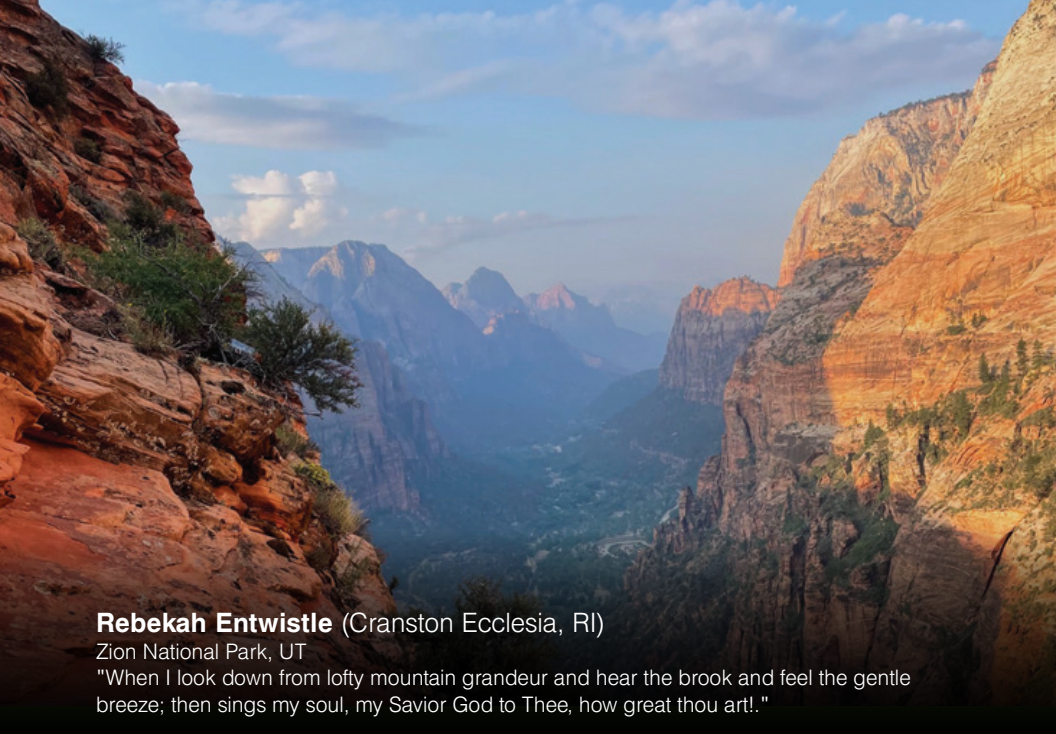


TIDINGS

Volume 85, Number 2, February 2022

SEEKING GREEN PASTURES

Our ecclesias can be the most fulfilling
and comforting gift we receive
during our mortal lives.



Rebekah Entwistle (Cranston Ecclesia, RI)

Zion National Park, UT

"When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur and hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze; then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee, how great thou art!"

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN **TIDINGS** OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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TIDINGS

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SEEKING GREEN PASTURES

By Dave Jennings

THERE is a place of refreshing unlike any other on earth. It is like a green pasture beside still waters. A place designed by God to refresh us. It is in this place, outside the wilderness of our lives, where we can immediately feel gentleness, merciful kindness and love. Here, conflict and strife from the surrounding world is silenced. When our minds fail to find peace and we feel we are sinking in the deep mire, a warm blanket of compassion is carefully wrapped around us. When we experience occasional triumphs and success in life, this is a place where they celebrate along with us. When we have nagging doubts, we find encouragement and spiritual sustenance in this place. It is an environment of joy, a place of

growth. It is an ample pasture for both the spring lambs and aging sheep.

This place is the ecclesia.

Is this your present experience? Do you find interactions with your brothers and sisters to be the calming and reinforcing environment you seek? For most of us, there have been times where our ecclesia was able to pull us through difficult times. While others in our lives walked away, our brothers and sisters stood by us. For countless times, we have been spiritually motivated by the faithful witness and examples of our brothers and sisters. But sadly, there have also been times when the ecclesia can almost feel like a battlefield. Coming to the very place we most value acceptance and

support can be the same place where we can feel rejected or dismissed.

Some may say that to think any human organization would fulfill the “green pasture” ideal is naïve. It might be argued that Jesus called us to conflict, sometimes within our own families. There are doctrines to be defended, spiritual principles to be enforced. It is to be expected that ecclesias will not always be “*like a covert from the tempest*” or as “*a great rock in a weary land*.” (Isa 32:2).

The way we view ecclesial life is not a matter of trivial importance. It is the roadmap for how we behave. It determines what our expectations are and can become the touchstone for self-examination. Having a clear picture of what the body of Christ is designed to do is essential.

Some might argue that their experience in life is that ecclesial life is always a mixed bag. Enjoy the good times but be prepared for the lean. Surely this can be true. Yet the commitment to the standard of life intended is what is essential. We can find ourselves allowing months, years and decades to go by which we know are out of sync with the commandments of our Lord.

In secular society, we continue to see people dividing into philosophical camps. One view is considered the only acceptable position and others

are not only considered foolish or ignorant but may be seen as threats. It is common to scream and deplore, but there is very little listening. There is progressive demonization of those who think differently, and there's an unwillingness to work toward mutual understanding. It is the epitome of “win/lose” thinking and the antithesis of peace. This viewpoint insists that “My rights are paramount, even at your expense.” It is all about “me, me, me!” Yet the historical idea of citizenry in pluralistic, democratic societies was that people could have different faiths, different goals, different ideas and a freedom for expression. It was citizenship that settled the differences, as each put the needs of the country or a community before their own. Citizens were expected to work things out for the common good.

It is a good time for us to pause and remember just how different our calling is. Here are a few thoughts about our ecclesias today and what may be required to ensure peace and love are fully embraced and practiced.

1. Jesus died to bring us peace. “*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*” (John 14:27). Ecclesias are to be communities of peace because

The way we view ecclesial life is not a matter of trivial importance. **It is the roadmap for how we behave.**

It determines what our expectations are and can become the touchstone for self-examination.

this is the great gift of our Lord. In communities of peace, there can be a full expression of love, and fear has no place. James spoke eloquently about peace,

For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. (Jas 3:16-18).

If we are experiencing ongoing strife and contention, it calls upon us to re-examine our own hearts. Someone once said, “One doesn’t sow seed on a battlefield!” Discord and strife stunt spiritual harvests. In times of peace and accord, that same battlefield can be repurposed as a place of abundant harvest. Individually, ecclesially, and as a community, we must commit to the hard work and submission to one another that peace requires. It is what our Lord demands. We cannot accept less. Our ecclesial leaders must be committed to be tirelessly working for peace. We need to hold each other accountable.

2. The body of Christ is designed to accept diversity along with the conflict it may bring. It is the “tempering” (1 Cor 12:24) of our Lord that makes His body, though diverse, interdependent and well-functioning. All parts are critical for proper functioning. We need not have cookie-cutter sameness from

all our members. There is great value in unharnessed thinking around the Scriptures. We are stronger when we are challenging our own minds and those of our brothers and sisters to see potentially new insights into the Word. All thinking must be governed and tested by the careful consideration of Scripture. We have a treasure chest of Christadelphian works available to us these days. They are wonderful supplements for our consideration, but they must never take the place of direct study of the Scriptures. This is where many diverse parts can work together for the health and well-being of the body. Thousands of eyes, fixed on the pages of Truth. Peace requires an assurance that open discussion and debate about Scripture happens in a safe environment.

3. The role of ecclesial leaders (shepherds) is to feed the sheep and to help create safe, green pastures. Effective shepherds don’t isolate the flock, or label other believing flocks as threats. God condemned the shepherds of Israel, and in contrast described how He would instead “feed them in a good pasture” and “there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.” (Ezek 34:14). Granted, the expectations for our serving brethren are high. Ecclesial leaders have always been accountable to the flock—they are elected or appointed servants. We have been blessed by their committed service to the needs of our ecclesias. When the flock was in distress, they would not

rest until peace was found and the flock was safe. In many cases, they dedicated countless hours of their own discretionary time to untangle and promote healing. We owe them so much.

4. The core of any ecclesia is its families. Healthy ecclesias begin with healthy families. All eyes in the ecclesia need to be focused on the care for the needs of the small lambs, our children. As a community, we not only teach the Truth, but we also demonstrate it. In all our pursuits in ecclesial life, ensuring the needs of our families are considered is paramount. Having ecclesias where children feel loved and safe is essential. When they hear disparaging comments about other believers or ecclesias it is poison to the spiritual development of a young person. We need not be families that don't discuss difficult situations or issues, but it must not be done by dismissing or condemning our brethren. What gets heard in the back seat of the car on the way home is just as remembered as the Sunday School lesson that day on how Jesus forgives us.
5. When we have active outreach, it teaches us to have a much deeper appreciation for the great blessing ecclesias are in our lives. It reminds the flock of how wonderful our green pastures really are. Seeing a new friend absorb the simple beauty of the first principles, and marvel at the prospects of the Kingdom, reminds us of the

pearl of great price in each of our hands. Bro. Roberts, in *The Ecclesial Guide*, wrote that ecclesias exist for two main functions: (1) the edification of the members and (2) the promulgation of the gospel message to those outside the ecclesia. He described these as requiring balance, with negative consequences being realized when they are not adequately aligned. Isn't it interesting that one of the ways to realize true joy and green pastures is by helping others? Peace in ecclesias is nurtured when we do not allow our ecclesial focus to become lopsided, or too inwardly focused. Helping others helps us!

6. Can we stop the labeling of brothers, sisters and ecclesias? There is no positive value in labeling ecclesias as "conservative" or "liberal." Bro. Harry Tennant once wrote,

Fellowships have been described as 'tight', 'loose', 'strict', 'open', or 'pure'. None of these descriptions is to be found in Scripture. They are inventions of man, and they reflect what someone would like our fellowship to be or not to be; but they do not necessarily bear any relation to reality.¹

There is no value in assigning a descriptor to a brother or sister because they have a different way of viewing items that are not fundamental doctrines. Brother or sister is the highest title any of us can aspire to, and it reminds us of the equality we have in Jesus Christ.

Paul lived life in appreciation for the many who labored with him. He prayed earnestly for those who opposed themselves, as well as him...

7. Finally, can we make the choice to celebrate each other? Yes, celebrate! It is a choice we make. The Apostle Paul wrote, *“And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.”* (1 Cor 12:26).

Rather than looking for what you feel is wrong, look for the positives and rejoice. I have so admired brothers and sisters that do this. They have nothing but affirming things to say about others. It's not that they aren't aware of the frailties of others, but that is not their focus. What they choose to see in another person is one for whom Jesus died. That person is a child of God and a representative of light in a world of darkness. They look for Christ in each other. They are cheerleaders for their brother and sister.

When we know the love of our brother and sister, fear of the open manifestation of our weaknesses can be dismissed. We feel more at ease sharing our burden and asking for help. That's not the case when we are in a judging and condemning environment.

I am always impressed how the Apostle Paul was so complete in his praise and thanksgiving for others. Yes, he did rebuke some, but that

was only after exhaustive attempts to help them, and aimed solely at correcting behavior that put them at risk. Paul praised helpers, fellow-laborers, those who shared bonds with him, as well as those who provided hospitality. They were generally commoners, though Erastus was the city treasurer. Finally, there is mention of one Quartus. Quartus is forever known as *“a brother.”* (Rom 16:23). We are left to wonder what his interactions were with the Apostle? What we do know is that Paul loved him. Paul lived life in appreciation for the many who labored with him. He prayed earnestly for those who opposed themselves, as well as him.

Our ecclesias can be the most fulfilling and comforting gift we receive during our mortal lives. But it requires each of us to make a choice to pursue peace and green pastures. The chief Shepherd will appear soon, by his grace bringing us to our ultimate rest. May he find us living in his peace, demonstrating our love of God by loving and celebrating one another. This is a call away from the chaos and tensions of this world to a place where we can all grow and produce the fruit of the Spirit together.

Dave Jennings

¹ Tennnant, Harry. *“The Ecclesia in the Last Days.”* The Christadelphian, 1988.

Changes at *The Tidings*

The work of the *Tidings* is dependent on the contributions of many volunteers. We are thankful for those who have served and those who continue to do so. I am pleased to announce that we have several new Section Editors for the magazine this year, beginning their new assignments in March.

Bro. Steve Cheetham, Moorestown, NJ, will become our new Exposition Section Editor. Bro. Steve takes over this section from Bro. Richard Morgan, who has served in this capacity since June 2020.

Bro. Richard Morgan, Simi Hills, CA, will now move to become the Section Editor for our First Principles section. Bro. Richard will be taking over this section, which was led by Bro. Joe Hill over the past 18 months. We thank Joe for his stimulating and important articles.

Bro. Nathan Badger, Cambridge, ON, will be assuming responsibility as the Life Application Section Editor. Bro. Nathan will be replacing Bro. Chuck Link, Moorestown, NJ, who served as the Section Editor since June 2020. We thank Bro. Chuck for his insightful article selections and diligent service.

Continuing in their work as Section Editors are:

- Bro. Duncan Kenzie, Saanich Peninsula, BC, with the Exhortation and Consolation section,
- Sis. Jessica Gelineau, Simi Hills, CA, with the Music and Praise section,
- Sis. Jan Berneau, Verdugo Hills, CA, with the Preaching and Teaching and CBMA section,

- Bro. George Booker, Austin Leander, TX, who leads the Thoughts on the Way section,
- Sis. Melinda Flatley, Pittsburgh, PA, who leads writer recruitment and final copy review, and,
- Bro. John Bilello, Ann Arbor, MI, who leads Letters to the Editor.

We continue to thank all of those who contribute to the work of the monthly issues.

*David Jennings,
Editor*

Committee Appointments

On behalf of the *Tidings* Committee, I want to thank Bro. Randy Davenport and Bro. Clive Drepaul for their many years of service as they retire from the *Tidings* Committee. Both have been active contributors over the years in helping to guide the direction of the *Tidings* and in providing articles, book reviews, coordinating special issues, and zealous promotion of the *Tidings* Magazine and our online presence.

Further, I am pleased to announce that Sis. Linda Beckerson of the Ann Arbor Ecclesia and Sis. Nancy Brinkerhoff of the Denver Ecclesia both agreed to join the *Tidings* Committee in 2021. We look forward to their contributions to the Committee with their varied experiences and spiritual insights in helping us in building the faith of our brothers and sisters in the community.

*Alan Markwith,
Chairman*

CHOOSING TO SUFFER

By Dave Jennings

THERE'S a challenging statement embedded in the Beatitudes. Jesus tells us we are blessed when we *"hunger and thirst after righteousness."* (Matt 5:6.) This is compelling to us, as we do desire righteousness in our lives. But Jesus goes on to say in verse 10, *"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake."* There seems a connection here that we must all take note of. Pursuing righteousness in our lives invites suffering. Paul says, *"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake."* (Phil 1:29).

For many of us, we live incredibly comfortable lives. Even when we preach openly, we may not experience suffering or persecution. The laws of our land have protections for those who wish to openly express their faith. You may wonder if you have ever really experienced the suffering the Lord describes in the pursuit of righteousness.

However, each of us can be quite assured that we do suffer likely every day. If we limit our view of suffering to overt persecution by the hands of men, we may not fully grasp what it means to suffer. For suffering is a choice that we make every day.

What then is the scope of Christian suffering?

Peter, who knew a bit about persecution and suffering, spoke about suffering in a different way than we might initially think.

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. (1 Pet 4:1-2).

Could it be that suffering is associated with the struggle we all experience

daily to resist sin? That the suffering we all share in fellowship is the decision not to pursue the natural impulses of the flesh?

It is common for us to think of the suffering of Jesus in terms of the intense physical pain he endured. His faithfulness was on public display as he experienced beating, scourging and the pain of the cross. However, it is in the Garden when he shed *"as it were great drops of blood"* (Luke 22:44), where we see our Lord in his greatest agony. It was in Gethsemane where our Lord struggled to submit his will to his Father's, even unto death.

We read in Hebrews, *"For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."* (Heb 2:18). The sufferings that were with our Lord every day and every interaction with men was his temptation to sin. Resisting temptation is suffering.

If you've found yourself wondering what suffering you may experience in your life because of your faith, here's the answer. Will you suffer persecution and reproach for your beliefs? Possibly. Will you suffer the loss of all things for the sake of Christ? Unlikely. But will you suffer with Christ every day and choose to resist sin? That is your choice.

One of the great challenges to believers over the centuries has been having a balance in our thinking about God's truth and mercy. God is a God of truth, but also a God of mercy. He is never only one of these two dimensions; He is always both. He expects us to follow His commandments, but He also has provided a way to demonstrate grace to those who believe. Paul discussed

how this imbalance of thinking was occurring in Rome. There were those who were dismissing their responsibility to repent of sin because of their reliance on grace. *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"* (Rom 6:1).

Paul reminded them that they had been freed from the prison-house of sin and that living in continuous sin was incompatible with their new life in Christ. Paul also wrote, *"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."* (Rom 13:14). To be a believer requires a steadfast commitment to holiness.

Well, of course! How could this have ever been in doubt? *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."* (Heb 12:14).

Sometimes I fear we can take a defeatist attitude toward sin. When we openly confess we are sinners, there are at least two ways to think about where we go from there. You can bemoan that you are a pitiful sinner and incapable of fighting sin, or you can strive for holiness and rely on God's grace to strengthen you. We all know that it is the latter that we must choose.

A Church of England priest, William Law (1686-1761), wrote the following.

And if you will here stop and ask yourself, why are you not as pious as the primitive Christians were, your own heart will tell you, that it is not through ignorance, nor inability, but purely because you never intended it. You observe the same Sunday-worship that they did, and you are strict in it, because

it is your full intention to be so. And when you have this intention to please God in all your actions, as the happiest and best thing in the world, you will find in you as great an aversion to everything that is vain and impertinent in common life, whether of business or pleasure, as you now have to anything that is profane.¹

Each one of us makes a daily decision to suffer with our Lord. It's not a natural choice and it is not thinking that makes any sense to the flesh. But it makes sense to us because we have minds that are governed by the Spirit. When we are faced with temptation to sin, our choice is not to make provision for the flesh, but to share in the life of our Lord and to have "fellowship of his sufferings." (Phil 3:10).

Our role in the fight is to eschew sin. We will not be victorious because of our own strength. James wrote, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." (Jas 4:7-8). We know that if we make the choice to resist sin, to suffer being tempted, He will sustain us and draw near. We make the choice to suffer, He delivers us.

Perhaps this is a new way for us to look at suffering? The daily determination to "walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4) is suffering with our Lord. Because he chose to suffer temptation, he learned obedience (Heb 5:8). It prepared him for the challenges ahead where he

would proclaim the righteousness and victory of his Father.

This then is our choice—to suffer every day. To see our temptations and failures as opportunities to learn about our Lord and to experience his power in our lives. If we wish to come closer to our Lord, to feel his presence, we need not wait for calamity or persecution from others to be injected into our lives.

The Apostle Paul described the natural impulses of the flesh, which he called the "vanity" of the mind (Eph 4:17). In contrast, we, who were once part of that world of darkness, have been called into light.

But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Eph 4:20-24).

May we each embrace our commitment to holiness. Though we fail, we can have the great confidence that "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together." (Rom 8:17).

Dave Jennings

¹ A Serious Call to a Devout & Holy Life, William Law A.M., Macmillan and Company, Limited, London, 1898.

OUR CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

By Peter Bilello



ONE of my hobbies is following major infrastructure projects around the world. I am especially interested in the design and construction of subway systems. I make efforts when traveling to ride subway systems by myself, even in countries where I don't understand the language, such as Moscow, Tokyo and Beijing.

The following story is one of fits and starts. It takes place in New York City, specifically the east side of Manhattan and the Second Avenue Subway. The subway line there runs under some of Second Avenue. It was first proposed

in 1920, but the first phase only started actual construction in 2007. It opened in 2017, 97 years after that initial proposal.

“That’s Progress”

This isn't the end of the story. At a July 2020 meeting regarding further phases, the MTA said it had begun the process of acquiring over a dozen properties along 2nd Ave and 125th Street through “negotiated voluntary agreements.” If agreements can't be reached “in a timely manner,” according to the MTA, they will take preliminary steps under

the state's Eminent Domain Procedure Law to lessen the potential for future delays to the project. In other words, they will force the owners to sell at fair market value. The article goes on to record comments from a local residence. "That's progress...And when there is progress, people and places get moved out of the way."

This statement is often true of such projects. Some individuals often do pay the price for progress. But many more often pay the price for no progress! History books are full of stories that describe the sacrifice of the few for the benefit of the many. For example, the protestors of old preached the gospel despite the fear of being persecuted. And, of course, our Lord Jesus Christ, the best example in human history.

The internet is littered with articles and news stories related to protests and concerns about the Second Ave. Subway and other major public works projects. There are many similar past stories related to how progress for the many was held back by the apparent narrow view, or perhaps selfishness, of a few. I am not trying to argue that governments can do what they wish with regard to individual property owners. My point is to consider how far we exercise our individual freedom to do what we wish at the expense of others. What is "Our Corporate Responsibility?" Our responsibility to others? In a way, that is the core of Jesus' sacrifice—one sinless man willingly died on the cross so that the door opened to eternal life for many. He put his corporate responsibility above his own life. What more can one do than that?

The Law of Gleaning

In Ruth chapter 2 and verses 1-3, we read,

Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech.¹

Gleaning is the act of collecting leftover crops from farmers' fields after they have been harvested or on fields where it is not economically profitable to harvest. Deuteronomy 24:19-21 describes a law related to gleaning:

When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over them again. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not strip it afterward. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.

Why was this law given? Why did the farmer have to allow strangers to pick from his field? Why couldn't they go back and get everything that they worked so hard to grow? Deuteronomy 24:17-18 explains:

You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow's garment in pledge, but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this.

God again emphasizes his point in verse 22, when we read, “You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this.”

It is important to note that this corporate or community responsibility went beyond just Israelites and also included strangers. For us, this means our corporate responsibility goes beyond our fellow brothers and sisters to include the community around us. In other words, we cannot be self-centered. We can't be “me, myself, and I” focused. We all know that there is no ambiguity in the self-sacrificing example of the Lord Jesus. Consider Philippians 2:5-8.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

We are not just responsible for ourselves, but for those around us, both those in the body of believers and those outside. How would those in darkness come to the light without us working amongst

them, preaching and showing love as one of Christ's brothers or sisters. We are members of a working body, every one of us having a particular part to play and specific responsibilities to fulfill. Recall 1 Corinthians 12:12-14 and 27-28:

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

Let us not forget that “We are members of the body of Christ.” Our purpose is to serve the greater good of the body.

Judeo-Christian Values

Why am I emphasizing this? In my opinion, Western culture, and perhaps civilization as a whole, is at a crossroads. Occurrences of people just helping a stranger in need are getting less frequent. Content on the internet and in the news where individuals stress their rights to do as they please without any apparent care for those around them appears to be increasing at an alarming rate. Often difficult times bring out the best in people. But in the last year or so they appear to be bringing out the worst as well.

One of my Chinese colleagues lives in Wuhan, China. He once told me one of the main differences between the U.S. and China is how people act during an emergency. For example, he observed that, if a plane went down in a lake or on a river in the US, many of the people on the shore would jump in and try to save people. However, in China, the people would stand on the shore and watch. In my travels, I've found it's not only people in the US who respond by helping. Those from other countries that have been based on sound religious ideals focused on doing unto others as you would want to be done unto you also behave this way. For countries where Judeo-Christian ideals are prevalent, this is probably because the commandments of Christ are an underpinning of common and expected behavior. Even laws and justice systems are based on these values. Historically, people in the U.S. and other Judeo-Christian-based countries would know the following commandments, even if they didn't know where they came from:

1. *Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you.* (Matt 5:44).
2. *Resist not evil.* (Matt. 5:30-40).
3. *Recompense to no man evil for evil: overcome evil with good.* (Rom 12:17).

4. *Bless them that curse you; let no cursing come out of your mouth.* (Matt 5:44).

5. *Render not evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing.* (1 Pet 3:9).

6. *Pray for them that despitefully use you and afflict you.* (Matt 5:44).

7. *Love thy neighbor as thyself.* (Matt 22:39). KJV

Again, we find a sense of community or corporate responsibility in many of Christ's commandments. Unfortunately, much of this appears to be eroding. If this affects the world around us, then it will also affect the ecclesia.

Dangers of Humanism

I tell people that I am a globalist, not as the world defines it, but rather as the Creator has defined it. We are all God's children. We can all accept Christ as our Savior. One of the movements that seeks to undo this is Humanism.

Many think that Humanism is a logical stance that emphasizes the potential and ability of human beings, individually and socially. It considers human beings as the starting point for serious moral and philosophical inquiry. According to the International Humanist and Ethical Union's bylaw 5.1:



Humanism is a democratic and ethical life stance, which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. It stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethic based on human and other natural values in the spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities. It is not theistic, and it does not accept supernatural views of reality.

While there are some general truths in this statement, it removes the purpose and responsibility that we have beyond ourselves—a responsibility that goes all the way back to creation itself.

Males and females were created for all species. God defined the family unit from the beginning. Abraham and his offspring were selected as a community, as a family, as God's ecclesia—the ecclesia set up to be a community where we help and strengthen each other. Creation wasn't individually focused. There was a plan for salvation from the beginning—salvation for mankind and not for one man. As I mentioned, there is one body of Christ but many members.

The erosion of a community spirit is contrary to the fundamentals of ecclesial life. In the US, we are taught

from a young age the phrase, “we have freedom of speech but not of the consequences.” We all understand that, regardless of having the right to freedom of speech, there are limitations to what can be said. For example, we cannot yell “fire” in a movie theater because that would incite chaos that can lead to someone being injured. If someone were to yell “fire” without there being an actual fire, they would face consequences through law enforcement.

So, why are so many going against this? Why are so many concerned about what they consider to be their individual freedoms, for example, when they refuse to wear masks or don't accept medical advice from the CDC to have their children wear masks in school? We have rules for no shirt, no shoes, no service, but some parents believe that somehow their rights are being compromised because medical authorities are requiring or recommending masks to be worn by their children. It is interesting to note that mask-wearing is somewhat common in Asia. That is because, as my colleagues in Japan and China have told me, individuals feel that wearing a mask protects others from the sickness that they might be battling. In these cases, a community understanding is clearly being practiced.



What happened to our Judeo-Christian ideals? Do we remember the Ten Commandments? At least half of the Ten are community-related:

- *Thou shalt not kill.*
- *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*
- *Thou shalt not steal.*
- *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*
- *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.* Exod 20:13-17 (KJV).

These are further reminders that our corporate responsibility is greater than ourselves.

Christ's Example

Finally, we need to think about others first, just as our Lord Jesus Christ did. Just picture him on the cross, an innocent man, willing to die for those he didn't even know. There are some relevant principles and practices in all of this. For example, we are to esteem our brother better than ourselves in a manner that encourages every member's opinion to be thoughtfully considered and respected. Scripture also teaches us to submit to each other so that when we don't share the majority's opinion we defer to the opinion of others, without promoting strife. We are to be hospitable, going out of our way to make all strangers feel welcome and wanted. We are also to obey rulers, to submit to every ordinance of man for the sake of the Lord. This of course requires us to adhere to all applicable governmental

laws and ordinances where they do not conflict with the commands of Christ

We are also reminded to confess Christ freely before men, to promote the teaching of the gospel to the surrounding community, in any way possible, including public seminars, classes and outreach programs. We are also to do good to all men as we have the opportunity, give to those who ask and love our neighbor as ourselves. This means that we should contribute to the needs of the community we live in.

Let us not be like many in the world, always worrying about ourselves, but let us put others first, and above all, put our heavenly Father and his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior first. Why? Because the greatest selfless act was God's giving of His only begotten Son and his Son's obedience to death. We have life itself because of our Heavenly Father. These are challenging times, and not just because of the pandemic. The moral decay of society is clear. Selfishness is rampant. Let's be the community that thrives and flourishes because we understand and execute a corporate responsibility that is in line with the Scriptures. As individuals, we always have a choice to do as we wish. Let's choose to accept our corporate responsibility is God-directed and that it is to be followed as we put off the old man and put on the new one. The emblems of the breaking of bread remind us of Christ's great sacrifice. They also remind us of our higher calling as members of the body of Christ.

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¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural passages are taken from the ESV

LESSONS FROM A FAILED MARRIAGE

IT is now over 50 years ago that I was very happily joined in marriage with a brother. During the years, something went terribly wrong. I learned that choosing and marrying another Christadelphian will not guarantee success. Many years later, our marriage lay shattered. We are broken human beings in a broken world, and it proved impossible for us to put the pieces back together again.

Was it any easier for our daughters, because they were almost grown up and sisters in Christ? What did it do to their faith to have what they thought was a solid family foundation and refuge torn away from them? Did our broken marriage lead to theirs? The sorrow of our separation and divorce radiated quickly to affect the whole extended family—both natural and spiritual. Joyfully, our daughters are still faithful sisters today.

Would our marriage still be intact if we had made different choices and had greater strength? Undoubtedly. However, it has taken the broken marriage and the consequent years of struggle to learn what it is we needed

to know then. God is gracious. His forgiveness and healing is complete. He still can, and will, save us both to the uttermost (Heb 7:25).

I rejoice that my former husband is still my brother. It is likely that we will spend eternity together in the wonderful Kingdom of God. Not as husband and wife. Because marriage, as we know it now, will not exist in the Kingdom. Instead, there will be a joining together of all saints in an unimaginably joyful eternal “marriage” with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

What could I have done differently? Would I do anything differently if I had to do it over again? I tried to be strong, but it was not enough. One thing I needed to do differently was to rise above my own fear and pain and speak openly with my then-husband. Also, to recognize the danger of my own weaknesses much sooner. I needed to face the problems head-on and not retreat. It is much easier to see that now. And perhaps with the skills I have now, I could have done it. There is a need to make up your mind beforehand that you will stand by God's principles no

matter what pain it causes when the test comes. It is all too easy to justify your actions when it is your marriage that is breaking down and your heart that is breaking; when the pain is so great you just want it to stop by whatever means possible.

Now I can only give thanks that my Heavenly Father and my Lord Jesus Christ never left my side. I know without a shadow of a doubt that they are utterly trustworthy and so merciful to weak floundering children.

By recognizing the weakness of my own flesh and knowing that God is strengthening me and helping me to grow in His grace, I know that my brothers and sisters are also growing. I imagine that, if they could go back and change their reactions, some of them would choose to do things differently as well. It is much easier for members of the body of Christ to rally around those who lose their spouse in death than through separation and divorce. But the need for support, comfort and the recognition of the great pain involved is just as great when a marriage comes to an end before death.

How can you help someone in that situation? Number one is to remember our Lord's words not to judge, lest you be judged also. We are all broken people in a broken world. Be thankful if you are in a strong marriage and remember you do not know how you would react in identical circumstances.

Recognizing principles and standards of behavior and the ideal is one thing. Condemning those who fall short of the mark is quite another. The Bible is full of real stories of people (e.g., Samson, David, Judah) who stumbled into sin but who will be in the Kingdom. God

has provided a way for us to be forgiven and that is the core of our great hope.

I can look back and see that the foundation of my faith was based on trying to be a "good" Christadelphian. This included attending the meetings regularly, teaching Sunday School and young people. Every summer the whole family attended Bible Schools. I listened with much note-taking and learning. I tried so hard to be the very best wife and mother I could be. In my inmost being, I was trying to be good enough for the Kingdom. It did not work and never could, so inevitably I fell flat on my face. God brought me to my knees pleading for forgiveness because we were not able to hold our marriage together.

Now my faith is based solidly on God's forgiveness and grace. I walk in His strength and not my own weakness (Phil 4:13). That is what it means to be redeemed. God saved me from my own arrogance and wretchedness. I know the strength of sin and recognize the enemy of my own human nature. Better still, I know the strength and beauty of grace that triumphs over sin.

This world is to be made beautiful again. Paradise will be restored. And the great joy that lays ahead is that we can be a part of that restoration. We can be there, not because we have lived exemplary lives, but because of God's tremendous love and mercy.

Praise be to our Loving Heavenly Father who has designed the earth with a great purpose, and praise be to His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who leads His sheep and calls us back to the right path whenever we stray. He is calling. Are we listening?

A Sister

SONGS OF DELIVERANCE

By James DiLiberto

Repentance and Song

“The earth is the LORD’s” begins Psalm 24, and it’s a Scripture which neither I nor any of the young people who were in my car will ever forget. Was it a memory verse we all had growing up? Unlikely. Did each of us have it on our Bible covers or bookmarks? Probably not. The truth is that the Sons of Korah group from Melbourne, Australia had put this Psalm to music, and we played it over and over, at much volume, as we traveled to and from the 2001 Toronto fraternal gathering as teenagers. The reason why we’ve never forgotten how

this Psalm starts is that the musical arrangement had incredible power to awaken our minds with truth, open our hearts to God’s influence, and refresh our souls with the purest kind of joy in worship. As science has proven, music has a significant effect on the human mind and in the spiritual life of a believer. It can be a real force for good. When in its proper place, music remains one of the best tools for the internalization and expression of spiritual things and is a God-prescribed channel for a genuine response when words alone will not suffice. That Psalm



24 arrangement by the Sons of Korah is a great example.

Of course, as technically “good” and enjoyable it can be, the wrong kind of music will have many negative effects on our spiritual life. It’s one thing to turn up the volume on our spiritual music while driving out of a Youth Conference or to the Toronto Gathering. It’s another to then turn back to secular content the next week on the way to work. Everything can have its place at times, but we must acknowledge this duplicity can be inversely impactful. The oft-used clean and dirty water cups object lesson comes to mind, as well as Paul’s advice in Philippians 4:8 (ESV): “*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*” This article explores some practical ways we can integrate “clean water” into our everyday devotional lives and some short Bible exposition to inform our practices.

Another psalm that I have found instructive in this regard is Psalm 32, from which I first took the name of The Seventh Day’s “Songs of Deliverance” album. What stood out to me was the progression of thought by David, after his sin with Bathsheba. In Psalm 32:6 (ESV), we find David reflecting on forgiveness received and his desire to share that experience with others, as he proclaims, “*Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.*” Whether as a teenager or

now as an adult, life can often feel like a flood of water completely engulfing us. David felt as if he was literally running from Saul, saying “*the sorrows of hell compassed me about* (H5437 *sâbab*): *the snares of death prevented me*” (Psa 18:5). In Psalm 32, David’s repentance led him back to the God of his life, who conversely surrounded him (that same word) with grace, expressed in the metaphor of song, a language which David especially could readily understand. David sings, “*Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.*” (Psa 32:7). As David so obviously did, we can also use the tool of the song in our everyday walk when overwhelmed and surrounded by the pressures of life.

Surround Me—A Devotional Routine

When most people think about clear Biblical instruction concerning music, they go to Paul’s exhortation to the Ephesians and Colossians where he writes “*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord*” (Eph 5:18-19). As it is in Psalm 32, one antidote for sinful behavior and ungodly thinking are “Spirit-filled” or “spiritual” activities as ways of communing with one another, just as they are ways of communing with our Lord. Songs are another devotional practice linking the head and the heart, just like prayer. “*I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also*” (1 Cor 14:15). Spiritual songs can have a cleansing effect on our hearts and minds as

shown in the parallel Psalm 51:1-2, 9-10, where there is a sense in which the spiritually invigorating songs of deliverance David was able to write would create in him a clean heart and renew a right spirit within him.

On a trip to Barbados in 2006, I was driving in the car of a local brother who had an audio Bible and Christadelphian music on alternating CDs. Remember CDs? When I asked about this and his daily routine, he reflected, “This is how I warm up for my day to stay focused on God at work and how I close my day on the way home to be in the right mindset for my family.” This had a big impact on me. As soon as I got home, I got hold of The Bible Experience MP3 set (replaced now with the Bible.com app) and put both it and as many Christadelphian and suitable Christian songs as possible on my digital device (an iPod then, but now my phone). Today with the dawn of portability, I can employ that same devotional

practice and surround myself with those songs of deliverance, intertwined with the Word, and listen at almost any moment in my day.

Although I am by nature a musical person, filling my life with spiritual music is a choice I still have to make and a desire I must continually develop and retain. It becomes a habit and alters my taste for things of the Spirit. In another Scripture, Paul says, “*For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.*” (Rom 7:22-23 ESV). The battle in our hearts is there constantly, and we need to feed our inner being a healthy diet and exercise our minds to strengthen that spiritual muscle and develop the stamina we all need. Like a

The battle in our hearts is there constantly, and we need to feed our inner being

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physical fitness routine, I have outlined below some suggested opportunities for surrounding yourself with songs of deliverance. Personally, I have found these very helpful to jumpstart my day, topping up along the way, and putting me in the right mindset in the evening.

Morning:

- **Wake Up Call!**—No one really likes to wake up to “Beep! Beep! Beep!” These days, as many of us use our phones as an alarm, most have options to choose a song as the tone. It’s amazing what a difference it makes to have your first thoughts of the day be about God before your feet hit the floor. It can totally set the direction of your day and has helped me remember that I need to get the Word in me before I am off about my daily business. For those who are still using a clock radio, you can usually find a Christian station in your area, and in this way, the first thing you will hear might remind you of God. Even if you cannot wake up to it, you can play spiritual music or an audio Bible while you are getting ready or having breakfast. It’s amazing how the morning rush turns into a morning devotional time of peace.

- **The Commute**—As in the earlier story, this is the most common time redeemed by believers and often most profitable. So much time can be wasted listening to pop music, the daily news, scrolling Facebook/Instagram, or clicking through YouTube. Instead, in the quiet moments during the commute, you can put pure spiritual water into your heart which will help you have the proper attitude at work or school. In fact, the commute is where we often develop early frustrations, if that time is not purposely intended for communing with God. Just think—when a person cuts you off on the road or squeezes you out of the train, how much harder is it to think or say bad things, or get impatient and negative when you have the things of God’s perspective ringing in your ears?

Day:

- **Your “Work” Day!**—Many people can listen to music while they work to pass the time as long as it doesn’t affect their productivity. Some people suggest that music increases productivity. This is certainly true if the music reminds you of the



LORD and you're working "as unto" Him. Over the past 10 years, I have gotten emails from young mothers or older retired sisters saying that our music has "turned my mundane housework into a service of worship," or "made stressful childminding a meditative experience on God's Fatherhood."

- Break!—Often, at university, in between lectures when you need a mental break, or if you have a moment at your job, you may choose to take that time to do your daily readings or pray. But another good thing to do is listen to inspiring spiritual music if you've had a busy morning, or maybe some really uplifting music if things are dragging along, even head out for some physical activity with a good spiritual shot in the arm.
- Commute Home!—As with your morning commute, it is a good time to just relax and consider God (providing you don't fall asleep to a soothing meditation piece!). I have often found the more moving, energetic music is fitting for the end of my day. This reminds me to be thankful, regardless of what happened at school or work. Instead of thinking of the frustrations from that day, one may end up thinking of the blessing it was to have a job or the ability to go to school in the first place. Good music can lift our spirits and just put everything into perspective.

Good music can lift our spirits and just put everything into perspective.

Evening:

- Preparing the Food!—In our house, whoever cooks or cleans often puts on some spiritual songs to lift the joy of it all, no matter how messy things may get. Some find that listening to a song before preparing the spiritual food (reading the Scriptures) stimulates all the parts of the brain, getting the heart, soul, and mind to be in tune with each other and prepared to receive the written Word with greater efficacy.
- Lullaby Time!—As it is helpful for babies to be settled to sleep with nice sounds, God's children are no different. It can be nice to finish off your night with a peaceful song to again condition your heart for evening meditation and prayer before you go to sleep. Some have shared that falling to sleep with spiritual music is a way to help you "commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still" (Psa 4:4).

Sowing and Reaping

In a world saturated with cheap junk food music and ungodly poisonous content, it's more important than ever to apply the sound advice of God's wisdom through Paul. In times past, before the digital age of constant media, believers often made music and sang together as a healthy pastime. I have many memories of growing up at the Schooley's Mountain Christadelphian Bible Camp in New Jersey, where on any given summer afternoon, you might be literally

surrounded by brothers and sisters who had very little materially but had songs of deliverance on their lips, ringing out from their cabin porch or under the Bell Tree (an old tree with a circle of benches underneath, which was a common and beloved gathering place). Later in the day, they would converge at the campfire for evenings filled with more spiritual songs. For them, it was a time to disconnect from the craziness of life and connect with each other in spiritual ways. This implanted in my heart an example for devotional time with God, using music as the vehicle for connection. Today, thanks to that same digital age that so challenges us, we also have a huge resource for enjoying those songs anytime and anywhere, especially with the content created by our brothers and sisters.

God created music to be used in both personal devotion and congregational worship. Like anything else, music has consequences, either good or bad. As Galatians 6:8 (ESV) states so clearly, *“For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from*

the Spirit reap eternal life.” God created music, enjoys it Himself, and sings His song over us at our salvation (Zeph 3:17). Throughout time, believers have used music in both their personal lives and informal services. Experiences from so many believers will leave you convinced that non-spiritual music often is one of *“every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us”* (Heb 12:1) and takes our eyes away from looking to Jesus. I would challenge the reader to give spiritual music replacement an honest try. See how it changes your day. There is a multitude of spiritual music resources in the Christadelphian community that varies in compositional styles and lyrical subjects. Some of the resources are included in the footnotes below. Rather than floating on the river of life, take control of your inner life by filling your heart with spiritual things and surrounding yourself with songs of deliverance.

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Useful Resources

- music.seekthelord.com/GuitarHymnBook - Bro. James DiLiberto's 2002 Green Hymn Book with guitar chords/capo options for accompaniment with piano or solo
- theseventhday.com.au - The Seventh Day collective recordings and sheet music
- jehoshaphatmusic.com - Choirs and Studio recordings, North America
- christadelphianmusic.com - Bro. Levi Myers' music
- soundcloud.com/christadelphianmusic - Compilation of Streaming Christadelphian Music
- Search Spotify for "Christadelphian" for many good sources like WCF Music including Hymns for Sunday and a compilation of All Christadelphian Songs organized by theseventhday.com

THE SONGWRITERS

By Carmel Page

WONDERFUL WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

In our continuing series of character studies about valiant and virtuous women in the Scriptures, Sis. Carmel Page draws our attention to a great woman of faith. ~ Editor

“The sun can conquer anything. It can kill by sapping all energy, but it can also defeat famine by making new crops flourish. The sun can burn a man’s brain so that he can’t even walk toward the shade. The sun can also lift spirits, bringing new light after darkness.” These were the musings of a man who was walking due south for many days. Each day he started before dawn, rested when it became too hot, then walked on beside his long evening shadow.

It was late afternoon and still blisteringly hot. The man swigged from his waterskin. He was nearly

at his destination, so on this day, he carried on through the midday heat. He was a poet and a songwriter; he hadn’t achieved fame, but he loved to write, and tunes danced their way into his head with the rhythm of each step. He wanted to write a song that used the sun as a metaphor for the power we have when we follow God. Sun... come... run...fun...begun, there are a lot of words that rhyme with sun, but none of them seemed right.

In the distance was the Palm of Deborah, and underneath its cool shade, there would be a warm welcome. Deborah

deserved a palace, not a palm tree, but the indigenous people do not get what they deserve in occupied territory. Jabin, King of Canaan, had invaded twenty years ago, and the Children of Israel had suffered. Without a fair judge like Deborah, it would have been a lot worse. At least people could sit in the shade of her palm tree where Deborah would settle their disputes. She had more wisdom than a court full of men, and she had everyone's respect.

The man walked into the tree's shade, hips, knees, lower back all aching from days of walking. As he sank into the cool cushions, they hugged his aching joints. He drank juice, cool and sweet. He thought "I should write a song about Deborah. What rhymes with Deborah? Something must rhyme with Deborah."

"Will you do that?"

"Ahh, what?"

"Barak, have you been listening to me or not?" Deborah laughed. "I've just told you why I sent for you. You do realize the LORD, the God of Israel, told me to send for you?"

"Yes, yes I know, and that's why I've come." He was flustered. Had he dozed off?

"So, will you recruit ten thousand men from Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor?"

That was a long journey to set off again—back up north from where he had just come. Deborah explained the plan.

"God will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the

Kishon River and then give Sisera into your hands."

The last thing Barak wanted to do was fight Sisera. He had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years. He had nine hundred chariots fitted with iron and seemed impossible to defeat. Barak was frightened of Sisera, but he trusted Deborah; everyone trusted Deborah.

"If you go with me, I will go, but if you don't go with me, I won't go."

"Certainly, I will go with you," said Deborah without any hesitation. "But because you don't trust God to protect you, he will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman."

Barak sat up and scratched his head. Had he done wrong to ask Deborah for help? Everyone asked Deborah for help! Perhaps he should have accepted what she said. She knew God's plan. Now Deborah was going to accompany him, and she would be the one to slay Sisera, he thought. That would be something to write a song about!

The Triumph of Faith

So, Deborah accompanied Barak on the journey back north to Kadesh. More hot roads and sleeping rough. And now Barak had a woman to look after too, although Deborah seemed quite able to look after herself. Being with her was rather like being a small boy again and having a mother looking after him. Fortunately, the men of Zebulun and Naphtali were enthusiastic about joining him. He soon had ten thousand under his command. Barak wondered if they would have been so enthusiastic if he hadn't arrived with Deborah.

Barak set off with his army of foot soldiers marching up the flat valley floor, striding the wadis where they

were narrow enough to leap and then, onwards up Mount Tabor. It was an arduous trek, but it gave them the advantage of high ground where chariots fitted with iron were too heavy to follow.

Sisera rode into the Kishon valley with his men and nine hundred chariots. Barak and Deborah watched from the mountainside. Then Deborah said, “Go! This is the day the LORD has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the LORD gone ahead of you?”

So Barak went down Mount Tabor, with ten thousand men following him. He was at the front, but he didn’t feel vulnerable because his Lord, the God of Israel, was ahead of him. Barak saw God before him, in the sky, a mighty pillar of cloud, dark as death, then an explosion of water dropped from it, drenching everything, the mountain quaked with the echo of thunder. Torrents hurtled down the mountain to the flat valley below. Flash-floods filled wadis, overwhelmed brooks, and engulfed chariot wheels. As the rain fell from the sky onto Sisera’s chariots, Barak’s army fell from the mountainside. Water rising from below, ten thousand men attacking from above. The crash of lightning, slash of swords, smash of bones. A bloodbath flowed across the valley in a tide of destruction.

While Sisera’s soldiers fought for him, leaping from their bogged-down chariots into the rising waters, fighting till the last breath was gone from them, Sisera got down from his sinking chariot and fled on foot.

No sooner had the fighting abated than the flash flood drained away. Like flotsam on a beach, the bodies of Sisera’s

army emerged from the waters; the half-sunken chariots lay before them. But Sisera could not be found amongst the dead, so Barak, with a small group of men, set out in search of him.

Some days later, Barak reached a Bedouin camp. They were Kenites, who had a history of friendliness to Israel but also had an alliance with Jabin. Barak was unsure if he could trust them. Just then, a woman came out to meet him.

She Bruised His Head

“Come,” she said, “My name is Jael. I will show you the man you’re looking for.” Was it a trap? Jael led Barak to her tent. He felt awkward entering and stood in the doorway. As his eyes adjusted from the desert brightness to the dark, he saw someone asleep on a bed mat. In the perfumed tent, decorated with women’s embroideries, he saw a hammer on the floor, incongruous on a beautifully woven mat. The sleeper was covered in a colorful blanket. Barak could hear the bleat of animals outside and the laughter of the children playing nearby. As his eyes grew accustomed, he saw that it was Sisera’s head snuggled into a red pillow. He was lying on his side and looked peacefully asleep. Barak’s eyes were playing tricks on him. Through Sisera’s temple, he thought he could see a tent peg, blood congealed around it, blood across the pillow, blood on the floor. Jael pulled back the door curtain so that Barak could see better. He had come from a battlefield. He had seen many men dead, killed in the anger and rage of battle and yet that hadn’t prepared him for the sight of Sisera. The idea that a woman had held a tent peg above his

sleeping head and hammered him into the ground was unsettling.

On the journey back, Barak's mind was in a spin. He wasn't inspired to write poetry or songs. But once again, under Deborah's Palm tree, there was a party. There was praise for the God who saved them and much singing.

Who Wrote the Song?

Nowadays, we call the song they sang "The Song of Deborah" but nowhere does it actually say she wrote it. Deborah was a Judge. She believed in justice, so this verse does sound like her:

*When the princes in Israel take the lead,
when the people willingly offer
themselves—
praise the LORD!*

*Hear this, you kings! Listen, you rulers!
I, even I, will sing to the LORD;
I will praise the LORD, the God of
Israel, in song.
(Judg 5:2-3 NIV).*

But surely any of the soldiers who witnessed the battle and the miracle that happened would want to sing about it:

*The earth shook, the heavens poured,
the clouds poured down water.
The mountains quaked before the
LORD, the One of Sinai,
before the LORD, the God of Israel.
From the heavens the stars fought,
from their courses they fought
against Sisera.*

*The river Kishon swept them away,
the age-old river, the river Kishon.*

*March on, my soul; be strong!
Then thundered the horses' hooves—
galloping, galloping go his mighty
steeds.*

(Judg 5:4,5,20-21).

It sounds as if the next words were Deborah's. But is it arrogant to sing about yourself like that? Or was it custom for singers to imagine what their hero was saying? I don't know if Barak really liked to write lyrics, but I can imagine he wrote this part about Deborah:

*Villagers in Israel would not fight;
they held back until I, Deborah, arose,
until I arose, a mother in Israel.
(Judg 5:7).*

Or did the people make up the song?

*Then the people of the LORD
went down to the city gates.
"Wake up, wake up, Deborah!
Wake up, wake up, break out in song!
Arise, Barak!
Take captive your captives, son of
Abinoam.
(Judg 5:11-12).*

Or was it the tribes who didn't fight who sang to honor those who did?

*The people of Zebulun risked their very
lives;
so did Naphtali on the terraced fields.*

*Kings came, they fought,
the kings of Canaan fought.
At Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo.
(Judg 5:18-19).*

I've never heard the song referred to as Jael's song, but it is about her too. I wonder why we think Deborah wrote about herself if we don't think Jael wrote as well?

*Most blessed of women be Jael,
the wife of Heber the Kenite,
most blessed of tent-dwelling women.
He asked for water, and she gave him
milk;
in a bowl fit for nobles she brought him
curdled milk.
Her hand reached for the tent peg,
her right hand for the workman's
hammer.
She struck Sisera, she crushed his head,
she shattered and pierced his temple.
At her feet he sank,
he fell; there he lay.
At her feet he sank, he fell;
where he sank, there he fell—dead.
(Judg 5:24-27).*

Anyone could have penned the song's ending:

*So may all your enemies perish, LORD!
But may all who love you be like the
sun
when it rises in its strength.
(Judg 5:31).*

We don't know who wrote "Deborah's Song", although I've enjoyed wondering if Barak was a songwriter. It could have been compiled by all the actors in the event. We do know about the actions of Deborah, Barak and Jael. The two women broke gender stereotypes at every turn and rose to every challenge. Deborah was a married woman, "*the wife of Lappidoth*." Some people have speculated that Barak ("lightning") was Lappidoth ("light"), the two names having similar meanings. If so, they were a couple who fully understood how to work together, each using their own skills, to serve God.

Deborah was the only female Judge who was also a prophet. The only other person who held both roles was Samuel. She prophesied that a woman would defeat Sisera, and she was right. Despite asking Deborah for help, Barak is listed in Hebrews 11 as one of the faithful. Perhaps he was the one "*whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies*." (Heb 11:34). Jael committed one of the most gruesome acts in scripture, but her acts were celebrated in song.

I don't know how long they sang the song, but after Deborah and Jael assisted Barak in the battle against Jabin and Sisera, the land had peace for forty years.

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EXPOSITION

DAVID IN ROMANS

By John Owen



THE key point of Romans is surely, “*The just shall live by faith.*” It clearly shows that in a world steeped in sin (chapter 1), which we are very much a part of (chapter 2-3:18), we have all fallen short of the glory of God. Our only option is to put our faith in the grace of God.

The argument through Romans would have been so powerful in dealing with the Judaizers of the first century, those insisting that the law was needed to earn salvation, kidding themselves and others around them that they could establish their own righteousness.

The argument is still as powerful today, it helps us recognize the fact that we are all naturally prone to sin, we realize God wants faith from us. What does that mean? It means God wants us to trust Him, believe His word, commit ourselves to Him in baptism and look to apply His word in our lives.

When studying a concept, it can be helpful to have a real-life example to help us understand it. The example of David seems to be used through Romans. For the first century Judaizers, details of his life would have been immensely powerful. This was their greatest king—surely someone they would want to emulate.

At the beginning of chapter 1, the inspired apostle writes he has been separated by God for the gospel “*concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.*” Normally we would think about Jesus being David’s seed in the sense that he was the promised king. Why are we being directed to think about Jesus as the seed of David “*according to the flesh?*” It’s

perhaps because David demonstrated the problem of humanity in committing a terrible sin. David’s sin, like all sin, in the end follows the pattern of Eden he “*saw,*” he clearly desired, and he “*took*” (cp. Gen 3:6 and 2 Sam 11:2-4). Like Adam and Eve, David tried to hide the sin by murdering Uriah. David comes to see that God knows his sin. There is no point trying to hide from God. He also comes to see that the law cannot save him; his only option is to trust in God’s grace. The Lord Jesus was the seed of David “*according to the flesh.*” He shared our nature; he too was tempted to sin. The Lord Jesus overcame that nature. He never sinned. Therefore he was, “*declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*” (Rom 1:4).

When studying a concept, it can be helpful to have a real-life example to help us understand it. The example of David seems to be used through Romans.

Note: the apostle addresses the ecclesia as “*beloved of God*”—the meaning of David’s name. Interestingly this Greek word, *agapētos*, translated “*beloved,*” is used in Romans more than any other book.

In 2 Samuel 12, Nathan was sent by God to make David recognize his personal problem; he tells David a story of a wicked rich man who stole a poor man’s one sheep (2 Sam 12:1-5). David is outraged. He was quick to judge the situation. He could see the problem of sin in others: “*The man that hath done this is worthy to die,*” he exclaims.

In Romans 1, having given the whole purpose of the letter in the first 17 verses, the apostle then highlights the problem of sin in the world at large. When you glance through it's a grim state. It ends in verse 32 by saying, *"they which commit such things are worthy of death."* We too might well hear that list and concur (like David), *"The man that hath done this thing is worthy to die."* But interestingly the point of the verse in Romans 1 is that those who know the judgements of God are consenting to that kind of behavior. This is exactly the situation David was in.

David was suddenly knocked sideways by Nathan as Nathan told him, *"You are the man."* (2 Sam 12:7). Notice how the next verse in Romans reads, *"Therefore thou art inexcusable o man."* (Rom 2:1).

The brethren and sisters in Rome, like us today, may look at the "world" (as described in Rom 1) and pass judgment upon them—see them as worthy of death. But, the point of this letter, the point of looking at David, is that we all have to grasp the problem in our lives: *"Thou art inexcusable."*

I am inexcusable! When it says at the end of chapter 1, we get pleasure (or consent) in those who do wrong. We

might question how much we consent to such behavior watching it on TV as if it's the norm! Thoroughly enjoying watching the very things we know God hates!

The power of those words suddenly hits home... *"Thou art inexcusable!"*

Perhaps the spirit is still drawing our attention to David in Romans 2:21-24: *"Dost thou steal...dost thou commit adultery...the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you."* Nathan made sure David knew he had stolen Bathsheba, and because of his adultery he'd caused *"the enemies of God to blaspheme."* (cp. 2 Sam 12:14).

We know that in David's case he came to realize sin needs to be confessed to God. We have the wonderful record of Psalm 51. Within that Psalm, twice he brings together the word "heart" and spirit. *"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me...the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."* (Psa 51:10, 17). Here David realized that no sacrifice of the law could help; there was nothing he could do except humble himself and put his faith in God's mercy.

We notice at the end of Romans 2 the apostle writes in verse 29, *"He is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."* From our first meeting with David in Scripture, the lesson there is *"The LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."*



The brethren in Rome needed to learn the lesson of David: he had come to the realization that God really does know our hearts. God wants us to honestly acknowledge sin in our lives

God wants us
to honestly
acknowledge
sin in our lives

and humble ourselves before Him, and make changes, not for the outward appearance, but rather to our heart.

Of course, there is nothing physical we can do to our heart, but by reading God's word daily which renews our minds, giving time in prayer to align our will to God's and spending time in fellowship with brothers and sisters, our faith is built up and we can be changed. We learn more of God and His purpose, our conscience is affected in different areas of our lives and we make changes to our priorities.

As we go into chapter 3 of Romans, the apostle draws our minds once again to David with a direct quote from Psalm 51:4. The citation on first reading is difficult to fathom. Looking at the Psalm, though, we see the citation is the center of a chiasm:

The middle phrase (F), which we're drawn to, is that all of us might understand the reason we should confess our sins is so we acknowledge the righteousness of God.

It's not about us! We need to see God as the just one; what He says is right—our confession of sin is an acknowledgement of that.

Clearly then, ALL of us have to admit, and confess to, the problem of sin in our lives, whoever we are. Verse 9 says, we “*are all under sin.*” What then follows in Romans 3, from verses 10-18, is at least six citations from the OT Scriptures to demonstrate that no one is exempt from the problem of sin. Five of the citations are from the Psalms, all Psalms of David, and each of those Psalms mentions the heart or inward parts!

It is teaching us that we're steeped in the problem of sin; “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.*” (Jer 17:9). So, these first few chapters of Romans are helping us to come to the realization that we are all sinners who

A Blot out v1

B Wash me v2

C Cleanse me v2

D I acknowledge my transgression v3

E My sin is ever before me v3

F “That though mightest be just when thou speakest” v4

E' In sin did my mother conceive me v5

D' Thou makest me to know wisdom v6

C' I shall be clean v7

B' Wash me v7

A' Blot out v9

cannot justify ourselves before God. Each of us has to face up to the fact that we can never be justified through any works of law. Romans 3:23 says, *“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”*

With that mindset, we grasp more fully that we can ONLY be saved by God’s grace. There is no other way. (vv 24-26). In the Lord Jesus Christ, God has provided for us; he is the seed of David. He was born with our nature. In his death he declared God’s righteousness. He acknowledged God was just—the nature he bore (associated with sin) needed to be put to death.

Wonderfully though, by this great act of love, the Lord Jesus acknowledged the problem of sin for mankind, by being publicly lifted up—there for all to see—the horror of sin. In that very act he wrought a great victory over the problem of sin: he personally overcame!

We cannot earn fellowship with God, but God’s gracious gift to each one of us is the offer to share Jesus’ victory. To do that we must believe in it—the just shall live by faith—we have to believe God can deal with the problem of sin.

What a blessing that is for each of us! David certainly came to appreciate that blessing. He was inspired to write Psalm 32, which the apostle cites in Romans chapter 4, *“David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”*

David had tried to hide his sin but had now come to grasp the best covering was God’s provision: forgiveness based on acknowledging sin and trusting God.

We all have the propensity to sin. We do sin. We must never ignore that fact, and never try to hide it and kid ourselves we are okay.

Rather, we are to recognize the problem and trust the solution God has provided! There lies the power of David’s example. He shared the problem; like us he inherited a sin prone nature from Adam, one which, like us, he succumbed to. But he came to confess the problem, acknowledging too that man



didn't have the solution. The only solution was, and is, to have faith in the grace of God.

In Romans 5 the apostle shows the impact of sin juxtaposed with the impact of God's grace. We, as David wrote in Psalm 51, are "*shapen in iniquity*," each of us are born with a sin-prone nature, flawed, hence Romans 5:12: "*So death passed upon all men*." We grasp that we are born mortal. It's the nature we all inherit. But here is the key point: "*Death passed upon all men, upon which all have sinned*."

We've inherited a mortal, sin-prone nature. On top of which WE have sinned! It's important we accept we are sinners who deserve to die.

In baptism we acknowledge that fact. We publicly confess we can't save ourselves and we need Christ's victory. Romans 6 shows "*We are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*."

The Lord Jesus Christ was raised by the glory of the Father, in other words, in accordance with God's standard, His character (cp.

Exod 33-34). Because the Lord Jesus had never sinned, it was right God raised him from the grave. In His grace, God has mercifully offered salvation to those who accept His standard, those who have the humility to see His way as the only way, the perfect way and furthermore try to live by it.

We are now walking "*in newness of life*" (Rom 6:4), which is clearly a newness of spirit (Rom 7:6). In this new way of life, we all have a responsibility to hear and use our knowledge of God to make decisions we believe, from Scripture, to be right. God has given us free will; the question is who will we serve? Self and sin, which leads to death? Or God's right ways? We note in 2 Samuel 7, where God makes such a fundamental promise to David, twelve times David is referred to as God's "*servant*." We know too that David's service is from his heart. Nathan said to him, "*Do all that is in thine heart*." This is where the change should come at our baptisms. "*Ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you, being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness*." (Rom 6:17-18).

Where Saul had chosen to serve sin, he'd ended up in the grave with no hope. David in choosing to serve God and His right ways was choosing eternal life. God promised him *"Thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee."* If we too make that choice and *"become servants to God,"* we know *"the end, everlasting life."* (Rom 6:22). Is serving God easy? No, it's a challenge, because it's not our way! Our weak natures are prone to sin; naturally we want to serve self.

In Psalm 51, as David asks for forgiveness from God, he first asks to be washed and cleansed of his sin—as God's inspired writer we see him laying the seeds for the need for us to be baptized to wash away our sins (cp. Acts 22:16). We also notice from the Psalm that David prays *"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."* (v. 10).

This is surely the *"newness of spirit"* we are now serving God in. Our sin is dealt with. We have a new spirit; we are choosing God's ways because we want them; we see they are better than anything the world can offer. Does that mean we are now perfect? Sadly not! We still fail. Romans 7 shows us clearly the battle we all have with sin, even after our baptisms.

The inspired apostle speaks of his personal battle with his nature, and his frustration with it, *"The good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do."* (Rom 7:19). A key point from this is that the spiritual person (e.g., Paul) has a battle going on. For us, it is important that the battle with sin is well and truly alive. The influence of the world in our lives (much of which we choose to bring into our homes, and

minds!) too easily sears our conscience, like *"a hot iron."* (1 Tim 4:2).

How do we keep the battle going? There is a clue in Romans 7:22, *"I delight in the law of God after the inward man."* This is picking up Psalm 40:8, *"I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."*—another Psalm David was inspired to write giving us the thoughts and words of the Lord Jesus Christ, a thousand years before he existed in person. Heb 10 proves that.

If we make God's will our delight, the battle becomes more effective. We look at God's ways and see them as right—the beauty of His creation, His set up of man and woman, the family structure, a clear unchanging moral code defining right and wrong. It's a stable rock on which we can build our lives. Wonderfully too, in God we see a character that is: *"merciful, gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth."* (Exod 34:6) Of course, the fruit of God's character, His spirit, *"is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."* (Gal 5:22).

Why wouldn't we delight in God's ways when we see the fruit? Practically how can we help ourselves delight in God's ways (to help keep the battle going in us)? Clearly, in alluding to Psalm 40:6, we realize we are to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Before he says, *"I delight to do thy will,"* he says, *"Mine ears hast thou opened."*

This is surely a huge help: to delight in God's ways begins with an open ear to the word of God. For the Lord Jesus morning by morning (Isa 50:4) he made time to listen to God's word.

We know we have a weak sin-prone nature. If we are serious about the

Psalm 143	Romans
1: <i>"In thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness."</i>	1:17: <i>"Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith."</i>
2: <i>"In thy sight shall no man living be justified."</i>	3:23: <i>"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."</i>
4: <i>"My heart within me is desolate."</i>	1:21: <i>"Their foolish heart was darkened."</i>
8: <i>"Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk"</i>	8:1, 4: <i>"Walk not after the flesh but after the spirit."</i>
9: <i>"Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies."</i>	7:24: <i>"Who shall deliver me from the body of this death."</i>
10: <i>"Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness."</i>	8:14: <i>"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."</i>
12: <i>"I am thy servant."</i>	6:22: <i>"being made free from sin, and become servants to God."</i>

battle, what choices can we make to help? Are we giving time to God's word each day? Do we make a choice to take our family to a Bible School for a holiday? Do we get involved in preaching campaigns? Do we put the local fraternal, or study days, in our diary and go to them? What do we listen to on journeys? There really are many ways we can feed on God's word. Too easily, we put barriers up, give excuses and instead feed the flesh! It should be the other way around, *"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."* (Rom 13:14).

Brother Robert Roberts in the preface to the Bible Companion wrote: "Salvation depends upon the assimilation of the mind to the divine ideas, principles, and affections, exhibited in the scriptures... much spiritual fructification is only to be realized in connection with fructifying influences of the Spirit in the Word."

In another Psalm, David prays, *"Thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness."* (Psa 143:10). Within the Psalm there are number of connections we can make to Romans: (See above)

Whatever the context in which David wrote this Psalm, it is clear he is aware of his unworthiness—so he pleads to God on the basis of God's character, verse 1, *"In thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness."* He knows he can't plead to God on his own righteousness, verse 2, *"For in thy sight shall no man living be justified."* He's struggling enormously with the problems he's facing, verse 4, *"My spirit is overwhelmed."* Even in that horrid struggle, notice what he does, verses 5-6. He starts recalling Scripture, he prays and his ear is open to Scripture, verse 8, *"Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning, for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk."* He's willing to be taught by the Word, verse 10, *"Teach me to do thy will: thy spirit is good; lead*

me in the land of uprightness.”

The problems in our lives now, *“the sufferings of this present time”* as Romans 8:18 puts it, God will help us through, if we have chosen, as David had, to be God’s servant. We serve Him, we make choices in our lives which put His will before our own. We can be confident in our hope of glory, if we are choosing to serve God and his right ways over ourselves and sin, although we still have the struggles of mortality.

Romans 8:31 assures those who want God’s ways, God is on our side: *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* There is so much comfort to be taken from this section of Scripture. If we can align our minds to Christ, we share a fellowship of spirit (cp. Phil 2:1-5). The spirit we’re trying to cultivate isn’t our natural disposition. But, if we have a genuine desire to be Christ-like, our spiritual mind-set can help with our circumstances, because although (as weak erring creatures) we don’t know what to pray for always. Our spiritual mind-set is making intercession for us! How? Because God, who knows our hearts, knows the spiritual mind-set we have. The word *“because”* in Romans 8:27 both the AV and RV margins

render as *“that”*—it’s the mind of the spirit *“that”* makes intercession for us with these “groanings which cannot be uttered.”

When we’re really feeling the drag of our human nature, we can feel lost for words, but the point here is God knows our innermost thoughts! We believe verse 24 of Romans 8 is picking up Psalm 38, a Psalm of David. David is struggling with life, but he writes, *“Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee.”* In other words, Lord, you know my desire, you know my innermost thoughts, my groanings.

This is what is so wonderful about these verses in Romans. If your heart’s desire is to be in the Kingdom, if you truly love God and want to serve Him, God, who knows you inside out is able to see that. Therefore, the spiritual mind-set is making intercession for you!

The result is God will ensure all the challenges of our mortal lives will work together for good. Nothing is *“able to separate us from the love of God, which is Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Rom 8:39).

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NOW THAT GOD HAS SENT HIS SON

By Joe Hill

THE blueprint of a building is not the same as the building itself. The blueprint encodes the architect's vision of the building, but until the building is actually constructed, the blueprint is just a design corresponding to that vision. The design can be shared with others, who then can share the architect's vision. When the building is completed everyone can see concretely what was intended by the design.

The pattern for a dress or suit is not the same as a dress or suit made according to that pattern. The pattern creates an image of what the dress or suit will be like once it's made. This image can be

shared by the seamstress or tailor and the future wearer of the dress or suit.

A picture of an apple is not the same as an actual apple. You can eat an apple, but not a picture of an apple. Of course, if you have never seen an apple, then a picture can prepare you to recognize an apple when you finally see one. The same goes for a verbal description of an apple.

Similarly, the shadow of a tree is not the same as the tree itself, but it can help you "see" some aspects of the tree, even if the details aren't too precise. As soon as you've seen the tree, you can't learn much more about it from its shadow.

Each of these examples is easy for us to comprehend. In each case, it is clear that a blueprint, or pattern, or picture, or verbal description, or shadow of an object is not the same as the object itself. Further, once the object becomes available, the earlier representation is no longer the best representation of that object. The object itself is much better.

The Relationship Between the Old Testament and Christ

The Bible uses these concepts to describe the relationship between the Old Testament and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared: *“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”* (Matt 5:17).

After his resurrection, Jesus explained that the Scriptures spoke of him, first to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, then to the eleven in Galilee:

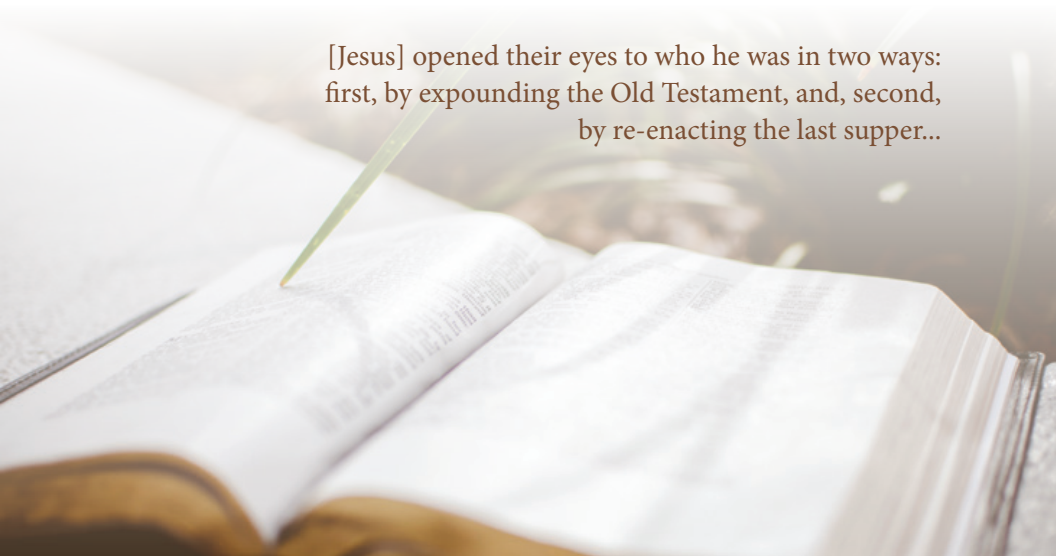
Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself...

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.” (Luke 24:25-27, 44).

He opened their eyes to who he was in two ways: first, by expounding the Old Testament, and, second, by re-enacting the last supper:

*And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were **opened**, and they knew him; and he vanished*

[Jesus] opened their eyes to who he was in two ways: first, by expounding the Old Testament, and, second, by re-enacting the last supper...



out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? ...

*Then **opened** he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”* (Luke 24:30-32, 45-47).

The Scriptures testify of Jesus, through whom is life eternal. In a heated debate with the Jewish leaders, Jesus admonishes them:

You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. (John 5:39-40 NRSV).

The Scriptures testify of Christ: it is he who is the reality through whom eternal life comes. Eugene Peterson captures the essence of Jesus’s rebuke:

You have your heads in your Bibles constantly because you think you’ll find eternal life there. But you miss the forest for the trees. These Scriptures are all about me! And here I am, standing right before you, and you aren’t willing to receive from me the life you say you want. (John 5:39-40, The Message).

It is essential that we know Christ and not merely the Bible that describes him.

The gospel of Jesus in Isaiah and the Psalms. Philip preached the gospel concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ in Samaria (Acts 8:5-12). Then he preached the gospel of Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:27-40). The eunuch was reading from Isaiah. In particular, he had questions about Isaiah 53:7-8. *“Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.”* (Acts 8:35).

The prophet Isaiah taught essentially all aspects of the gospel, as indicated by the following New Testament quotations from his book:

- The virgin birth (Matt 1:23; Isa 7:14)
- The preaching of John the Baptist (Matt 3:3; Isa 40:2-4)
- Jesus’s preaching in Galilee (Matt 4:15-16; Isa 9:1-2)
- Jesus’s healing of the sick (Matt 8:16; Isa 54:4)
- Jesus’s answer to John the Baptist’s asking if he was the one (Matt 11:5-6; Isa 35:5-6; 61:1; 28:16)
- Jesus, God’s servant (Matt 12:18-21; Isa 42:1-4)
- Why parables? (Matt 13:14-15; Isa 6:9-10)
- Traditions of men (Matt 15: 8-9; Isa 29:13)
- Cleansing the temple (Matt 21:13; Isa 56:7)
- Jesus’s willing sacrifice (1Pet 2; Isa 53)
- Preaching to the Gentiles (Isa 49:1 cf. Gal 1:11-16; Isa 49:6 cf. Acts 13:47; Isa 52:7 cf. Rom 10:11-15; Isa 54:1-3 cf. Gal 4:22- 5:1; Isa 54:13 cf. John 6:44-45; Isa 56:7).

- Pictures of the kingdom (Isa 25:6-8; 26:19; 35:10; 51:11; 60:1-22; 65:17-25; cf. Rev 7; 21).

Similarly, the Psalms are like a fifth gospel, providing insights into the life and thoughts of Jesus, even including intimate communications between him and his Father. Here is a small sample:

- *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed.* (Psa 2:1-2).
- *I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.* (Psa 2:7).
- *What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.* (Psa 8:4-6).
- *For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* (Psa 16:10).
- *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?... They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture... I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.* (Psa 22:1, 18, 22).
- *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is*

written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. (Psa 40:6-8).

- *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right scepter. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.* (Psa 45:6-7).
- *The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool... The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.* (Psa 110:1, 4).

Christ is the Goal of the Law. Paul argues that Christ was the fulfillment of the ultimate purpose and intent of the Law, as the various translations of Romans 10:4 indicate:

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. (KJV).

Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. (NIV).

The Messiah, you see, is the goal of the law, so that covenant membership may be available for all who believe. (New Testament for Everyone, N.T. Wright).

The earlier revelation was intended simply to get us ready for the Messiah, who then puts everything right for those who trust him to do it. (The Message, Eugene Peterson).

The context of this verse within Romans 9-11 and the whole Letter to the Romans demonstrates Paul's point that Christ is the means by which God fulfills His promise to Abraham; that

is, God blesses all believers, from all nations, Jews and Gentiles, through His Son Jesus.¹

According to the Scriptures. The gospel preached by Paul, by which we are saved, was according to the Scriptures:

*Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins **according to the scriptures**; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day **according to the scriptures**. (1 Cor 15:1-4).*

The Old Testament was a shadow of Christ, who is the reality. Paul says the Old Testament laws were a shadow of Christ who was to come:

*Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: **Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.** (Col 2:16-17).*

In other English versions, the Greek word here translated “body” (KJV, RV, YLT, Jewish NT) is translated “substance” (NKJV, NASB, RSV, NRSV,

ESV, Message), and “*reality*” (JB Phillips, TEV, REV, NIV, Jerusalem Bible). Like the shadow of a tree, the Old Testament laws were merely a shadow of things to come. Like the tree itself, Christ is the body, substance, reality that projected that shadow.

Before and After Christ Came

So Christ fulfilled the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. But he did even more than that. Paul describes the fundamental transition that occurred when God sent His Son. Through Christ, and his faithfulness, and our baptism into him, we have gone from being children under the discipline of the Law to being adopted children of God our Father, and therefore heirs with Christ of the promises to Abraham:

*Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian **until Christ came**, so that we might be justified by faith. **But now that faith has come**, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for*

Like the shadow of a tree, the Old Testament laws were merely a shadow of things to come. Like the tree itself, Christ is the body, substance, reality that projected that shadow.

all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

*My point is this: heirs, **as long as** they are minors, are no better than slaves, though they are the owners of all the property; but they remain under guardians and trustees **until the date set by the father.** So with us; **while we were minors,** we were enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world. **But when the fullness of time had come,** God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" **So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir [of God through Christ, mg].** (Gal 3:23-4:7 NRSV).*

As the Son of God, Christ Reveals His Father

There is no mirror like a child. A regular mirror can reflect the outside image of a person, but a child can reflect the inward character of a person. Similarly, Christ reveals the character of His

Father. Whatever we might be able to learn about God from the Scriptures, we can learn so much more about Him from His Son.

The Old Testament describes Yahweh's interactions with His people Israel. It also provides blueprints, patterns, word pictures, and shadows of His plan and its fulfillment through the one who would come. And when the time was right, God sent His Son to fulfill His purpose. In particular, as the only begotten Son of the Father, Christ has revealed and will reveal the invisible God, our heavenly Father:

***And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.** John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. **For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.**" (John 1:14-18).*

Whatever we might be able to learn about God from the Scriptures, we can learn so much more about Him from His Son.

*Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of **his dear Son**: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: **Who is the image of the invisible God**, the firstborn of every creature. (Col 1:12-15).*

*I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of **our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.** (1 Tim 6:12-16).*

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the

*prophets, but in these last days **he has spoken to us by a Son**, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. (Heb 1:1-4 NRSV).*

The Letter to the Hebrews goes on to show that Christ, the Son of God, is greater than the angels, than Moses, than Joshua, than the Levitical priesthood, than the old covenant, than the animal sacrifices. Christ is even greater than the Scriptures. The Old Testament describes God in various ways, but Christ is “the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being.”²

Joe Hill,
(Austin Leander Ecclesia, TX)

¹ See, Joe Hill, “Everyone, Including Gentiles,” Tidings, May, 2010, pp. 178-179 (tidings.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2010_05_May.pdf).

² For a similar discussion of this topic, see Bro. Nat Ritmeyer, “Jesus vs. the Bible,” Living Faith (living-faith.org/2018/10/05/jesus-vs-the-bible/).

A VISIT TO ST. LUCIA

By Mike LeDuke

I arrived at the airport near the southern tip of St. Lucia in the afternoon of Sunday, November 7. The passenger intake through the COVID screening and customs was smooth and well-organized. My transport to the Mission House was there waiting for me, even though my flight was over an hour late.

Upon entering the Mission House in Castries, the capital, I was pleasantly surprised to find the place sparkling clean, bedding, towels etc. all washed. No sign of the volcanic dust which had recently blanketed much of the island following the huge eruption on the island of St. Vincent, about 75 Km south of St. Lucia, from December 2020

through April 2021, and which had come into the house in quantity. Before leaving for his final medical treatment in Trinidad, Brother Andre George had left the windows open a few inches to keep air circulating, normally not a bad idea but due to the volcanic eruption, it turned out to be counterproductive to say the least. It must have taken a tremendous effort to get things as clean, neat, and tidy as they were when I arrived.

Kudos to Sis. Dawn David-Hutchinson for organizing the cleanup and washing the bedding and towels, and even the curtains! Sis. Julie Gonzaque, who is deaf and mute, did the hard labor of cleaning the dust and ash remnants

throughout the house—a Herculean task to say the least! Sis. Dawn ensured that the fridge was well stocked with staples—bread, eggs, margarine, milk, juice, cheese, etc. and had prepared a meal for me to eat when I arrived. Since then, she has dropped by with more pre-prepared meals. Each of these were good for a couple of days or more.

The only downside upon my arrival was that there was no internet or phone service available. I had some hard work to do, dealing with a bureaucratic communications company to get the internet and landline reconnected. The internet was back on Thursday, November 11, and I finally got the landline working about a week later!



Bro. George Rock

On Friday, November 12, I traveled to see Bro. George Rock in Rodney Bay. George was in good spirits, and we had a lovely Breaking of Bread with him. It took a lot longer than in previous years to get to Rodney Bay, as the traffic was horrible and the roads were a mess, due to the election of a new government with an overwhelming mandate halting

all the roadwork projects initiated by the previous government—abandoned in mid-project with roads dug up and many pieces of large construction equipment left behind seemingly to rust in the rain. Such is the petty nature of politics on this island.

On Sunday, November 14, the ecclesia met at the Mission House for the first time in 20 months. There were seven of us in attendance. I exhorted on Mark 8, the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida. We used the Isolation League's website for our hymns and followed along with the words on the screen and sang along with a Christadelphian choir. It was great for Sis. Julie as she could follow the hymns much more easily than by using the hymnbook. She sang energetically, in what could only be termed a "joyful noise!"

Following our meeting, which ended about 11:30 AM, St. Lucia time, I was able to link up with my home ecclesia's (Kitchener-Waterloo) Zoom meeting prior to their start. We had an enjoyable visit especially since many members of the Kitchener-Waterloo Ecclesia have been to St. Lucia on missionary work themselves or as visitors and are well known to the St. Lucian members.

Following our "virtual visit," I hosted a lunch for the brothers and sisters. Being on my own, the lunch did not come up to the standard enjoyed when couples have come to Saint Lucia. It was true "bachelor fare" of sandwiches, juice, and cookies. We made up for the quality of the meal with excellent fellowship, as we renewed the relationships which had been so disrupted by the ongoing pandemic. For me, a highlight of the

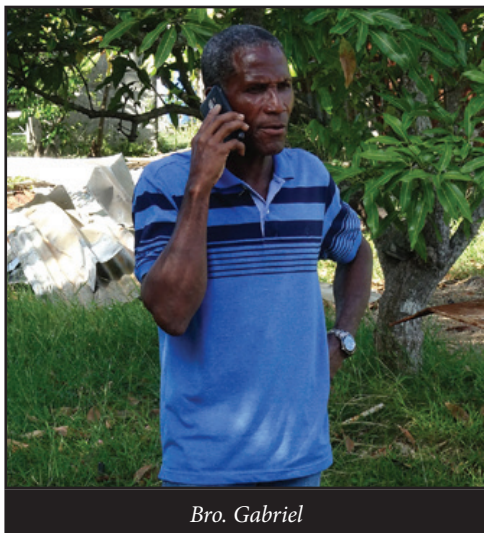
meeting was the attendance of Bro. Gabriel. That is a promising sign as Gabriel is a very capable brother. Now if I could figure out a way of getting him to stop speaking so fast!

On Friday, November 19, I arranged to meet with Sis. Rosie Fregis, recently baptized online through the “Bible Basics” program. We met at the home of Bro. George Rock. It turns out she knows George and had been to his home frequently many years ago as a close friend of one of his daughters. Sis. Rosie has participated in our ecclesial activities and now regularly attends the Kitchener-Waterloo’s Sunday Zoom meetings and has fit in very well indeed, participating freely in the pre-and-post meeting conversations.

Once full communications were restored, I spent my time calling our list of contacts and arranging meetings and conversations with them mostly at a nearby park, because none of the contacts with whom I was able to meet had been vaccinated. So, one-on-one conversations were the order of the day with masks and good separation protocols observed.

The mission house was available during the week for drop-ins by our members. Several members including Sisters Lauretta, Julie, and Dawn and her daughter, Leah, dropped by for a cool drink and the Readings, as did Bro. Gabriel on two occasions and Bro. Benji. I was also able to conduct two Bible classes per week (sometimes three!), with my landlady and two of her caregivers.

On Sundays, Nov. 21, 28 and December 5 (I returned home on December 6), we joined the Kitchener Waterloo meeting, with the local brothers and



Bro. Gabriel

sisters attending.

On Wednesday November 14, I traveled with Bro. Gabriel to the south end of the island, near the airport, to have a look at his home rebuilding project. The house was completely wrecked by a fire started accidentally by his 94-year-old mother. I had coordinated assistance for Bro. Gabriel’s work in restoring the family home. Special donations were funneled through the CBMC’s welfare fund. The work done to restore the home was very impressive, especially considering all the COVID-19 related delays involved. Bro. Gabriel did a very competent job of managing the project and doing much of the work himself.

*Mike LeDuke,
(Kitchener Waterloo Ecclesia, ON)*

HOW I CAME TO KNOW THE TRUTH

By Subrata Ganguli

I was born in 1976, brought up in a Brahmin family and was a worshiper of Kali and other idols of Hinduism. I was not at all interested in any other religions. In 1996, I was studying in Class XI and living in a hostel in Ramkrishna Mission, Purulia, West Bengal. Once I was returning towards my hostel from the market, someone on the roadside gave me a small book containing a verse from Revelation 3:20: *"Look, I am standing at the door and am knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into his home and will eat with him, and he with me."*

I read that verse but did not understand it. I kept it inside my study book. When I passed the final exam of Class XI, I returned to my hometown at Agartala in Tripura state. I was admitted to a new school for Class XII. The book that I received that day was still with me.

On December 12, 1996, when I was worshipping in a Kali temple, there was a

Community Hall nearby and the same verse that I received in West Bengal was written on a big temporary sign. It made me remember that small book. Then I decided to investigate what was going on inside the hall. I usually preferred to have friendship only with the high caste Brahmin families. I believed Muslims and Christians to be of low caste, so I always avoided them. I don't know why, but I decided to go inside the hall with one of my friends, named Gopal Chakraborty. There we found that the hall was completely full. We tried to locate seats but all in vain. So, we decided to leave. At that very moment I found a single vacant seat in the second row, third position. My friend insisted on me returning back, but due to some unknown attraction I sat down on the seat. I was feeling shy. My nearby audience was from tribal society, but they greeted me when I sat down. On the stage there were some foreigners who were preaching that

same particular verse (Rev 3:20) and also telling the audience to confess their sins and get saved through Jesus. At this I felt something inside my heart and soul. What should I do? Should I confess or just go out of the hall? I don't know what happened to me. My feet were as if they were stuck there. I could not move out of that place. The audience was told to keep their eyes closed and then someone started praying. Then someone came to me and prayed, holding my hand. I can't express my feelings in writing about what happened to me. After the program ended, a man asked for my name and my details. I was given a book (New Testament) and a cake, as it was a pre-Christmas program. They said that the book was the Bible. When I returned to my friends, they looked down on me. However, I started going there regularly without telling anyone, even my parents, and started Bible study.

I studied there for six months. Once I asked the center head (Pastor) what I have to do to accept Jesus. He said that I had to be baptized in the name of Jesus. During this time my friends informed my father about my activities

with the Christians, and he became so angry that one evening he beat me very badly. But I was determined to accept Jesus. Ultimately on November 18, 1997, I was baptized in the name of Jesus by Agartala Baptist Church. I informed my mother about it. At about that time I passed my Class XII exams. The Pastor suggested for me to study theology rather than study in normal college and be prepared to do God's work. That was a very hard time for me. My father, sister and every Hindu relative were against me, and still today they are against my faith. But my mother was supportive of me from the very beginning because she doesn't worship any idol. She believes in Karma and not in idols. Around this time my father left us and decided to live at a Hindu Ashram (monastic community).

I enrolled in and completed my theological degree from Emmanuel Theological Bible College, Kota, in Rajasthan State. In June 2001, I came back to Tripura and started working for the Baptist Church as an evangelist. At that time there was a huge problem of militant political activities with a group wanting a separate state for the tribal Tripuri people. Some of these activities were encouraged and even run by the Baptist Church. Eventually these problems were mostly solved by negotiation, although difficulties do still sometimes arise. Until 2003 I worked as an evangelist. Then in 2004 I got an opportunity to teach in Saint Paul Baptist



Bible Study Class in India

School, along with preaching the gospel in Agartala. In Tripura state a large number of tribal people speak Kokborok language. In order to communicate the gospel to them I decided to learn the Kokborok language.



Baptisms in India

In January 2007, when I went to Kolkata, I found a Christian monthly journal named Nabayan, on College Street, where I came to know about the Christadelphian group having the name and address of Bro. Nirmal Mondal. Then I contacted him and started studying Christadelphian supported books. With help from those writings, I came to know the real truth of the Bible. From Baptist Church Agartala I had learned about their belief of a Trinity God (God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit). Along with this, I found that they also wrongly preached about Satan, hell, going to heaven, etc. But these Christadelphian supported books opened my eyes, and I came to know about Bible Truth: who is God, who is His son and what is Holy Spirit along with other subjects? I still remember that for one complete month I studied all these books very deeply. I stopped going to school, completely engaging myself in deep study of the Bible, and ultimately I came to know that God is one and unique as mentioned in

the Bible. All sorts of problems and conflicts got cleared up for me. When I was Hindu, the same conflict was there regarding who God really is, as there are so many gods and goddesses in the Hindu religion. The Truth gave me peace, and I was satisfied. My mind, heart and soul were full of spiritual happiness as I came to know the true God. I never experienced such feelings in my lifetime even though I was baptized in the Baptist Church. The Bible says when you come to know the truth; the truth shall make you free (John 8:32). But I could not speak about the truth to the Baptist Church people because of my job.

In October 2007, Bro. Nirmal Mondal invited me to Kolkata for a conference at "Seva Kendra" Tangra, Sealdah West Bengal, at the time of one of the main Hindu religious festivals. There I went through two hours of baptismal interview by Bro. Ken Easson and Bro. Hugh Saxon, and another local brother. Then Bro. Ken baptized me nearby. After that, I was very much pleased to get the privilege to be a member



Ecclesial Hall in Tripura, India

of the worldwide Christadelphian ecclesia as my family in Christ. There I met with Bro. Milton Richardson and other overseas and local brethren. They greeted me warmly as a member of their family. Then I returned to Agartala and started teaching school in late October after the holiday period. During the first week of November, the Baptist Church people requested me to preach in their church. When I preached the truth in the church before them the school secretary asked me to meet next Monday. When I met with them before the school committee, they asked me from where did I get all the knowledge. After knowing about my membership with the Christadelphian group, they said that their faith is completely against my faith, and so they wanted me to resign if I would not give up Christadelphian teaching. I then submitted my resignation letter and came back home and thought about how I would survive.

Then I consulted

with my overseas brethren, and at the same time I continued preaching the Truth and started private school children's tuition to survive in 2008. Still, I remember during the end of 2007 the first Bible missionary came to visit me was Bro. Wesley Butler from Vancouver, Canada. We preached together in so many places. Then other overseas brethren also visited

me and encouraged me in preaching in Tripura.

I met Dipa, who was born into a Baptist family. She had completed her graduation in accountancy from Odisha and finished a short theological course. I preached to her the Bible truth, and she diligently studied the Bible during 2011. During this time, I became attracted to her, but I was determined that I could not marry her if she did not sincerely accept the Bible truth. We both attended the Hyderabad end of year camp. There Bro. Steve baptized her after a good confession of faith. So, Sis. Dipa became the second member of the Agartala, Tripura Christadelphian Ecclesia.



Ecclesial Members in Tripura, India

We were married in January 2012, solemnized by Bro. Milton Richardson and by other local and overseas brethren at Kolkata West Bengal. I was now blessed to have one close to me with whom I could share my thoughts and faith and love. We started teaching and preaching other Christian friends who came to our house. I also tried to get as many opportunities as possible to preach the Truth at various churches and fellowships.

I want to mention that Dipa, became pregnant in June 2012, and after 4 months was detected to have an ectopic pregnancy and lost the baby at ILS hospital Agartala. The lady physician said that there was no hope for any further pregnancy. We became very much upset, but we didn't lose hope in Him. According to the Bible, Hannah cried, and God listened. In this way, we trust and obey the Lord. But still I continued my preaching work.

In 2013 we got the third member of our ecclesia, named Bro. Surajit Debbarma. After one year of study, he was baptized. Then his wife also joined us. In this way we started a small fellowship in our home in Agartala.

In 2014 Dipa again got pregnant, and we were blessed with a baby boy in August 2014. As we miraculously got our baby, so we named him Samuel, God's given.

Then a number of overseas and local Indian brethren visited us. Our Agartala Christadelphian Ecclesia got more and more members. Now we have 2 ecclesias in Tripura. One in Agartala, and another formed in late 2019 in the Gagrachera Village, Dhalai District of Tripura state.

Now another nine interested people are preparing for baptismal interviews, after more than one and a half years of Bible study. I want to mention here that Bro. Surajit Debbarma is the key person to help me in this preaching work among tribal peoples. Now we have two small meeting halls in Agartala and in Gagrachara, with a total of 29 brethren with so many children.

During this lockdown period, God's work has not stopped, rather many interested friends are coming to join our ecclesia and many are preparing themselves for baptism interviews, God willing. In this way I want to tell you to never give up hope. When I was alone in true Bible faith in my life, God was with me and now I have so many brethren in Bible study every day. God is ready to help you, and He is ready to answer your prayer in every tough situation.

So, brethren my message is to trust and obey the one and only Almighty God!

*Subrata Ganguli,
(Argatala Ecclesia, Tripura, India)*



Bro. Subrata and Sis. Dodi

FIRST CHRISTADELPHIAN GATHERING


This advertisement appeared in the Richmond, Virginia paper on June 22, 1855. Note the name at that time, prior to Christadelphians.

GENERAL MEETING: A general meeting of Believers in the Gospel of the Kingdom promised and conformed to the seed of Abraham, will be held at Slash Cottage, Hanover, Virginia 15 miles North of Richmond, (on the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Rail Road,) commencing on the 2nd and continuing till the 3rd Lord's day in July inclusive. Brethren Anderson, Dr. Edwards, Magruder, Dr. Thomas, Dr. Passmore and other public advocates of the Kingdom are expected. The public are respectfully invited to attend.

(From *The Herald of the Kingdom*, a magazine of Dr. Thomas. It is unclear whether he actually attended, as he was living in New York. But all the other named attendees were well known believers at the time. Slash Cottage is now Ashland.)

*Peter Hemingray,
(Pittsburgh Ecclesia, PA)*

SPECIAL NOTICES.

 **GENERAL MEETING.**—A general meeting of Believers in the Gospel of the Kingdom promised and conformed to the seed of Abraham, will be held at Slash Cottage, Hanover, Virginia, 15 miles North of Richmond, (on the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Rail Road,) commencing on the 2nd and continuing till the 3rd Lord's day in July inclusive. Brethren Anderson, Dr. Edwards, Magruder, Dr. Thomas, Dr. Passmore, and other public advocates of the Kingdom are expected. The public are respectfully invited to attend.

June 22—etd

NEWS & UPDATES

Ottawa, ON

What a joy to see our new sister SIYANA STOYCHEVA baptized on September 11, 2021. Sis. Siyana's enthusiasm and love for her new-found faith in the saving gospel of Christ was kindled through discussions with Bro. Pelo Mulumba of Montreal. She then studied via Zoom classes with Sis. Pam Walker of North Bay.

Brother Silas Perks, has moved to San Diego. With our love, we are pleased to transfer his membership to that ecclesia, and pray that his move will benefit both his new ecclesia and his own spiritual growth.

Bro. Bill Weir of Toronto North and his daughter Sis. Andrea Weir-Laverde have moved to Buckingham, Quebec. As Ottawa is now their closest ecclesia, we look forward to sharing fellowship with them when possible.

Ethel Archard

Simi Hills Preaching Fund

Many ecclesias have set in motion their planning for preaching in 2022. With the familiarity many of us have developed with Zoom, and our hope that the pandemic will begin to recede in the Spring, we are all anxious to return to the promulgation of the gospel for our communities. Now is the time to meet with your ecclesial committees and develop your plans for the coming year.

Just a reminder that **financial help is available** to offset a portion of your ecclesial preaching program's budget. The Simi Hills Preaching Fund has usually been able to contribute approximately 50% of the cost of ecclesial preaching programs.

Please submit your request to:

Ken Sommerville
19111 Kinzie St.
Northridge, CA 91324
kenjsommerville@gmail.com
Phone: (626) 622-2841

Thoughts on the Way ***A Young Girl and Her Bible***

MORE than 200 years ago, a girl named Mary was born in an obscure village in Wales called Llanfihangel. (Don't bother trying to pronounce this name; practically no one can—unless they grew up in Wales.) Wales was part of the British Empire, and perhaps one of the poorer parts of the U.K. in southwest Great Britain.

Little Mary's parents were very poor, even by Welsh standards. The Joneses were uneducated weavers who worked every day from dawn to dusk—and still they could barely manage to make ends meet. Life was difficult in the village, a daily struggle just to survive. Every penny which they earned went for food and clothes. The simplest luxuries were out of the question. But even so, the Joneses believed in God, and taught their children stories from the Bible, even if they did not own a Bible.

From her earliest days Mary loved to hear the Bible stories. Of course, we don't know if her parents got all their facts straight, since they had no Bible themselves, and could not read a Bible even if they had one.

An Education

As Mary grew older, however, there finally came an opportunity for her to attend school. Her little village had no school whatsoever, but now, when Mary was 10 years old, a school opened up in another village, Abergynolwyn (don't try to pronounce that one either!), which was three miles away.

Of course, Mary had to walk to school each morning, and walk back home in the afternoon. Don't forget; there were no school buses in those days!

Maybe it was because she had never been to school before, but Mary was eager now to learn everything. She was a gifted student, and before long she was made an assistant teacher (unpaid) to help instruct the younger children.

All this time she had no Bible, but she was determined to get one, and read the stories for herself, and understand its teachings. A relative of her family, Mrs. Evans, lived two miles away. She had a Welsh Bible, and she was happy to have Mary visit when she could and read her Bible as much as she liked. So, almost daily, Mary walked those four miles—two miles to the village, and two miles back home—for the pleasure of reading the Word of God.

Still, Mary wanted to have her own copy of the Bible, so that she could read it every day. But this meant that she had to do her daily chores at home, and then do extra work—a little here and a little there, for neighbors—and also save every penny she could earn. She took on every little job she could find, to add a few coins to her savings. She chopped wood, she cleaned houses, and she babysat the neighbors' children.

Her first year's savings amounted to a dollar or two in our currency. The next year, she added several more dollars. Now she began to believe that she could really buy that Bible one day.

She could scarcely wait to realize her dream. But then her father, who had not been well for years, became sick with tuberculosis, and unable to work at all. Now Mary knew that her little bit of money, which she had saved, would have to go to help take care of her family.

So, she continued to work to help her family, and also to put aside just a little bit every month for that Bible. It took six years of hard work before there was enough money for that long-desired Bible. Finally, she had enough money, but where would she get the Bible? There was no bookstore anywhere near her village.

Then Mary, now in her teens, heard that a minister named Thomas Charles could help her. But he lived a considerable distance away, on the other side of the mountains. This did not stop her, though. One day Mary started out, with a bit of bread and cheese, to walk barefoot along lonely trails through the mountains, more than 25 miles, to the home of Mr. Charles! She arrived there in the evening, exhausted but excited, and she held out her money, and asked for a Bible. Mr. Charles said, "But I have only one extra copy, and I've put it aside for someone else."

But then he heard her story, of working, sacrificing, and saving for years, and walking all those miles just to get to his house. "Never mind," he said, "you can have this last Bible. Others can wait until I get another supply."

The next day, rested and so happy, Mary began her long walk home, carrying her precious Bible. She paused now and then along the way, to rest for a while, and used that time to read her

very own Bible.

And there the story of Mary Jones ends. No more is known about her personally.

But not long after this, at a church conference in London, Mr. Charles told the story of Mary Jones and her Bible, and suggested that an organization be established to print and distribute Bibles in Wales. Everyone in attendance approved his proposal. But then another member of the group stood up and asked, "If we can do this for Wales, why not for the world?"

Who could say "No" to this proposal? Shortly after this, the British and Foreign Bible Society came into existence, with its goal to make the Bible available in all the languages in the world. And then came the American Bible Society, and finally the United Bible Society, with the support of churches in many nations around the world. Since then, millions of Bibles have been printed in hundreds of languages, and portions of the Bible in thousands of other languages.

Jesus said: "*This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*" (Matt 24:14). His prophecy will surely be fulfilled one day soon.

Most likely, the young girl Mary Jones never knew how much her love for the Bible changed the world. All of us owe her a great debt of gratitude. Perhaps we can show how grateful we are by treasuring our Bibles as much as Mary Jones treasured hers.

George Booker,
(Austin Leander Ecclesia, TX)



EcclesiaSafe

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