, or cast it aside, even momentarily, on the pretext of any other virtue or necessity. What cannot be done in love and kindness should not be done at all. It is so easy to let self-righteousness and natural antagonism and contentiousness trample love underfoot on the pretext of duty.

JOY

The second fruit of the Spirit is Joy. The command to rejoice is repeated over and over. It is a vital ingredient of godliness. It is essential to pleasing God. It may at first thought seem strange to be commanded to rejoice, for we think of joy as something that comes naturally as a result of joyous things and events. But deeper thought will reveal the wisdom and necessity of the command. The brief spontaneous giggle of a temporarily pleased and gratified infant has no relation to the steady, unchanging, intelligent, spiritual "Joy" here referred to.

We are commanded to rejoice in everything in our lives, good or bad, for all is of God and all is for a wise and loving purpose. We rejoice in the fundamental, unchanging realities that God is good, and that God is great, and that all things work steadily forward toward eternal joy.

A sour, complaining, self-pitying attitude is purely of the smallness and evilness of the flesh. If we are not fundamentally, basically joyful, we cannot please God—rather we insult and dishonor Him.

Paul "rejoiced in tribulation." The disciples rejoiced that they were considered worthy to share in the sufferings of Christ. Jesus said:

"Rejoice and be exceeding glad when men revile and persecute you" (Matt. 5:11-12).

The infinite goodness of God and His purpose must overwhelm and overshadow every other consideration in our mind. Paul had the sound, sensible, balanced perspective when he said—

“Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17).

Paul realized the vital importance of this spiritual fruit of thankful joyfulness if we are to be of any constructive use in God’s purpose. Nehemiah exhorted the rebuilders of Jerusalem, at a time of trouble, and in a day of pitifully small things—

“The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Neh. 8:10).

All who are sorry for themselves or difficult to please or given to complaining or always wanting something they haven’t got, or in any way dissatisfied with their lot are barren of this spiritual fruit, and are not only making themselves and others unnecessarily unhappy in this life, but are cutting themselves off from the life to come.

PEACE

Peace is the third fruit of the Spirit. Jesus said, on the last night, as he went forth to suffering and death (Jn. 14:27):

“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.”

Throughout the Scriptures we are invited to peace, to:

“Cast all our cares on God, for He careth for us.”

Do we really believe in this promise? Have we a real and assuring faith in God’s constant care? Paul, writing to the Philippians, gives a clear, specific formula for peace. He says:

“Rejoice in the Lord always: again I say, Rejoice!

“Let your gentleness be known unto all men.

“Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:4-6).

The five essential ingredients of peace which he here lists are: Rejoicing, gentleness, casting all care and worry and anxiety upon God, prayer, and thanksgiving—a healthy, spiritual, beautiful frame of mind. And the assurance he gives, if

this formula is followed in loving faith, is:

“The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7).

The commands of God are all designed to purify and beautify our characters and make our lives fuller and richer. They are the loving instructions of infinite wisdom for controlling and curing mankind’s worse disease—sin-in-the-flesh.

All natural mankind are deathly sick of this disease. It has filled the world with sorrow and suffering and inequality and oppression and hatred and confusion.

Let us have the wisdom to carefully follow the instructions of the Great Physician, and enjoy the glorious spiritual health and joy that these fruits of the Spirit portray.

Paul says that Christ is our peace, and in all his salutations to his brethren he speaks of peace as a blessing from God, and prays that his brethren may receive it abundantly.

Are we sincerely concerned with the spiritual peace of our brethren? If we are, we will be very careful to do everything that will contribute to their peace, and avoid everything that will disturb it. Then we can with Paul, sincerely pray to God that His peace may be on them. It is hypocrisy to pray for their peace while wilfully disturbing them.

LONGSUFFERING

The fourth fruit is long-suffering—patience toward others. This is the first and basic aspect of love that Paul enumerates in 1 Corinthians 13:

“Love suffereth long” (v. 4).

This is certainly the most important aspect of love, and for most of us it seems to be the most difficult. How often does our “love” break down at this first testing point! Love—true divine love—suffereth long, and is kind.

We may find we can make quite a fair show of our spiritual fruit if we are allowed to display them in attractive and pleasing circumstances at our own convenience, but the enumeration of “longsuffering” faces us with the problem of irritations, obstruction, opposition, provocation.

How does our long-suffering stand up? Our patience and long-suffering are the measure of the depth and sincerity and spirituality of our professed love for others. If our works are marred by impatience and irritation, then our motive is exposed as not spiritual love but fleshly self-gratification.

GENTLENESS

The fifth is gentleness. That is mildness, sweetness of character.

James says the wisdom from above is “gentle and easy to be intreated,” quick to adjust and conform and conciliate where comfort or convenience or the desires and well being of others is concerned. Never harsh, or abrupt, or willful, or selfish. Jesus said:

“Blessed are the peacemakers ... agree with your adversary quickly” (Matt. 5:9, 25).

And the Spirit through Paul instructs us to be at peace with all men, to the fullest extent that is possible in harmony with faithfulness. Some bearing the name of Christ glory in conflict and harshness and antagonism to mankind, thinking thus to manifest their “zeal for the Lord.” But the Spirit of Christ is the spirit of gentleness.

This “gentleness” is the same word Jesus used when he said—

“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly. . .

“My yoke is easy” (Matt. 11:28-30).

“Easy” here is “gentle.” His yoke was gentleness—a loving, but all-powerful yoke.

Paul, who had full authority to condemn, appealed in love to the proud and self-satisfied Corinthians:

“I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:1).

And God said through Hosea, of backsliding Israel:

“I drew them with bands of love” (Ho. 11:4).

GOODNESS

The sixth fruit is goodness. Jesus himself disclaimed the description of “good,” saying—

“There is none good but God” (Mk. 10:18).

This shows the height to which this spiritual fruit points. Here is Godlikeness—complete devotion to truth and righteousness and purity and holiness—absolute

sincerity and integrity—hating anything that in the slightest degree deviates from truth and wholesomeness. Here is the preserving salt of incorruptibility that gives all the other spiritual fruits soundness and purpose. Jesus said:

“Truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:32).

Only perfect truth can give freedom from corruption. Paul’s words concerning the flesh make a striking contrast to this most exalted of the fruits of the Spirit:

“In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good” (Rom. 7:18).

And James declares that all goodness and perfection are gifts from above.

FAITH

Seventh is Faith. Faith is the channel by which everything is accomplished. Faith is our link with the divine purpose. Faith is the unshakable conviction of the universal power and reality of God that turns weakness into strength and overcomes the world—

“This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith!” (1 Jn. 5:4)

Jesus made everything hinge on faith:

“All things are possible to him *that believeth*” (Mk. 9:23).

In view of the magnitude and immensity of the divine relationship to which we have been called, we exclaim with the disciples:

“Lord, increase our faith!” (Lk. 17:5).

But there is a vital part in the process that we must do:

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

Our duty is to increasingly build the power of our faith by constant study of the Word.

How clear is the majestic picture faith portrays, compared with the pitiful confusion and speculation of the world:

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God” (Heb. 11:3).

MEEKNESS

The eighth fruit is meekness. The word for meek literally means “tame,” not wild. It is somewhat related to gentleness, which comes before, and also to the final fruit, self-control, which follows.

While gentleness carries more the idea of consistent kindness and courtesy toward others, meekness refers rather to the wisdom of true humility and lowliness. “Learn of me,” said Jesus:

“For *I am meek* and lowly, and ye shall find rest to your souls” (Matt. 11:29).

The opposite of meekness is pride and self-satisfaction and desire for praise and admiration. Meekness is true wisdom. It sees all the foolishness of mortal pride and glory that brings no real happiness and satisfaction and only ends in death.

TEMPERANCE

And finally, Self-Control—the full control of the scripturally-enlightened mind over all the desires and reactions and impulses of the flesh—what a glorious, worthwhile culmination!

What a wonderful promise that if we will do our part, God will “work in us to will and do of His good pleasure,” that we may be gloriously transformed in the spirit of our mind, given power to overcome the flesh! Following the list of these nine beautiful fruits of the Spirit, the apostle continues—

“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” (Gal. 5:24-25).

(Taken from “*Be Ye Transformed*” Volume 2, G. Growcott.)

*A little more courage!
A little more perseverance,
and by His coming the Lord will gird us with immortal strength.
He will clear our blurring eyes, and rouse our failing hearts,
and strengthen our faltering steps,
and revive our drooping life with a vigour that will never abate,
wisdom that will never err,
and joy that will never end.*

Robert Roberts

Secretarys Notes

The August 2009 Issue

Due to particular circumstances, we were unable to produce the August 2009 issue, but recommence this month. We apologise for the inconvenience, and are thankful for the support of various brethren and sisters which enables us to keep going.

Donations

A number of readers have kindly provided donations for the furtherance of our work, and the supply of issues for those who cannot remit the requested subscription cost. Therefore, should anyone require free subscriptions, please contact the Secretary as per the back cover—in complete confidentiality.

RSV Study Bible

A sister is looking for: The Revised Standard Version of a Study Bible. It was published by Cambridge University Press: Code: RSV 340, ISBN: 0-521-51105-4

We understand this particular edition to be out of print: if anyone has a second-hand copy available, please contact the Secretary, address as per back cover

Kent Prophecy Day 2010

We have received the details as follows:-

Saturday, **20th March 2010**, God Willing Start 3.00pm.

Venue: East Malling Village Hall, New Road, East Malling (just off exit 4, M20, West of Maidstone)

Theme: *“We have also a more sure word of prophecy whereunto ye do well that ye take heed...”*

1st Session: The King of the North and His Allies
Bro. Simon Collard (Cambridge)

2nd Session: Israel and Her Allies
Bro. Andrew White (Rugby)

3rd Session: The Papacy and Her Daughters
Bro. John Evans (Swansea)

You are reminded to bring your own food. Tea, coffee and cold drinks will be provided.

Contact for further details: Bro. Peter Moore, tel: 01474 703037 or email: petermoore123@talktalk.net

The Angels of God

Our New Testament reading for the day, Luke chapter 20, provides us with a glimpse of how things will be ordered in the coming kingdom of Messiah:

“... they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: *for they are equal unto the angels*; and are the children of God, being the children of the Resurrection” (Luke 20:35-36).

There is a comparison to be made then, between the Immortal messengers of the Almighty, and the position of honoured saints in the coming kingdom. Again, the Master said in his well-known prayer of Matthew chapter 5: “thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven” (Mat. 5:10). The Angels are the agents whereby things in Heaven are done according to Yahweh’s Will, and the immortalised saints are the agents by which things shall be similarly done in earth. So it is that by considering the Angels of God, we can see a likeness of what we will become; a vision of immortal life manifested in a great multitude of the redeemed.

In our exhortation this morning then, we propose to consider a particular facet of Bible teaching concerning these Divine Messengers, in the context of deliverance and blessings.

2 Kings Chapter 19 expresses Hezekiah’s confidence in Yahweh in the face of the Assyrian invasion that had beset the land. In his prayer he asks:

“... now therefore O Yahweh our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art Yahweh Elohim, even thou only” (2 Kings 19:19).

The answer came through the prophet Isaiah:

“... I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David’s sake. And it came to pass that night, that the angel of Yahweh went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.” (2 Kings 19:34-35).

We find therefore that the means by which Yahweh delivered his people from the power of sin, was through the work of an Angel appointed to the task. In some ways, we are in a similar position as Israel of old. We are at enmity with the world around us, and daily we face the power of sin active within our mortal frames. Each day is a warfare against the flesh – both within and without, and there is no discharge until the day of our death, or the appearance of our Master, whichever comes first. But like Israel, we are appointed with Angels to watch over us, even as it is written: “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation”? (Heb. 1:14). We would do well therefore, to scrutinise the angelic activity in relation to Israel, that we might understand more about the ministers that attend to us in our own lives.

When we consult the Old Testament writings, we find that Angels had a role right from the very beginning of Israel's history. Acts 7 and verse 53 describes how Israel "have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it". And Exodus 23 recounts the promise of divine blessing and protection when Israel were to go forth to take possession of the land of promise:

"Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared ... mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off." (Exod. 23:20,23)

The role of the Angel so described in some measure compares with the role of our Master, even Jesus himself. Just as the Angel was to go "before" Israel to the place "prepared", and overcome the enemy, our Lord speaks likewise:

"In my Father's house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (Jno. 14:2-3).

This is one of those passages which are traditionally hard to understand, yet which is perfectly intelligible in the light of the True Gospel. Church tradition would lead us to believe that Jesus is here promising his followers a place in heaven – even though these words

mention nothing about heaven. What is promised is a place in "*my Father's House*" – a house which in Old Testament times was described as the "Temple," as constructed after a divine pattern by Solomon. Even so the prophetic Scriptures reveal that this "house" is to be reconstructed as "a house of prayer for all nations" (Isa. 56:7), and is described in considerable detail in the latter chapters of Ezekiel's prophecy. King David spoke of his desire to be given a place in this house:

"a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper *in the house of my God*, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psa. 84:10)

"... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell *in the house of Yahweh* for ever" (Psa. 23:6).

To be granted a dwelling place in Yahweh's house therefore, is to be granted an abiding place within the coming Temple of the new age in which Messiah's laws shall go forth to the ends of the earth. What a glorious prospect this is!

The point of comparison we wish to make is that just as the Angel would go forth to defeat Israel's enemies in order that they could inherit the place "prepared", even so Messiah has gone before to defeat the power of Sin, in order that we might be able to inherit the place he has prepared for us. Being "the Way" as well as the Truth and the Life, he is able to lead us into a position in his Father's coming kingdom, if we but put our trust in Him. That does not

mean to say, however, that we shall experience no difficulties along the way, or that we do not need to exert much effort ourselves. Even though Israel were promised possession of the Land, they had to go forth to war against the powers of sin themselves. They couldn't simply sit at the border and expect the land to be turned over to their control: they had to fight, and contend against their enemies. The Angel used the people's own endeavours to bring about success. Even so Brother Roberts wrote: "Human action is the basis of Divine Supervision – without it, the Angels have nothing to work on." We must engage ourselves in the same warfare as Christ did, in order for him to lead us into victory. We must also therefore "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim.2:3), and be willing to suffer for his sake.

There is an aspect of the Angelic care that is sometimes overlooked. It is thought that because we have divine "ministers" to help us, that therefore we should experience no evil. A little reflection however, reveals the short-sightedness of such a view. It is part of the Father's purpose that we endure afflictions as part of His Chastisement upon his sons:

"for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you illegitimate, and not sons" (Heb. 12:6-8).

This would appear to be the case in the example of Hezekiah, referred to at the beginning. His reign was characterised by reform, bringing the people back to the worship of Yahweh. Of him it is written:

"he trusted in Yahweh Elohim of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him" (2 Kings 18:5).

At such a time of reform, the question is raised: Why therefore, were the Assyrians brought against God's people? We suggest that it was to be a trial: a chastisement to test the people's faithfulness or otherwise before their God. It was designed to show the hearts of men: did they really trust in Yahweh's angelic care, or did they seek after worldly wealth and the good things that come with prosperity?

Psalms 44 appears to be written in the context of these circumstances. The chapter begins by describing how that Yahweh had brought the people into the land:

"for they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance ..." (Psa. 44:3).

It continues to speak of how the nations had turned back to their God:

"in God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever" (vs 8). But the next

verse continues: “But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies. Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy: and they which hate us spoil for themselves” (Vs 9-10).

So it was that even in a time of obedience, the faith of the people and their king was tried by invading forces, to see how they would respond. And as we have seen, Hezekiah led the people in trusting in the power of their God to deliver, and sent the Angel to smite the Assyrian army.

THE ANGELS AT WORK

Psalm 34 describes the Angels’ work, in harmony with what we have just considered:

“the Angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Psa. 34:7)

Notice the point here: the Angel does not prevent difficulties from coming, but will deliver out of those difficulties when they come. As it is written: “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tried above that ye are able, but will with the trial also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). Indeed, the same Psalm describes: “Many of the afflictions of the righteous: but Yahweh delivereth him out of them all” (Psa. 34:19).

The allusion in this Psalm appears to be from Jacob’s words concerning the Angelic hand in his own life:

“The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads...” (Gen. 48:16)

When we consider the life of Jacob, we see a man who endured many adverse circumstances in his life – in his case, there is no question as to whether evil times had come. But Jacob’s faith was not that he be spared affliction: rather it was that Yahweh’s Angel would deliver him out of it when it came.

Another case in point is the experiences of Daniel’s three friends in the Truth, and their refusal to bow the knee to the Babylonian Idols. They were thrown into a fire so hot that it devoured the mightiest men of Babylon, yet were protected from harm, so that even the smell of the fire did not linger in their clothes. So Nebuchadnezzar recognised the means of divine protection: “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel and delivered his servants that trusted in him...” (Dan. 3:28). Again, the fiery trial was to come – it was not averted – but in the midst of it all, the Angel delivered them out of all evil.

PERCEIVING DIVINE MESSENGERS

When we consider the events of our lives, there are many instances where we might see the consequences of the Angels at work. There are probably myriads of other occasions where they were active, and we never knew. Only when in the kingdom might we be able to consider aspects of our past lives, where the Angelic hand was working, guiding our circumstances, and leading us out of temptations and trials. We must, however, see their operation through the eyes of faith, not doubting our ultimate deliverance at their hand.

2 Kings chapter 6 describes a man who at first, could not visualise the immortal messengers sent to deliver him. The

king of Israel sought to kill Elisha and his servant: “therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about” (2 Kings 6:14).

Humanly speaking, all was lost. How could two individuals possibly be expected to be victorious over a mighty and great army? So Elisha’s servant exclaimed: “Alas, my master! How shall we do?” (2 Kings 6:15). He was, however, merely repeating the mistake of Israel of old, when they were commanded to go into the land. The “children of Anak” were their, who were strong and mighty – how could they possibly be expected to overcome? Again, a little later, the giant Philistine challenged Israel, whose king cowered in unfaithfulness.

So it was that Elisha showed the spirit of Caleb, and David: a sure confidence in the power of God in the matter. “And he answered, Fear not, for that they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Yahweh, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And Yahweh opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (2 Kings 6:16-17).

The Angelic hand is often unseen – especially by men of the flesh. But in the word of Psalm 34, they encamped “round about” Elisha and his servant, and delivered them, as their antagonists were smitten with blindness, and were unable to find their way. Even so, we ought to have confidence that Yahweh is with us in our warfare against sin. Elisha’s prayer to Yahweh is alluded to later in the New Testament: “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1

Jno. 4:4). Like Elisha’s servant, we must have our spiritual eyes opened, recognising the great power that is for us, and which shall intimately effect our final deliverance from sin.

We read earlier that the angels are “ministering spirits” sent forth on the behalf of those who are “heirs of salvation” (Heb. 1:14). The application does not only refer to us: Messiah himself, as the heir in whom we obtain the inheritance, also needed, and experienced strength from Angels. Matthew chapter 4 describes his wilderness trials, ending: “then the diabolos leaveth him and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him” (Mat. 4:11). At the time of his wrestling against his mortal nature in Gethsemane: “there appeared an Angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him” (Lu. 22:42). And again, whilst being crucified he spoke of how he had 12 legions of Angels at his disposal. The Master therefore, was One who recognised the hand of the Angels in his life – and we, therefore, must seek to have that same vision. Jacob, Caleb, David, Elisha, Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego and others still, all trusted in angelic deliverance in times of difficulty and adversity.

Messiah cried out to Yahweh in his distress: and that prayer was answered by the provision of an Angel. Hebrews chapter 4 describes how:

“in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplication with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared” (Heb. 5:7).

Notice the expression here: “... to save him *from* death...” We are told that the Greek is more specific: “... to save him *out of* death...”. The difference is

this: if he was saved from death, he would not had died, he was saved from it. But the truth of the matter is that he did die – but he was raised up out of that death by the hand of the Father. As we showed earlier: Angelic ministration does not mean evil will not come, but will rather mean that we will be delivered from our trials – and the example of Christ himself is a case in point.

We began by showing how the Angels minister to the saints, particularly emphasising the way in which they deliver from evil. But it is written that “unto the Angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak” (Heb. 2:5). The earth will rather be given to Messiah and his glorified brethren. Christ and his saints will cause God’s Will to be performed as in the heavens aboe. We cited earlier the word of Messiah’s prayer: “... thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven” (Mat. 6:10). Obedience to the Will of Yahweh will be the ultimate objective in

His coming Kingdom.

To conclude therefore: we have seen tremendous things from the Holy Writ, which have a very direct application to our lives. The Angel is there, and will deliver us out of all evil, according to the mercy and wisdom of our Eternal Father. Like Elijah, trusting the Angelic Host, we declare war with the flesh, both within and without, and can be confident of the victory. The Lord Jesus Christ himself needed Angelic deliverance, and we, as his brethren, have a like need. In the future, Christ’s brethren will themselves have an angelic role, becoming part of Yahweh’s continually expanding glory. This is a position which we need to prepare for - and the only preparation is to search the Scriptures daily, and act upon the precepts revealed therein. This we do, both to see whether these things are so, and also to strengthen our vision of the coming kingdom, and our place within it.

Christopher Maddocks

Causing Men to Hear His Words

How beautiful is the light that is in the Bible, wherever we peep in. Some cannot see it for the words and verses and chapters; they see these and not the things that the words and verses and chapters represent. This is a failure. The light lies in the things represented and not in words; yet, of course it is by the words we see the things and seeing the things, we see that which gives light and truth and joy. Let us try the process on the chapter read this morning from Jeremiah.

At the first rough glance, we see three things strongly, that suggest many other things. We see Jeremiah speaking unpleasant things. We see him in the land of Israel, over 2,400 years ago. We see him in the midst of the Jewish nation. On this we have to ask, How came there to be a Jewish people? And what led Jeremiah to take up so unpopular an attitude in their midst? The question has a practical present day interest, because the Jewish people are prominently before the notice of mankind at the present hour, and because they are no longer in the

land where Jeremiah addressed them, but dispersed among the nations in the circumstances of suffering that Jeremiah predicted. The first of these questions need not detain us on the present occasion: because we all know that the history of the case has but one answer—namely, that God specially formed the Jewish people for Himself by the various circumstances narrated in the Scriptures—the call of Abraham from Chaldea, the settlement of his family in Canaan, their migration to Egypt and multiplication there, and their exodus from that country under Moses by whom (after miraculous deliverance) they were organised into a nation, on the basis of a law direct from God. They had been settled in the land for nearly a thousand years when Jeremiah appeared in their midst.

What has he to say to them? And why? It is the answer to this question that yields so much that is of importance to us. What he says is complex in character, but all extraordinary. The first word of this chapter is a volume itself: “woe.” This is the foretelling of evil. Almost the whole of his prophecy is in this key. What is the explanation of this? How was Jeremiah able to foretell evil? If any man in our day say “Woe to Britain,” we attach no weight to it. We instinctively feel it is the voice of fanaticism: it is a querulous egotistical human voice, and a human voice can tell us nothing of the future. But we cannot read “woe” in Jeremiah without feeling that it is a very different voice from any modern voice that may say “woe.” The surrounding circumstances make us feel the difference, as well as the fact that the “woe” has all come to pass. The surrounding circumstances show us a timid man who has no pleasure in messages of evil:

“Oh Lord, thou knowest I have not desired the woeful day” (Jer. 17:16).

He was almost scared into silence by the public scorn.

“The Word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me daily, therefore I said, I will not speak any more in His name, but His Word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing and I could not stay (17; 20:8-9).

He was sick of life through the bitterness of his work:

“Woe is me, my mother, that thou has borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth. I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury. Yet every one of them doth curse me” (15:10)

“Cursed be the day wherein I was born . . . wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed in shame?” (20:14-18)

He was finally overwhelmed with sorrow at the public calamities:

“Oh, that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people” (9:1; and all Lamentations).

“Woe” comes heavily from the lips of such a man. What was its cause—what its explanation? Jeremiah himself was called upon to make a declaration on this point under very extreme circumstances.

He was arrested in Jerusalem during the siege of that city by Nebuchadnezzar, on a charge of intimidating the defenders in the interest of the Babylonians. His captors, backed by an infuriate populace, said, “Thou shalt surely die.” They demanded of him,

“Why hast thou prophesied . . . saying, this city shall be desolate without inhabitant? (26:9).

Jeremiah’s answer was,

“The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard . . . As for me, behold I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you, but know ye for certain that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth, the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears” (26:12-15).

Here, then, is a specific statement on the most important of all questions, viz., whether we are to trust in the glorious things written in the Bible or not—whether God or man speaks in the case. If man speaks, we have nothing to trust to; for man knows nothing of futurity. He may amuse us with beautiful fancies or beautiful jingle, like “the poet”: but he knows nothing and can tell us nothing of eternal truth. But if God is the speaker, it is a very different matter indeed. That God is the speaker is alleged not once or twice, but many hundreds of times everywhere—in all parts of the Bible—beginning, middle or end. As a specimen of the Beginning, you may take Moses:

“I have not done things of mine own mind” “the Lord said unto Moses” (Num. 16:28; 17:1):

The Middle:

“The vision of Isaiah . . . the Lord hath spoken” (Isa. 1:1):

The End:

“These sayings are faithful and true: the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly be done” (Rev. 22:6).

This fact that the messages of Jeremiah, like the messages of all the prophets, “came not,” as Peter declares (2 Peter 1:21) “by the will of man, but holy men of

old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit,” imparts the utmost moment to what we read in them.

Let us return to Jeremiah 23 and ponder God’s comment on the public opinion of Jerusalem that we may get a little guidance for the day in which we live. People attach great importance to the “comments of the daily press,” though it mostly amounts to so much gab. Public opinion and the public press generally drift together because they are part and parcel of the same thing. One or two of the public get pens in their hands and scribble what as members of the public they think: that is the public press. The rest of the public that read what one or two of themselves have scribbled in harmony with their own thoughts: that is the public. In the case of what we read in Jeremiah, the case is very different. It is the case of one man uttering against a whole community thoughts of God concerning man, not shared by the public, not conceived by Jeremiah, but communicated by the Spirit of God direct, and blown into a red heat in Jeremiah’s mind, as we might say, so that he could not resist their utterance, as he says in one of the verses quoted. Now, he has something to say about the public teachers of the city. He says:

“They speak a vision out of their own heart and not out of the mouth of the Lord” (v.16).

He says:

“They make you vain.”

“They cause My people to err by their lies” (v.32).

“They strengthen the hand of evil doers, that none doth return from his wickedness . . . They say still to them that despise Me, ‘the Lord hath said ye shall have peace’: and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, ‘No evil shall come upon you’” (v.14&17).

What does God say concerning these corrupting teachers?

“I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied” (v.21).

Now, this is interesting and instructive for us to consider because we live in an age when the most prominent figures in public life are the men in what are called holy orders, and who claim to be sent of God and to have authority to speak His Word. We have the archbishops, and the bishops, and the canons and the deans, and the vicars, and the curates, and all the other grades of the clerical army “as by law established.”—None more respectable; none higher in the world’s honour and esteem: none whom it seems more presumptuous to call in question. But as we listen to Jeremiah’s exhibitions of God’s estimate of the public teachers of Jerusalem, we are greatly strengthened to consider whether these modern prophets may not be in a like case. Is it quite certain that God has sent these modern

prophets who are so quick to run about on their professional errand? Is it quite certain that God has spoken to them? Is it not within the bounds of possibility that they speak a vision out of their own heart and not out of the mouth of the Lord? Is it not indeed a demonstrable fact that they cause the people to err by their lies, and strengthen the hand of evil doers by smooth words to all and sundry? Saying to every one that walketh in the imagination of his evil heart, "No evil shall come upon you?"

In the providence of God, through the possession of His Word, we are in a position to decide these questions. This very chapter indirectly supplies the text. Although God disowns the prophets who fathered their misleading vaticinations upon Him, saying, "He (the Lord) saith" when they were but using their own tongues (v.31), yet He points out a way in which they might have been of service to Israel though He had not sent them. He says (v.22)

"If they had caused My people to hear My Words, then should they have turned them from their evil way."

There was a written Word in Israel's hands, the Scriptures of Moses and the prophets, so far as developed up to Jeremiah's time. Concerning this work (so far as developed), it had been laid down abundantly in the Psalms that it was a:

"lamp to the feet and a light to the path."

"The entrance of Thy words giveth light."

So practically was this the case that it was a matter of direction to Israel that they were to use this Word as a test-standard in trying the claims of any man professing to speak spiritual things.

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20).

Now, if in God's own nation, and to the leaders of God's own appointing (for it was by divine appointment that the Levitical class assumed to be prophets and teachers), the written Word was to be used as a test in determining all spiritual claims, who shall forbid us applying it in a nation that God has not created except in a providential way, and to a class of men who are self-elected and man-appointed altogether? It must be manifest that in a day when God is silent (as pre-arranged and predicted beforehand), there is no other method of determining such claims. The application of this test disposes of the claims altogether. Nothing is more certain than that the clergy have no authority from God whatever, and that they cause the people to err by doctrines that are the mere outcome of human thought and imagination in various dark ages past, and whose tendency is to strengthen the hand of the evil doer, and to cause the whole wicked world to sit still in a fool's paradise.

There is no hope but in the wholesale appeal that God Himself makes to scriptural enlightenment in this chapter (v. 18):

“Who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord and hath perceived and heard His Word? Who hath marked His Word and heard it?”

It is for those who answer to this appeal to stand forth with confidence. The Bible is the Word of God; and those who have “perceived and heard” it, who have become enlightened in its teaching or “counsel,” who have to come to an understanding of it and are in affectionate submission to its authority, are here rallied by God Himself, as distinguished from the impotent mass of the community who are in bondage to the traditions of men, and who know not what is truth. God appeals to them on the score of knowledge as to what is coming on the wickedness that is tenderly patted on the back by all kinds of false prophets.

“Who hath marked His Word and heard it? Behold a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind; it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the Lord shall not return until He have executed and till He have performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly” (23:18-20)

If God would have been pleased with the false prophets for using their position to enlighten Israel with reference to His written testimonies, although He had not sent them, it is easy for us to perceive an acceptable sphere of service for any man or woman in a similar situation in a different age. God has not spoken in a personal sense to any mortal man living in our age; but He spoke to the Gentiles by the apostles, who though long dead, still speak in their written message. Their word is God’s Word, for so Jesus instructed them—that whosoever listened to them listened to him and to the Father who had sent him (Matt. 10:40). Therefore in “causing” any one to “hear the words” that God spoke by the apostles, we are doing that which has God’s recorded approval, in this chapter even though we may have had no personal delegation. This is according to common intelligence. God has addressed mankind in general:

“Look unto me all ye ends of the earth” (Isa. 14:22).

“Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden” (Matt.11).

“Ho everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters . . . Hearken diligently unto me and eat ye that which is good. Let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come to me. Hear, and your soul shall live” (Isa. 55:1-3).

“The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17).

But these “great and precious promises” though beautifully written, have no power of self-proclamation. They require a living agency to arrest attention. They depend in great measure for their efficacy on the faithful activity of those who believe. Hence the direction:

“Let him that heareth say, come.”

This is where our opportunity lies. God, as He looks down from heaven, humanly speaking, and surveys mankind in their million-fold occupations and activities, sees a man doing a thing that is according to His mind, who busies himself in “causing men to hear His words.” Our ability may be small; our opportunity less; so much the more reason for making the most of what we have. There are many ways of doing this work. If a man have covered his private circle, let him get at what public circle he may, and if he have no public circle, then let him operate through those who have. Whoever helps the work of those who have a public field of labour in this matter becomes a partner in that public work. It is in the power of many private people to thus extend the sphere of their own labour. Some “know the day of their visitation” in this matter, and act according to knowledge, some are blinded by jealousy or other derangement of nature, and let their opportunity slip till it is too late.

And the gospel lies here that God is the Rock and the Foundation that has promised to do certain things for us if we believe. His promise standeth sure and his threatenings, too. His Word in this sense is a fire and a hammer. It will break and destroy all that is opposed to His will. He told Israel this, in quiet words, concerning their land and nation; and next day and next year, it seemed that there was nothing in it when the sun rose and all things continued as usual. But in due course, the state of the case appeared. “I will make this city into ruinous heaps!” said the still small voice of prophecy—“without man and without beast;” the valley of Hinnom, in which the inhabitants gloried for its beauty, shall be called the valley of slaughter. There will be dead bodies there till there is no room to bury. It seemed very unlikely but let us take our stand by Titus, on the day of the capture of the temple: hearken to the hurrahs of the soldiery massed around him as the ensigns of Rome are planted in the holy place: what see we as we glance around? smoking heaps; wide pools of human blood; piles of corpses. The same Word, in the chapter before, promises restoration, rebuilding, restitution and joy. It will all come as assuredly as all the woe, and happy shall we be if, having waited patiently for the salvation of God in a day of contradiction, down-treading and darkness, we are there to see and to share in Zion’s glad morning.

*Taken from: - “Seasons of Comfort” Vol. 2
Pages 327-332
By Robert Roberts*

REFLECTIONS IN SCRIPTURE:

Healthy Diets

Life is full of contrasts that graphically portray mans true nature. For example much human misery and ill health stems from having a poor diet. Poverty and famine bring starvation for millions who do not seek such depravation, but are in general victims of the results generated by the greed of others, war, mismanagement of resources, squandering of available resources, or natural climatic and other conditions.

On the hand within the richer nations, complacency, greed and laziness lead to obesity, something which has become almost endemic and certainly in the UK a major source of extra expenditure for the National Health Service. Conversely there are those who for the sake of fashion and social acceptance amongst their peers starve themselves to get into ever smaller sizes of clothing. Again models trying to reach size zero have been in the headlines and there is controversy about fashion companies trying to promote such unrealistic and health threatening fashion.

Human beings are very good at going to extremes and yet a balanced healthy diet is essential to both good mental and physical health. Over weight and obese children face having a poorer quality life and associated mental and physical health problems. Overweight and obese adults will have a shorter life span and face illnesses such as coronary heart disease, diabetes, skeletal disorders and many other potential health deficits. Yet for all the health promotion activities provided by health professionals few people take much notice! Few will change and eat a healthy diet, ceasing to eat the 'junk' and other unhealthy foods that generally are the staple diet of many who are overweight. All advice is ignored until disaster strikes, but then it is largely too late!

Now with this in mind, in spiritual matters it is just as easy to become 'flabby', lazy and unhealthy. Christ's disciples cannot afford to starve themselves of the essential nutrients needed for healthy spiritual growth. Nor can they afford to be spiritually lazy and slumber as did the foolish virgins in the parable told by Jesus.

Now Peter states:

"If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.." 1Peter 4:11

How can we speak according to the ordinances and Word of God if we do not take in the manna of life, gathering just as each has need? The lesson is clear from those oracles of the Word that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Further, without the spiritual sustenance that we need, how can we be active in 'ministering' and in the service of our Creator. How can our lives bring honour and glory to Him?

Spiritual malnourishment or ‘obesity’ triggered by eating the wrong spiritual diet will bring spiritual lethargy and ill health followed by a very limited life span. We live in an age when mankind speaks anything but from the Word of God. They seek pleasant things, human rights and material benefits. They fill themselves with man made ideas, philosophies and wisdom; a junk food diet that leads to an early and eternal grave. The result is a world that calls what is right, wrong and chooses that which is perverse. Thus there is a famine, not of materials things, not of foods to satisfy the stomach, but a famine of the Word of the Lord our God. Even those who would call themselves brethren in Christ, turn from that which is a healthy diet of ‘manna’ and turn to the apparently richer varied diet of Egypt, not realising that it is but a thin diet indeed, devoid of the life giving vitamins and other nutrients needed for health spiritual growth. The Truth is watered down to make an easier less challenging life and they are the poorer for it!

The last days will call for spiritual stamina if we are to endure to the end and run the race of life to its ultimate conclusion. The Spirit through the Word calls upon us to turn from a poor diet to a healthy diet and to turn to the healthy, nutrient filled manna provided within the Scriptures. Let us be amongst those who have been satisfied with the manna of God’s providing, the food that is renewed every morning of each new day of life that we are privileged to be granted. All that is needful for spiritual health is there for us to gather in from His Word.

Amidst the teeming billions of humanity that have existed throughout the ages, a few, just a small remnant, will be found who have walked the path of wisdom. When the Lord Jesus returns, He will bring an end to their wilderness journey and as the greater Joshua will bring them into the land promised so long ago. They will be privileged to inherit all things and never hunger nor thirst for righteousness again. We are indeed privileged to have been invited to travel through the wilderness to a land ‘flowing with milk and honey’.

So, hold fast that which is good, learning to seek first the Kingdom of God and learning the path of wisdom which says: “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.” We can only follow this path and eat grow spiritually healthy by a daily diet of reading the scriptures. But just looking at the scriptures is not enough, it must be ‘eaten’, taken into the heart and mind, thus forming the foundation of our thoughts and guiding our every action.

If that is the case we will neither be spiritual obese, nor starving, but will be active and willing in the Masters service; “speaking the Truth in love, (that we) may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” Eph 4:15-16

Andy Peel

THE TRUTH CONCERNING THE TREE OF LIFE

In a previous article, we considered the condition of Creation before the Fall, when the first human pair were placed in the paradise prepared for them by their Maker. Adam was formed in a “very good” state, and was therefore free from any form of defilement, or decay. We demonstrated that he was not created a dying creature, but as the Apostle declared, death entered into the world subsequent to, and as a consequence of transgression (*Rom 6:12*).

But there are those who feel that Adam was created mortal and they teach that it was necessary for Adam to eat of the Tree of Life in order to arrest the decaying process which was inherently within him. As the Divine command was “of every tree thou mayest freely eat” (*Gen 2:16*), and as “every”, here must include the Tree of Life, so it is said, they must have eaten of this also. Yet, as we shall show, this is no more than supposition, as nowhere in Scripture is the Tree of Life spoken of in this way.

ADAM DID NOT EAT FROM THE TREE OF LIFE

Although it does not in itself prove our case, it should be pointed out that this is not a new idea by any means, it has been around for many years, and is a theory which Christadelphians have long resisted. In 1896, Bro Roberts spoke of it, calling it: “a plausible theory to the effect that we do not inherit death from Adam by any physical law, but merely by denial of access to the tree of life; that the sentence of death took no effect on Adam’s body, and therefore not in ours: that, in fact, we are the “very good” and uncursed Adamic nature ... that our nature is not an unclean and sinful nature: that there is no such thing as sin in the flesh ... *it is the old doctrine of Renunciationism in a new form. It is worse than Renunciationism ... while apparently an innocuous and harmless theory, it fatally corrupts and upsets and perverts the truth at its very threshold ...*” (*The Christadelphian, July 1896*).

These are strong words, even for Bro Roberts’ day! But when we carefully consider the logic of his reasoning, these words are fully justified. For, if Adam was created subject to decay already, then the wages of sin would not be death (*Rom 6:23*), but merely the exclusion from a particular life-sustaining fruit. This would then mean that the nature of man is not in itself under condemnation, as the Scriptures teach, but is still in the “very good” state in which it was first formed. And this would seriously undermine our understanding of how we are affected by Adam’s sin, for rather than inheriting a defiled, condemned nature, as Christadelphians have always believed (and as the Bible teaches, as we shall see in the next study), the only way in which we can be under condemnation is in some “legal” sense; because of Adam’s sin, we can’t eat from the tree! And this would totally nullify our understanding of the Sacrifice of Christ, for he would not need to overcome *the diabolos* in our sinful nature (*Heb 2:14*), and so overcome death itself, to stand before God as our rep-

representative (*Heb 9:24*). Rather, as our nature itself would not be the problem, he must have died as some kind of substitute, to suffer our punishment so that we might walk free. And these beliefs are held in great sincerity - by some of the churches around us. So then, although it may seem to be an “innocuous” suggestion, as Bro. Roberts wrote, it has serious ramifications which negates the whole of Scripture teaching concerning the Atonement.

What then, do the Scriptures teach? It is true that the Lord gave permission for Adam to eat “of every tree of the garden”, but nowhere in Scripture are we told Adam actually ate from the Tree of Life. At best, this can be no more than an inference. Permission was given, but nowhere are we told that Adam actually did eat from every single tree which existed in the garden. And in any case, the expression “of every tree”, does not mean any tree without exception - it did not include the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The Lord said “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but *of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it ...*” (*Gen 2:16,17*). When Adam was given permission to eat “of every tree”, as we shall see, this meant every tree which was placed in the garden for food, not every tree which existed - the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not formed for food, and was not to be so used.

But the Tree of Life was not formed for Adam to feed upon either! This is clear from Gen 2:9, where a distinction is made between trees for food, and those other two unique trees: “And out of the ground made Yahweh Elohim to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life *also* in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil”. The Lord made trees for food, and “the Tree of Life *also*”, that is, in addition to, and distinct from the other trees. Thus, God allowed Adam to eat of any food-bearing tree, but this did not include the Tree of Life, or the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which were in different categories of their own.

Again, we read of the Tree of Life in Gen 3:22, following the transgression of our first parents, and the subsequent covering of their nakedness: “And Yahweh Elohim said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and *live for ever*: Therefore Yahweh Elohim sent him forth from the Garden of Eden ...”. Here, the Tree is spoken of as giving everlasting life, and clearly if the Tree of Life gave immortality, then Adam couldn’t have eaten from it, or else he would still be alive! And in addition to this, the phrase “lest he ... take *also* of the tree of life” is used, which would also imply that he hadn’t previously eaten of the tree.

THE “EVIDENCE AGAINST” EXAMINED

But against this, those who press the idea tell us that although the Hebrew word for “also” is usually translated in this way, it can also mean “again”, which would suggest that Adam had eaten of the tree, and that he was being prevented from doing so *again*. And as to the Tree of life giving everlasting life, they tell

us that the Hebrew word translated “ever”, (as in “live for *ever*”), does not in itself contain the idea of eternity, (although it can be used in this sense), but it literally means a time of unspecified duration, and can also be used for short time periods. So, the Tree had previously been eaten, we are told, the eating of which gave them life for a limited period, which meant they had to keep eating of it at intervals to prevent death. Thus, the sentence against Adam needed only to be exclusion from this type of food, and he would naturally die.

But again, there are clear errors in this reasoning. Firstly, it is recognised that the AV rendering of these words is in accordance with the meaning that they can carry. And secondly, it is also recognised that the AV rendering is the usual way these words are translated - thus the case is far from proved. But in addition to this, there is a third point - surely there is something wrong with building a doctrinal structure, the logical outcome of which undermines fundamental points of our faith, upon a foundation which is no stronger than the *possible* meaning of two Hebrew words?

As a body, we have long recognised that the correct way of understanding Bible teaching, and learning doctrines, is by “comparing Scripture with Scripture”. So then, to learn about the Tree of Life, we need to consider what other parts of Scripture tell us.

A REWARD FOR FAITHFULNESS

In the Apocalypse, the Tree of Life is used to represent the reward given to the faithful: “to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (*Rev 2:7*). Here, being permitted to eat of the Tree of Life is used as a representation of the reward given to those who have “overcome” a period of trial. This clearly contrasts with the expulsion from the Edenic paradise of those who failed to overcome, in order to prevent them from partaking of the life-giving Tree, and also suggests to us that had Adam overcome, he also would be permitted to eat from the Tree, as a reward for his faithfulness.

We read of this antitypical tree again in *Rev 22:14*: “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life ... “. Similarly, we have another contrast with those who did not obey God’s commandment; they did not have a right to the tree of life, and were driven from its presence.

So then, from these two passages, we learn that as a symbol in the Apocalypse, the eating of the Tree of Life speaks of a reward given to those who endure and overcome a period of trial, who obey the commandments of God. Thus, it speaks of the bestowal of Immortality by the Lord Jesus Christ upon his brethren. We would suggest that if in Eden, the Tree was not present for this purpose, it would not be an appropriate symbol in the Apocalypse.

When we consider the literal Tree in Eden, every indication suggests that it's existence was ready for the rewarding of man's faithfulness (had he obeyed the Divine Command), with the bestowal of Immortality. Indeed, it's very name, (the "Tree of Lives", as it could be better rendered) is suggestive of this, it would give life to all those who would partake of it. In this, it stands as a great contrast to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which would cause death to those who transgressed the command in partaking of it. How appropriate for there to be a Tree which would give life consequent to obedience, and a Tree which would be the cause of death to those who transgressed.

This appears to be the reasoning of Bro. Thomas, for speaking of the Tree of Life in *Elpis Israel*, he wrote: "Its fruit, however, was of a quality entirely opposite to that of which they had eaten. Both trees bore good fruit; but that of the Tree of Life had the quality of perpetuating the living existence of the eater for ever ... It is probable that, had he (i.e. Adam) been obedient to the law of the Tree of Knowledge, *he would have been permitted to eat of the Tree of life*, after he had fulfilled his destiny as an animal man; and, instead of dying away into dust, have been "changed in the twinkling of an eye" (*E.I. p70*).

What this means, is that Adam and Eve had immortality to look forward to, had they remained obedient. But following the Fall, access to the Tree was barred, and the sinful pair were thrust out from it's presence. We can only begin to imagine how Adam and Eve must have felt outside of the Paradise in Eden, knowing they were to lead a life of travail and suffering, as dying they would surely die. At one time, they were faced with the prospect of being like the Elohim in nature - if they had obeyed, but now all was vanity as they were denied access to the Tree of Life, and condemned to return to the ground from whence they came.

But this hope was only deferred, not removed altogether! The Lord, in His Kindness and Mercy had ordained a "Way" back to the Tree, which was preserved by the Cherubim, and Flaming Sword, placed at the entrance to the garden (*Gen 3:24*). And, even before their expulsion from Eden, both Adam and Eve were taught the need for Sacrifice in order to provide a covering (atonement) for sin, a practice they were to continue at the entrance to the Way, as we learn from the opening verses of Gen 4.

This situation is aptly described in Proverbs thus: "*Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life*" (*Prov 13:12*). Despite the sickness of heart Adam would experience because of the condemnation of death, he nevertheless had a hope of life. As He stood at the entrance to the Garden (which was also the place where "the Way of the Tree of Life" began), to offer his Sacrifice, it is quite possible that he would be able to look beyond the sword of fire, wielded by the Cherubim of Glory, along "the Way", to the Tree in the distance, yielding it's life-giving fruits. Indeed, the role of the Cherubim to "keep", or "preserve" the way (*Gen 3:24*) would suggest this, for the record states that it wasn't simply the entrance to the way, but *the way itself*, which was preserved. The features of the Cherubim would teach him what he must become, being a depiction of the glorified Body of Christ (*Ezek 1*). And the fiery sword, being the means by which the Way was preserved would teach that he, as all who seek "glory and honour and immortality" (*Rom 2:7*) have the duty to preserve the Way of God (*Ps 119:33-35, cont Gen*

6:12) by the effective use of the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (*Eph 6:17*), cutting down the high things which exalt themselves against the knowledge of the Truth (*2Cor 10:5*). And being a Fiery sword, as well as speaking of the bright flame of the Word, it would also teach him that keeping the true Way is often accompanied with a fiery trial (*1Pet 4:12*) of affliction.

And so as Adam gazed past these things, along the “Way” to the Tree which was “afar off” (*Cp Heb 11:13*), in the midst of the Garden, he would be able to look beyond his sentence of death, and all that it entailed, past the depiction of what he must do to be saved, to the glory which lay ahead. And this place itself, being a place of Sacrifice, would teach that the means to access the things that this tree offered would ultimately be provided by the One who had the power to overcome, through death, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE TREE OF LIFE ELSEWHERE IN SCRIPTURE

The fruits of the work of Christ, is that a means is provided for those who would seek to “overcome” to access the antitypical Tree of life. Thus, we read in *Prov 11:30* “The fruit of the righteous (*or, Righteous One*) is a tree of life and he that winneth souls is wise”. The Lord Jesus is the One who is righteous and wise, and who is able to win (*or “take”*, as the word means), souls from the bondage of death, that they may be redeemed by his Sacrifice. Having truly “overcome”, he is himself the Antitypical Tree of which believers must partake in order to be ultimately glorified in immortality. As he said, “he that *eateth* my flesh, and drinketh my blood, *hath eternal life*”, and again, in a clear allusion to *Gen 3:22*, “he that *eateth* this bread *shall live for ever*” (*Jno 6:54,58*).

Here, we need to appreciate that the Lord is speaking as the Word made flesh (*Jno 1:14*). To partake of the True bread of life, which is the Lord Jesus as the antitypical Manna, is to consume the spiritual nourishment which comes from him, and this is the Word which he spoke. As it is written “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (*Mat 4:4*). The Words which proceed from God, then as spoken through His Son, and others constitute this Spiritual bread, which we must be partakers of. And the Lord Jesus, being the Word made flesh is an embodiment of that Word, the fulfilment of the things testified in the Oracles of God concerning him. Thus, to feed upon the word which testifies of the Saviour, is to feed upon the Saviour Himself. To feed upon this word, is to eat the flesh, and drink the blood of Christ (*Jno 6:56*), which will enable us to partake of the everlasting life he is able to impart, for to partake of him, is to partake of the Antitypical Tree of Life.

The Word of God, then, being the Word of life, those whose tongues are guided by, and influenced by it, themselves are able to impart words of life. As it is written: “a wholesome tongue is a Tree of Life” (*Prov 15:4*), words which have their fullest application to the Lord Jesus, whose words truly can give life to the hearers. But, this being so, it is not surprising for us to find the Tree of Life being spoken of in connection with the wisdom which comes from hearkening to these words. Thus, we read in *Prov 3* of the wisdom of God, “her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her, and happy is every one that retaineth her” (*Prov 3:17,18*). Wisdom, then, is a Tree of Life to those who are able, and willing to grasp hold of her. Being a Tree of Life, her “ways”, and her “paths” are paths of the Tree of Life (*cp Gen 3:24*) along which a person must walk in order to find life, and peace, a peace which “passeth all understanding” (*Phil 4:7*).

The ways of wisdom collectively form the “narrow” way which the Lord informs us leads us to life, as opposed to the “broad” way which leads to destruction. “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (*Mat 7:14*).

Just as Adam and Eve were faced with two trees, a tree of life, and a tree of death to those who partook of them, so their progeny are faced with two ways. And just as Adam was led by his wife to walk the path to the tree of death; this is the way the multitudes have chosen ever since; a way of wilful disobedience to the will of their Maker. The other way is a way, which must be sought for. Although it is partly obscured by the traditions of men, it is being kept open, by those who wield the sword of the spirit, in cutting away the thorns of apostasy. This way, although it must be diligently sought for in these days of corruptness and evil, is a *narrow* way. And being narrow, it is not designed to accommodate the ignorant multitudes who follow every whim and fancy of man, but those few who would walk it in faith, looking to the end, beyond the trial of this life, to the vision of the Tree of Life in the Kingdom, even the Lord Jesus himself (*Heb 12:1,2*).

A FURTHER POINT

But there is a further point to consider. The question naturally arises, “If the Tree of Life gave Immortality, why didn’t Adam and Eve simply go to that tree, and eat from it after the Fall?” Indeed, it would seem that they did have opportunity to go to the tree, as after they transgressed, and before their appearance before God, there was a time when they were hiding in the trees of the Garden. A possible explanation, is that there was no fruit on that tree for them to eat, for the Scriptures say nothing about it yielding fruit, prior to transgression. In Gen 1:14, we read that there were “seasons”, and we know that trees bear fruit according to their particular season. In “very good” conditions, trees would give fruit at their appointed time. And as the Tree of Life was designed for the reward of faithfulness, a season for it to bear fruit, surely would be when faith had been shown? And being a Type of Eternal Life in Christ, to those who are in need of healing from mortality, in the event of transgression taking place, another season for it to bear fruit would surely be after transgression, and after a way of reconciliation had been appointed? If there were fruit on this tree, we would suppose that there would be great urgency to drive man out from before it. Yet, in Genesis 3, we find that this was the *last* thing to be done, immediately following the appointment of Sacrifice.

So then, the presence of the Tree of Life in the Garden taught Adam and his wife that if they were faithful, their faithfulness would be rewarded. But even in the event of their transgression, there would be a Way of Life provided - on God’s terms, as it duly was. The expulsion of Adam and his wife from the Garden taught that the way of life can only be accessed by the means of God’s appointing. Thus, the tree stands as a powerful exhortation to us, not to devise fables which contradict the main thrust of Scripture, not to walk along the broad way that leads to destruction, but rather to understand and accept the way of Salvation, as appointed by the Lord Himself. We must seek wisdom, and then walk in it’s ways, which are the ways to the Tree of Life. And then, if we show ourselves to be faithful, if we “keep” God’s ways, if we seek to “overcome” sin, then by God’s grace, when the Lord returns, we might partake of the Antitypical Tree, and so be “partakers of the divine nature” even as the Lord has promised (*2Pet 1:4*).

Christopher Maddocks

The Wonder of The Transfiguration

It is worthy of note, in connection with this wonderful subject to see what the Master said in Matthew 16:28; “There are some standing here who shall not taste death till (or before) they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom”.

We know that they died, and that they will be resurrected when Christ comes into his kingdom, so that, what they witnessed upon the mount was in miniature.

It is very significant that it was after six days, which is typical of six thousand years since the creation, to be followed by “... a rest for the people of God” (Heb. 4:9).

He took Peter, James and John. These three occur together seven times. He “led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves: and *he was transfigured* before them” (Mark. 9:2). The word “transfigured” is the Greek *mortamorphoo*, from which comes our word metamorphosis. It refers to when a caterpillar turns into a butterfly—the word is used four times, twice “transfiguration”, twice “transformed,” (Rom. 12:2, 2 Cor. 3:18). “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed” (1 Cor. 15:51-52). This is exactly what happened to Christ on the mount. Luke tells us that he went into the mountain to pray (9:28-29). It was then that His remarkable change came: “the appearance of his face was altered, and his robe became white and glistening”. “His face shone like the sun, (Mat. 17:2) - like, we might add, the face of Moses, and even his clothing was “white as the light”. We are reminded of Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 4:6: “God ... has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”.

Matthew records “Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with him” (17:3). Mark and Luke tell us the same, but Luke also tells us what they were talking about: they “spoke of his decease” which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem (9:31). The word “decease” is in the Greek “*exodus*”, which means “departure”, as in Hebrews 11:22. So Moses and Elijah were talking to Jesus of his forthcoming death, and his Exodus from the grave.

John referred to this wonderful event: 1:4: “we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”. In 1 Peter 1:16-17 we read that “we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory when such a voice came to him from the Excellent Glory: this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased”. The two words used by Peter, “honour” and “glory” are used in the Septuagint in Exodus 28:2 of the High Priest’s garments, which therefore represent the glory of Immortality. Paul uses the same two words in Hebrews 2 when quoting from Psalm 8 and referring to Christ, “you have made him a little lower than the angels; you have crowned him *with glory and honour* and set him over the works of your hands. You have put all things in subjection under His feet”. So that he is now, what he was for that short period upon the mount. This is of course beyond our comprehension, but it enabled Yahshua “to be able to taste the joy set before him, endured the stake, despising the shame”. Peter

was anxious to keep Moses and Elijah, so asked, “Let us make three tabernacles: one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah,” ... while he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them ... and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “this is my beloved Son. Hear Him!”. The voice of the Almighty made them afraid as it did with Israel and even Moses. Christ then told them to fear not and in 17:8, “When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only,” which clearly shows that they did see Moses and Elijah, and not an apparition.

Many think it was only a vision, which assumes that Jesus was talking to an apparition, which would not have done much for Christ or his disciples. But was it a vision as such? We read in verse 9, “tell *the vision* to no man”. The Greek word for “vision” is *horama*, a spectacle, - a thing seen, which can mean a vision, or something literal. This word is used in Acts 7:31 “the sight” which was certainly not a vision: the angel was literally in the bush. So Moses and Elijah were there, on the mount with Jesus: it was a representation of Jesus coming in his kingdom (Mat. 16:28).

For Moses to be there entailed his resurrection, for we know that Moses died and was buried. Moses represented the Law—the Law that could not give life. It was a temporary addition to the Abrahamic covenant because of sin, says Paul in Galatians 3:19. So Moses could not lead Israel into the land of promise, he had to die, so the resurrection of Moses, represents the resurrection of the dead, when the Son of Man comes into his kingdom, whilst Elijah whose death is not recorded, represents those who are “alive and remain” (1 Thes. 4:17).

So we see that the Transfiguration was in fact a wonderful prophecy. It was then, when Peter James and John saw his Glory as recorded in John 1:14: “we beheld his glory” - also 2 Peter 1:16-17:

“for we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God that Father honour and glory when such a voice came to him from the Excellent Glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Ted Bailey

God alone can set apart and make holy. An act or thing, then, to be made holy to God, must be according to His appointment; and whatever is done according to divine ordination, God does. “The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for such are the worshippers the Father requires. God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23). To worship is to honour, and to honour God is to do what He requires. Honour emanating from the will of man is “will worship” and therefore unacceptable to God. Spiritual worship according to truth, is the honour He requires. The worship appointed by the Spirit, through the Apostles, is the spiritual worship; and is composed of certain acts set forth in the Scriptures of Truth.

John Thomas