

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

*Pleading for a complete return to Christianity  
as it was in the beginning.*

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## THE GREATNESS OF JOHN

Listening recently to a brother speaking on the parentage and birth of John the baptist reminded me of notes I collected years ago on John himself. It must have been difficult for John to have claimed the attention he deserved when we consider that the Christ was Himself, personally, treading this earth. John was one of the greatest Jewish prophets and one of the most significant characters of the Bible. John was not a baptist; he was the baptist, just as Jesus was not a Christ but the Christ — there was but one of each.

John's true greatness is generally overlooked for several reasons. Firstly his greatness is often obscured by theological arguments as to the true nature of his commission and task. By concentrating on detail we sometimes lose sight of the true purpose - failing to see the wood for the trees as it were. Then again, the activity of the twelve apostles, and Christ's disciples in general, must have detracted from his full impact, and occasionally John's disciples encountered Jesus' disciples and Moses' disciples. Most importantly however, John must have been seriously overshadowed by the earthly presence of the Messiah Himself (the light of the moon is barely to be seen in the brightness of the sun at noon-day).

John's greatness was doubtless influenced by his parents for we read that, "His parents were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6). Certainly his greatness was influenced by God's inspiring power — "The word of God came unto John" (Luke 3:2) Testimony as to his greatness was given by previous prophets and contemporaries and the people of John's own day certainly recognised him as a great prophet. The following are a few examples.

(1) Isaiah (700 years B.C.) "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain" (Isaiah 40:3-4). John was to be a 'trail-blazer' for Christ.

(2) Malachi (400 years B.C.) John was to be the 'Elijah' to precede Christ's coming — "behold I send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse".

(3) John's own inspired father, Zacharias, proclaimed that his son would be called, "... the prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord (Christ) and prepare His ways".

(4) People living in John's day, according to Matt. 21:26 all recognised John as a prophet for we find that, when the scribes challenged Christ's authority, and were asked in return to state

whether the baptism of John had originated with God or with men, declined to say "With men" for they feared the people", for all hold John as a prophet".

(5) Jesus, Himself, testified thus, of John, "And as they departed Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see. A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold they that wear soft clothing are in king's houses. But what went ye out for to see, A prophet? Yea and I say unto you and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist, notwithstanding he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he" (Matt. 11:7).

John's greatness is better shown in his life and work. He had a personality of magnetic power as evidenced by the fact that whereas other preachers had to seek the multitudes, the multitudes came into the desert to seek John. King Herod also felt John's power and feared him, but observed him. "For Herod feared John knowing that he was a just man and a holy, and observed him, and when he had heard him, he did many things and heard him gladly". This was the same Herod who was convinced that Jesus was but John risen from the dead. "But when Herod heard thereof (of Jesus), he said, it is John whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead". Herod feared John even after John was dead.

John's greatness was evidenced in his simplicity of life. He had no seven-roomed manse or mini-bus and soft clothing is certainly found in king's palaces. We read that as a child he grew and waxed strong in spirit and was in the deserts until the day of his showing unto Israel (Luke 1:80). We read also that "...there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptised of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of skin about his loins, and he did eat locusts and wild honey". How many preachers could claim to have been sought out by the throngs equalling the numbers from all of Judea and the vast city of Jerusalem. John's coarse garb, like that of the old prophets being a visible exhortation to repentance; the wilderness in which he preached symbolising the lifeless, barren state of the Jews at that time; his topics being sin, repentance and salvation - presenting for the very last time the condensed epitome of all the previous pleas and overtures of God to His people, the Jews. As Jesus said, John was 'much more' than a prophet.

If humility is the handmaiden of true greatness (which it is) then John was truly great. Although many theologians have had the gall to amend and adapt the words of Jesus, John counted himself completely unworthy even to bend down and unlatch His shoe. He was reluctant to baptise Jesus and only did so when so instructed. Rather than challenge the words of Jesus John completely acknowledged that Jesus was the bridegroom of the bride, the church, and that he was but the friend of the bridegroom and that he must decrease but Christ increase. Would it not be wonderful if this would be the attitude of all men, including the theologians - we must decrease and Christ must increase.

John's humility was surpassed only by his complete fearlessness. He condemned the religious misleaders of his day and called the Pharisees and Saducees a 'generation of vipers'. He also fearlessly condemned king Herod's adulterous marriage and suffered the consequences - "For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John and bound him in prison for Herodias sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against John and would have killed him but she could not" (Mark 6:17).

Perhaps John's true greatness is lost upon us because we do not appreciate his true significance or value. We perhaps only remotely understand his task and function. Certainly God bestowed upon him the supreme honour of preceding the Messiah and preparing the way for Him, calling upon the people of Israel to "repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand". To John it was given to be the fulfilment of the prophesies of Isaiah and the others and that he would be God's messenger to the world, turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, and vice versa, and making the paths straight for the coming Son of God, for, "John bare witness of Him,

and cried, saying This is He of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me" (John 1:15). John was not the heavenly Bridegroom, and performed no miracles (John 10:41) and his baptism was but of a temporary nature (Acts 19:1-6). yet his task was a great task and he was more than equal to it and he died the death of a martyr for God - he was truly more than a prophet.

"Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist, notwithstanding he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he". How do we respond to such a statement as this? EDITOR.

## PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

Romans, chapter 12, verse 1. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service".

This is a well known and oft repeated verse. Let us consider it backwards - taking the last word first.

'Service' Just an everyday word, yet found in all aspects of our life. We are happy to be of 'Service' in our home. Church and country and are limited only by our ability.

'Reasonable' Defined in the dictionary as moderate - not excessive, making it possible for us all to give service, according to our age, experience and opportunity.

'Acceptable unto God' This makes a great difference to our choice and degree of service, for to be 'acceptable to God' it cannot be contrary to His will.

'Holy' Do Christian men, women and young people realise that the service - the every day actions are tempered to the Holiness of God - are high in a moral sense. Christians were called Saints but were people exactly like ourselves.

'Bodies a living Sacrifice' This applies to our personalities - ourselves - our offering to God. In the Old Testament sacrifices to God were dead; but here is a LIVING sacrifice. Living, active, a daily offering of SERVICE to God. A personal, practical life for God. Is this too difficult? How is it possible? We are frail, misunderstood, prone to compromise, assailed by Satan and his claims. IT IS POSSIBLE, but only through a merciful, understanding God, and by the example of Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

'Brethren' Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, being part of the family of God and living in love and unity.

'I beseech you therefore' These words are a continuation of chapter 8 with its catalogue of blessings. It is because of these great promises that we read, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service'.

'Be not conformed to this world', taught Paul in Romans chapter 12, verse 2, to Christians whose standard of living differed from that of the world. Paul taught separation. How does today's Church receive and act upon such teaching? Are we informed of our faith's demands? Do we, as mature Christians offer young people an example? Separation from the world is made possible by a change - a transformation - a renewed mind.

(Verse 2) '...be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God'.

Chapter 8, verses 5, 6 and 7 show the difference between the carnal and the spiritual. 'For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.'

Would we part from that perfect will of God by being satisfied with the carnal mind? We were full of joy and enthusiasm, when we accepted Jesus Christ and made Him Lord of our life. Let us keep that renewed mind.

To the church in chapter 12 verse 3, Paul said, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith". This was an injunction to men to be humble and to think gravely and calmly, for thinking is allied to faith; while there is no room for boasting, there is sure ground for HOPE.

In verse 4 Paul writes of the roll of Church membership and the fact that each member has different ability. Each member in the church, which is the Body of Christ, is dependent upon another, and upon the Body; each possessing gifts which differ but all of which are necessary and important.

This list in Romans 12 is not the only one or the longest given by Paul, but it is written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Verse 6 mentions 'Prophecy' which we believe to be a God given gift to the Apostles and Prophets during the formation of the Church, one which passed when the foundation was laid and the New Testament written, but the Church still has a ministry. Verse 7 'A minister'. It is a great responsibility requiring long preparation for this accepted, God given vocation, to minister to the church - to serve the Church, in a special way.

'Teacher' If there are those who can teach and thus can edify the Church, or instruct the young, they should be called to do that work. Let the Gospel be taught everywhere in any language. God's gifts include the ability to teach and the Church must decide if it edifies.

Verse 8. 'He that exhorteth'. 'And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogues sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on' (Acts chapter 13, verse 15). It seems that Testimony may be a means of Exhortation.

'He that giveth'. There are many ways of serving God and the Church, either financially or otherwise, but Paul suggests that any service can be offered with simplicity. Jesus taught, (Matthew chapter 6, verse 3) 'But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth'. A lesson which may be applied to many activities.

'He that ruleth' - ruleth with diligence. 'Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy' (1 Timothy, chapter 6, verse 17).

'He that sheweth mercy' - with cheerfulness. There is room for mercy in the Church - for understanding and for cheerfulness. These come by allowing the Holy Spirit to use the various gifts which have been given to the church, by Jesus Christ.

The fellowship of working together is taught in these verses.

There are PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS TO christians in verses 9-21.

- 9 'Let love be without dissimulation - a sincere, pure love - seeking no reward.
- 10 Affection - brotherly love - in honour preferring one another
- 11 Warmth and enthusiasm in all activities - the Lord is master of our lives.
- 12 Hope gives joy - tribulation means patience - in all circumstances, prayer.
- 13 Share where need is found - be hospitable.
- 14 Do not retaliate - return good for evil.
- 15 Share others joy and sorrows.
- 16 Be agreeable - speak and act in such a way that the lowest in understanding will be able to accept - do not be conceited,
- 17 Some will speak ill of you - meet evil with good.
- 19 Leave anger and vengeance to the One who said, 'Vengeance is mine'.
- 20 Even your enemy will change, if you help him in his need.
- 21 'BE NOT OVERCOME WITH EVIL' BUT OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD'.

Amen.

by the late F. R. W. KIMBERLEY

# ASK

Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love;  
The fellowship of kindred minds  
In like to that above.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" Ephesians 3:20.

ASK ..... WHAT DO I ASK?

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The Lord Jesus invited His disciples to "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat" Mark 6:31. It is still vitally necessary for God's children, to come aside, and meditate on eternal things, to seek out those glorious truths in the precious Word of God, which will help us in our daily living for Christ, and to develop our understanding of the wonderful subject of prayer.

ASK ..... WHAT DO I ASK?

"When I remember you in my prayers". Phil. 4

In our quiet moments shall we turn our minds once more to that mighty man of God, the aged Apostle Paul. He is a prisoner in Rome for Christ's sake, "Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ" Philemon verse 1, "being such a one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ" verse 9, "There salute thee Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus" verse 23. While he was in prison news is brought to the Apostle, of one Philemon, who with others gathered together in his house to worship and serve God. His love and faith, towards the Lord Jesus and toward the saints, caused Paul great joy. News also reached the prisoner of the Lord, that Onesimus, a servant of Philemon had been unprofitable to him, and had evidently left him. Now Paul writes a letter to Philemon, beseeching him to receive Onesimus back "Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?" verse 16. Read the Epistle for yourselves and see the concern of this slave of Christ for the one "whom I have begotten in my bonds" verse 10

In last month's article we brought your attention to the prayer of the Apostle to the Church at Colosse, this month we are considering Paul's prayer for one man, Philemon. Read this carefully and prayerfully.

"I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and all the saints, and I pray that the sharing of your faith may promote the knowledge of all the good that is ours in Christ. For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you" Philemon verses 4-7 (RSV).

Can you read these words without a thrill being sent through your own soul. We stand back in contemplation and marvel at this saint of God, who lived so near to Him and the Lord Jesus. It is said that one picture is worth a thousand words, if so, let your imagination run riot for a few moments, use God's precious gift of memory to help you share this wonderful experience, with one who suffered so much for his deep and abiding faith in the Lord Jesus, the one who had shed His own precious blood on his behalf. What is the picture you have now of Paul ... a prisoner in a Roman Jail, in captivity, in bondage, deprived of freedom, ... dejected, in despair, downcast, despondent, joyless? A thousand times "No". This was not the first time this bond-slave of Christ had been in prison, turn to the 16th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and read from the 19th to the 25th verse, and note the re-action of Paul and Silas. "And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market-place unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city. And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast

in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them," Many stripes ... cast into prison ... their feet in the stocks, I suppose the man in the world would expect them to be down in the dumps, not so, no joining the mourners and groaners society, for these men of God, they prayed and sang praises. What a valuable lesson for God's children today, how often we grumble and complain, and at times are discontented with our lot, when truth to tell, we receive countless numbers of rich blessings from our heavenly Father, Shall we like Paul and Silas start praying and praising. And what of Paul now in this Roman Jail. True, the authorities had the power to keep his body in that cell, but they had no power whatever over his spirit and soul, and these could not be confined to that prison. Be assured that time and again he was before the mercy seat, talking in an intimate way with his heavenly Father, no prison doors or bars could keep this soldier of the Cross away from the Divine access, that was his by right because his citizenship was in heaven. Divine communion and fellowship was his daily diet, he exhorted the Thessalonian brethren, "Pray without ceasing", and I think it would be true to say that the Apostle Paul was a man who practised what he preached. So from that prison cell he sent a prayer for Philemon.

"I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers".

This spirit filled saint makes me feel utterly ashamed of my self, as I fall so short of his glorious example. Every time he remembered Philemon in his prayers he thanked God. How often we remember our brethren at the throne of grace, and yet we forget to stay awhile to say a big thank you, for their work and faithfulness. Not so with the Apostle, "I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers". Evidently Paul accepted the invitation of the Psalmist:— "Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving" Psalm 95:2. "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name" Psalm 100:4.

Shall we change the question while we have some thoughts on this subject of thanksgiving.

**ASK ... WHAT DO I ASK? to HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN TO SAY THANK YOU?**

**For Deliverance from the power of sin**

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" Rom. 7:23-25

**Have you forgotten to say thank you?**

**For victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ". 1 Cor. 15:55-57.

**Have you forgotten to say thank you?**

**For causing us to triumph in Christ.**

"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place" 2 Cor. 2:14.

**Have you forgotten to say thank you?**

**For His unspeakable gift.**

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" 2 Cor. 9:15.

**Have you forgotten to say thank you?**

**For all things**

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" Ephesians 5:20,21.

**Have you forgotten to say thank you?**

**For the brethren.**

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure" 2 Thessalonians 1:3,4.

**Have you forgotten to say thank you?**

**For individuals.**

"I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and all the saints, and I pray that the

sharing of your faith may promote the knowledge of all the good that is ours in Christ. For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you" Philemon verses 4-7 (RSV).

Oh, do read these verses over and over again, may the thoughts derived through meditation bring rich blessing to your souls. Forgive me if I bring you down to earth by any comments of mine; one feels so unworthy to expound from the messages from Paul the aged. One or two thoughts may prove helpful though, please note that Paul here talks about Philemon's "your love and the faith", yet in Ephesians 1:15 he says "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints", "faith and love". Again the same thought in Colossians 1:4 "Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and the love which ye have to all the saints", "faith and love". Faith without works James said is dead, Philemon's love was manifested because of his deep and abiding faith in Christ. He had a faith that worked. Note also this love and faith was twofold:—"which you have toward the Lord Jesus". "and all the saints" Can we say it was a double love and a double faith.

ASK ..... WHAT DO I ASK?

'That the sharing of your faith may promote the knowledge of all the good that is ours in Christ': Thank you Paul for your love and faith, and also for sharing with us the wonderful messages given to us through your letter to Philemon. Through you our eyes are turned to our Master, and we say with the writer to the Hebrews:—"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" Heb. 13:15.

What thanks I owe Thee, and what love,  
A boundless, endless store  
Shall echo through the realm above  
When time shall be no more.

May the Lord's richest blessing be your portion.

LEONARD MORGAN.




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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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**'What really is meant by 'the chastening of the Lord?' Who and especially how does He chasten?'**

CHASTENING primarily denotes to train children and suggests the broad idea of education. It is in this context that the Bible teaches about it. The dictionary definition is 'to correct by punishment; to inflict pain for the purpose of reforming; to purify from errors and faults; to subdue

The idea of chastisement is expressed first in the Old Testament in the book of Proverbs; "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of His correction: For whom the Lord loveth He correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth" (Prov. 3:11,12). The truth that man needs correction is expressed by Jeremiah the prophet, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O Lord, correct me, but with judgement; not in thine anger lest thou bring me to nothing" (Jer. 10:23,24).

It is also quite evident that the Deuteronomists knew that God intended something good by His correction, for we read: "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of

the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills..." (Deut 8:5-7).

If we then were to answer the question 'what is meant by the chastening of the Lord', we would have to say that it is God training, education, and correcting His children so that He may bring them to that blessed state where they may partake of all of the blessings that He has graciously prepared for them. It is, in effect and in fact, God exercising His discipline on His children for their good.

#### What is Discipline?

True discipline, is not, as many people imagine, the wielding of the 'big stick'. When punishment has to be administered it usually means that the offender has repeatedly failed to respond to instructions. True discipline is seen in the person who has responded to the promptings of God and exhibits that self-control which God attempts to inculcate in each one of us; as Paul put it when he wrote to Timothy, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (self-control)". Therefore, it makes sense to us when we read the writer to the Hebrews saying, "And have you forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons? 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by him. For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives' (Heb. 12:5,6). This brings us to the consideration of suffering, and of how this fits into God's scheme of bringing us to the point of self-control.

#### Discipline and Suffering

It seems that suffering goes together with sonship. The writer of the Hebrew letter reminds us that as sons we are to "look to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction (opposition) of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds" (Heb. 12:2,3). The writer is reminding us that when we feel that the Lord's discipline is resting heavily upon us, that we look to Jesus who endured all things for us so that we might have the privilege of being sons. He reminds his readers that some had suffered shame for Christ. "But call to mind the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used" (Heb. 10:32,33). Later, he contrasts Christ's sufferings with theirs and makes the telling point, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. (12:4). It seems that the writer is suggesting that as Christ was allowed by God to endure physical suffering so we too may have to endure correction which is painful to us.

Before we can fully understand the teaching in the Hebrew passage it is necessary for us to appreciate the operation of the family in the ancient world. The father was not only responsible for the welfare of the family unit, but he was also the source of authority in the family. The education of children embodied the principle of corporal punishment: "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell" (Prov. 23:13,14). Physical correction was a fact of life. Fear was a necessary part of education. From this it would naturally follow that God the Father would also "lay the rod on every son that He accepts".

#### How does God Discipline?

We see one example of correction in 1 Tim. 1:20 where Paul writes, "Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme". This is a severe discipline by apostolic authority and probably refers to exclusion from the assembly of saints. This is a similar type of punishment to that recorded in 1 Cor. 5:5 but you will notice that the express purpose is "so that they may learn".

Another way is in bringing the word of God before His children, but in the proper manner. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient. In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves" (2 Tim. 2:24,25). This is why it is



important that God's children should study His word and present themselves for instruction whenever it is being taught. Incidentally, it is also why God's word should not be used as a bludgeon, 'in meekness instructing'.

Then there is the problem of the endurance of physical suffering. The writer of the Hebrew letter says, "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not"? (Heb. 12:7). He furthermore goes on to suggest that if we do not endure the chastening of the Lord then we are illegitimate sons (v8). You will no doubt recall that when Jesus was before Pilate, and Pilate could find no guilt in him, he said, "I will therefore chastise him and release him" (Luke 23:16). This would undoubtedly be a chastisement with blows, to scourge. Therefore, when we are called upon to endure physical suffering, it may be that God is allowing this so that we might be refined as sons. But we can be assured that God will never allow more than we can bear and will always provide a way of escape.

The writer of the Hebrew letter sums it up by saying, "We had fathers in the flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of Spirits and live?" (Heb. 12:9).

### The purpose of Discipline

God never does anything without a purpose, nor is He a sadist. It would be unnatural for us to enjoy physical suffering at the time it was taking place, and so the writer says, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (v11). We cannot enjoy the good life until we have accepted God's discipline. We learn to accept that discipline because of the example which we have seen in Christ who always accepted the discipline of God. In v10 the writer says that it is for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.

This is a fascinating study and I do not pretend to have exhausted all that is contained in the teaching, but I would advise all God's children to place themselves unreservedly under the discipline of our Heavenly Father so that He may bring us to that state of righteousness and holiness which will make for our eternal salvation and happiness.

(All questions please to Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Highfield, Wigan, Lancs.)

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

### JULY 1977

3—Psalm 41	Matthew 26:1-16
10—Zech. 13	Matthew 26:17-35
17—2 Kings 6:8-23	Matthew 26:36-56
24—Deut. 19:7-21	Matthew 26:57-75
31—Genesis 37:13-36	Matthew 27:1-26

### LOVE REJECTED

THE dreadful tragedy of Judas Iscariot meets us first. Jesus included in sorrowful anticipation of His own death, "The Son of Man is betrayed". What a depth of grief must have filled His heart with the thought of Judas's terrible decision and its consequences to him. Yet all rejection of Jesus, or our unfaithfulness can "grieve the Holy Spirit" (Eph. 4:30). We must consider the danger of knowing Jesus as Judas did by close and daily contact, and failing

to respond to goodness and love. John gives us a hint of dishonest motive at work (John 12:6) indicating a love of money. He might even have bargained for his price (Matt. 26:15). But what a revulsion of feeling filled his heart "when he saw that Jesus was condemned" (27:3). He had failed to realise the full implications of his action, "Be sober, be vigilant" writes Peter (1 Peter 5:8). Does our human nature ever realise the possible results of even a wrong thought, or word, or action? What of the even worse betrayal by the priests and elders? (26:4).

There is some difficulty in reconciling Peter's account of the consequences, (Acts 1:16-20) with those recorded here by Matthew (27:3-10). It may be that the purchase of a field had been Judas's intention but when he saw the inevitable death of Jesus, any worldly plans sank out of sight. He could no longer bear himself. Peter's denial of Jesus was a failure of courage under stress, but Judas had considered and planned apparently for selfish gain

### Love Accepted

It would seem that Jesus was entertained, in a special way by the household at Bethany. The house of Simon the Leper may have been Martha's house (Luke 10:18). Probably Simon had been healed by Jesus, and the house was open for Jesus and His disciples. It was natural that special hospitality was exercised here for reasons of respect and love, there being a consciousness of present and coming crisis. The hatred of the rulers would be well known due to the connections with Jews from Jerusalem (John 11:19). There would be emotional stress both on the part of the disciples, the household and Jesus Himself. Jesus's love (John 11:5) was generously responded to, and in Mary overflowed with longing to manifest itself in some open uninhibited exhibition of devotion. So she chose to use her cherished precious ointment, anointing with it his head and feet. I quote "It is a striking juxtaposition:

as Mary's is the highest deed of loving and clear-sighted faith, Judas's is the darkest act of treacherous and misguided hate". The one seems to have finally instigated the other. Jesus was deeply moved, and more than defended Mary from the petty criticism of some who were present.

### The Last Supper

Surely Jesus had friends in Jerusalem. One of them was not ashamed to do the woman's job of carrying the water. It distinguished him for Peter and John so they knew where to prepare the meal. Doubtless Jesus and His disciples were being watched and a measure of concealment was necessary so that the meal would be taken quietly and without interruption. It was an event which Jesus had looked forward to with special interest (Luke 22:15). He was there to institute that which has been celebrated over all following centuries by His own people. He had also special teaching to give. The urgent need of unity and humility among His chosen few was taught by word and in action (John 13). Chapters 14 to 17 of John's gospel enshrine these vital words of instruction and promise. It must have been about midnight when they sang together, probably from the psalms as the custom was, and then Jesus led them out of the city and up to Gethsemane. We cannot realise the doubts and fears they must have experienced, and to Peter, James and John the Saviour's distress and prayers must have been a mystery. The full

import of what was taking place was tempered by utter weariness. That Jesus could be overcome must have seemed impossible to them — His submission, and rebuke to violence attempted in His defence incomprehensible (26:51-54). We can see its consistency with His teaching and life, having the facts written for us but those involved could only grasp their significance when able to look back. Incidentally how wonderful was the gift of the Holy Spirit which enabled them to do this infallibly — humanly impossible.

### The Mock Trials

We can hardly exaggerate the wickedness of the religious leaders. History has provided many instances of similar behaviour on the part of man and groups of men in power. All true moral restraints are put aside in order to work out what unreasoning hatred and envy demand. No vestige of Mosaic and prophetic instruction is regarded. They said "We are disciples of Moses". They bribed a man to betray their victim, they bribed others to present false witness against Him. They met at an illegal hour, and struck and browbeat Him before giving opportunity for defence. When did Moses approve such behaviour? Religious leaders in all ages have been tempted to use power with violence, and this applies equally to revolutionary movements. The true religion of Jesus can never be forwarded by violence. The Inquisition never made one convert. War never will either. The dignified silences of Jesus spoke volumes - His innocence was too obvious to need support by words. We gather that Jesus was first taken to Annas, then to Caiaphas, and then to the whole council, where the final decision would be made to hand Jesus over to the Roman governor (27:1). Here the charge for blasphemy could have no force but the charge was that Jesus claimed to be a king, which would be treason in the eyes of Rome. We can see the reluctance of Pilate to put an innocent man to death. Only the insistence of the rulers made him agree to do so eventually after three times declaring Him innocent. The rulers had the whiphand when they persuaded the crowd to join the cry "Crucify Him". We may think it surprising that there were not a sufficient number to support Jesus, but must reckon with the disappointed hopes when the people saw the prophet from Galilee degraded and disgraced, a convicted prisoner unable to exercise any of the powers He had shown so recently in the Temple. They then would re-

gard Him as false. So when Pilate said "Behold the man!" and "Behold your king!", "there was no beauty that we should desire Him" (Isa. 53:2). He was then an object of such pitiable shame "as one from whom men hide their face, HE was despised" (Isa. 53:3). He had been spat upon, unmercifully bruised, crowned with thorns. The purity and holiness which characterised His every word and action were forgotten. So they joined the infamous cry, "And we esteemed Him not!" Yet the stupendous fact is that this was "God manifest in the flesh".

R. B. SCOTT

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Blackburn, Mill Hill:** The church at Blackburn, were encouraged and spiritually uplifted, by our two weekend missions, in April during the 16th and 17th, Brother Graham Gorton from Rochdale preached the Gospel and we were well supported by our fellow brethren from Hindley, Longshoot, Newton, Wigan, and Earlstown. We had a total of 17 visitors during our weekend, and well over 60 brethren and friends gathered together in our meeting-house for the Saturday night meeting. Also in May on the 7th and 8th Brother John Diggle from Ilkeston again spoke from the Word of God having as his theme 'The Body'; again brethren from the Wigan area, Earlstown and Skelmersdale supported us and 11 friends came to hear the Gospel preached. Although no fruit has yet come forth, we know that the Word has indeed been sown, and in time may yet be fruitful.

We welcome into our fellowship Sister May Renshaw who has come to meet with us from the Hamilton St. congregation, and also welcome Bro. and Sister Reg and Betty Bursnell, from Kirkby in Ashfield who have also been added to our number. We give them a warm welcome into our fellowship. Tony Tyson

**Kentish Town:** We rejoice to record that Mark Hurst made the good confession and was baptised into Christ on Lord's Day, April 24th. We believe our young brother will seek to be useful to the Lord, and be richly blessed.

R. B. Scott

**Slamannan:** On Saturday afternoon April 16th, the church here held their annual social meeting, Bro. John Wilson snr. presiding. The meeting place was comfortably filled with brethren and friends. A number of brethren and sisters from other churches were present to assist and cheer us with their company. Tea over, the chairman, in a short address, gave a hearty greeting to all the visitors. We had two most inspiring addresses given by Bro. Leonard Morgan, Hindley, and Bro. Jim Sinclair Jr., Tranent. Hearty congregational singing, solos, choirs and a recitation added to our enjoyment. A most enjoyable meeting was brought to a close by all singing "Lord dismiss us with Thy blessing".

Bro. L. Morgan served the church here the following day at both morning and evening services. At the close of the latter meeting a young girl, Audrey Wilson, daughter of Bro. Peter Wilson and Sis. May Wilson, requested to be baptised that same evening, Audrey has attended church since her childhood. Bro. Morgan took her confession, after which her father, our Bro. Peter Wilson immersed her. Audrey was received into fellowship on Lord's Day, 24th April. We hope she will be a useful member in the church here and by her consistent walk bring others to Christ. May we all take courage, and do our level best for Christ and His church. Then shall it be said:

Though sown in tears through weary years,  
The seed will surely live;  
Though great the cost it is not lost,  
For God will fruitage give.

The harvest time of God will come,  
And after toil and care,  
With joys untold your sheaves of gold  
Will all be garnered there.

M. Neilson.

## OBITUARY

**Newtongrange:** Once again the church has been saddened by the loss of another of its members. Sister Mary Clark died on Sunday 3rd April after a long illness. We commend her sorrowing loved ones to the loving care of our Lord Jesus Christ. Robert Hunter, Sec.

# CORRESPONDENCE CLASS

## THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST or THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### Chapter 13:1-15

- 1 Describe the setting apart of Barnabas and Saul for this mission (vv1-3) paying attention to the acts of fasting, laying on of hands and prayer.
- 2 Note the position of Seleucia in relation to Antioch, and having traced the journey of Saul and Barnabas to Cyprus, state what you know about this famous island.
- 3 Who was the Minister called John? Describe his office.
- 4 Why did Bar-Jesus oppose Saul and Barnabas?
- 5 Did Sergius Paulus become a Christian?
- 6 Describe the journey from Paphos to Antioch and state what you think caused John to turn back from Perga and go to Jerusalem?

Answers, which should be written on one side of the paper only, should be returned to: Edward Jess, 34 Charles Street, Penicuik, Midlothian, Scotland.

Some students are two or three papers behind those appearing in the 'S.S.'. In order that all may 'catch up' the months of July, August and September will be regarded as holiday months and 'Correspondence Class' will resume in October.

E. JESS.

### WHAT ARE WE SENDING UP?

A rich lady dreamed that she went to heaven and there saw a mansion being built, "Who is that for?" she asked of the guide. "For your gardener". "But he lives in the tiniest cottage on earth, with barely room for his family. He might live better if he did not give away so much to the miserable poor folks".

Further on she saw a tiny cottage being built. "And who is that for?" she asked. "That is for you". "But I have lived in a mansion on earth. I would not know how to live in a cottage". The words she heard in reply were full of meaning. "The Master Builder is doing His best with the material that is being sent up".

Then she awoke, resolving to lay up treasure in heaven — Selected.

SHOW me the way,

Not to fortune and fame,

Not how to win laurels

Or praise for my name

But show me the Way

To spread the Great Story

That thine is the Kingdom

And power and glory.

A TRULY charitable man is like an apple tree. He gives fruit and is silent. The philanthropist is like the hen...

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