

# *The* **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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## ON THE MOVE

LETTERS to the editor are always welcome whether complimentary or critical. Some readers write to me expressing concern over the 'Editorial Policy' and the tendency for material to appear in the "S.S." which is of a controversial nature and thus not good for the tranquility of the church. It is also averred that such articles show a lack of brotherly love and a lack of concern for the unity of the brethren. The pages of the "S.S." are, of course, open to our readers and articles on 'brotherly love' and 'unity among the brethren' will always be welcome. 'Brotherly love' is a now well hackneyed phrase which means whatever we want it to mean, and nowadays usually means that we lack it if we are critical of how we see the churches developing in this country. If the making of critical statements is a sign of lack of brotherly love then the apostle Paul, and the other apostles, must have had very little brotherly love for they have some hard things to say in their epistles. To charge others with a lack of 'brotherly love' is a poor way of reacting to serious criticism. By contrast, very few of the letters to the editor express concern on important issues, such as the condition of the churches and what can be done about it?

Self-criticism is always the best kind of criticism and each generation should critically examine itself and ask itself the question, "Is the church in this generation a faithful copy of the one described in the New Testament, and if it is not wherein is it not, and what can be done about it?" Historians, years after events, with the glorious aid of hindsight, can explain to us where men of past centuries went off the track, or took the wrong turning, or adopted the wrong procedure, or did the wrong thing. If each generation carefully scrutinised the course on which the church was bent and took steps to rectify any tendency for it to go off the narrow path then all might be well. However history also shows that those who had the foresight and insight to see the church going a-gley were usually few in number and were shouted down by the majority. Ecclesiastical history shows too that departures from the New Testament arrangement were usually introduced in times of crisis or difficulty though usually well intentioned. Much like, I suppose, the recent necessity laid upon the Church of Scotland to introduce women ministers and women elders because of the shortage of menfolks for such work. One need only have a brief glance at the denominational bodies to realise that once ONE DEPARTURE is taken from the New Testament pattern ( I realise some brethren don't agree that there is a pattern) there is just no stopping place. It is very easy to find a good-looking reason for changing things: it may be that progress seems to be too slow: it may be that we have to bring things up-to-date: it may be that others have tried it and it succeeds. After all which one of us has not sat down and racked his, or her, brains trying to think of some

way of reaching men more successfully with the gospel. All kinds of propositions are tried from, at one end of the scale, the 'Educated Ministry' to the other end of the scale, cups of tea at the end of the service. Is 'Success' to be the criterion as to whether we do or don't do a thing, or is it to be the teaching of the New Testament?

We would all like to see rapid progress in the churches, but progress based on a sound and scriptural footing. Numerical increase is not necessarily a sign of progress. Some of the younger denominational religious bodies, such as 'Jehovah's Witnesses' and the Mormon churches boast of ever increasing numbers and buildings but are they making 'progress' in God's sight? How is progress to be assessed and quantified? What is progress? Doubtless we could all make more progress than we do if we were but to work harder and longer but such progress would always have to be legitimate and scriptural. When I hear brethren say that "The church is now on the move" I shudder a little and wonder where it is moving to, and where it will end up. When something is on the move it can go in various directions and thus the scrutiny, mentioned earlier of each one of us is necessary. Where it will end up depends on those who are at the helm or who are in the driving seat, and who are they? When we hear exciting claims of rapid progress let us remember the fable of the hare and the tortoise, and closely examine the merits of the progress. After all we would surely not ever want to be described as 'The fastest growing denomination in the world' would we?

There seems to be an upsurge in interest being shown in the life and times of the late brother Crosthwaite and brethren are trying to get copies of his talks and writings. Many of the young members of the churches today, are unfortunately, like 'the king who knew not Joseph' and have the disadvantage of not having known brother Crosthwaite, what he taught and for what he stood. Some of us remember with the greatest affection and pleasure our late brother, and we wonder how he would regard the situation in these islands if he were alive today. I think I have a fair idea of what his reaction would be and what he would have to say to all concerned. It was reported recently (concerning a congregation with quite a large membership which was about to lose its full-time evangelist) that "it was realised that another preacher would be needed to take care of the congregational work". Brother Crosthwaite would have been surprised to have learned that that was said of a congregation in the British Isles. A sign of the times? Brother Carl Ketcherside, one of the finest visiting brethren to grace these shores, has had a great deal to say in recent days, about an undoubted clergy and laity system amongst the churches in another continent and we should all give due regard to what he has to say. After all we could all be entangled in the same system in a few years hence, if not sooner. Let us critically examine ourselves, as well as others, to determine whether or not we, as churches, are faithful replicas of the original church as described in the pages of the New Testament. Those who form the view that it does not much matter should re-examine the rise and origins of the denominational bodies - the same denominational bodies from which many of our own members have come, and come gladly.

EDITOR

## FOLLOWING CHRIST (Part 1)

ON the mount of transfiguration, God, our Father, is reported by Matthew, Mark and Luke to say "This is my beloved Son, Hear ye Him". The root meaning of the word "beloved" is from the Greek word 'agape', meaning love.

John, in his first letter, uses this word, when he says "God is love". In fact, he uses the word 'agape' and its derivatives no less than fifty-six times, in his three letters, and of these twenty-eight times, in chapter 4 of his first letter. This is not surprising, in view of his close association with his beloved Master, as revealed in his gospel. Incidentally, it was John who, along with Peter and James, was privileged to be with Jesus, on the Mount of transfiguration.

### The Disciple whom Jesus loved

John was no doubt the disciple mentioned in John 13:23, in the words, "Now there was reclining close beside Jesus the disciple whom Jesus loved". The occasion was the Last Supper, prior to our Lord's betrayal by Judas Iscariot. It seems from John 18:15, that John was also present, when Jesus was arraigned before the High Priest and again, from John 19:26-27 that John was at the foot of the Cross, when Jesus entrusted His mother to John's care.

How honoured we would feel to be in John's position – the disciple whom Jesus loved. The inherent nature of John shows us that his position was fully merited. His meekness and modesty, in not naming himself as the special recipient of the Master's love, his loyalty to his Lord in His darkest hour, and his presence at the Cross, when all the others had fled, show us what a loving and loyal heart he had, almost like his Master's. No wonder love was the main theme of his Gospel account and also of his letters.

### The Greater Love

The nature of God's love for us and His gracious purpose for us is nowhere better exemplified than in John's Gospel, especially chapter 3: 16-19 which reads:—"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth in Him is not judged: but he that believeth not has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil".

(How true that is nowadays, in an age of violence and permissiveness which are the very antithesis of Christian love). Again in John 15:12-13 we read: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you".

### Following Christ

Obviously John had this kind of love, in great measure, so much so that Jesus loved him in like measure, for does not love beget love? It is natural that every christian should want to be an example like John. Is this possible? We must say confidently, "Yes"; but how? Is it not by closely following the greatest example of love in Jesus, Himself?

Paul says as much in his letter to the Ephesian brethren, where he says "Be ye, therefore, followers (Imitators) of God, as dear children, and walk in love (agape), as Christ also hath loved us and hath given Himself for us, as an offering for a sweet smelling savour" (Eph 5:1-2).

It is noteworthy that at the very outset of their discipleship, the disciples were asked by Jesus to follow Him. Of the two disciples who were with John the Immerser who looked upon Jesus as He walked and said "Behold the Lamb of God"; one was Andrew (John 1:40); the other who is not named was no doubt John who with his accustomed modesty never names himself in person, in his Gospel. Both we note in verse 37 "Followed Jesus". But this was Jesus command to all who would be His disciples: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt...16:24). "If any man serve me, let him follow me. If any man serve me, him will my Father honour" John 12:26. "My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish. neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" John 10:27-28.

But what does following Christ mean? Is it not walking in love, as both John and Paul exhort us to do? Is not this the mark of the true Christian, the true follower of Christ? Jesus, Himself, said so in John 13:35 where He says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"

### Our Lord's Last Will and Testament

This was the last thought in our Lord's mind, when He prayed that penultimate prayer to His Father, on this side of eternity. It was at the Last Supper and just before His betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus commences His prayer in John 17 with the words "Father, the

hour is come". There is a knell of parting doom about these words. Here was our Lord's dying deposition. All human experiences teaches us that a man's dying words are invariably to be accepted as the truth, even in law. How careful, therefore, all Christians should be to listen to these words of our Saviour, especially in view of verse 20 which shows us that He is praying not only for His followers who were present at that supper, but also for all those who would follow Him; for our Lord says. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word" and He closes that prayer in which He pours out His heart to His Father in heaven, with the impressive words, "that the love (agape), wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them".

#### The Christian Fellowship

Have we that love within us, brethren? If not, we walk in darkness, for John says in 1 John 2:10-11, "He that saith he is in the light (in Christ) and hateth his brother is in darkness, even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in light (in Christ) and there is none occasion of stumbling in him" In John 1 1:7, John says, "If, however, we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from Sin".

Is not this the Christian fellowship of love, referred to by Jesus in John 14:23, when He says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him and we will come unto him and make our abode with him". (To be continued) W. BROWN, Dunfermline.

## IT IS MY PSALM — IS IT YOURS ?

Alone we falter day by day;  
We take wrong turns or lose our way.  
With God our steps are safe and sure,  
Our path quite clear, our life secure.

#### PERFECT CONFIDENCE — "ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE" Psalm 23:6

MAY I invite you to share with me, an oasis of peace and tranquility, by making still another visit to one of our favourite quiet places. Coming aside once again, leaving the cares and problems of life, to make our journey to pastures green, and there to lie down for a while in the tender grass. Coming away from everybody and everything which would distract our fellowship with our Lord Jesus, so that we can meditate on our theme of :-

#### Perfect Confidence — "All the days of my life"

Peter, James and John, saw the glory of the Lord on the mount of transfiguration, we too, who are His beloved, can also see a little of that glory, so making our whole lives gloriously open to His presence in our hearts. As a result we can have a deeper knowledge of His grace, His love, His peace, His joy, His wisdom, His power, as we consider together His glorious promises. We can be assured of this fact, we can have a measured supply of the things that matter according to our needs. "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" Philippians 4:19.

Surely goodness and mercy, shall follow me, ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE".

But David would you say that it applies to "Days of Worry?"

Do you mean those days of frustration, when everything seems to go wrong, and we are at wit's end corner, and feel over-burdened with care and anxiety. The feeding and clothing of the family. The paying of the rent and rates. The expense of the car. The upkeep of the house. The gas, electricity and telephone accounts. The sickness and accidents of the family. The kettle doesn't boil soon enough, the dress will not fit, the washing machine is broken down, the glass vase you treasured is smashed to atoms, the garden is overgrown. The pressures of business life... Of course all these things will not happen in one day, so the first thing we can do is stop worrying about tomorrow's troubles. Robert L. Stevenson said:-

“Anyone can carry his burden, however hard, until darkness.  
 Anyone can do his work, however hard one day.  
 Anyone can live sweetly, patiently, lovingly,  
 And this is all life really means.”

Sound advice, and when coupled with the words of Thomas Carlyle:— “Our main business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand”, we can go forward living a day at a time to our advantage. Live for today, live every moment of every day, **NOW, THIS MOMENT IS YOURS!** No wonder we falter, we try not only to carry today’s load, but tomorrow’s, and even add yesterday’s for good measure. Why should we let tomorrow’s or yesterday’s care, cloud the contentment, we can share with our Lord today. Listen to the world’s greatest teacher, the one who was called “Counsellor”. “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day’s own trouble be sufficient for the day” Matthew 6:34 (R.V.) Did He help you yesterday? If so, why not trust Him for today! You can be spiritually satisfied by trusting His infinite wisdom and His unmeasured love.

**Perfect Confidence – “All the days of my life”**

**But David would you say that it applies to “Days of Temptation?”**

“Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from earth, will draw all men unto me” John 12:31-32.

“He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” 1 John 3:8.

“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished” 2 Peter 2:9.

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” 1 Corinthians 10:13.

“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” Acts 26:18.

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” Ephesians 6:11-13.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” Romans 8:35-39.

**Perfect Confidence – “All the days of my life”**

**But David would you say that it applies to “The Fellowship of His Sufferings?”**

Days such as James Gilmour must have experienced when in his diary, he wrote after years of labour. “In the shape of converts I have seen no result. I have not, as far as I am aware, seen any one who even wanted to be a Christian”. Earlier, when he arrived at his field of labour, he had written these words in his diary:— “Several huts in sight! When shall I be able to speak to the people? O Lord, suggest by the Spirit how I should come among them, and guide me in gaining the language, and in preparing myself to teach the life and love of Christ Jesus!.....” “I have not, as far as I am aware, seen any one who even wanted to be a Christian”. Days such as Allen Gardiner, a missionary to Patagonia, of a bygone day endured. He came through some cruel hardships. Here is the end. He was found, too late for life, lying under an upturned boat. He had

kept a diary, and the last entries were something like these: "I am lying under an upturned boat, out of reach of the sea. I am dying, but I am in peace; my chief discomfort arises from a strong feeling of thirst". A later entry in a weaker hand: "Last night it rained heavily, and by thrusting the corner of the sail out under the gunwale, and getting it drenched. I have been able to allay the almost intolerable pangs of thirst". Then the last entry – scarcely legible: "I am overwhelmed with a sense of the goodness of God".

**Perfect Confidence – "All the days of my life"**

But David would you say that it applies to "Days of Pain?"

Days such as Kathleen Levick has experienced over a period of many years. Days when she has been at rock bottom, suffering intensely through Rheumatoid Arthritis. Pain which has been so long lasting, and so terrible that she had pleaded with the Lord to take her, because she felt that she could not take any more. Toomuch and too long! Like Job she argued with her Lord, reasoning like this: "I am supposed to be His child, and yet He refuses just what I ask Him! But Kathleen although at times full of doubt and fears, still trusts her Lord, and looks to Him for grace and strength, for as she says: "Where else can I go? Who else is there to talk to and ask for comfort or get comfort from...?" We thank God for those who walk through the valley of intense pain, yet keep a strong and an abiding faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Shadows deep have crossed our pathway;

We have trembled in the storm;

Clouds have gathered round so darkly

That we could not see Thy form:

Yet Thy love hath never left us

In our griefs alone to be.

And the help each gave the other

Was the strength that came from Thee.

**Perfect Confidence – "All the days of my life".**

But David would you say this applies to "The Last Days".

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy. Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good. Traitors, heady, highminded lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" 2 Tim. 3:1-5.

"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age". Matthew 28:18-20 (RSV).

**Perfect Confidence – "All the days of my life?"**

This month's exercise: – Re-read at your convenience the lines of Robert L. Stevenson, and Thomas Carlyle, and learn by heart Matthew 6:34. May the Lord's richest blessing be your portion.

LEONARD MORGAN,

## GOD'S REMNANTS

### In the Old Testament

Throughout history, God has often found it necessary to take a faithful remnant of his people and make a fresh beginning. A few generations after the creation, wickedness had become so general that the majority of mankind perished in the flood, while one righteous man and his family were saved in the ark to repopulate the earth.

A little later, the Lord chose another God-fearing man, Abraham, to be the founder of a new and special nation, numerous beyond reckoning. Seventy of his descendants entered Egypt,

and, in spite of the Egyptians' attempts to limit their increase, so large a number left that in their second year in the wilderness, they numbered 603,550 men not including dependants.

But because of their sin, over 39,000 died in the wilderness, and God twice threatened to destroy the whole people, and make another fresh start with the family of Moses. When Moses pleaded for them, the Lord decreed that only two of those who left Egypt should enter Canaan, so that when the nation arrived at the promised land, they numbered 601,730, slightly less than forty years before,

Once in possession of their country, the fortunes of the Israelites rose and fell according to whether they served the true God or not. When they fell into idolatry, they were punished by the Lord through the agency of the surrounding nations; and when they repented and destroyed the idols, they were saved once again. Yet they never finally learnt the lesson, and the same cycle of events kept repeating itself with every few generations.

Moses had also warned them against the testing effects of prosperity upon their characters (Deut. 8) lest they should think it was all due to their own efforts. For instance, Israel was never so rich and powerful as in the days of Solomon, yet this prosperous reign ended disastrously with division and idolatry.

Israelites who served God were often only a small minority of the people; in the time of Elijah, there were 7000 who had not worshipped Baal, at a time when the nation probably numbered between one and two million (2 Sam. 24).

Finally, ten tribes (about two-thirds of the nation) were taken captive to Assyria, never to return. The kingdom of Judah lingered on for more than two centuries, but again failed to learn the lesson, and the remaining Jews were taken prisoner to Babylon, while their land lay uncultivated for seventy years.

The remnant who returned from this captivity numbered only 42,360, far fewer than had originally come out of Egypt. They rebuilt the Temple, and history asserts that they did not become idolaters again, but they suffered under various conquerors until the time of Christ.

### In the New Testament

The coming of the Messiah was of course a great new beginning. From twelve disciples, the number of Christians rose to 5,000 men and was daily increasing. We do not know how many Jewish Christians there eventually were, but after a few years the New Testament makes it clear that the majority of Jews had rejected their Messiah, persecuted the Christian Jews, and met their final end as a nation with the fall of Jerusalem. Again, only a remnant was saved.

God's people were now the Christians, and many of them were Gentiles. Surely they would not prove a rebellious people, like the Jews? Alas, they were no different.

When the letters were written to the seven churches in Asia, these congregations had been in existence for perhaps fifty years. They had had time to fall away, to leave their first love, become lukewarm or spiritually dead, and some of them had false doctrine within them. Significantly, the two churches which were not called upon to repent were both in danger of persecution from the Jews, and one was poor, and the other had only a little strength; perhaps adversity had helped to keep them faithful. There was still an obedient remnant among the other congregations, but it did not comprise the whole church.

### In our own time

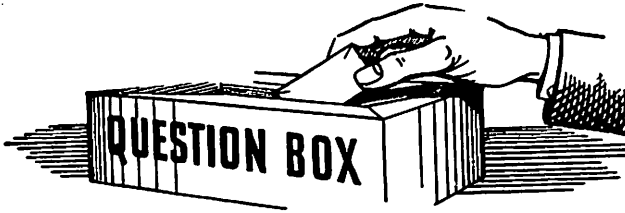
The pattern of events which can be seen beginning in the seven churches of Asia, repeats itself again and again in the history of the denominations, thus:— 1. A congregation begins small, poor and zealous. 2. In course of time it grows and becomes prosperous. 3. Years pass, and it becomes complacent and tolerates departures from scripture. 4. If there is still a faithful remnant, they will eventually find themselves excluded. 5. The faithful remnant must now begin again. The only cure for this sad falling away is repentance.

In this country, we, like the Israelites of old, are seeing the results of several decades of prosperity and neglect of God. Just as the Jews turned back to the true God when they had brought

calamities upon themselves, it may be that people will become more willing to receive the Gospel as a result.

Are we, as individuals and churches, the remnant of the Lord's people today? This depends on our faithfulness and willingness to repent of anything that is amiss. We should remember that a remnant without God is nothing; but a remnant with the help of the Lord is all that is necessary for a great new beginning.

Miss R. M. PAYNE, Reading, Berks.




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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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**"The scriptures say that we should love all men – should we love them more than God's truth? The scriptures likewise say that we should love our brethren – should we love them more than God's truth, i.e., to which do we give first priority?"**

In attempting to answer this question I am assuming that the questioner is wanting me to establish priorities between the christian's love for all men and his brethren on the one hand, and God's truth on the other. I am also assuming that God's truth means the revealed will of God, i.e., the Bible. Anyway, I shall comment from these basic assumptions –something I never like to do if it can be avoided – and I trust that the questioner will inform me if I have assumed wrongly.

#### Establishing Priorities

This is a very important thing to do. In simple terms it means that we are endeavouring to deal with the most important things first, and leave the less important until later. To put it another way, we are dealing with those things first which will have the greatest impact on that which we are attempting to do. I suppose this is what Jesus meant when he said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" Matt. 6:33. So let us say, as a general rule, that it is a good thing to establish priorities if at all possible. We need now, in fact, to see if we can establish priorities in terms of the question.

#### The Truth of God

When Jesus prayed to his Father He said. "Sanctify them through thy truth: Thy word is truth" John 17:17. Here we have the first fundamental lesson, and it is quite an important one, that the truth of God is the Word of God. Jesus emphasised this importance when, earlier in the prayer, he said, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me" John 17:8.

From this we see that Jesus identifies himself absolutely with the truth of God. That truth came in words which he, Jesus, had delivered to men who received them. The reception of them engendered belief on the part of those who heard them. There is no doubt at all in my mind that God's truth was manifested quite clearly by the personification of His love in Christ Jesus His Son. It was Jesus who said of himself, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me".

So here we have the clue. It is God's word which teaches us about His love. We cannot love as we ought until we have apprehended God's love through Christ Jesus. It is only when we receive Christ in faith and obedience that we can enter fully into the love of God, and conse-



quently learn how to love in our own right. Therefore, I would say that if it is absolutely imperative to treat God's truth as first priority, because it is from that truth and because of that truth that we are able to love anyone else in the christian context.

### Loving our Brethren

Love prompts us to do good things. The scripture says that Jesus went about doing good. Paul wrote to the Galatians and said, "And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. AS we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men. especially unto them who are of the household of faith" Gal. 6:9,10. The word "especially" means, "most of all", and is the superlative of 'very much'.

As brothers and sisters in Christ we are related to Christ in a unique way. Concerning the husband and wife relationship Paul said, "He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh: but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" Eph..5:28-30. If we apply this reasoning to our spiritual relationship with Christ then we can see that it is impossible to hate our brethren because they are in the same body as we, and so long as this relationship is maintained in the church, which is the body of Christ, then we should be continually demonstrating that love for each other which prompted Jesus to die for the church. We, the church, are precious to Jesus, and because we are 'in' him we are precious to each other. As John says, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him. That he who loveth God love his brother also" 1 John 4:20,21. Yes, loving our brethren is a very high priority, and we must always remember that it was the revealed Word, the Truth of God, Jesus himself, who taught us how to love.

### Loving all Men

Isn't this exactly what was in the mind of God in the first instance? He desires that none should perish but that all should come to eternal life through Christ Jesus. The gospel according to John sums up God's attitude to fallen mankind, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life" John 3:16.

Clearly, we can say from God's point of view that love toward all men was the chief priority. As a matter of fact, those who are now his children once fell into the "all men" category, and if they had not been recipients of God's love they would have no grounds at all for differentiating between the relevant priorities of His word and their brethren. Therefore, we can say that if the love of 'all men' is a great priority with God then it can be no less a priority so far as His children are concerned.

### Summary

I think I have said enough to indicate that it is not easy to separate the priorities as the questioner is asking. It is undeniably true to say that the love of God's truth is of paramount importance to the christian, revealing as it does God's will and His love. It is no less true to say that love of the brethren could be and should be an extension of that primary love which is revealed in God's truth, and it should be beautiful to behold and dynamic in its application to the world in which we move. And who would say that he is not moved with extreme compassion when he sees millions of people going to Christ-less graves because they either do not know of, or have not yet responded to, the love of God toward each one of them?

Let us try to summate. God's love, God's truth, Christ's sacrifice, the unification and effectiveness of the church, are all designed for one end; the salvation of all men. The beauty, worth, and importance of the inter-relationships which we have are bonuses to the extreme pleasure which we have of seeing some of the "all men" turn to Christ.

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

# SCRIPTURE READINGS

JULY 1976

4—Proverbs 25:11-28	Romans 12
11—Leviticus 19:1-18	Romans 13
18—Isaiah 45:14-25	Romans 14
25—Isaiah 11:1-10	Romans 15:1-13

OUR readings for this month present us with instructions on three aspects of christian living — our attitudes to God, to government and to one another. Of course the duties are intertwined. They impinge on one another. The first is the most exacting and most necessary. The others impose a strain on human nature which only the grace of God can provide for.

## Duty to God

It is true that we are involved in duty rather than pleasure, but if we were properly instructed before baptism we have already known this. It is much more important to do what is right than to enjoy ourselves. This is a reversal of the "rudiments of the world"; yet the fundamental need of every man and woman. When correctly understood and practised, duty becomes privilege, and finally joy. "His nature and His works invite to make this duty our delight" says the hymn writer of "praise". Paul has previously dealt with the need to put ourselves at the disposal of God (Rom. 6:13), and has just been telling God's wisdom exercised in providing salvation for the hopelessly lost condition of both Jew and Gentile. He now urges (12:1&2) that the whole body must be presented to God. The picture comes from the Old Covenant where the offerings involved the sacrifice of a life — nothing held back. So coming to the New Covenant we offer — not our possessions — but ourselves. Naturally it includes our possessions. But the thought of the apostle relates it to a complete "transformation" due to renewal of the mind. Without that transformation we cannot hope to fulfill the "will of God", which is "your (our) sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:3), our being set apart for God's purposes. We have the contrast in the A.V. "conformed" and "transformed" but there is another contrast in that the "conforming" is rather an outward change, the "transforming" a more radical change. The

same word is used for "transfiguring" — which 'starts' another idea, the reflected glory (2 Cor. 3:18). This is indeed reasonable seeing we 'were bought with a price' (1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Pet. 1:19). This fervent appeal has the work of the church in view. Our service there requires first humility and then persistent effort in whatever kind of work we undertake. Here is required special grace, and the rest of chapter 12 contains a concentration of instruction for christian graces which needs to be constantly reiterated. The renewed mind is under constant pressure from worldly influences.

## Duty to Government

It has been a difficulty in modern society to decide when and where the instruction to obey the powers that he begins and ends. It cannot be absolute for the gospel spread in spite of the powers, and the apostles made it clear from the beginning that "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). In our own country the liberty we have, came through the refusal of faithful men and women to obey "the powers that be". Paul wrote at a time when the despotic Roman Empire ruled the world then known. It was based upon military might, and maintained by the same with a measure of justice. Wherever it went order was maintained and anarchy suppresses. It was replaced by another form of despotism in Europe, a religious one, which has passed through changes, wars, revolutions, etc. up to present forms, allowing measures of liberty varying from state to state and in general producing orderly society. Paul's main concern surely was to warn christians not to be driven to violent rebellion but to obey whenever possible consistently with obedience to God, and if necessary to suffer without resentment as did their Saviour. We hold that a christian cannot take up arms in any circumstances for he must be required to do things forbidden by Jesus, and His spirit. How far we may serve government in other respects must be left to each conscience — so we feel.

## Duty to ONE ANOTHER

The circumstances of the time were such that apart from family loyalty — and not always then — the weak went to the wall. The large majority were slaves of one kind or another, and life was cheap. Chastity was almost unknown except among the Jews. It was an utterly heathen world when the love of God began to be exercised by a tiny minority won

for Christ by the gospel. In the church all sorts and conditions of men and women came close together into the new community, New and holy relationships began in spite of the wide-ranging differences in previous behaviour. There were already in the world together and in contrast the Jew and the Gentile, irreconcilable in belief and behaviour, and their mutual abhorrence was recognised. The Roman authority actually made large concessions to satisfy Jewish consciences, which incidentally was a wonderful acknowledgement of a foreign culture, and even moral superiority. To the Jews were entrusted the oracles of God – hence the difference. They were spread all over the Empire and maintained their religious habits. But now in the church with great difficulty and some strife Jew and Gentile are living together, and the great work of the apostle to the Gentiles, himself a Jew of Jews, is to break down the barriers, and unify the new community. This was the work of the apostles and prophets, teaching the new “morality” everywhere so that the very spirit of Christ Himself animated all the members, enabling them by divine grace to live so heartily at one that it was said “How these Christians love one another”. It was their outstanding characteristic. The Lord certainly knew there would always be the need for such teaching as given in

chapter fourteen although some of the things which were then in view have gone for ever. It would be wrong indeed if the church were not composed of all sorts and conditions, and where this is so all kinds of differences in habits and outlooks crop up. So christians must exercise tolerance towards individual peculiarities. In these days when the world has become so much smaller from the communications standpoint, and the mingling of nationalities, there is a deep need for allowance. There is a call often for “putting yourself in his place” before making harsh decisions. So often we can misunderstand one another. In these verses we have Paul’s appeal for care in relationships. There is a need often for self-denial where what we do in some circumstances can be misconstrued. We sometimes hear people say “I’ll do what I like”, but we should always consider how this affects others, or even closer – would my Saviour approve? Where there is doubt, the apostle advises us, refrain. Where we can be on the safe side, let us choose it – whatever it costs.

There must remain of course matters upon which no compromise can be right. The truth of the gospel and its effect on the life must be upheld (Gal. 1:6-10; 2 Tim. 2:19).

R. B. SCOTT.

THIS is the final test of a Christian: his respect for those who can be no possible service to him.

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Blackburn, New Wellington st.:** The Brethren here at Mill Hill rejoice in the adding of another soul to the Lord’s Church. Roy Lowe was baptised into Christ on April 28th, Roy had been studying with the church here for a few months, and attended many of the meetings; growing to know the truth and the need for salvation he decided to be baptised, and so now has become a Christian as many did in those early days as recorded in the Acts. We pray that our young brother will be a great worker for his Lord and Master.

We held our mission on April 24th and 25th when Bro. J. Diggle from Ilkeston gave some fine messages from the Word of God. We were blessed by support from fellow brethren and visitors during our short mission.

TONY TYSON

**Slamannan District :** A large number of brethren from the various churches in the district and others met for mutual benefit at Motherwell on Saturday 15th May 1976, to discuss ‘Does God care what people wear?’ Bros. Wm. Black, and D. Charmers from Dalmellington opened up the subject followed by an hour’s open discussion.

We thank the Motherwell brethren for their hospitality. God willing, we hope to next meet at Dalmellington on Saturday 11th September 1976 to discuss “Is there, as seen from the scriptures, a defined Christian System? If so, What it is?”

We are sure we will be greatly benefited by this future discussion as we have been in all past discussions. H. DAVIDSON, Dist. Sec.

## OBITUARY

**Longshoot, Scholes, Wigan:** The brethren at Longshoot have again been saddened by the death of one of their long standing members. On Saturday 17th April, Sister Ruth McGarth died suddenly at her home. Although she had not enjoyed the best of health for some time, her death came as a shock to us all, for she had broken bread with us on the previous Lord's Day.

Ruth was a faithful member of the church at Scholes for many years, and she will be missed by all of us. We remember her family at this time, who mourn her passing so soon after the death of her husband John just over a year ago. We are thankful that we need not mourn as those who are without hope, but can find our strength in Jesus, who is able to comfort us in all our sorrows. D. MELLING.

### "TO SEE ANOTHER'S NEED"

MANY times in the New Testament we read of Christ being "Moved with compassion" or "having compassion on the multitude". He shared our humanity — had a fellow-feeling with us. We are told "He pleased not himself" — what a wealth of meaning is enshrined in this statement. Should we all not try harder to copy this example amongst ourselves and our neighbours.

We may hold the right doctrine but how far short we all sometimes fall in our actions — it's so difficult to match doctrine with our works which oft-times are "rather thin on the ground". Perhaps we stand aloof when we should be offering a helping hand, and we

should recall the saying of James "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is SIN".

The Apostle Paul also says "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others". This is surely a lofty call to be unselfish (one of the greatest virtues) which we must constantly strive for, although so difficult to attain.

A little anecdote will perhaps illustrate this message:—

Some years ago in East London a poor woman was shopping and saw some crockery at bargain prices, but only two cups, saucers and plates were allowed per shopper. This lady very much wanted a complete set of four cups, saucers and plates. On mentioning this to an unknown passer-by (a friend of mine) the friend kindly took a place in the queue outside the shop, afterwards bought the "extras" and presented them as a gift to the poor woman. Imagine her surprise and delight on receiving them and with what joy she went home. What a kind action was done!

As a writer said many years ago:— "I shall pass through this world but once; therefore any good thing that I can do, let me do it now and not defer it, for I shall not pass this way again".

Sister PAYNE, Reading.

### HYMN BOOKS

THERE is a final stock of the Church of Christ Hymn Book numbering 200 books in all. Any brother or church wishing to purchase further copies of the hymn book can do so at the price of 25p. each, by contacting Bro. Fred Hardy, 73A Bridge Street, Morley, Yorks Postage and Packing extra. Bro. Hardy is to be commended for all the trouble and inconvenience he has been put to over the years in the matter of the hymn books.

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