

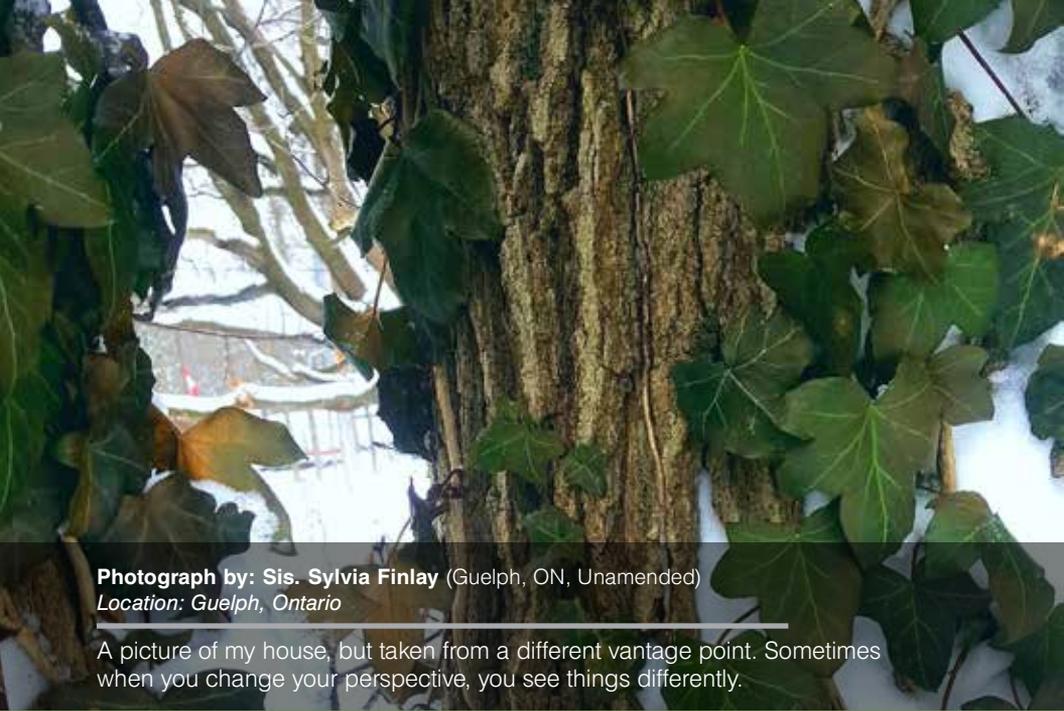
TIDINGS

Volume 84, Number 1, January 2021

A NEW KIND OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Here is God's wonderful message to us:

“Stop thinking about sin and all your failures;
rather, focus daily on trusting Me and following
faithfully My Son.”



Photograph by: Sis. Sylvia Finlay (Guelph, ON, Unamended)

Location: Guelph, Ontario

A picture of my house, but taken from a different vantage point. Sometimes when you change your perspective, you see things differently.

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TIDINGS
OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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TIDINGS

Volume 84, Number 1 / January, 2021



IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial — Waiting at the River Ahava	4
Life Application — Maximizing Spiritual Contributions in Retirement, <i>Chuck Link</i>	8
— All One in Church (6), <i>Carmel Page</i>	12
Consolation and Exhortation — A New Kind of Righteousness, <i>Ted Sleeper</i>	14
— Paul's Transformed Source of Confidence and Implications for Us, <i>Jessica Miller</i>	20
Music and Praise — www.jehoshaphatmusic.com , <i>Dan Osborn</i>	25
Exposition — Chiastic Structure (2), <i>Richard Morgan</i>	29
— Men Loved Darkness, <i>Caleb Osborn</i>	30
First Principles — The Rich Man, Lazarus and Abraham (3), <i>Steven Cox</i>	38
Take a Marginal Note — Compacted Together, <i>Dave Jennings</i>	42
Preaching and Teaching — La Paz, Bolivia, <i>Isaiah and Rosie Tunnell</i>	44
Ecclesial News	46
Thoughts on the Way — Where did Bible Marking Come From?, <i>George Booker</i>	50

WAITING AT THE RIVER AHAVA

By Dave Jennings

ECCLESIAS are our cities of refuge in this life. In a world filled with chaos and confusion, our ecclesia is the place where we find like-minded brothers and sisters, with similar priorities. Fellowship is all about participation, and our ecclesias thrive when all are engaged in worship and work. Yet sometimes ecclesias can have a great imbalance between those who are performing the work and those who are not. It can be a source of great frustration and lead to resentment. Some have said that 80% of the work in some ecclesias is done by 20% of the members. If true, this surely cannot be how our Lord intended ecclesial life. But how can ecclesias realize a robust engagement of all brothers and sisters? Is it even possible?

THE WISDOM OF EZRA

As we read through Ezra in November, it was striking to see the wisdom of Ezra's leadership for a people who were

not fully united. I was struck by how his patient forbearance with the Levites and temple servants (Nethinim) allowed for inclusion of brethren that would otherwise have been left behind. Let's take a brief look at how he encouraged these brethren and completely changed their lives.

It had been a time of great hope for the Jews that were living in captivity in Babylon. The initial decree had allowed many to return to Jerusalem and start the important work of rebuilding the Temple, with the blessing of the Persian government. The altar had been restored and the foundation laid, though there must have been a sense that not everything was going as planned. The adversaries of the land first attempted to infiltrate and upset the work, then they turned to harassment. Finally, the adversaries turned to the Persian government to lobby the court of Cyrus to have the work stopped. It was briefly successful,

Each member of the body of Christ is indispensable and offers a vitality that is critical. When parts of the body are not engaged, we all lose.

and the work was abandoned for a time. The priority shifted to enhancing their own homes in the cities outside Jerusalem. Jerusalem lay largely in ruins, and the Temple foundation lay bare. God sent Haggai and Zechariah to prophesy to the Jews in the land to get back to work.

After a check of the royal archives by Darius, the legitimacy of the work was re-established, and now additional funding was provided for the work. The adversaries were made aware that any further attempts to inhibit the work could lead to their own execution. Everything was ready to go now. Vessels of gold and silver were retrieved to be restored to the house of God. Darius specifically stated in his proclamation that the Levites *“that were minded of their own free will”* (Ezra 7:13) to go up to Jerusalem could now do so. It was abundantly clear God was blessing them and clearing the way for the great work to be accomplished.

But the threat to the work now moved to becoming a “people problem.” Ezra had ample material resources, but would he have the necessary workers to undertake the challenges in Jerusalem? There were nearly 1,500 brethren that were packed and ready to go with Ezra back to Jerusalem. No doubt, enthusiasm varied throughout the camp. Some were filled with excitement about being part of this great and meaningful work and saw it

so compelling that they were willing to make great personal sacrifices. Others may not have been as eager but felt it their duty to make the 700-mile journey and do the needed work. What lay ahead for them all was great uncertainty. They were transporting huge treasures which were entrusted to them by Artaxerxes. They were without Persian guards and an easy target for robbers. However, the vision of what could be accomplished gave them courage in the LORD for a successful journey. They knew God was with them.

DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE

But, instead of leaving straightaway, Ezra wisely chose to gather this band outside Babylon, on the banks of the Ahava River, on the northwestern side of Babylon. The group dwelt in tents for four days. We can only imagine the infectious enthusiasm that was sweeping the camp. There are few greater joys in life than when brethren undertake a work in the Truth where they are aligned and have a common vision. However, as Ezra began to walk through the camp, he noticed an absence of Levites. Not one Levite was in the camp! How could this be? The king had specifically given them opportunity to leave (Ezra 7:13). How is it possible that those who were designated to be spiritual leaders had chosen not to be part of this great work?

The very ones that were to be joined to this great spiritual revival with Ezra were choosing to stay comfortably in Babylon.

Ezra dispatched “*men of understanding*” (Ezra 8:16) to appeal to the Levites lingering in Babylon. Other versions translate this “*men of discernment*” (NLT) or “*men of insight.*” (ESV) It’s an interesting phrase, seen previously in 1 Chronicles 12:32 about the men of Issachar, who “*had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.*” These wise and prudent men were ideal for making the appeal. They understood the work and had insight into what it would require. They likely had a personal relationship with each of the Levites. The message of these men landed on open ears and encouraged the Levites to conclude what they’d known all along—that they were needed for this great work. The ecclesia was depending on them! The appeal was effective, and 38 Levites and 220 (temple servants) joined the volunteers at River Ahava. Now, with all the

necessary parts of the body intact, Ezra proclaimed a fast, and there was a time of intense prayer to seek the direction of God on their journey.

ENERGIZE THE ECCLESIA TO EMULATE EZRA

In ecclesial life, it is not uncommon for us to face similar situations. Few can say they are unaware of ecclesial plans and the need for help. But there are times where we find a divide in how our members are engaged in the work. It can lead to silos, camps of members that take one position or the other. There can be significant differences of opinion about the value of the work and its goals. Often this can lead to an unhealthy identification of those who work and those who do not. The engaged ones charge off to do what they believe is needed, and the disengaged often can feel unneeded, offended or even shamed. Sometimes repeated appeals from the platform are made for all to join the work, but this rarely seems to move the needle.



Ezra knew that the Levites were key to the success of this great spiritual revival. He did not shame them or coerce them. Rather, he paused and utilized those who would be most able to speak to the hearts of these men. When the ecclesia agrees to do a work, it is important to find a way to make a personal appeal for all to join the work. Let every member know how important they are to the success of the project. Let everyone know that we really do not want to “break camp” without them. Try to find work for them to do, even if it is a small task.

In our ecclesias, we need to make every attempt to invite and encourage all brothers and sisters to join in the work. Perhaps part of the encouragement is to highlight why the work is so compelling and why their contributions are critical for success. Then, allow sufficient time for them to respond without coercion or manipulation. When it is time for the work to begin, look positively at whatever volunteers the Lord does provide, and be thankful. Before any work starts, involve all in dedication and prayer. Then get on with it!

Perhaps your mind has taken you to ecclesial projects, such as preaching seminars in the community or a major project working together at the ecclesia. It is so easy for some to be left behind and for the motivated to charge forward with the work. Sometimes it makes the busy ones feel self-important when they inaccurately compare themselves to others not as involved. In many cases, it makes the disengaged feel that they have little ownership for the work of the ecclesia. This can lead to guilt or resentment or a lack of feeling

part of the group. Further, it can be disheartening for some to do work in the ecclesia and make suggestions for improvement, only to have it negatively received.

DO THE MATH

In the end, Ezra netted 17% more volunteers for the work by thoughtfully pausing and encouraging. The Levites only made up 2.5% of those returning but were essential. Could your ecclesia benefit from having 17% more workers? How about twice as many? Are we reaching out to those who may be shy in volunteering or are unlikely to be normally considered for certain works? Some of these same Levites that came along with Ezra to Jerusalem, also stood on the wooden pulpit, reading and explaining the Law to the people. They led great spiritual reforms that would be accomplished within just 100 days. In a unique way, these Levites experienced a joy and fulfillment in their service that they could never have initially imagined.

Each member of the body of Christ is indispensable and offers a vitality that is critical. When parts of the body are not engaged, we all lose. Rather than criticizing or manipulating compliance to the work of the ecclesia, let us instead adopt encouragement and clearly articulate why all are needed. As the Apostle Paul wrote, “*All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it.*” (1 Cor 12:27). May all of us indeed be working together in these Last Days.

Dave Jennings



LIFE APPLICATION

MAXIMIZING SPIRITUAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN RETIREMENT

By Chuck Link

RETIREMENT has been defined as “withdrawal from one’s position or occupation or from active working life.”¹ For many, retirement is freedom from the daily 9-5 grind, a time to rest, to relax, to travel, to dabble in hobbies, to visit the kids, etc. However, for some in the secular world, retirement is not always a fully welcomed change. They derive their self-worth, identity and purpose from an occupation. Consequently, when they retire, they may feel adrift and melancholy.

From the dawn of civilization to the industrial revolution, vocational retirements in the private sector were virtually unheard of. There were no golden parachutes, corporate pensions, 401K plans or Social Security. The elderly worked their entire lives, though some transitioned to less strenuous work while mentoring those younger and stronger. This was mostly made

possible because of multi-generational family living arrangements and shorter life spans.

The first secular retirement pensions went to Roman Empire soldiers.² Almost 2,000 years later, with the industrial revolution expanding, the private sector sought a younger more productive work force and began offering pensioned retirements. However, in the 1980s companies began contributing less to pension plans and by 2018, only 12% of American workers in the private sector were participating in a Defined Benefit pension retirement plan.³ Corporate contribution cutbacks have caused many to begin saving for retirement earlier. This is a wise implementation of Luke 14:28, where the advice is to calculate the cost of a project before starting it.

However, God doesn't want us to covet material possessions; rather, He wants our hearts focused on spiritual riches (Isaiah 55:1-2; Luke 12:13-21). In Jesus' Parable of the Rich Fool, the man planned an early retirement. Instead of being satisfied with the blessings God had already bestowed on him, he devoted his time to building bigger barns and filling them with more goods. He had neglected to use his possessions for others. And he did not know he never would enjoy those riches. *"So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."* (Luke 12:21).

SPIRITUAL RETIREMENT

The biggest mistake we can make is to retire spiritually. Retirees may face various challenges including loneliness, loss of loved ones, aches and pains, short-term memory loss and other health-related issues. But these trials can be opportunities for our community of retired believers to offer love and support. Simple kindnesses like a phone call, an email, a letter, a card, a visit, a shared meal, etc. benefit both receiver and giver—and compassionate deeds are as done unto Christ (Matt 25:34-40). But, for those in Christ, vocational retirement provides additional time, freedom and opportunity to maximize service as ambassadors of Christ. It is a time filled with purpose, value and joy. God provides spiritual opportunities befitting retirees. Expertise, free time and the ability to travel unhindered by employment are gifts not to be wasted. A retiree might be ideally suited for the following: long-term missionary work, relocation to a small ecclesia,

editor of a Christadelphian magazine, book writing or production of online materials including videos.

Some retirees or their spouses, due to the ravages of age or illness, may sometimes need our constant attention. But retirees in these demanding circumstances may be able to contribute in other ways such as helping to fund Christadelphian charities.

Retirement offers rest from vocational toil. But retirement and old age are not a time to spiritually rest and dry up, for *"they still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green."* (Psa 92:14 ESV). Those with godly wisdom never spiritually retire. Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life (1 Sam 7:15-17). The prophetess Anna contributed to God's service though advanced in years (Luke 2:36-38). Samuel and Anna each made a free-will decision to forever serve a loving master. They metaphorically had their ears pierced to Christ, the door to eternal life; they are among the sheep who hear and respond to the shepherd's voice (Exod 21:5-6; John 10:4-5, 7-9).

The Apostle Paul, a tent maker by trade, worked hard day and night with his own hands supporting himself and others (Acts 18:1-4; 20:34-35; 1 Thess 2:9). And Paul's lengthy list of spiritual accomplishments was without the time-freeing benefit of a vocational retirement.

There was a partial retirement for Levite males who served in the tabernacle:

"Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'This is what applies to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they shall enter

to perform service in the work of the tent of meeting. But at the age of fifty years they shall retire from service in the work and not work anymore. They may, however, assist their brothers in the tent of meeting, to fulfill an obligation,” (Num 8:23-26 NASB).

Job observed the aged as having wisdom and understanding (Job 12:12). Peter exhorted spiritual elders to shepherd the flock, though not in a domineering way, but by example and in humility (1 Pet 5:1-5). Samuel, Anna, and other sheep helped shepherd the flock in times of old. They prayed to God for guidance and help. We also benefit from today's experienced sheep who have prayerfully responded to the good Shepherd's call. They too help guide the flock but with the advantages of vocational retirement, plus modern advancements in communication and travel. Faithful retirees can additionally help the Bride of Christ grow spiritually not only by sharing knowledge, insights, but also with their contagious enthusiasm and godly character. All these aspects allow retiree believers to maximize their spiritual contributions in the Lord's vineyard.

ENCOURAGING EXAMPLES

One brother seized early retirement joyfully, so his wife could join him on extended missionary visits. During a journey to Africa he obtained permission from CBM, Meal-a-Day, and re-opened a school for blind and handicapped children under the Christadelphian name. Because he was retired, he had opportunity to travel extensively while raising funds for the improved re-opening. A Christadelphian brother managed the

school. Many were helped with sight-restoring operations and procedures enabling the lame to walk. Attending children were taught reading, writing, arithmetic and farming skills enabling them to later survive a challenging environment. They were taught God's Word, some using Braille Bibles, and with God's grace a number were baptized, including some who had heard of, but never attended, the school. More recently, he and his wife have shared the gospel elsewhere resulting in additional baptisms.

A sister retired due to a medical condition depriving her of the ability to speak. But she developed PowerPoint presentations to facilitate teaching. She used it for Sunday school classes and, in faraway South Africa, presented a weekend women's retreat while another read out loud for her. She also used Zoom at a sister's meeting in South Africa. Retirement also allowed mission trips to Jamaica where she provided lesson plans and supplies for a vacation Bible school so a young brother could teach. Additionally, she continues to encourage believers with letters, emails and spiritual contributions online.

Another sister is on a disability retirement. Asked about coping under adversity she replied, "God won't test us beyond what we can bear, but He may test us beyond what we think we can bear." With limited resources she created TV programs promoting God's Word. She also reaches out, inspiring the brotherhood by writing letters, while living in relative isolation.

When another brother retired as a teacher, he became a domestic missionary. He traveled the USA helping and growing ecclesias in

various ways—distributing leaflets, visiting contacts and so forth. One of his “contacts” was a relocated Christadelphian from overseas who happily joined the local ecclesia. The retired brother also traveled to contacts in isolation leading to several baptisms. He had a talent for getting invited in the homes of contacts by personally delivering requested free literature. Once inside, provided there was interest, he utilized a first principles flip chart beginning with the promises to Abraham. He carefully planned out every day, thus optimizing time. He helped Christadelphian families in financial need from his own pocket. One could confide in him and ask for spiritual guidance, knowing he wasn’t a gossip. He contributed by writing for Christadelphian internet sites. Despite being vocationally retired, he never spiritually retired. Now he sleeps awaiting the resurrection, having run his race.

The Bible instructs us to be spiritual runners with a strong finish. Paul counseled, “*Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.*” (1 Cor 9:24 ESV). There have been many outstanding runners over the years who won an Olympic gold prize: Abebe Bikila, Dave Wottle, Usain Bolt, to name a few. While their races were impressive, they’re

all part of the secular rat race, where one hopes to win a temporal prize. But the retiree believer pursues an eternal prize. Among those pursuing an eternal prize was a retired brother, hampered by illness much of his life. He loved God and wanted to be useful, but was nearly blind and suffered from other maladies. How could he spiritually contribute to his ecclesia? He was understandably frustrated and discouraged. Some reached out to help him, but without much success. However, God arranged for a persuasive elderly retiree brother to encourage and explain how the ecclesia sorely needed him. This approach proved most effective, and he changed more than anyone I’ve ever known. He suddenly became full of hope and joy.

Toward the end of his race, as he ran toward the finish line, he was literally smiling. A memorable moment was when he prepared, and without notes, gave an exhortation. In it he referred to a song where the lyrics asked, “What’s love got to do with it?” And he answered, “Everything.” He finished his spiritual marathon sprinting, enduring to the end, and inspiring those who knew him to never spiritually retire.

Chuck Link,
(Moorestown, NJ)

1 Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition, principal copyright 2003.

2 Clark R.L., Craig L.A., Wilson J.W., A History of Public Sector Pensions in the United States, 2003, Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. Archived from the original (PDF) 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Retirement

3 Pension Rights Center: How many American workers participate in workplace retirement plans? Pension Rights Center, July 15, 2019, <https://www.pensionrights.org/publications/statistic/how-many-american-workers-participate-workplace-retirement-plans>



LIFE APPLICATION

ALL ONE IN CHURCH
CHILDREN

By Carmel Page

BABIES ruin everything. Your figure, sleep, carpets, routines, finances, social life and peace of mind. Everything! I know this because I had one, and even though he had done all of this, we then chose to have another.

We were very blessed but not everyone is as fortunate. Not everyone finds someone to have a family with and not all can conceive. Not all children are healthy, not all children have long lives, not all children are conceived in happiness and not all parents stay together. In fact, it is hard to think of a more emotive subject than children and families. People love children, but they stir up many other emotions too.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Churches are good for families: from toddler groups to Sunday school

and youth weekends, we provide for all ages. I believe my children have benefited greatly from our ecclesial life. But I remember thinking how much parents need spiritual stamina because we missed many services, and parenting is hard. We all can help make life easier for families if we are flexible and plan thoughtfully.

- Families may arrive late. Walking into a silent hall can be daunting. Why don't we welcome latecomers from the platform and thank them for their effort in getting to the meeting?
- Our Memorial Services are designed around the spiritual needs of adults, but if our members have children, we must accept them too. Telling parents how much joy you feel at hearing their baby gurgle

and play will help them to be more relaxed during the service.

- A comfortable nursery, well equipped with toys, where parents can listen to the service helps to support young families. Do you ever offer childcare so parents can enjoy worshipping together?
- A few lively action songs may help the little ones. Giving them a few minutes to share their Sunday school lesson will help them feel special and know they belong.
- After Meeting, children who have been still and quiet will need to run around. Plan a safe space where they can do this and offer to keep an eye on them so that parents get some much-needed social time.
- Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility. Have you child-proofed your church? Do you store cleaning products, thumbtacks and the toolbox safely?
- If a child has a disability, then the whole ecclesial family needs to educate themselves about it. Tactless questions can unknowingly cause much sorrow for the child and parents. Could you arrange a fundraiser for a relevant charity to show your support and spread insight?

HELP NEEDED!

We discovered it takes one adult to care for one baby and a second adult to care for the adult who is caring for the baby. I cannot work out how any single parent manages with a newborn. Even getting to church must be an exhausting task for them. Some parents may also feel judged for being single. Nevertheless,

Children are a gift from God, and we must treasure them and support their parents.

everyone needs to know they and their children are loved and valued.

And in the middle of the hurly-burly of family-focused activity how do we make space for those who couldn't have, or lost, a child? Parents often talk about how tiring family life is. This does not give comfort to those who crave that exhaustion of having a little person totally dependent on them. One thing we all can be sensitive about is the practice of asking women about their fertility:

“Isn't it time you had one of your own?”

“Are you planning to have a family or are you a career girl?”

How did insensitive comments like these ever become normal?

Children are a gift from God, and we must treasure them and support their parents. They give us new aspirations, new ways of looking at the world, new laughs, new joys and new hope for the future. And as Jesus himself said, “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.” (Mark 9:37 NIV).

*Carmel Page
(Sheffield, UK)*

A NEW KIND OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

By Ted Sleeper

DAVID'S EXPERIENCE

THERE are two Psalms David wrote about his sin with Bathsheba: Psalm 51 and Psalm 32. Both are powerful descriptions of the devastating effects of sin in our lives and hearts and the path to restoration and forgiveness with God:

“When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You In a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him.” (Psa 32:3-6 NKJV).¹

What was particularly grievous for David about his sin of adultery and then murder was that God made no provision in His Law for such sins. There was no offering David could bring, nothing he could do to repair the immeasurable harm he had done no matter how intense and sincere his confession of sin and his repentance:

“The man who commits adultery with another man’s wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.” (Lev 20:10).

“The murderer shall surely be put to death.” (Num 35:16) (“Surely” is a Hebrew intensive which means the murderer will certainly, without fail, be put to death. It was what God said to Adam: “You shall surely die.” (Gen 2:17).)

David is not only appealing to the God he has come to know as merciful and compassionate, but he is also at pains to make clear he is the only one at fault.

So, David was a dead man, without hope, without any recourse under the Law of God. What was he to do? What could he do? He did the only thing he had learned to do through all the experiences of his life: He threw himself upon the mercy of God.

“A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.” (Psa 51:1-4).

Notice that David is not only appealing to the God he has come to know as merciful and compassionate, but he is also at pains to make clear he is the **only one** at fault. There is no blame-shifting; he alone had committed these two grievous sins. God is just and righteous; David is the sinner, and thus he says, *“You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.”* (Psa 51:4).

Yet God forgave David, **despite** what the Law of Moses required! There would be consequences necessary

for David’s salvation, but equally important, so that none could accuse God of partiality or injustice. In David’s life, God would clearly be shown to be just and still be a justifier of those who would put their trust fully in Him.

And herein we are presented with powerful instruction about what God really wants to find in us:

“For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise.” (Psa 51:16-17).

Consider the details from these verses:

- “broken” = to be utterly broken; like the hail did to the Egyptian trees; like Israel had to do to the images of false gods.
- “a broken spirit” = that human spirit that would seek to justify itself, deny any wrongdoing, seek to vindicate itself: this is the spirit that is utterly broken. It is the opposite of a “proud spirit.”
- “contrite” is very similar to “broken” = crushed to pieces.
- “a broken and a contrite heart” = a conscience and heart overwhelmed and crushed by the enormity of one’s sins and failure to remain true and faithful to God. A heart where the obstinacy of pride is crushed small and completely broken down.

These are the responses God is looking for in us. These He will not despise, no matter how horrendous the sin.

BASIS OF FORGIVENESS — RIGHT ATTITUDE OF MIND

Amazing, isn't it? God forgave David based on an attitude of mind that was within him, **not** on something David did or could do—which in this case he couldn't; he was utterly helpless in the face of these sins.

Compare this to Jesus' well-known parable about the Pharisee, who trusted that he was righteous, and the tax collector:

*Sin is about
so much more
than what we
do or don't do.
It is our failure
to be all that
God desires!*

“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—

extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9-14).

The tax collector was greatly humbled by the consciousness of his own unworthiness, his own failure to live up to what God desired. This man threw

himself upon the mercy of God.

God's response? *“This man went down...justified rather than the other.”* (v. 14). That is, God forgave this man and counted him to be a righteous man before Him. However, the Pharisee who thought he had done everything necessary to be righteous before God, **didn't** go back home a righteous man in God's sight!

THE OLD RIGHTEOUSNESS

We can understand why the arrogance of this Pharisee did not find any acceptance with God, but not all Pharisees were like this. Many were deeply religious men seeking to live their lives in faithfulness to God and His Law. Remember that the essence of God's Law through Moses rested on the two great commandments: love God and love one's neighbor. The multitude of do's and don'ts were only an elaboration of **how** one was to love God and love one's neighbor.

What was the problem then? As guidance for daily living, the Law of Moses was, **and still is**, wonderful instruction (e.g., see Lev 19). The problem was not in what the Law taught. It was in what men thought it could do to give them approval before God. The Pharisee thought he would be able to go down to his house justified, a righteous man, **because of his deeds and his blameless life**.

But the Law couldn't do this, it could only show how far short we fall from being fully and truly like God:

“Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin ...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom 3:19-20, 23).

Sometimes I think we can misunderstand sin. It is much more than what we do or don't do. Ultimately, it is our failure to be **all** that God desires!

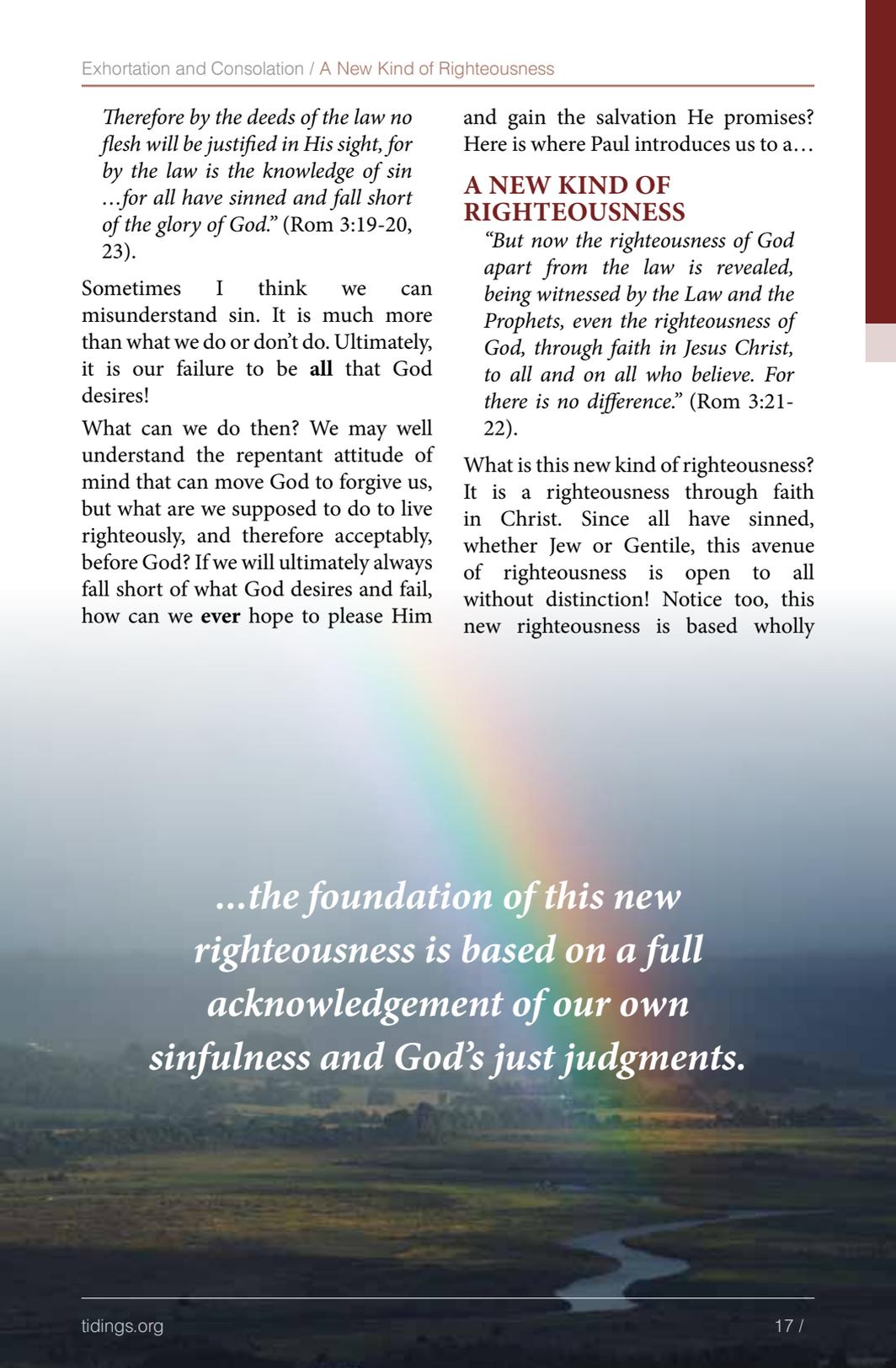
What can we do then? We may well understand the repentant attitude of mind that can move God to forgive us, but what are we supposed to do to live righteously, and therefore acceptably, before God? If we will ultimately always fall short of what God desires and fail, how can we **ever** hope to please Him

and gain the salvation He promises? Here is where Paul introduces us to a...

A NEW KIND OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference.” (Rom 3:21-22).

What is this new kind of righteousness? It is a righteousness through faith in Christ. Since all have sinned, whether Jew or Gentile, this avenue of righteousness is open to all without distinction! Notice too, this new righteousness is based wholly



...the foundation of this new righteousness is based on a full acknowledgement of our own sinfulness and God's just judgments.

on the grace of God freely given to those of faith. It is not something we can somehow earn by our religious behavior, no matter how devout, for...

“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” (Rom 3:23-24).

Notice again how the foundation of this new righteousness is based on a full acknowledgement of our own sinfulness and God’s just judgments. Just like David, when God is justified by us and we take full responsibility for what we have done:

“whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus”. (Rom 3:25-26).

But what exactly is this new kind of righteousness? How am I supposed to live before God now?

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH

“What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who

does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.” (Rom 4:1-5).

Did you see what Paul said? This new righteousness, the “it” in verse 3, is our faith. When Abraham believed God’s Word without reservation in Genesis 15, God said, in essence, “that conviction of yours, Abraham, that unshakeable confidence you have put in Me and in my promises is your righteousness before me!

Paul brought this point home with another example from Abraham’s life:

“who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore ‘it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.” (Rom 4:18-24).

Here is what is wonderful about this new righteousness. When we spend all our time thinking about how not to sin, guess what we spend our time thinking about? Even psychologists

have come to recognize that if you want to put away old habits of thought and behavior, you must replace them with new thoughts and behaviors.

So, here is God's wonderful message to us: "Stop thinking about sin and all your failures; rather, focus daily on trusting Me and following faithfully My son. Don't waver in your trust so that I can work out my salvation in you through My son!" As James so eloquently argued: "*Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works!*" (Jas 2:18).

We can now appreciate more fully Jesus' appeal to each one of us: "*Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" (Matt 11:28) Here is the gracious invitation to stop struggling against the heavy burden of sin: "*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke [the yoke of faith] is easy and my burden [learning to trust God] is light.*" (Matt 11:29).

Listen in conclusion to Paul's insightful words:

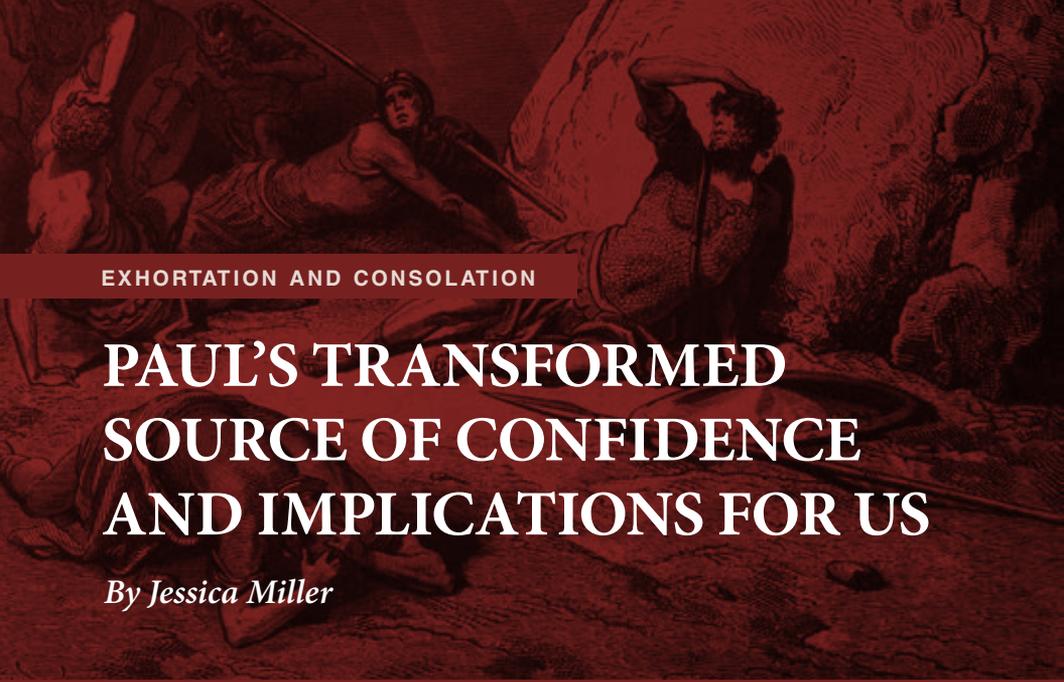
"We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain." (Gal 2:15-21).

Ted Sleeper
(San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

1 All Scriptural quotations are from the New King James version

Editors Note: Bro. Ted has announced his retirement from The Tidings after many years of service. We are thankful to have him continue to share his thoughts with us through articles such as this.

"...I will give you rest."



EXHORTATION AND CONSOLATION

PAUL'S TRANSFORMED SOURCE OF CONFIDENCE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR US

By Jessica Miller

THE Apostle Paul knew all about confidence prior to his conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). “If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more,” he wrote to the Philippian believers (Phil 3:4). Paul was a “Hebrew of Hebrews,” a Pharisee with impeccable credentials (vv. 5-6). But he tossed his claim to natural glory aside when he realized, in a literal flash, that his confidence was misplaced. In that moment, he traded temporal glory for eternal. And ultimately death for life. This trade is one that all believers must make, each on our own individual roads to Damascus.

Paul summarized the transformational impact his conversion had on the source of his confidence in Philippians 3:7-9:

“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value

of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.”¹

Paul’s newfound understanding radically changed his life and, presumably, his eternal destination. Instead of being confident in his own abilities, he had learned to “*put no confidence in the flesh,*” and glory only in the Lord (Phil 3:3). This had a profound impact on his actions going forward. In his letters, Paul demonstrated an absolute certainty regarding his salvation. In 2 Tim 4:7-8 he told Timothy,

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the

faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

But he did not connect the security of his salvation to his own merit. He never forgot the sins committed in his previous life. In 1 Timothy 1:15, Paul called himself the “*foremost of all*” sinners, having committed blasphemy and persecution of believers through his ignorant zeal (v. 13). But following his conversion into the saving name of Jesus, rather than crediting his faithful attendance to the Law, his lineage or his prestige as a Pharisee as the source of his salvation, Paul emphasized the mercy and grace of his Savior (vv. 13,14) and the faith and love it inspired in his actions (1 Tim 1:12; 4:8).

As a result of Paul’s spiritual recalibration, he wrote profound passages that can help inspire confidence in our own lives. In Philippians 4:13, Paul spoke of the ability to be content (“*possessed of unfailing strength*”—Strong’s Concordance) under any circumstances, saying, “*I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*” In Romans 5, a chapter that describes the complete unworthiness of mankind and the delight God has in redeeming us anyway, Paul offered a tremendous expression of the practical impact Christ’s sacrifice had on his life.

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand;

and we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” (vv. 1-5).

Paul exalted no more in his own accomplishments, but now in his tribulations. Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 12:7, Paul acknowledged the “*thorn in the flesh*” that kept him from “*exalting*” himself. Through the trial of praying for the removal of this natural deficiency (whatever it may have been) and not having that petition granted, Paul learned an important lesson which he passed along to the Corinthians:

“And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Cor 12:9).

Paul’s confidence in his salvation was not just an intellectual exercise. It impacted the way he lived his life every day. In 2 Cor 11:24-28, we read about the massive trials he went through for his faith:

“Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned,

Most of the hardships Paul suffered were, in some sense, self-selected.

three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.”

Most of the hardships Paul suffered were, in some sense, self-selected. God chose him for this purpose (Acts 9:16), but Paul still had to decide to live the life that was laid out for him. He faced the dangers described above because he made the choice to live confidently and courageously, no matter the cost. We have this decision to make as well. Our trials will be different, but our attitude should be the same.

Today the world encourages a type of confidence, but it is closer to the kind Paul possessed prior to his conversion than the kind God desires. The world tells us to be confident in our abilities and accomplishments, our possessions, our bodies and our sexuality, all the while bombarding us with images and accounts of people we can never live up to in any of those areas. There’s a key word often put in front of the type of confidence the world wants us to have—**self**. But we are setting ourselves

up for failure when we trust in our **selves**. The word “self” is rarely spoken of positively in the Bible. We read of self-indulgence (Matt 23:25), self-exaltation (Jer 48:29), self-will (Titus 1:7), and self-made religion (Col 2:23). In 2 Timothy 3:2, Paul criticizes those who are “*lovers of self*.” The flesh isn’t something to glory in (Phil 3:3); it’s something to be crucified (Rom 6:6). In Colossians 3:9,10, Paul tells us that we have “*laid aside the old self*” and “*put on the new self*.” And this “new self” isn’t our **self** at all. It is Christ in us (Col 3:11)!

This message can be hard to hear because it is quite opposite from what the world often tells us. And it may be hard to decipher exactly what it means in a practical, day-to-day way. With all the negative scriptural focus on self, does that mean we should dislike, or, even, hate ourselves? No. We are all unique creations of God, with personalities and characteristics that He intended to be cultivated and developed, molded into distinct individuals. By observing the vast differences of those around us regarding size and shape, skin color, hair length and color (or even existence), accent, personality and all the other beautiful variations in the spectrum of humanity, we can be sure that our Creator loves individuality! We are called to Him as individuals and welcomed as such. And we would struggle to inspire others to come to our God if we presented ourselves as miserable, self-loathing creatures. Like Paul, we should recognize that there is

no good thing in our flesh (Rom 7:18). But this recognition shouldn't inspire self-hatred; rather, it should provoke a deep and abiding appreciation for what God has accomplished, and is accomplishing, for us through Christ. This appreciation, if taken to its logical conclusion, can lead to the possession of an unshakeable confidence that surpasses the transient whims of a society that reconfigures its standards of beauty.

So how do we counteract the messages that society bombards us with, in order to develop a biblically accurate view of confidence that we can cultivate in our lives? It comes from a simple, yet profound, acknowledgement of who we are without God and who we are with Him. In Luke 7, Jesus was dining in the house of a Pharisee, when a woman who was simply described as "a sinner" approached him, crying and anointing his feet with perfume (v. 37). When the Pharisee criticized Jesus for allowing this woman to

touch him, Jesus told a simple story and then asked a simple question. "A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?" (v. 41-42). The Pharisee knew the correct answer: "the one whom he forgave more." (v. 43). Through the rest of the chapter, Jesus contrasted the faithful acts the "sinner" performed to those of the Pharisee, and then told the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (v. 50). There are at least a couple of notable messages in his words to this faithful woman (who many conjecture is Mary Magdalene). First, he commended her faith; secondly, he encouraged her to walk in peace. She had demonstrated her faith in the recognition of her position before Christ as a sinner, but Christ didn't ask her to remain there, groveling at his feet indefinitely. I imagine that as she walked away, her head was not raised high in the

A properly derived confidence will stand the test of time and of our human failings and will allow us to be sure of our place in the world, and for eternity.

arrogance of **self**-confidence but was also not hung low in shame. I imagine that her Lord's blessing of peace had instilled a quiet confidence within her, a sense of contentment, or unfailing strength. If this woman was Mary Magdalene, we know that her faith led her to follow Christ to his crucifixion and to proclaim his resurrection to her brethren (Mark 15:40; John 20:18). Her confidence was properly rooted in her Messiah and was, therefore, unshakeable. Like Paul, this faithful woman knew how great her sins were. But that was just the start. Because also like Paul, she knew that God's mercy was incomparably greater.

Recognition of our sins may begin with hanging our heads in shame, but it cannot end there if we want the kind of confidence God desires us to possess. As the words to a scripturally based children's song say, "Be bold! Be strong! For the Lord your God is with you!"² An understanding of the second part of this phrase is the key to living out the first. We can and should walk in confidence, but with a firm understanding of the source from whom it comes. Once we appreciate how much has been done for us, we shouldn't have less confidence, but more! But it is a confidence rightly acknowledged as coming from our position as loved, forgiven children of God, as opposed to our own merit or hard work. Confidence derived from our value to God and appreciation for Christ's sacrifice is so much more powerful than confidence derived from any inherent merit we may falsely

believe we possess. If our confidence is based on our achievements or our intrinsic positive characteristics, eventually we will come face-to-face with the insufficiency of those qualities. There will always be someone more talented, more intelligent, more attractive; someone who is "more" of everything our self-confidence encourages us to take pride in. But a properly derived confidence will stand the test of time and of our human failings and will allow us to be sure of our place in the world, and for eternity. Like the writer to the Hebrews, we can "*draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*" (Heb 4:16). Properly derived confidence can also lead us to live lives of purpose and courage **now**, just like those whose witness we read throughout the Bible. Like Joshua and Caleb, we can have the confidence to claim what God has promised (Num 13-14); like David, we can face any **self**-confident giant who stands before us, threatening us or those we love (1 Sam 16-17); like Mary Magdalene, we can bravely follow our Lord and proclaim him to those around us; and like Paul, we can "overwhelmingly conquer" any temporal trial, knowing that none of them "*will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Rom 8:37-39).

"For the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught" (Pr. 2:26).

Jessica Miller,
(Richmond Chapel, VA—Unamended)

¹ All Scriptural quotations are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) unless otherwise noted.

² Words and music by Morris Chapman

WWW.JEHOSHAPHATMUSIC.COM

By Dan Osborn

THE record of King Jehoshaphat's victory over the confederate Moabite invaders, found in 2nd Chronicles 20, is one of the most unique and inspiring battles in the Bible. From this account we learn the importance of spiritual leadership, the power of purposeful prayer and God's ability to **do the impossible** in saving his people from certain destruction. Central to this dramatic event and impossible victory is the role of spiritual music.

THE VICTORY OF FAITHFUL PRAISE

Upon learning of the approaching invasion, King Jehoshaphat leads Judah in heartfelt communal prayer, concluding with the admission that *"neither know we what to do: but our eyes are on thee."* (2 Chr 20:12). The silence that ensues is broken by the prophetic response of Jahaziel, a musician from the house of Asaph, who stands in the middle of the congregation to deliver a stirring reminder of God's past work in saving His people and His ability to do it again if His people will just believe. In 1 Chronicles 25:1, we find that David had established the families of Asaph,

Heman and Jeduthun **to prophesy** through their music, and I believe that Jahaziel stood and **sang** this stirring prophecy in the spirit of his forefathers. What follows in the rest of the chapter is an homage to the astounding power of faith-motivated, Biblically-based spiritual music in the lives of believers, and particularly in their battle against sin—here represented by the Moabite army.

After Jahaziel's passionate and prophetic plea, the Kohathites stand up *"to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high"* (2 Chr 25:19). Following this example, early the next morning the King and his people together decide to *"appoint singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, 'Praise Yahweh', for His mercy endureth forever!"* (2 Chr 25:21). It is only *"when they began to sing and to praise,"* employing the house of Asaph's national anthem (1 Chr 16:7) that Yahweh moves to destroy their enemy, and Judah enjoys the victory of faith!

Imagine the incredible scene, as the nation goes forth to battle clad in the

armor of spiritual music, knowing that the sacrifice of praise will be the chief weapon in the victory God will bring against their overpowering enemy. What a wonderful lesson for today's disciples: the sharp sword of spiritual music can be a powerful weapon in the battle against sin!

OH MUSIC, WHERE ART THOU?

When I began trying to break free from the hold of popular music as a teenager living in the 1990s, I struggled to find alternatives. Like many of my peers, I no longer wanted to be connected with the lyrics, music, image or outlook of popular artists. The filth of that stream was no longer welcome in my ears, my mind or my life. When searching for a soundtrack to better fit the ideals of discipleship, I found hymns, Handel's Messiah and popular Christian music.

The heritage of our hymns is a priceless treasure—but was their room for other Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs in daily life? Handel's Messiah and other similar classical oratorios are beautiful works, but their polyphonic harmonic structure makes them somewhat inaccessible, and largely unsingable by most singers without formal training. The more accessible contemporary “Christian” music was often even worse—spiritually shallow and often overtly conveying false doctrine. Where could my peers and I turn for spiritually uplifting and inspiring music?

The question began to be answered in the music being produced by a handful of Christadelphian musicians and composers, starting with Christadelphian-produced CDs in Australia. This was followed by

similar efforts on other continents, and specifically in North America by the cantatas at Manitoulin Youth Conference and other Bible schools: spiritual music composed entirely by Christadelphians! This music was Scripturally rich, Biblically-sound, and much more accessible for the average listener and singer. It was music that, like our hymns, clearly reflected the uniqueness of our understanding of the Gospel, while not catering to the tastes and musical styles that many disciples wish to avoid as they grapple with staying separate from the world. Over the past two decades, hundreds of songs have been produced for the brotherhood by brothers and sisters, giving further musical voice to our hope. Given Scripture's emphasis on the benefits of spiritual music (along with the dangers of the “music of Egypt”), wouldn't it be wonderful to have an online repository for some of this Christadelphian-composed and produced music?

ENTER JEHOSEPHAT MUSIC, VERSION 1.0

In 2012, the Jehoshaphat Music project began, with the goal of providing brothers and sisters and young people a healthy alternative to the world's music offerings—and particularly to combat the proliferation of online music services and their often-unholy influence. In the summer of 2020, a major upgrade began, and new features are constantly being added at www.jehoshaphatmusic.com.

When you visit jehoshaphatmusic.com you will find over 300 songs (and counting!), all of which can be downloaded or streamed free of charge. Songs can be searched by

title, composer, or theme. This is particularly helpful in finding music for Bible school choirs, youth and Sunday School programs, Song and Praise evenings or special events like weddings or baptisms. Because the site is accessible to non-Christadelphians, we have attached a brief overview of our core beliefs as a cover sheet on all copies of the sheet music. Our prayer is that brothers, sisters and visitors will notice these doctrines reflected in the lyrics of the music and be drawn to the true gospel.

STREAMING

One of the goals at jehoshaphatmusic.com is to provide a safe site where adults and children can search and stream spiritual music without being bombarded by the world's advertisements, offerings, images, videos or sound bites. As such, the music is not linked to any popular streaming sites or apps. We feel that playlists of Kingdom-focused music are most effective when not interspersed with the world's musical offerings.

OTHER MUSIC-RELATED RESOURCES

The topic of music in the Bible can be both fascinating and transformative, so we have included a section of documents designed to assist disciples in appreciating the purpose and power of spiritual music in the Bible and in their lives. Here you can find links to Bible classes on music-related matters, as well as documents and articles on topics such as: "Music and the Need for Godly Principles", "Singing in the Kingdom", "Effective Hymn-Singing", "Evaluating the Scriptural

Soundness of a Song" and "Suggestions for Christadelphian Composers". We have also included some helpful vocal tips and exercises that we have used in teaching voice lessons or directing choirs over the years, designed to enhance Christadelphian music presentations and choral programs.

One of our strong beliefs is that acceptable spiritual music must be solidly grounded in scripture. As previous articles have demonstrated, God wants both our hearts and our minds engaged in our songs of worship. As such, many songs on the site are direct, or remarkably close quotations of scriptural passages. All songs are vetted to ensure that they are lyrically-sound and accurately reflect the doctrines of the Truth.

Our *Musical Musings* blog is updated regularly with information regarding new songs and projects, interesting quotations and articles, podcasts, stories behind the music, links to videos and performances of Christadelphian music, and other motivating music-related material.

WAYS TO SUPPORT

When we first began producing CDs here in British Columbia in the late 1990s, the participating singers were strewn across the entire Province, separated by up to 10-12 hours of driving. Many singers met each other for the first time during our recording sessions! As technology has developed over the years, we have been able to include singers and musicians from all over the world, and in some cases have equipped satellite recording "studios" in a few locations throughout

North America (Seattle, Los Angeles and Southern Ontario). Writing, recording, and producing the music on Jehoshaphat Music consumes a great deal of time and resources, all of which are donated by the participants. Being able to acquire recording equipment would help further the goals of jehoshaphatmusic.com, and continue the work of producing spiritual music to support the brotherhood in these Last Days. Please contact us at jehoshaphatmusic.team@gmail.com if you would like more information on how to help.

Music is a special creation and a wonderful gift from our Heavenly

Father. The angels employed it in Creation, the Kingdom will resound with it, and God's saints have been blessed with it in every era in between. We pray that brothers and sisters find this music useful in augmenting Christadelphian musical events, singing along in the car, providing a soundtrack for praise or supporting times of quiet meditation. And perhaps, in the spirit of Jehoshaphat, you will use it to express your thanks for God's promise of victory and experience its power in the daily battles of your discipleship.

*Dan Osborn,
(Okanagan Central, BC)*

Thoughts on the Way - Continued from Page 51

end to the other, with a variety of styles and designations; so he could in a moment seize upon his favorite passages, without the labor of spelling out what lay between them." (*Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Ch. 14).

Stowe's model for Uncle Tom was Josiah Henson (1789-1883). He was born into slavery in Maryland, and eventually escaped to Ontario, Canada, where in the 1830s he founded a settlement for fugitive slaves. From there, he returned to the United States several times, helping other slaves escape to Canada. He was often referred to as a modern-day Moses.

Henson also wrote his own colorful biography, *The Life of Josiah Henson: Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada*. In later years, Henson and his wife sailed to Great Britain, where they visited Queen Victoria at Windsor

Castle. Mrs. Stowe had sent the Queen a copy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and the Queen was very pleased to finally meet the man who had inspired such an extraordinary fictional character.

So where did we get the idea for Bible marking? Well, that's an easy question to answer:

- From Josiah Henson, an escaped slave from Maryland who met Queen Victoria,
- to Harriet Beecher Stowe, the celebrated author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*,
- to a young man who read the novel in his early teens, learned an important lesson from it, and
- grew up to be Bro. Robert Roberts.

*George Booker
(Austin Leander, TX)*

CHIASTIC STRUCTURE (2)

By Richard Morgan

HERE'S an interesting example from Genesis 17 (ESV). In verse 1, we read that "Abram was ninety-nine years old," and then again in verse 17, we find mention of his age—"Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old?" That repetition might not seem remarkable until we carry on reading after verse 1 and before verse 17. Notice in verses 3 and 17 Abram (or Abraham as his name is changed in the chapter) "fell on his face." The parallels continue. In verse 4, Abram is told, "you shall be the father of a multitude of nations," and in verse 16 of Sarah, "she shall become nations."

When you begin to find parallels like this, keeping reading forwards from the first bookend and backward from the second. In this case, the next elements are changing the names of Abram and Sarai to Abraham and Sarah in verses 5 and 15. The text is bringing us ever inwards to the center. See if you can spot the other parallels and what is at the center of the chiasm and, therefore, the text's main point.

Sometimes a chiasm can stretch over many chapters and describe the structure of a whole book or section of a book. A well-known example of this is in the Aramaic portion of the Book of Daniel, which covers chapters

2 through 7. The first and last chapters are the two famous visions of the Kingdom of Men. First, in chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar's image, and then in chapter 7, Daniel's dream of the same world empires but this time in the form of beasts.

Chapters 3 and 6 also form a parallel. Both are instances of the enmity between the Kingdom of Men and the Kingdom of God. Chapter 3 is the story of Daniel's three friends being thrown into the burning fiery furnace. Chapter 6 is the story of Daniel himself being thrown into the lion's den.

Finally, in chapters 4 and 5, we have the parallel of God bringing judgment upon the Kingdom of Men. Chapter 4 is the vision of the Babylonian tree being cut down, and chapter 5 is the chapter about the writing on the wall at Belshazzar's feast.

These chiasmic structures are not obscure, somehow hidden in the text. However, they will only jump out at the careful reader, who takes time to read the text and notice repeating language and ideas. Chiasms don't change the text's meaning, but they do enhance the message and highlight the author's main point.

Richard Morgan,
(Simi Hills, CA)

Image: Incantation bowl, written with Aramaic language, from Babylon, 4th to 7th century AD, on display in the Pergamon Museum, Berlin, Germany.

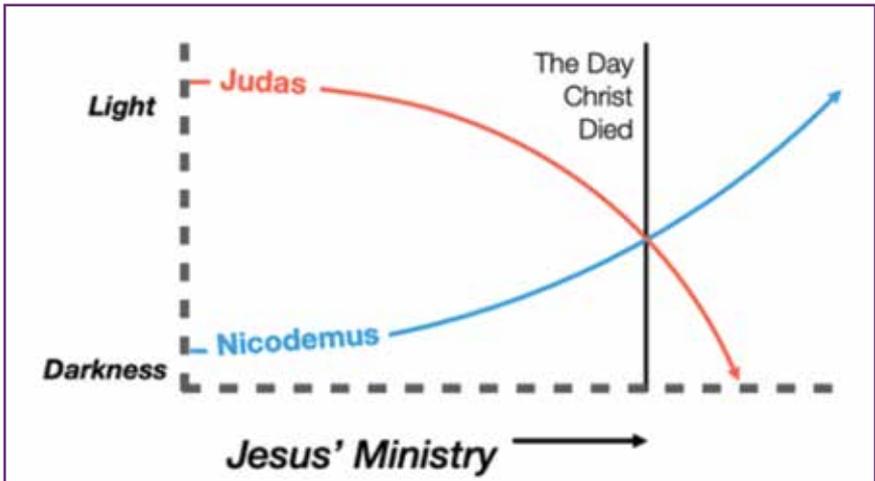
MEN LOVED DARKNESS

By Caleb Osborn

*“In him was life, and the life was the light of men.
And the light shineth in darkness;
and the darkness comprehended it not.” John 1:4-5*

THE conflict between light and darkness is one of the many lenses through which one can read the Gospel of John. The iconic opening verses of John 1 set the scene for the book: Jesus is the light who enters a world saturated in darkness. But not everyone is happy to have light enter their lives, so the light immediately starts to create division. Just like the creation of light in Genesis 1 separated the day from the night, the light who entered the world in John 1 would separate those who love light from those who love darkness. You might expect a savior who came to free people from their darkness would be accepted with open arms—but it turned out that all too many preferred their darkness.

In this article, we examine the stories of two characters in John’s gospel who crossed over the line between light and darkness. The spiritual transformation of both men spans the entirety of the ministry of Jesus. A comparison of their conversion stories reveals that while they share many similarities, they trend in opposite directions. If you were to depict their spiritual journeys on a line graph, they would display a clear inverse relationship (see Page 31). While one man starts out loving darkness and ends up coming to the light, the other starts in the light and ends up going over to the power of darkness. Their respective transformations develop slowly over time, but ultimately, the defining



Jesus met and called both Nicodemus and Judas Iscariot to join him near the beginning of his public ministry, but their responses were very different. Judas answered the call, was given the Holy Spirit power to perform miracles and was sent out to preach the gospel of the kingdom. (Mark 3:13-19) Though profoundly impacted by his meeting with Jesus, Nicodemus was not prepared to respond to Jesus' invitation, preferring the comfort, security and honor of his position. Light had come into his world, but Nicodemus loved darkness too much to leave it behind and step into the light.

Initially, then, Nicodemus and Judas were on totally different planes—Nicodemus preferred darkness, and initially refused to come to Jesus. But in the beginning, Judas was walking in the light (John 8:12).

As far as we know, Judas began well (Acts 1:17). As Jesus' ministry progresses, however, we are given hints that his discipleship had started to weaken. The first indication comes

in John 6:66-71, at a stage when many were becoming disillusioned with Jesus's teaching. *"From that time,"* we are told, *"many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."* Jesus asks the disciples if they would also depart, but loyal Peter speaks up with his famous confession of faith: *"Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the son of the living God."* This was a high point in Peter's discipleship, but Jesus warned him that he couldn't speak for everyone: *"Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"*

We learn from the next verse that it was Judas Iscariot, *"one of the twelve,"* who did not share Peter's firm belief that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. What was it that had shaken Judas's fledgling faith? We aren't told about the specific source of Judas's doubts, but the immediate context does tell us why many other disciples were turning their backs on Jesus at this time. For much of John 6, Jesus

has been speaking enigmatically about his death. He taught his listeners that they must eat and drink his flesh and blood if they want to be his disciples. In 6:51, he had said, *“The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”* For people who were looking for a victorious king, these were *“hard saying[s]”* to swallow (John 6:15, 60). They were tripped up by Jesus speaking about his death—and their faith began to wane. We know from later events (John 12:4-6) that Judas was particularly interested in the temporal benefits of association with Jesus. Thus, it seems reasonable to say that the unpalatable idea of a dead king began to sow the seeds of betrayal in Judas’s heart.

While the idea of a dying Messiah seems to have played a part in the decline of Judas’s faith in Jesus as the son of God, John 3 makes it very clear that it was a significant stumbling block for Nicodemus as well. The iconic climax of Jesus’ discussion with Nicodemus is one of the earliest and clearest statements of his mission: God loved the world so much that he planned to give his only son to be impaled on a pole to save those who believed on him. Nicodemus was asked to believe that Jesus was the son of God **and** that he was going to be killed. Even though Jesus went on to warn that refusing to accept this would bring him into the condemnation of those who love darkness, Nicodemus was unconvinced. Like Judas—and many Jews—the idea of “Christ crucified” was a massive stumbling-block to his faith (1 Cor 1:23).

The next time we see Nicodemus is during a council of the chief priests

and Pharisees in John 7. They had sent out officers to arrest Jesus, who returned empty-handed. The reason for their failure to arrest Jesus? *“Never man spake like this man.”* (v. 46). The appalled Pharisees lambasted the soldiers: *“Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed”* (vv. 47-49). The Pharisees seem to be unaware of Nicodemus’s inner warring convictions. But the text reveals that Nicodemus is uncomfortable with his colleagues’ confident and premature dismissal of Jesus’ claims: *“Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night being one of them,) ‘Doth our law judge any man before it hears him, and know what he doeth?’”* (vv. 50-51).

Notice that Nicodemus is still identified as the one who had come to Jesus by night—because he had remained in the darkness of the defiant religious rulers—he was still “one of them.” But we are starting to see him depart from the general hostility towards Jesus that was rampant within the Sanhedrin. He cautions his colleagues that they violated the due process, stipulated in the Law of Moses.

But the Pharisees are quick to turn on Nicodemus for daring to defend Jesus. They respond, *“Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.”* (v. 52). Nicodemus doesn’t respond, but it seems likely indeed that he went home and started searching, if he wasn’t already. (See also Jesus’ appeal to the Pharisees in John 5:39-46). As he furiously read through scroll after scroll, questioning his assumptions and trying to put together a picture of who Messiah was supposed

to be, at some point he likely came to Isaiah 9, which foretells that there would come a time when, “*in Galilee*” of the nations, “*the people that walked in darkness would see a great light.*” (v. 1). Imagine the chill that went down Nicodemus’s spine as he read of a “*great light*” springing up in the darkness of Galilee—and how it intensified a few verses later as he read, “*for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given*” (v. 6) and he realized that the coming King was supposed to be revealed in the despised Galilee. Slowly, imperceptibly, Nicodemus’s disbelief in Jesus was being worn down.

Meanwhile, in Judas’s spiritual journey, it was his faith that was being worn down. To read the next episode in his story, we fast forward to the last week of Christ’s life, to a meal Jesus and his disciples shared with Martha, Mary and Lazarus. The contrast between Judas and Nicodemus becomes even more evident when Mary anointed Jesus with a whole pound of costly spikenard in a beautiful act of devotion, understanding and love. Whereas in John 7, Nicodemus had defended Jesus’ followers, instigating conflict amongst the religious rulers, Judas criticizes loyal Mary, causing murmuring amongst Jesus disciples. As both Nicodemus and Judas edge closer to revealing where their convictions lie, neither man was willing to say anything that would get them ejected from the security of their position in their respective groups. Instead, when they wanted to voice their objection to what was going on, they did so in a way that disguised their true loyalties. For Nicodemus, this meant appealing to due process under

the law, a relatively safe thing to say to his Sanhedrin colleagues. For Judas, it meant appealing to the irreproachable cause of caring for the poor.

Hypocrisy—acting in a way that belies one’s true motivations and convictions—was one of Judas’s biggest problems. It appears that Judas had perfected the art of hypocrisy so well that he could make his closest companions think he was a socially conscious philanthropist while secretly pilfering from the common fund to set up a nest egg for himself. The thick facade he had built up around his heart was so impenetrable that Jesus’ repeated warnings and appeals never really impacted his conscience. Even on the night of the last supper, when Jesus had warned him at least four times that he knew what he was up to, Judas would not be dissuaded from his intention (John 13:10, 18; Matt. 26:21, 23-24). When his fellow disciples engaged in honest self-examination, asking Jesus if it was them who would betray their Lord, Judas chimed in with a convincingly earnest “*Master, is it I?*” even as the High Priest’s silver weighed down his pockets. A few minutes later, when he left to join the group of armed men that would arrest Jesus, John tells us that the other disciples assumed he was off to buy supplies or feed the poor (John 13:28-30).

Nicodemus’s hypocrisy cut in the opposite direction from Judas’s, but it proved almost as challenging to penetrate. Even though he had been deeply affected by his conversation with Jesus and believed that Jesus was a teacher sent from God, Nicodemus was seemingly far too comfortable in

his position of Pharisaical prominence to switch sides. While no further direct conversations are recorded between him and Jesus, The Gospel of John records Jesus making many impassioned appeals aimed at Pharisees like Nicodemus in the temple courts, which would have almost certainly come to his ears. (John 5:39-47, 7:14-29, 8:12-18, 8:28-32, 9:39-41, 12:35-48). The first of these is John 5:39-40, where Jesus challenged the Pharisees to test their assumptions about the law they claimed to know, *“Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me! And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.”* Nicodemus had been personally invited to come into Jesus’ light back in John 3, so Jesus asked why he still refused to respond. The last of these public appeals meant to reach Nicodemus is found in John 12:35-36, where Jesus had just been asked why he says that the Christ, who was supposed to be eternal, must be lifted up (a reference to John 3:14). Jesus’ answer is a warning that time is running out for those who still have not come to him. *“Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest*

darkness come upon you... While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.”

Nicodemus’s and Judas’s spiritual paths finally meet—and diverge again—in the last 24 hours of Jesus’ life. Each man’s character arc reaches its climax as he faces the final decision to reveal and act upon his true allegiance.

Judas ignored Jesus’ repeated appeals, left the little ecclesia in the upper room, and set off to gather the force that would capture Jesus. Tellingly, John 13:30 adds: *“and it was night.”* Judas led the High Priest’s mob to the Garden of Gethsemane and betrayed the Son of Man with a kiss. But he lingered to witness the trial until the verdict was given (Matt 26:66, 27:3). Meanwhile, within the house, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea tried desperately to hold the trumped-up trial to some semblance of due process. According to Matthew 26:59-62, the council brought many false witnesses against Jesus, but were unable to find any that agreed. If everyone was on board, and Jesus said nothing to defend himself, why were his accusers proved to be false? At least Joseph of Arimathaea, and probably Nicodemus were fiercely cross-



examining the witnesses, trying to hold the council to some semblance of due process (Luke 23:51; John 19:38). Still, their dissent was overpowered by the rest of the Sanhedrin, who thundered, “*He is guilty of death.*”

Matthew 27:3 reveals that it was when Judas saw that Jesus had been sentenced to death that he “*repented himself.*” As the enormity of his treachery sank in, Judas frantically tried to return his silver to the High Priests, hoping to undo the consequence of his betrayal, but to no avail. Realizing he was guilty of betraying the body and blood of the Lord, he threw away the money, went out, and hanged himself. Judas had chosen to go over to the power of darkness and believed it was too late to come back. He had done the unthinkable and therefore believed he had gone beyond redemption. He chose to kill himself rather than live with the guilt of betraying the son of God. His spiritual journey met its bitter end in a broken, gory mess in the middle of the night in a dark and lonely field (Acts 1:18). Jesus lost a disciple that night—but before the next sunset, he would gain another.

By the end of the following day, the execution of Jesus had been carried out. His marred and bloodied body hung limply from the nails that held him to the cross—in a grim display of defeat. Now that the object of their hatred and derision hung defeated on the cross, the religious rulers began to drift away from Golgotha. But to their surprise, Nicodemus pushed past them and approached the cross. “*And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night.*” (John 19:39). At last,

Nicodemus had gathered the courage and conviction to break rank with his fellow Pharisees and take the most critical step of his life—out of darkness, and into the light. There would be no going back now. Nicodemus had nailed his colors to the mast—or rather to the cross. He made it clear where his loyalties now belonged: in the body of Christ.

On the previous night, Judas had killed himself because he saw that Jesus was condemned to death. But when Nicodemus witnessed the death of Jesus, he saw the opportunity to be born into a new life. When Nicodemus saw Jesus lifted up like the serpent in the wilderness, everything fell into place. He was fully convinced that Jesus was who he said he was (John 3:14-16; 8:28; 12:31-36). In that moment, Nicodemus was reborn. By associating himself with the crucifixion and burial of Christ, Nicodemus had finally completed the process of conversion Jesus had begun on the night they first met.

CONCLUSION

Judas began in the light, but as he became disillusioned with its message, he began to hide from its rays behind a hardened facade of hypocrisy. Eventually, his fallen motivations revealed themselves in his actions, and he left the light of the world to join forces with the power of darkness. His story’s tragic end is a chilling testament to the danger of resisting the light.

On the other hand, Nicodemus began in the dark, not comprehending the light that had blazed into his life. He resisted Jesus’ message for years, wanting to believe that his understanding of what

God required was sufficient—he didn't think he needed the light. As time went on, the light slowly made progress in his mind and his heart, but he hid his growing conviction, unwilling to lose his position, his reputation, and the Scriptural understanding he prided himself on (John 5:39-45, 12:42-50). For Nicodemus, it was the spectacle of the crucified Messiah, lifted up on a cross that finally convinced him to come into the light. The gospel had shined into his heart in the face of Jesus Christ, and at last, he responded. From that moment on, Nicodemus chose to walk in the light.

1 John 1:5-10's description of what it means to walk in the light explains the difference between the paths that Nicodemus and Judas chose:

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Throughout the ministry of Jesus, both Judas and Nicodemus claimed to be in fellowship with God (by their association with Jesus or the Law), but as long as they refused to receive the light of Jesus' words, they lied, and did not the truth. When Nicodemus finally chose to renounce the lies, he used to

subscribe to, and began to walk in the light of Jesus, he was cleansed from sin. Judas's ending stands in tragic contrast. When Judas regretted his sin, he was so enveloped by the darkness that he did not see a path to confession and restoration, and so went to his grave unforgiven.

When he first met Nicodemus, Jesus issued the following challenge:

"And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." (John 3:19-21 ESV).

Jesus clearly stated that a man's response to the light would be the basis on which he would be judged. If we refuse the light because we love darkness, then we will be condemned; but if we come to the light because we value the truth, we will be saved. Judas took the first choice, and Nicodemus took the second. (See Page 37.)

We, too, have had the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shined into our hearts in the face of Jesus Christ. Our natural tendency is to follow Judas's downward-sloping path—because *"men love darkness,"* but if we choose to walk the harder path, we can face the darkness without fear of stumbling because we follow the Light of Life.

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Judas	Nicodemus
Starts in the Light (Acts 1:17; John 8:12)	Starts in and preferring darkness (John 3:1, 19)
Stumbles at eating and drinking Messiah's blood (John 6:51-66)	Stumbles at the idea of Messiah lifted up (John 3:10-16)
Doubts that Jesus was the Son of God (John 6:69-71)	Slowly comes to believe Jesus was the Son of God (John 3:18-19)
Secretly loses faith in Jesus (John 6:70)	Secretly builds faith in Jesus (John 3:2-7)
Criticizes Jesus' follower (John 12:3-4)	Defends Jesus' followers (John 7:47-51)
Hides his true motivation by appealing to philanthropy (John 12:5-6; 13:29)	Hides his true motivation by appealing to due process (John 7:51)
Resists repeated appeals from Christ (John 12:7-8; 13:10, 18; Matt 26:21, 23-24)	Resists repeated appeals from Christ (John 3:1-21; 5:39-47; 7:14-29; 8:12-18, 28-32; 9:39-41; 12:35-48)
Sees anointing Christ's body as a waste (Mark 14:4)	Anoints Christ's body for burial (John 19:39-40)
Agrees with the Sanhedrin to betray Jesus to death (Matt 26:15; Luke 22:48)	Dissents from the Sanhedrin to prevent Jesus' death (John 19:38-39 cp. Luke 23:50-53)
Leaves Jesus to join the Pharisees by night (John 13:30)	Leaves Pharisees to join Jesus by day (Luke 23:53-56)
Sees condemnation in the cross (Matt 27:3-4)	Sees salvation in the Cross (John 3:14-16, 8:28, 12:31-36)
Kills himself because of his involvement with Jesus' death (Matt 27:5-6; Acts 1:18-19)	Is born into a new life by association with Jesus' death (John 3:3-6; 1Pet 1:3; Rom 6:3-4)

THE RICH MAN, LAZARUS AND ABRAHAM (PART 3)

By Steven Cox

AT THE RICH MAN'S GATE

“At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.” (Luke 16:20-21).¹

As we noted in considering the real Lazarus, when a Jew contracted a disease they became “unclean.” They were at most allowed only into the outer court of the temple. This meant the unclean were no longer allowed to eat from the sacrifices offered in the inner court. In this way Lazarus (Simon the Leper of Bethany?) was barred from eating at the table of Caiaphas in Jerusalem.

There is similar language in Matthew 15 when the Canaanite woman (who was a “Gentile dog” as far as the Pharisees were concerned) said to Jesus, *“Even the*

dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.” (Matt 15:27).

It may be that before he died, Simon the Leper literally did beg outside the temple. But the meaning here is deeper than begging for food. Jesus is saying that the weak, the unclean, and the poor, were all denied spiritual food by the ruling caste of high priests.

THE BOSOM OF ABRAHAM

“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side.” (Luke 16:22).

Now this is where the story starts to become difficult. Nowhere else in the Bible does it say that when men die, they go to Abraham’s side. In older Bibles it reads *“the bosom of Abraham,”* meaning the lap of Abraham.

Today there are a hundred and one different theories about death. Many

people seriously believe when they die, they will go up to the gates of Heaven, to be met by the Apostle Peter. Other people believe countless different things. But the idea that the dead go to sit “in the lap” of Abraham is something that nobody today believes.

But people did believe it in Jesus’ day. Mentions of “the bosom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” have been found in burial papyri in Israel (cf. papyrus Preisigke Sb 2034:11). In early Rabbinical legends and Jewish mythology “the Bosom of Abraham” was where the righteous went (cf. Kiddushin 72b, Ekah 1:85).² It is not in the Bible of course, but it was popularly believed.

While the NIV has “to Abraham’s side,” the literal AV rendering “to the bosom of Abraham” is a better rendering, as the “Bosom of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” was a specific concept in contemporary popular belief.

Another source showing what Jews of Jesus’ day believed is a book called 4 Maccabees, which was probably written by Jews in Egypt about a generation after Christ. In this work of fiction Abraham, Isaac and Jacob receive and welcome Jewish martyrs into the world of the dead: “After our death in this fashion Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will receive us and all our forefathers will praise us.” (4 Maccabees 13:17).³

Again, this is not Bible teaching, only popular superstition.

THE RICH MAN IN HELL

The story becomes even more difficult when we read the next verses:

“The Rich Man also died and was buried. In Hell where he was in torment he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus in his bosom. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’” (vv. 23-24).

Even with the most fertile imagination it is difficult to believe that from Hell one can see people in Heaven and talk to them. But the story gets stranger still:

“But Abraham replied. ‘Son remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone else cross over from there to us.’” (vv. 25-26).

Nothing else in the Bible prepares us for this description of Hell. Again, the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus turns out to be unique.

WHICH HELL?

We need to clarify what the word “Hell” means here, as in English Bibles, two words have been confused into one.

...the idea that the dead go to sit “in the lap” of Abraham is something that nobody today believes. But people did believe it in Jesus’ day.

“Hell” in the English Bible can be one of two words in the original Greek text:

1. Hades, the grave, the pit, the place where the dead sleep. In the Hebrew Old Testament, it is known as “*Sheol*” — (See, for example, Gen 37:35; 42:38; 44:29,31; Num 16:30,33; Job 14:13; Psa 6:5; 30:3; Eccl 9:10). The Greek Septuagint translates *Sheol* as Hades. In the Bible all people go to Hades, some awaiting the resurrection (1 Cor 15:55; Rev 20:13). Even Jesus was in Hades for three days and three nights. (Matt 12:39-40; Acts 2:24-32; Rev 1:18).

2. Gehenna, originally the name of the valley Gehenna on the south side of Jerusalem. In the Old Testament it was known as *Ben Hinnom* (Jer 7:31). In the New Testament the name is associated with the fire into which the rejected will be destroyed at the last judgment:

“If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell.” (Mark 9:43-47; see also Matt 5:22; 23:15,33; Luke 12:5).

The problem is that in Luke 16:23 the “Hell” described does not fit either of these Bible definitions. In fact, the word is Hades, but it does not fit with the Hades of “*silence*” (Psa 31:17), where Jesus was laid (Acts 2:25-28, quoting Psalm 16:8-11). There are nine other mentions of Hades in the New

Testament, 50 in the Old Testament (as it is translated in the LXX). All these other references present Hades as the grave. Luke 16:23 is the odd one out.

The source for the unusual Hades in Luke 16:23, as with the source for the “Bosom of Abraham” itself, lies outside the Bible in the myths of the First Century. Many Jewish myths survive today (e.g., in the *Apocrypha*, *Pseudepigrapha*, Dead Sea Scrolls, Talmud, etc.). In these works, a variety of fantastic pictures of Hades are given that have no connection with the Old Testament. One of the closest to the picture given in Luke 16:23-24 is in a work called *The Apocalypse of Zephaniah*.

FALSE BELIEFS ABOUT HADES

It needs to be said that *The Apocalypse of Zephaniah* has nothing to do with the Zephaniah who wrote the book of that name in the Bible. The real Zephaniah lived in the days of King Josiah about 620BC. The so-called *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* on the other hand, was written by an unknown Jewish author, presumed by many to be a Pharisee, sometime around AD 150. In other words, the book is pseudepigraphal.

It is interesting, however, because the myth shows us what many Jews in Jesus’ day believed. The details are not precisely the same as in Luke 16:23-24. For example, in the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* the chasm between the fiery part of Hades and the part given to Abraham has a giant river running through it. In fact, the author recounts the fictional Zephaniah’s journey across the river in a boat steered by an angel:

“You have escaped from the abyss and Hades, you will now cross over the crossing place... then he ran to all the

righteous ones, namely Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Enoch, Elijah and David.” (Apoc. Zeph. 9:2).

Another difference is that in Luke 16 only Abraham is mentioned. In The Apocalypse of Zephaniah all three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, are in the side of the underworld reserved for the righteous, along with Enoch, Elijah and David.

But the differences are minor, and there are enough common points, and more in many other Jewish myths, to suggest that the content of the Rich Man and Lazarus parable has some relation to contemporary Jewish ideas, and in particular to popular Pharisee teachings.

THE PHARISEES AND THE “SINNERS”

We have established above that the picture of Hades—the Bosom of Abraham, and the chasm between them—represents the Pharisees’ teaching, rather than Jesus’ teaching.

All this is, however, only half of the Pharisees’ teaching. The other half concerns the Pharisees’ ideas about exactly who would go to be with “*Father Abraham*” (Luke 3:8), and who would go to the fiery side of Hades.

According to the Pharisees all the “sinners,” meaning publicans, tax-collectors, the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame, lepers, people with other skin diseases, the insane, and, of course, Gentiles and Samaritans, would burn in the fire.

Only those who followed all the rules of the Law, as did the “righteous”—meaning the rich and respectable, the scribes, the experts in the Law, the rulers of the synagogues, the priests and high priests, and of course the Pharisees themselves would depart to be with “*Father Abraham*.” “Our father Abraham” is a common phrase in the Jewish Mishnah (e.g., Aboth 3:12; 5:2, 3, 6, 19; 6:10; Taanith 2:4, 5).

WHAT THE PHARISEES DID NOT TEACH

But note that the Pharisees did not teach that the righteous went to Heaven. Even they knew that “*no man has ascended into Heaven*.” (John 3:13). Heaven was for God alone (Psa 115:16) and to teach otherwise would have been blasphemy.

The Pharisees also did not teach that Abraham’s Bosom was the final destination of the righteous. The Pharisees taught a resurrection and judgement on earth. Abraham’s Bosom was only a waiting station.

With the above in mind it is surprising that so many people quote the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus as proof of the doctrine of heaven going. Not only does the story not mention the word heaven once, this description of Abraham’s Bosom bears no resemblance to any ideas about Heaven taught anywhere.

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1 All Scriptural quotations are from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.

2 References to the “Bosom of Abraham” in Kiddushin 72b and Ekah 1:85 are cited from L. Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, republished John Hopkins, 1998, Vol. 5, p. 269.

3 Quotations from 4 Maccabees, the Apocalypse of Zephaniah, and the Testament of Abraham taken from J. H. Charlesworth, The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, 2 vols., Doubleday, New York, 1983.

“JERUSALEM IS BUILDED AS A CITY THAT IS COMPACTED TOGETHER”

By Dave Jennings

In Psalm 122, David expresses his love for the City of Jerusalem. His words are familiar to us and used in a long-popular anthem which Christadelphians have sung for generations. *“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.”* (vv. 6-7). It focuses our minds on the future of this marvelous city when our Lord makes it the worldwide capital of the Kingdom of God on earth.

The way Jerusalem is referenced in verse 3 is interesting. It says that the city is *“compacted together.”* What might this mean? Is it referencing the close proximity or construction of parts of the city?

The Septuagint renders an interesting alternative translation. Speaking of Jerusalem, it says *“whose fellowship is complete.”* The Hebrew word, *“chabar”* includes fellowship as one of the ways for this word to be translated. So, how might this improve our understanding of this passage? When does the concept of “compacted” meet in Scripture with fellowship?

In Ephesians 4:16, the Apostle Paul describes the body of Christ. The head is Christ. But the body is *“fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth.”* Here we see the beauty of fellowship. A body that is held together in fellowship and knit together by what every part of the body contributes—compacted! The ecclesia has its greatest strength of fellowship when all parts are working in harmony and unity unto the *“edifying of itself in love.”*

The vision that excited David is about a time when unity and fellowship would be complete in Jerusalem. When the faithful of all ages will be joined together in perfect harmony. This will be accomplished soon through our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us join David in saying *“Peace be within thee.”*

Dave Jennings

THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S

*For centuries men, in their blindness
Have fought for war's doubtful rewards;
Have wrested the land from their neighbors
And known not "The Earth is the Lord's."*

*They've sought, with their might and their cunning
To triumph again and again;
Like Nebuchadnezzar, not knowing
That God rules in the kingdoms of men.*

*The rulers of earth are like puppets
Controlled by the hand from on high.
Who work out God's plan, and His purpose,
Unchanged, as the centuries fly.*

*It is good, in the midst of the turmoil
Amid unrest of the Earth's weary hordes,
To know that the MOST HIGH is ruling
And truly, the "Earth is the Lord's."*

*Marguerite C. Curry
Christadelphian Herald of the Kingdom,
December 1953*

LA PAZ, BOLIVIA

By Isaiah and Rosie Tunnell

“Here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?”

This Bible passage has been going through our minds for the last month or so, but instead, there is no water!

We'll start the story back at the beginning of November when two lovely ladies, Ilda and Dalia of the ecclesia here in La Paz, had their interviews for baptism. However, we discovered shortly thereafter that there were still no pools open due to all the coronavirus restrictions! We spent a few weeks looking at different options. A bath was out (as Ilda is going on 84!), so we were trying to work on a heated paddling pool option. That option was going to be difficult, although doable. Private pools at hotels were also proving to be troublesome, as there were many biosecurity measures preventing us from using them. Both Ilda and Dalia were very patient throughout all of this and finally, thanks be to God, the government ruled that public pools could open again!

The ecclesia met in the center of town early on Tuesday morning, November 24, and what an exciting time it was.

This was the first time that everyone had been together and seen each other since March. What better occasion than to watch two more people commit their lives to the Lord? We gathered at the poolside and did a reading together before Dalia and then Ilda entered the water. For a bit of background, Dalia is Ilda's granddaughter, so it was very special for them both to be baptized on the same day! For Ilda, it was a big deal, because she cannot swim and was afraid of the water. Also, she has been quarantining at home since March. This was a big outing for her. This doesn't even take her age into account as well! The look on her face afterwards was just pure joy. She and Dalia were both so excited, and the ecclesia (as well as the angels, our Lord Jesus and our Father!) were all rejoicing with them.

Sis. Magaly, (daughter of Sis. Ilda, and aunt to Sis. Dalia) was telling us how her mother, Ilda, had always been a staunch Catholic. “Who would have thought that my mother would ever want to be

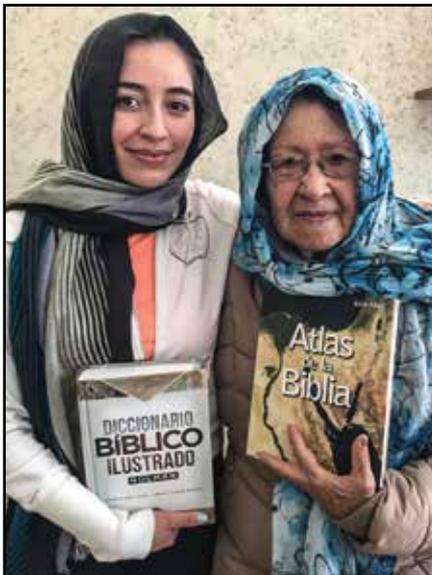
baptized?! But God has His timing.” He sure does! Apparently, Bro. Sami (Sis. Dalia’s brother, and grandson to Sis. Ilda) was giving Ilda classes, and even though Magaly lives with her mother, she didn’t realize this was going on for quite some time, until Ilda finally let her know that she was interested in the Bible! Dalia was also at the same time sharing with her grandma what she had been learning in Bible classes herself. Dalia became interested in the Bible after returning to Bolivia in 2017 from several years living in Israel. Her brother Sami invited her along to some Bible talks, and she says that she found it fascinating to read about all the places in the Bible that she already knew personally! As they say, the rest is history. Their family (Sis. Magaly, Bro. Sami, and now Sis. Dalia and Sis. Ilda) are a great testimony to the fact that

you never know what God’s plan is, so all you can do is sow the seed!

Not only were we able to spend time together as an ecclesia at the pool, but afterwards we returned to the ecclesial hall. After a short talk and welcome to the new sisters, we shared a meal of *salteñas* (essentially savory Bolivian meat pies). There was a lot of chatter and laughter; it was clear how much we were enjoying being in each other’s company again!

Coronavirus restrictions are still affecting life here, though not to the extent previously. We now have no curfew or restrictions on the days that we can go out, but masks are still very commonplace, and people still don’t meet together as much as they did before. The ecclesia has decided for now that we will go back to meeting together in person (it has been over Zoom for the last nine months), but at this stage, only every second week. It is so different meeting in person rather than virtually! While the internet has been a huge blessing this entire year to keep up communication and connection with brothers and sisters, it has been wonderful to start meeting together and really getting to know our brethren here in La Paz on a different level. They are such a wonderful bunch, and we know that Sis. Ilda and Sis. Dalia will be such a great addition. Thanks be to God for His unfailing love toward every one of us!

*Written by Bro. Isaiah and Sis. Rosie
Tunnell, Mission Couple in La Paz
Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau,
CBMA/C Publicity*



*Two new Sisters in La Paz, Bolivia:
Sisters Ilda and Dalia*

NEWS & UPDATES

COLLINGWOOD, ON

The Collingwood Ecclesia has been able to continue meeting virtually during the pandemic. Some members have been meeting together in small groups in homes or at a rented hall, and this has been of great benefit to our young people who seem to have been most negatively affected by the isolation during lockdown.

We have also continued with our midweek Bible Class and CYC online, and welcomed visitors from afar. Anyone interested in joining us can contact the undersigned for details.

It has also been encouraging that our Bible Reading Seminar has continued uninterrupted during the lockdown. We meet with 5 or 6 interested friends each week via Zoom and are currently reading

the Gospel of Luke together. This has allowed us to maintain a relationship with them that otherwise may have been lost. God's Word can't be locked down!

Most encouraging for our ecclesia, has been the baptism of two of our young people, and we are thankful that technology allowed us to share these happy occasions with friends and family from around the world.

On April 25, 2020, KYLA ABEL was baptized. Sis. Kyla is the daughter of Bro. Joe and Sis. Kate Abel.



Ben Aback with his father, Paul Aback

On September 12, 2020, BEN ABACK was baptized. Bro. Ben is the son of Bro. Paul and Sis. Cindy Aback.

The example of these two young people is an encouragement to us all in these difficult and challenging times.

Perry Braux

ADDRESSES FOR DONATIONS

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works. 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941: www.tidings.org

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for current activities as well as to make online donations. Donations by check should be sent to 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or cbma.treasurer@gmail.com

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, V3R 0J7

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110. Phone: 818-842-2868 or jberneau@earthlink.net

Christadelphian Heritage College
522 Book Road East, Ancaster, ON L9G 3L1, Canada

Christadelphian Heritage School
Donations to: Thousand Oaks Christadelphians, c/o Aaron McDonald, 3004 Mineral Wells. Simi Valley, CA 93063

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) helps ecclesias cultivate faith, nurtures faith in youth and creates opportunities for faithful service. c/o Virginia Brierly, PO Box 264, Villas, NJ, 08251-0264 www.wcfoundation.org

Christadelphian Tape Library Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923. Phone: 732-381-4590 Fax: 732-499-8415 or christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net

Agape in Action provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to P.O. Box 146, Three Rivers, CA 93271-0146, or 70 Delevan Drive, Cambridge, ON N1S 4S3 or via website: www.agapeinaction.com or info@agapeinaction.com

Christadelphian Save the Children Fund provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy children in mission areas: www.christadelphianchildren.com

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. www.fairhavenfoundation.ca. Donations can be sent c/o Jennifer Narjes, 8 Royal Rouge Trail, Toronto, ON M1B 4T4

Joy Fund, Inc. provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. To donate: Acct name: Timothy Charles Galbraith, BSB: 343020, Acct #: 018016090, Bank: HSBC Eastland, Ringwood, AUS, Address: TC Galbraith, 18 Edna Str., Heathmont, Vic, 3135.

Spanish language Literature is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. 626-303-2222, or jdhunter45@gmail.com

RETIREMENT OF
BRO. JOE HILL
AS CHAIRMAN OF THE TIDINGS
PUBLISHING COMMITTEE

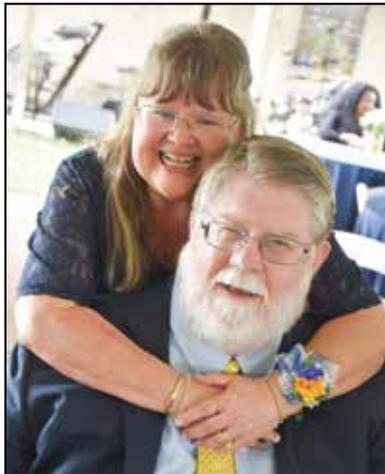
Bro. Joe Hill has retired as Chairman of the Tidings Publishing Committee as of December 31, 2020, and has been succeeded by Bro. Alan Markwith of Hamilton Greenaway, Ontario, Canada. Bro. Joe was the second Chairman of the Committee, taking office in 2007. He brought new talent and energy to the position. When he assumed the position, he was accompanied by his wife, Sis. Kathy Hill, who took on the responsibility for magazine layout and later the additional chore of financial accounting. Together they made an excellent team of dedicated workers.

The responsibilities of Chairman go beyond just running the Publishing Committee and reviewing the final drafts of the magazine each month. Bro. Joe also accepted the task of recruiting

two Editors as both Bre. George Booker and Peter Hemingray retired during his tenure. Finding willing, able brethren

to do that job took a significant amount of time and good judgment. I am sure as a community we can appreciate that those decisions made by the Committee, led by Bro. Joe, have kept the magazine flourishing. Moreover, his importance to the Tidings's success goes far beyond these seemingly

routine tasks. Bro. Joe has through the years also contributed several articles and a major pamphlet for public outreach (Meeting God, His Son and their Family, available at Tidings.org). There came a period during his tenure when the firm that had been handling Tidings printing and distribution suddenly fell into bankruptcy. Something had to be done



Bro. Joe and Sis. Kathy Hill

immediately, and it involved decisive, competent management. Bro. Joe, with the able assistance of Sis. Kathy, quickly moved magazine operations from California to Austin, Texas. They obtained a new printing firm and established postal distribution with only a slight delay in magazine distribution.

Over the years, Bro. Joe has been the lead in fund raising and financial planning for Tidings. It is with this steady hand that he can pass on to the next generation of management a magazine that is able to not only continue, but capable of expanding its horizons. While spending many hours each week supporting the

Tidings, Bro. Joe had to still work a full-time job to support his family. The Apostle Paul told Timothy that “*the laborer deserves his wages.*” (1 Tim 5:18 ESV) Since Tidings is a volunteer organization and we cannot pay him even a token of what he deserves, we can only recompense Bro. Joe and Sis. Kathy with our sincere gratitude, love and prayers for their future health and happiness. Our thanks to you both for jobs well-done. Special congratulations are extended to them for becoming new grandparents on November 29, 2020. Bro. Joe will continue as a member of the Committee.

The Tidings Publishing Committee

Additional Committee News

Bro. Alan Markwith of the Hamilton Greenaway Ontario, Canada Ecclesia has agreed to take on the role of Chairman of the Tidings Publishing Committee, effective January 1, 2021. Bro. Alan has been a member of the Committee for several years and we are looking forward to his vision and leadership in the coming years, Lord willing.

Sis. Jolie Tunnell of the San Diego County, CA Ecclesia has accepted an invitation to join the Tidings Publishing Committee. We look forward to working with her in our Lord’s work.

Bro. Ted Sleeper has also retired from the Tidings Publishing Committee as of December 31, 2020. Bro. Ted has served on the Committee since it was formed in 1993. Over the years, he has done many things, including overseeing the Tidings first principles pamphlets. Although no longer on the Committee, he intends to continue contributing to the Tidings. Thank you, Bro. Ted. It has been a pleasure working with you.

Sis. Karen Guist has served as Tidings book agent, storing and distributing Tidings books for many years. Because of a new decision to publish books using a print-on-demand model, our existing hard copy book inventory has been turned over to the Detroit Christadelphian Book Supply and will be available for sale at www.christadelphianbooks.com. Thank you, Sis. Karen. We appreciate all your hard work.

Thoughts on the Way

Where did Bible Marking come from?

IN the earliest days, when Bible manuscripts (or individual Bible books or letters) were copied for circulation, the copyists took every possible precaution to avoid errors. They knew that an error, once left in a manuscript, would be copied and recopied time after time, thus multiplying the first mistake.

Similarly, Bible students who worked with handwritten manuscripts generally avoided making any notes in the margins—again, for fear the next copyist to work from that manuscript might mistake the note for part of the text, and so perpetuate the problem.

This attitude began to change when the 15th-century printing press made full Bible texts or translations available to many people. Then the owner of the Bible could make notes to his or her heart's content, with no fear that the notes would be mistaken for part of the text. Even then, though, a lot of folks did not mark up their Bibles, possibly because of the Bible's own warnings:

“See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.” (Deut 12:32 NIV).

“Do not add to [God’s] words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.” (Prov 30:6 NIV).

“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this

book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.” (Rev 22:18,19).

Nevertheless, many of us today write notes in the margins of our Bibles. Sometimes we buy wide-margin Bibles for that specific purpose. We may even have graduated from wide-margin Bibles (with room for lots of notes) to Bible translations on computers (with practically unlimited space available to add our own commentaries and study helps). Surely there can be nothing wrong with this approach to Bible study, if we don't mistake marginal notes for the Bible itself, or think of our notes, from whomsoever, as inspired or infallible.

When I began to study the Bible, I used Bro. Maurice Stewart's first-principle notes. I copied these diligently, word for word, into my wide-margin Bible (which I still have, by the way). At the same time, I also used Bro. H.P. Mansfield's verse-by-verse commentaries on various books of the Bible.

Many of those early notes are still there in my laptop computer, copied from ordinary Bible paper into the elusive magic of computer text. But alongside these notes, there are many, many more computer notes which I have produced on my own, following the suggestions of Bro. Harry Whittaker, who wrote two wonderful books, *Exploring the*

Bible and Enjoying the Bible. (He wrote many wonderful books but these two are the ones I have in mind.) From these two books I learned techniques for Bible study which I could do on my own. And I learned that the best Bible commentary is the one we construct for ourselves, for this simple reason: By the time my own thoughts have been processed and put onto paper and/or into my computer, I will have learned **why** they are there, **why** they make sense, and **how** they relate to other parts of the Bible. Brother Whittaker's best single piece of advice for Bible study comes from one of his first books, *Exploring the Bible*: "Don't rely on memory; when you hear or learn something worthwhile, write it down immediately!"

So far as I can tell, the first Christadelphian to mark his Bible was Robert Roberts (1839-1898). He explained why in his autobiography, *My Days and My Ways*:

"It was about [the early 1850s] when I commenced the systematic reading of the Scriptures, now so general a practice, with the aid of *The Bible Companion*. I found I must read, first for information, and then for daily sustenance in the things of the Spirit. Reading led to marking special passages with ink—arising from the need for ready quotations in conversation with those who opposed the truth. I think I got the first idea of [Bible] marking from Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*."

The Mrs. Stowe to which Robert Roberts refers is Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896), an American abolitionist

and author. Along with her husband, a minister and professor, she supported the Underground Railroad, bringing escaped slaves out of the South into safety and security in Canada. She is best known for her novel, which depicted the harsh conditions of African slaves in America. Her book was read by millions, in the United States but also in Great Britain and other countries, and was influential in provoking anti-slavery sentiment. It is said that when she met President Lincoln in 1862, he greeted her with: "So you are the little lady who wrote the book that started the great war [Civil War]."

In her novel, Stowe wrote of Uncle Tom, a slave who taught himself to read the Bible, and then preached its message, as best he could, to his fellow-slaves every Sunday. But such reading, for someone who was scarcely literate at the time, was very time-consuming, and Uncle Tom needed a better method of finding specific passages in his Bible. So, as Harriet Beecher Stowe explained:

"As for Tom's Bible, though it had no annotations and helps in the margin... still it had been embellished with certain waymarks and guideboards of Tom's own invention... It had been his custom to get the Bible read to him by his master's children, in particular by young Master George; and, as they read, he would designate, by bold, strong marks and dashes, with pen and ink, the passages which more particularly gratified his ear or affected his heart. His Bible was thus marked through, from one

(Continued on Page 28)

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