

## "The Resurrection"

The resurrection is a beautiful topic. As Bible students we believe and understand that for the resurrection process to start required the redemptive sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. The most important subject of the Bible is the Ransom and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the next and most beautiful topic. It is the sweetest message from Almighty God. In all the world's libraries we will not find information relating to the subject of the resurrection. In universities and private and public libraries throughout the world there is not one book teaching about the resurrection. Why? Because this can only be achieved through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The main verse for our topic is John 11:25 where we read: 'Jesus said unto her "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, though he be dead, yet shall he live." Only a few words but how important that we have them. In this verse we have two important statements - first, that He is the resurrection and the life, and second, that He is the life-giver. He is the life-giver, by His ransom God will give life and that life will be everlasting - not a thousand years, not one million years or even a billion years, but everlasting. We sometimes need to sit quietly alone and meditate very deeply to appreciate that God will give everlasting life for all mankind. There will be no more death.

All the gospels declare that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were witnesses and they say that our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the grave by the power of His Almighty Father. In Acts 1:1-3 we read: 'The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach. Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty

days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: - not only for one day but for forty days. Here we have a clear statement of the resurrection of our dear Lord Jesus from the grave.

Chapter 15 of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians clearly explains the resurrection topic for us. When we examine this subject we learn that the very first being to be resurrected on our globe was our Lord Jesus Christ. We are told in Holy Scripture that God raised



**The Empty Tomb**

Jesus on the third day. Christendom believes that Jesus rose by Himself but that is clearly not what the Scriptures say and it is not true. What the Scriptures say is that God raised Jesus; that He was not alive for three days. He said it was all fulfilled to completion when He died. The lesson of the resurrection of our Lord has a strong foundation. As has been mentioned, Acts 2:32 declares that the apostles were witnesses of this: 'This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.'

Our Lord Jesus Christ is a biblical and historical figure. In the Jewish Torah it states that Jesus was a prophet. The Jewish historian, Josephus, writes about Jesus who was born in Bethlehem, but as a Jew he does not state that Jesus was the Saviour. He couldn't because he had a veil over his eyes, but he tells us that historically Jesus existed at that time. The Roman historian, Seneca, writes about Jesus of Naz-

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areth whom Pilate condemned to death. He also says that Jesus had many followers. There is a similar thought in Matthew 27:54 where it is stated that a Roman centurion gave witness, saying: 'Truly this was the Son of God.' There was darkness for a few hours and there was also an earthquake and the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom. This veil was 10cm thick and it was torn by God's power, not by man, for man could not do this. We recall that the centurion stated that 'This truly was the Son of God'. The priestly class and Pharisees did not offer such words. They gave a very different title to our Lord, a title which is nearly impossible to believe but which is recorded in Matthew 27:63,64. They said Jesus was a deceiver of the people. From the High Priest and leaders of the Jewish nation, our Lord received the title of Deceiver but from the Roman pagan He was given the title of Son of God. What a paradox!

Our Lord's resurrection was so important for us and the entire mankind. The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:13-17 says: 'But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen.' What logic! No-one can dispute that. 'And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.' If Christ is not risen we have no faith, no hope, finished! A dark future for all mankind! Then the Apostle claims that if Jesus Christ had not been raised 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.' Did Apostle Paul speak the truth? While others enjoy the pleasures of the earthly life, our pleasure is to be with the Lord and the brethren. If Christ was not resurrected there is no hope for us and we would be the most miserable people on earth. We recall our Lord's words as to how seriously He looked upon the resurrection and His Ransom price. His words were 'Now is the judgment of this world.' (John 12:31)

In the Russian Orthodox church during Easter celebrations they greet each other with the words: 'Christ is risen' and the response from the receiver of this greeting is: 'Yes, truly He was resurrected!' In the Christian churches at this time the bells ring, but it is far more important that the hearts ring out with thankfulness and love for the Lord and our Heavenly Father. That is good! God says through the prophet, 'Give me thine heart'. God does not look at what man looks at, but at the heart. Sometimes we hear in conversation with other people, 'I believe in God, I believe in Christ, but I do not believe in the resurrection.' Maybe

you have found this when you speak to others. They cannot see the anointing and do not appreciate the Ransom. They are in darkness, and we don't blame them for that, but there will come a time when they see Christ and will believe in the resurrection.

Let us have a look at how strong is God's might and power. We believe that according to the Bible all of the human race will be resurrected in the future. That will be a miracle! But we have to think further to have a real foundation, so let us look at the strength of God's power. Our Earth is a sphere with a circumference of 40,000km at the Equator. It is suspended in Space. The gravitational forces work in an unexplainable way to keep it there. That is what the scientists say but the real question is, Who gave the gravitational forces that operate? Also, we are hanging in the air – not too close to the Sun and not too far. Someone gave this rule, this order, not the blindness of nature. The Sun is 1,300,000 times larger than the Earth. It heats us and gives us light every day without fail. It has shone for so many thousands of years and helps to keep life on our globe. Are not these things a miracle? With these facts in mind, we believe resurrection of 20-30 billion people by God will not be difficult for Him. What do the astronomers say? In a book written for the layman they say our galaxy has 20 billion stars. They do not say how they counted them, but this is what they report using the latest light telescopes. Light travels at 300,000 km per second and the light from our galaxy to the next takes 700 years. They also say that they have counted 20 billion galaxies in the Universe. So for God it would be no problem to recreate 20-30 billion human beings if we look at what He has done in the Cosmos.

In 1 John 1:1 we read: 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life.' This is not some silly theory; this is a fact from the apostle telling us about Jesus Christ, the Logos. When it was necessary to fulfil the redemption of Adam and all of mankind, the Logos would have discussed the subject with God. The Logos agreed to be sent from heaven to Earth. 'Whom will I send?' 'Send me' are the verses in prophecy because we believe and understand that the Lord did not come to Earth without His consent. God made the proposition 'This is my plan' and the Logos would have said 'Tell me please.' 2Cor.8:9 proves this: 'For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.' This is a clear statement. He was very rich in heaven, He created everything, and He became very poor. He was born in a stable, He sat on a donkey that didn't even belong to Him, and He was laid in a new

grave, not having the money to own His own grave. And through Him, we became very rich.

After His resurrection He spoke some very important words, not before His resurrection but after, recorded in Matthew 28:18 - 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.' We have assurance from our Lord that God gave Him power in heaven and earth, not limited power but **all** power. Originally He was the Logos with power from Almighty God. He had a spiritual body. When necessary, God transferred His life to Mary as told in Matthew. And when he had completed the work assigned to Him, God took Him again to heaven. The journey of our Lord was from heaven to Earth and then from Earth to heaven. It is easy for us as human beings to believe that if the Lord God Almighty will accept us, we will receive a spiritual body. Our Lord is our example. He was a spiritual person, after He was born as a human being in Bethlehem as the second Adam, and after that He was again taken to the heaven and into His Father's house.

If Jesus Christ were not raised by the power of the Almighty Jehovah God, what would happen? **Firstly**, the prophecies in Genesis 3:15 and Galatians 3:16 would not be fulfilled. The first text says that the seed of the woman will bruise the head of Satan and the second proves that this seed is Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ were not resurrected, this prophecy from God could not be fulfilled. **Secondly**, the promise given to Abraham in Genesis 22:17,18 for his unfailing faithfulness in offering his own son, Isaac, would not be fulfilled - 'in thy seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed.' **Thirdly**, if Jesus Christ could not be raised the figures in the Tabernacle shadows, the types and prophecies pertaining to the future kingdom of God would hold no power. **Fourthly**, the Holy Spirit could not be sent upon the apostles, therefore all would be back to their previous occupations, like fishing, if the Lord could not be raised. **Fifthly**, by logical deduction, there would be no apostles. There would be no Apostle Paul and therefore no apostle for the Gentiles.

We would not have the four gospels or the Acts of the Apostles, and no letters from the Apostles. There would be no Book of Revelation from Jesus Christ, and consequently no New Testament if the Lord did not rise. There would be no high calling, no Christianity, neither Roman Catholic, Greek or Protestant, Reformers, Baptists, Adventist churches. There would be no good and faithful servant or Bible Students. We would not know the Lord and God's Plan if Jesus were not resurrected. We would be like dry trees, and what value is that? Without His resurrection we would be without faith and without hope. Our Lord's prayer, 'Our Father who art in heaven' would not be known.

But our gracious loving Heavenly Father raised His

Son on the third day and so assured the resurrection for all mankind who believe in the Lord Jesus and acknowledge and accept Him as their Saviour. That is the condition now and it will be the condition in the future. Whoever wishes to receive everlasting life must accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Many educated people who believe in God say they believe John 3:16 - '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.' In the words of Apostle Paul in Acts 24:15, 'And have hope to our God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.' We are thankful to our heavenly Father, that from the Holy Scriptures we receive such a beautiful truth as the resurrection. This truth is not like the air but has a sure foundation of power and authority. Though there will be a difference between the resurrection of the church, the great company, and the whole world, the basic assurance from Scripture is - "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth."

What a sweet moment it will be for each one if the Lord accept us and we receive spiritual life in that "first resurrection" (Rev 20:6) that we may see the glory of our Heavenly Father! (LK.03)

## The Garden Tomb

In my dreams I wandered back to Calvary,  
To the place where Jesus bled and died.  
In His hands my eyes beheld the nail scars;  
And I saw the spear wound in His side.

Chorus

"Once for all I gave my life on Calvary;  
I am now alive forever more,  
An empty tomb will always be a witness;  
I'm not coming this way anymore."

As my thoughts then wandered to the garden,  
To the tomb wherein my Saviour lay.  
There the angel came and rolled the stone  
away;  
He was gone — He is alive today!

As I stooped and looked into the tomb there,  
With the grave clothes lying separately,  
As today I ponder all the reasons,  
Seems I hear my Saviour say to me:

Joel A. Holloway

## “ECOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE KINGDOM”

The Lord's people have a very special privilege knowing about the work of the Kingdom that places us in a position that the world does not have. We understand that the physical earth is promised to “abide forever” (Ecclesiastes 1:4) and that the earth in its entire potential splendour will some day be the glorious footstool of Jehovah. We can see this in two of the promises recorded in Isaiah: 66:1 - “Thus saith the LORD, ‘The heaven is my throne, and *the earth is my footstool*: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?’ ” Isa 60:13 - “...and I will make the place *of my feet* glorious.”

Throughout the world there is a growing respect and concern for the environment and what's happening to the planet, in fact there is recognition that through mankind's unwise management “the earth mourneth and languisheth; Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down, Sharon is like a wilderness.” Isaiah 33:9

Within my own country, if one visits the magnificent forests of Northern California it is possible to get a sense of the glory that Lebanon once had – now reduced to sad languishing. The health of the global environment is in fact, what brings me to Australia, on my third trip since 2000. Currently, there is a 500-page document being prepared under the auspices of the United Nations World Meteorological Organisation that hopes to address the question of what should be done about the buildup of atmospheric carbon dioxide. This is one of those situations where there is perplexity among men. There is even perplexity amongst some who say, “Is it an issue and should we even care?”

Since portions of the Christian community have been especially dismissive of this, let me begin by asserting that of course it is an issue, and one for which there is long-standing concern. Anthropogenic climate change was speculated on by historian Edward Gibbon in the 1790's in “The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.” French engineer and mathematician Joseph Fourier recognized that the earth's atmosphere served as “greenhouse” and brought this term “greenhouse effect” in use in 1820's. American atmospheric scientist Samuel Langley made the first systematic attempt to measure this greenhouse effect in the 1890's, supplying data that at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Swedish chemist Svante Arrhenius used to first calculate the impact of man's coal use on the earth's temperature. What I am trying to illustrate is that we are participating in an investigation that has been of concern to some of our pre-eminent minds for over two centuries. As we move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the societal, political, and economic impacts are a concern for every

world government. Amongst the poorest, Bangladesh with an average elevation of 1.5 metres above sea-level sees its unrelenting misery increase if even the most conservative estimate of a 1-metre sea-level rise during this century come to pass. The third world and developing economies such as China that are not under the threat that hangs over Bangladesh see both immediate threats to shifting watersheds, challenges to an already stressed and marginal agriculture, and a roadblock to their economic path forward. This is perceived as but one more ill the developed world is visiting upon the third world, increasing further the polarisation that characterises our day.

Australia is not indifferent to these developments, and as the new millennium began in February 2000, one can find record of “a public inquiry into the implementation of ecologically sustainable development by Commonwealth departments and agencies.” At the same time, Australia and the domineering “G8” economic “club” (America, Japan, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Canada and Russia) recognise that the climate issue fundamentally challenges their very way of life. By any metric, this is a way of life that is deeply enmeshed with the release of carbon dioxide. Already, all these problems are feeding into the perplexity of nations that characterises this great Time of Trouble.

As the Lord's people, we have a privileged vantage that permits us to see the Lord's wisdom in what's happening. By faith, we are among that company upon the “sea of glass mingled with fire” (Revelation 15:2). In seeming defiance of the Creator's own laws; our feet stand supported by the very waters of the stormy seas, as did our Master's (John 6:19-20). Like him, our message to the humble of heart must be “Be not afraid.” While not in any way advocating staying the course with a “Business-as-usual” approach to “sustainable development,” let us recognise that some of the problems that are, or will, come as a consequence of the environmental response to the buildup of greenhouse gases and climate change, will actually be a blessing in terms of how the Kingdom is going to be ministered.

### What does this mean?

What if the resurrection took place this afternoon, in other words, with world conditions just as they are right now? Naturally, there would be an incomparably better administration. We might be tempted to think, “So that takes care of all these problems for the billions that are coming back from the grave,” and of course that is true. It is going to be a perfect administration, the best that the Universe has ever seen. Surely, that's

why it has taken so long to find the 'jewels' here on the earth, and for our Heavenly Father to oversee their much needed polishing.

But let us take our considerations one step further. What if the resurrection took place right now and people came back from the grave with the skills with which they went into the grave? Let us recall that in all things relating to the resurrection, "Where the tree falleth, there shall it lie." (Ecclesiastes 11:3) What are the skills the majority of mankind's generations know?

Consider this, on the eve of the industrial revolution in the 1820's, as the old economic order was coming to a close, agrarian China accounted for nearly one-third of the world's economic productivity [David Hale, "China Takes Off," *Foreign Affairs*, November 2003, p.37] Economic historian Fernand Braudel chronicles how England as the world leader in the industrial revolution, found industry overtaking agriculture by 1820. Shortly thereafter town-dwellers outnumbered the farmers. For the U.S. and Germany, economic domination of industrialisation at the expense of agriculture occurred in the late 1860's, while France followed nearly twenty years later in the mid-1880's [Braudel, F., Civilization & Capitalism, Vol. 3, Harper Rowe (1984) p.306].

Currently, less than 3% of the developed world's population engages in an agriculture production that supplies not only the recommended dietary needs, but a nearly 50% surfeit some of which goes into export and some into well-padded waistlines [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, The Future of Food, Paris (1998) p.27]. Looking at the millennium from David to Christ (Matthew 1:17-18) we find support for a reasonable approximation of 3 generations per century. Hence, for England we are looking at only five generations in which farming skills have not played the dominant role in society.

The statistics cited illustrate that in the resurrection those having skills in farming will dominate the generations returning from the grave. Under the present circumstances, as one resurrected you would be coming back to society that has virtually no specific use for farming skills. How would you feel coming back under those circumstances? Since you are far less than perfect, you would likely feel as if you were a second-class citizen with marginal skills, and no skills whatever with respect to present-day technology. Until the gradual process of education would teach a new set of skills, you would feel lost and it would be discouraging.

But what if you came back at a time where your skills as a farmer were exactly what the world needs?

Let us consider what might be learned from some recent events right here in Australia. The long-term orbital cycles of the earth oscillate Australia between being a rain-forest dominated continent and its current desert environment with the rain forests in their refuge zones in Queensland. I would like to think that kingdom conditions will move Australia back towards being rain forest. However, the trend towards desert conditions is being exacerbated by current conditions. The massive forest fires two years ago in the Blue Mountains outside of Sydney; and the threat to Canberra from the forest fires last year may well be a response to climate stress. These all follow a well-predicted chain of events; that may be over-simplified to saying climate stress leads to a weakened forest that sets up conditions for forest fires.

This last summer in the United States this same pattern operated with devastating effect around San Diego, one of the premier cities in the U.S. The further along we go with "Business-as-usual" the worse things become. It is already recognised that higher carbon dioxide levels will promote woody tissue growth, but since the cycling of other critical nutrients, phosphorus, nitrogen, and sulfur will not increase, decay will slow down setting up conditions for more fires. Recognising this, there are even suggestions from a leading researcher that these new dynamics, "may even diminish long-term carbon storage" thus amplifying the problem [Korner, C., *Science*, 23 May 2003, p.1242].

#### **Did the Lord forewarn us of this?**

In type, "trees" often picture the established world leaders of high ethical principle and purpose. Nebuchadnezzar was one such "tree" (Daniel 4:10) Perhaps we may do well to take the following texts previously considered as symbolic; and consider them as having both a symbolic and literal application. Perhaps, "trees" should also picture – trees: "The rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them." Isaiah 10:19 "The earth mourneth and languisheth; Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down, Sharon is like a wilderness." Isaiah 33:9

#### **There is of course a promise of restoration:**

"Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be counted for a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." Isaiah 32:15

"Is it not a very little while and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field and the fruitful field esteemed as a forest?" Isaiah 29:17

Well, it is clear that we have brought some of the ecological troubles that will close out this age upon ourselves. Man's original job description called for him to "keep" the garden (Genesis 2:15). Now it appears as if his job will be to straighten up the mess he has made. If children mess up their bedroom, a good parent doesn't go and straighten it all up for them while they are

out to school. A good parent makes them go in and take care of it themselves.

We as the Lord's people have a special privilege because we understand the Scriptural basis for the times of restitution and ecology. As the resurrection takes place people coming up from the grave will have the job skills and life experience that are just what the earth will need. Isn't that just like the Lord?

There should be more than enough replanting to keep everyone productively employed as they make progress up the highway of holiness, and this is certainly going to be the most massive public education and public works program ever! In the end, when all is reconciled in Christ, we will find Jehovah's footstool both glorious for its moral perfection *and* of surpassing beauty.

(From a discourse given by Bro Richard Doctor in Melbourne, Australia.)

## “GOD’S PEACE ”

How can any individual or group find true, inner peace. How can any nation find lasting peace with its neighbour in our world today? In the political sphere, President George Bush speaks at times of his “Road Map for Peace” in the Middle East, but though we can admire those who seek to bring peace about, we are only too aware that there can be no lasting peace on earth while mankind remains estranged from its Creator. For when disobedience and sin entered, the accord was broken and without some form of reconciliation it must and will remain so, leaving no prospect for any real peace.

We are blessed indeed that as Christians we do have a Road Map for Peace, a plan of ages, in our Bible, a program that stretches out over a long period, by our human calculations. Ours is assured of success, because it is backed by the sure word of God and by the sacrifice of our dear Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ. Meantime, there have been some in every age who have come to know something of real inner peace. In the Old Testament, the psalmist and the prophet tell us – Psalm 119:165 “Great peace have they who love Thy law and nothing shall offend them” Isaiah 26:3 “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee”

The Lord's people of this gospel age rightly claim these assurances, but the writers were no doubt speaking from personal experience and in each case we can see the heart and mind turned toward Jehovah, whose will and law was their delight. Israel as a nation enjoyed periods of national peace while they sought to keep His law, but all too often they lapsed back into sin and at times idolatry. But to those whose hearts were turned to Him, God could grant His peace. Since faith and obedience are so closely linked with peace, no doubt the faithful ones of Hebrews 11 would have come to know something of this peace, even in the severe trials they endured.

### Peace With God

Their experiences were perhaps a foretaste of the full provision which our loving Heavenly Father had in mind for the ultimate establishment of peace for all

mankind. We read about this in 2 Corinthians 5 and we note again that it was and is to be a stage by stage process. We love to hear of the beautiful and most important doctrines of Ransom, Resurrection and Restitution, to which we should probably add another ‘R’ – Reconciliation. In the chapter quoted, Paul is speaking of his own ministry and that of his fellow workers; by implication this includes all the Lord's people down the gospel age, to whom has been given the ‘word of reconciliation’.

Paul speaks of his commission as a “ministry of reconciliation”, of calling his hearers back to be reconciled, to be at peace with God and outlines how this is now possible – “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.” (2 Cor 5:17-20)

This is surely one of the most profound and also reassuring passages of scripture in our Bible. First, we note that reconciliation was and is God's initiative, in love He planned it all, as John tells us in other words. Second we see that Jesus Christ is the basis of reconciliation through His blood shed as a Ransom for all. (Col 1:20, 1 Tim 2:6,7). Third it is IN HIM, and only in Him, that the individual believer can come to know His peace. Our Lord's own words speak to us here – “These things I have spoken unto you, that IN ME ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33) Only in Him is there real peace; in Eph 2:14, Paul says that “He (that is, Christ) IS our peace.”

Reconciliation is then by faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also

we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Rom 5:1) For the Christian, the estrangement is done away with and a new life pleasing to God can begin. Paul goes on to list the experiences and the development which should follow in his or her new life - (1) Peace with God and (2) Access by faith into His presence by “a new and living way which He (Jesus) hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.” (Heb 10:20)

The next step is that of consecration to the will and service of God and the sealing of the Holy Spirit in the heart and life of each believer. “After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of Promise, which is the earnest (pledge or guarantee) of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.” (Eph 1:13-14) Here we see that God not only marks us out as His own but underwrites the promise He has given us in Christ. Part of this promise is that of His peace and Paul several times refers to our Heavenly Father as the God of peace, but perhaps the best known and most precious is the promise of Phil 4:6,7 – “Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

### **Inner Peace**

What a perfect recipe is here for inner peace, if only we can take it to our own hearts. We live in a stressful world, as Christians we are not immune from the difficulties and trials which others experience, but we have a sure basis for faith and reliance in Him “who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling” through His dear Son, our Saviour, and has given us assurance that He will never leave us or forsake us. As with the Old Testament ones earlier considered, communication and heart harmony are involved. Do we always take advantage of the rich privilege we have of access by our Saviour into the presence of our Father in heaven? Do we daily seek to be more and more “transformed by the renewing of (our) mind that (we) may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Rom 12:2) In our Saviour, we have a faithful and sympathetic High Priest who has passed into the heavens, so “let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb 4:14-16)

Our Saviour Himself promised His peace, as we read in John 14:27. His own life and ministry were indeed an illustration of perfect trust and rest in His Father. We read in Mark 4 how that in the midst of the storm our Saviour slept. The concerned disciples roused Him saying “Carest Thou not that we perish? “And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea,

Peace be still. And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.” (Mk 4:39) Here we see not only His own complete trust but His power to bring peace. In our life’s trials He still can whisper ‘Peace be still’ to the storm tossed heart, as He promised. “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Nor was this to be any transitory thing, but rather His assurance was “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (or rather ‘age’).”

One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is peace and the peace which comes with increasing faith and trust should be evident in our lives. It is indeed to be a controlling factor in our lives, as we read in Paul’s instructions to the brethren in Colosse – “Above all these things (mercy, kindness, forgiving, etc) put on love, which is the bond of perfectness, and let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which you are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.” (Col 3:14-16) Surely, the more we come to know and love that “word of Christ”, the more the peace of God given to us in Christ will be manifest in our lives and in all our relationships with others.

### **The Practice of Peace**

The peace of God is not just for our own blessing or private gain, but is to be the basis of all our dealings with others, especially the Lord’s people. Within the Church, we are to “endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace” (Eph 4:3), while to those around us in the world we are to “follow peace with all, and holiness”. (Heb 12:14) Furthermore, we are instructed to seek peace and pursue it.” (1 Pet 3:11) The pursuit of peace may often not be easy but it is to be striven for. Paul echoes Peter’s sentiments in Rom 14:19 – “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith we may edify another.” Our Lord’s own words need also to be remembered – “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” (Matt 5:9) In His words, there is not only a challenge but a rich promise.

This practice of peace will require first of all that our daily lives be such as radiate peace to those we meet, for we are followers of the Prince of Peace. Further it will require the elimination of self-will, personal ambition apart from the service of Christ and it may require personal sacrifice. At times, it may call for silence, and we all need the divine wisdom that comes from above in such circumstances. One particular hazard is the tongue, about which James warns us. At times, how our prayer might be as one of the hymns says – “Set Thou a seal upon my lips, just for today.” (and every day!) What joy it is to meet those dear saints of God whom we have known and still do whose presence ra-

diates peace. May we all grow more like them year by year.

How few of all earth's peoples as yet however have any experience or practice of this peace of God that passes all understanding? Some find a measure of peace in earthly activities or philosophies but for real peace there is need not only for a present but a future fulfilment. As Paul tells us - "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." (1 Tim 4:8) The Christmas season reminds us again each year us of the coming into our world of Him who is named the Prince of Peace, of whose government there is to be no end. As yet we do not see that new order established, though events around us suggest that it is near. So we continue to pray Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. This alone can bring lasting peace.

Psalms 72 is a prayer of David for his son, Solomon, but it is clearly prophetic of our Lord, the "greater than Solomon". While Solomon enjoyed local glory in his day, the influence of the greater one than he is to be universal and eternal. Verse 7 reads - "In his days shall the righteous flourish and abundance of peace as long as the moon endureth." Only then will come to pass that "desire of all nations" spoken of by the prophet Haggai - "For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Yet once, it

is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory." (Ch 2:6,7) Abundance of peace - what a prospect!

So as Israel were told to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, so the Lord's people continue to pray for the coming of that kingdom which shall establish lasting peace for all mankind, for that time when God's will shall be done not only, as now, in heaven and in the hearts of His people, but in earth in every land and people and when all will come to know God from the least to the greatest. Meantime, we are privileged to know something here and now of the breadth and length and depth and height of God's love as exhibited in the gift of His dear Son and of His peace which passes all understanding to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Let us each daily resolve to diligently and in full faith follow our Road Map for Inner Peace as set out by the apostle, and already quoted but worth repeating - "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

## **"BE NOT AFRAID FOR I AM WITH YOU"**

The quotation 'Be not afraid for I am with you' comes from Genesis 26:24. The setting is in the land of the Philistines. Isaac had been instructed by God to move there as the land in which he lived was in famine. While there, he had experienced fear for his life as we are told in Genesis 26:7. When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, "She is my sister" for he was afraid to say "my wife" thinking that the men of the place might kill him on account of Rebekah because she was beautiful. Isaac prospered in the land and became the envy of the Philistines to the point where they filled in his father's well and eventually their king asked him to leave. We turn to Genesis 26:14-16: <sup>14</sup>For he had possessions of flocks and herds and a great household so the Philistines envied him. <sup>15</sup>Now all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham, his father, the Philistines stopped up by filling them with earth. <sup>16</sup>Then Abimelech said to Isaac, Go away from us, for you are too powerful for us.'

Isaac also encountered conflict with Gerar herdsmen as he dug wells in the valley, with the herdsmen claiming the water as theirs. It was not until he moved from their area that he found water that was not dis-

puted. Isaac must have been wondering about the promise from God, which we read in Genesis 26:3,4: <sup>3</sup>Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father, Abraham, <sup>4</sup>And I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and give your descendants all these lands, and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.' However, Isaac was reassured by God as we read in Genesis 26:24: 'And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, I am the God of your father, Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for the sake of my servant, Abraham.'

As followers of Christ we, too, sometimes feel afraid or unsure of ourselves in our daily walk. Our Lord tells us in Luke 12:32: 'Do not be afraid, little flock, for your father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.' Sometimes we feel that we have been deserted and that our Heavenly Father is not answering our prayers. Our Lord gives us the following assurance in Matthew 10:29-31: <sup>29</sup>Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? and yet not one of them will fall to the ground



apart from your father. <sup>30</sup>But the very hairs of your head are numbered. <sup>31</sup>Therefore do not fear, you are of more value than many sparrows.'

### **Elijah Provided For By God**

Let us return to the Old Testament and to the story of Elijah, which we find in the book of Kings. This gives us an insight into the attitude we have to have if we are to hear the answer that our Heavenly Father has for us. Elijah was a faithful servant of God in the days of the kings of Israel and Judah. Many of the kings did evil in the sight of the Lord, instituting the worship of Baal and causing the people to sin grievously. At the Lord's direction, Elijah informed the king, Ahab, that there was to be a drought in the land because of their attitude to God. Elijah was instructed to hide by the brook of Cherith and the Lord looked after him by having the ravens to feed him there. We find the story in 1 Kings 17:2-6: <sup>2</sup>'And the word of the Lord came to him saying, <sup>3</sup>Go away from here and turn eastwards and hide yourself by the brook Cherith which is east of the Jordan, <sup>4</sup>And it shall be that ye shall drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there. <sup>5</sup>So he went and did according to the Lord, for he went and lived by the brook Cherith which is east of Jordan <sup>6</sup>And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening; and he would drink from the brook..' As the famine took hold, the situation worsened and the brook that Elijah relied on for his water eventually dried up.

The Lord instructed Elijah to contact a certain widow and the prophet and the family were miraculously kept alive by the barrel of meal and cruse of oil which did not need replenishing by human hand. Reading from 1 Kings 17:10-14, <sup>10</sup>'So he arose and went to Sera-path, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks, and he called to her and said, Please give me a little water and a jar that I may drink. <sup>11</sup>As she was going to get it, he called to her and said, Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand. <sup>12</sup>But she said, As the Lord your God liveth, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in a bowl and a little oil in the jar, and, behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son that we may eat it and die. <sup>13</sup>Then Elijah said to her, Do not fear. Go, do as you have said, but make me a little breadcake from it first and bring it to me, and afterwards you may make one for yourself and for your son. <sup>14</sup>For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, the bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain on the face of the earth.'

During this period the son of the widow died and

Elijah, with God's power, was able to raise him from the dead. We read in 1 Kings 17:17-24: <sup>17</sup>'Now it came about after these things that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became sick and his sickness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. <sup>18</sup>So she said to Elijah, What do I have to do with you, O man of God? You've come to me to bring my iniquity to remembrance and to put my son to death. <sup>19</sup>And he said to her, Give me your son. Then he took him from her bosom and carried him into the upper room where he was living and laid him on his own bed. <sup>20</sup>He called to the Lord, saying, O Lord my God, hast thou also brought calamity to the widow with whom I am staying by causing her son to die? <sup>21</sup>Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and called to the Lord and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's life return to him. <sup>22</sup>The Lord heard the voice of Elijah and the life of the child returned to him and he revived. <sup>23</sup>And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house and gave him to his mother and said, See, your son is alive. <sup>24</sup>Then the woman said to Elijah, Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is true.'

Three years passed without rain and the whole country was in sore straits. Elijah made a sign to make the people realise who was the true god, worthy of their admiration and service. He called the prophets of Baal to arrange a sacrifice to their god but not kindle the fire. He himself prepared a sacrifice to Jehovah. Prophets of Baal called on their god all day to send fire to consume the sacrifice, but received no answer. Eventually Elijah, at the time when the evening sacrifice should have been presented, besought the Lord to vindicate His name. We read in 1 Kings 18:37-39: <sup>37</sup>'Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people might know that thou art Lord God, and that thou hast turned their hearts back again. <sup>38</sup>Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burning offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. <sup>39</sup>And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God.'

### **Elijah Encouraged By God**

Surely, these events should have shown Elijah the love, power and mercy of his God, and he should have been greatly strengthened by all these experiences. Elijah's need for food and water had been miraculously provided by a loving God. He had seen the mercy of God in the raising of the widow's son, and he had seen the awesome power of God demonstrated by the fire. However, when the wicked Queen Jezebel threatened his life, he fled. Although Elijah fled, God still continued to provide for his temporal needs and

eventually he lodged in a cave on Horeb, the Mount of God ( Exodus 3:3). Let us turn to 1 Kings 19:9-13: <sup>9</sup>‘And he came there to a cave and lodged there, and behold the word of God came unto him, and He said to him, What are you doing here, Elijah? <sup>10</sup>And he said, I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts, for the sons of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, torn down thy altars and killed the prophets with the sword, and I alone am left; and they seek my life to take it away. <sup>11</sup>So He said, Go forth and stand on the mount before the Lord and, behold, the Lord was passing by. A great and strong wind was rending the mountain and breaking into pieces rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup>And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing’ (or a still small voice, as the KJV puts it) <sup>13</sup>And it came about when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave, and, behold, a voice came to him and said, What are you doing here, Elijah?’

Elijah wanted big things to happen and for God’s words to thunder out to him. It was only when he realised that God worked in quiet ways as well that he hid his face in his mantle. He realised that he had no righteousness of his own to give him a standing before the Lord. The Lord chose this way to rebuke Elijah for his lack of faith, even though he had previously stood valiantly on the Lord’s side. Then He gave Elijah further encouragement by revealing that, unknown to Elijah, there were 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed their knee to Baal and He gave Elijah a further commission. Moffat translates the still small voice as the breath of a light whisper. This reminds us of the creation of Adam and the fact that the Lord breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and he became a living soul.

#### **“The Breath of a Light Whisper”**

The breath of a light whisper also reminds us of our own begetting to a new nature and the working of God’s Holy Spirit in each Christian. ‘The anointing which you have received of Him abideth in you.’ It is not easy for us to accept this promise in its entirety with the many problems that we come across, but Hebrews 10:23 reads: ‘Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for He is faithful who has promised).’ He will guide us into all truth. And we read in Titus 3:5: ‘Not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to His mercy He has saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.’ In this breath of a light whisper Elijah at once recognised the presence of the Lord, and in deep humility he wrapped his face in his mantle before putting himself into a position to hear what the Lord had to say to him at that time. He

learned from this example that his faith need not have wavered and that although the forces of evil were seemingly very great, the Lord was in complete control of the situation. Elijah immediately set out to fulfil the further commission which the Lord gave to him, assured that the presence of God would continually be with him. The mantle in which he wrapped his face became an instrument of power, and after his work was done he used it under the Lord’s hand to smite the rivers of Jordan that he and Elisha might pass over dry shod.

We read in Isaiah 61:10: ‘I will rejoice greatly in the Lord. My soul will exult in my God, for He hath clothed me with garments of salvation; He has wrapped me in a robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decks himself with garlands and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.’ We, as Christians, have a mantle, a robe of righteousness. This is provided through Christ’s righteousness, covering our imperfections and allowing us to be dealt with by our Heavenly Father. We also do well to wrap our face in our mantle, to listen to the Lord in deep humility, so that we may know of His plans for us. At times, like Elijah, we become disheartened, disappointed and dejected, imagining that we are forsaken, that we alone have tried to uphold the ways of righteousness, the forces of evil have been too much for us and we feel the pangs of defeat. Like the Psalmist in Psalm 42:11, we ask, Why are we in despair, O my soul, why have you become disturbed within me. We should also be able to answer, Hope in God for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God. Maybe the Lord will kindly rebuke us for our lack of faith, but we may be sure that this will always be done in love. And we may say with the psalmist, ‘My soul thirsts for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God?’ (Psalm 42:2) We find the answer in verse 8 of this same Psalm – ‘The Lord will command His kindness in the daytime and His song will be with me in the night, a prayer to the God of my life.’

We sometimes feel dismayed at our small numbers and feel so weak in ourselves that there is nothing we can achieve, but only the Lord knows the actual number of His people at any given time. He is well able to give us the encouragement we need to perform whatever service He requires of us. Our difficulties often stem from a lack of understanding of the way the Lord operates. He does not send storms, earthquakes or fire to persuade us of His power, but the breath of a light whisper to assure us of His tender love for us. ‘Hereby do we know we are in Him and He is in us because He hath given us of His spirit’ (1 John 4:13). What a wonderful gift this is, His free gift, bringing with it all that we need for our enlightenment, for our spiritual progress, help and support, strength in times of weakness, upholding power when we would fall, protection from

clamouring voices which would distract us from our chosen pathway. His spirit gives encouragement when we feel so alone, comfort and cheer when we are cast down by our faults and failures. Like Elijah when he cast himself down under the juniper tree, we feel inclined to say, Lord, it is enough, I can go no further. I have failed utterly, I cannot go on. It is then that we may hear the breath of a light whisper, the voice of the Holy Spirit bringing us refreshment and strength, and food for the journey until, as Elijah did, we go on in strength from that food to the mountain of God.

Our Lord, while in the Garden of Gethsemane just before His trial and crucifixion, felt that the cross was becoming too much to bear. In Mark 14:35 we read: 'And He went forward a little and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it be possible the hour might pass from Him', yet His faith in His Heavenly Father was strong. From verse 36 we read: 'He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee. Take away this cup from Me, nevertheless, not what I will but what Thou wilt.' God had not forsaken Him, as we read in Luke 22:43: 'And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.' All this and much more is ours in the gift of the Holy Spirit until we are able to rejoice continually in the unspeakable blessings we receive, saying morning, noon and night, Praise be to Thee for Thine unspeakable gift.

### Lessons from Elijah's Life

Elijah was one of the ancient worthies, one with whom the God of Israel dwelt in a very special manner. He lived in a time of apostasy when the nation as a whole had departed from the worship of the true God and followed after those who worshiped idols. Elijah showed before the people and kings the degree of holiness which the Lord required from those who were to serve Him acceptably. It was this very special way in which the Lord used him and taught him. He will be a wonderful and shining example of the gracious power of God in the age to come. Centuries later when the Messiah came, Elijah was one of the two who were seen to commune with Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration. The disciples were in no doubt as to who appeared before them, and Peter in wonderment and adoration said, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, one for Moses and one for Elias.' (Matt.17:4) Years later Peter wrote: <sup>16</sup>'We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. <sup>17</sup>For He received from God the Father honour and glory when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. <sup>18</sup>And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with Him in the holy mount.' (2 Peter 1:16-18)

Let us not rest in that which we have already accomplished, nor look for things of great importance to do for the Lord. Be careful that ambition does not overtake us. All through our Christian walk we must be little in our own eyes, giving glory to God for every onward step. Maybe we will be overtaken in a fault and feel obliged to flee the wrath of those who know not the way of the Lord. Perhaps we have some pet theory of our own which prevents us from properly serving amongst the brethren. Perhaps for a time we lose faith, become afraid of the powers of evil. Satan marks our weak spots and does his best to discourage and hinder us. Maybe the Lord will give us a special commission, some service for the glory of His name after a period of disappointment and despair but, as in Elijah's case, the Lord gives such a commission only when our face is wrapped in our mantle, only when we realise that of ourselves we are nothing, that all that we have and all that we are able to do is only by His grace, with the robe of Christ's righteousness so graciously provided for us. Whenever we trust in our own strength we are useless to the Lord, but when we are in an attitude of deep humility, as was Elijah, the Lord may well use us to perform some service for Him or His people. It behoves us to keep our heart with all diligence, remembering that we have nothing which we did not receive from the Lord, and that every moment of every day we are dependent on Him for His covering robe.

The story of Elijah was written for our admonition and we may draw many lessons from his life, but let us take this one to heart. Maybe in our own experiences we will recognise the breath of a light whisper, the quiet presence of the Lord. Maybe we will hear His kindly rebuke, the words of His encouragement, the words of His commission, as did Elijah. Happy are we if we do as Elijah did – **wrap thy face in thy mantle**. We must also remember that the promise made to Isaac also applies to us, the promise from our Heavenly Father, **Do not be afraid, for I am with you.** (RC:03)

**"My presence shall go with thee  
and I will give thee rest"**

**Ex. 33:14**

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# THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT-GENTLENESS

It is of vital importance that the true Christian, having crucified the flesh and its deeds, develop the fruits of the Spirit (Gal.5:22). Every one who is seeking to be “*holy and without blame before Him*” (Eph. 1:4) must bear the fruits of the Spirit, the fruitage being a manifestation of God’s power working inwardly in them. So it was that the Apostle Paul was encouraging the church in Galatia many centuries ago, and his message is just as pertinent to us in these end times.

This article is devoted to the fruit of gentleness.

In secular circles *gentleness* is often regarded merely as an absence of force, and as “love in society”. Both of these attributes are incumbent on the Christian. Our Lord’s ministry at His first advent was characterised by gentleness towards the common people, and His gentle and kind spirit should be evident today in His footstep followers: “*Let your gentleness (KJV “moderation”) be evident to all*”. (Phil. 4:5 NIV). How true it is that “*a gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger*” (Proverbs 15:1 NIV). Consequently it is a challenge for us to show consideration, mercy and moderation to the extent that our gentleness is evident to all, remembering that it will not be until the “*day of visitation*” that all who “*behold our good works will glorify God*”. (1 Peter 2:12)

The definition of *gentleness* given in Strong’s Concordance (#5544 – *chrestotes* - “*usefulness i.e. moral excellence (in character or demeanour)*”) indicates that there are several aspects of gentleness, and that gentleness does not mean just the absence of force or will.

For something to be *useful* it must contribute to the desired outcome; that is, it must be constructive and not destructive. This objective must always be in the Christian’s mind and must dictate our every action, including our ministry to, and teaching of, others.

Jesus’ teaching was always gentle; to His disciples He said that He had many things to say unto them, but they could not bear them yet. (John 16:12) His disciples were not yet ready to cope with some of the deeper aspects of God’s plan, and to burden them with those truths at that stage of their development would have done more harm than good. Jesus restricted His teaching to those truths that were useful (constructive) to them at that time; His teaching was gentle.

Likewise the Apostle Paul urged those “*that were strong to bear the infirmities of the weak*”, to the extent that they were not to “*destroy them with their*

*meat*” (Romans 15:1; 14:15, 19–20). To the Thessalonians Paul wrote that the apostles had been “*gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children*” (1 Thess. 2:7), and he instructed Timothy that “*the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all, apt to teach, patient*” (2 Tim. 2:24).

These exhortations and admonitions apply to us today also. We are to be gentle with each other, even to the extent of refraining at times from a long and deep exposition of some truths if such an exposition would not be in the best interests of those present. While the truths might be very precious to us, we are to consider the welfare of others, and to ask ourselves whether what we are about to say will be useful (i.e. gentle) to those present. As “*God’s chosen people*” we are to “*clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience*”. (Colossians 3:12 NIV)

The usefulness aspect of the fruit of *gentleness* is employed widely in the Scriptures, also being translated as *goodness* and *kindness*. In Romans 2:4 the Apostle Paul says that it was the *goodness* of God that led us to repentance, and in Romans 11:22 the very calling of the Gentiles is ascribed to God’s gentleness (or goodness): “*Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness....*”

In Titus 3:3-5 God’s gentleness is translated *kindness*: “*For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish ... but after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared ...according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration ...*” Since our calling and salvation are due to God’s gentleness (goodness, kindness), our gentleness to the world and to our brethren should know no bounds.

## THE EVERLASTING ARMS

I’ve a safe and sacred refuge  
In the midst of all life’s care,  
I’ve a helper, tried and precious  
Who will all my sorrow share.  
I’ve a comforter who dries my tears  
And soothes my deepest grief;  
Who stills my fears and gives to me  
A blessed, sweet relief.  
I know no fear or trouble  
In the whirl of life’s alarms,  
No storm can shake my refuge  
In the Everlasting Arms

(LKP)