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## “PEACE ON EARTH, GOODWILL TOWARDS MEN”

**The Christmas message of peace on earth and goodwill toward men will one day be universally and completely fulfilled. So why is it that people everywhere experience a lack of contentment and a wish for something more satisfying? This discontent some acknowledge and some do not.**

Apart from Adam when first created, and Jesus Christ who came in His perfect humanity, there has not been one member of the human family born into contentment – indeed, all have been born in sin and shaped in iniquity. From our earliest years when our minds began to reason, we became aware that we lacked something essential to our complete wellbeing. The older we grew, the more conscious we became of that fact, though we all have been slow to acknowledge it, and some still do not.

The false theory of evolution found ready entry with its claim that “of course one day we will grow out of all uncertainty and become entirely self-sufficient for all our needs”. However, in reality, no-one has ever reached or attained to such character; there is no increasing light, rather the grave has been ever before us.

It was only by particular circumstances that any of us were lead to see eventually that “the light of the world is Jesus”, and all who saw that began to experience what is termed salvation. What we lacked, He began to supply and a remarkable change of character began to develop and continue in our lives. Little by little, day by day, year by year, we learnt what constitutes real life, and instead of bemoaning our lot, we began to count our blessings.

Also we began to understand that Christians are a “peculiar” people. It has been well put by one writer – “your motives and aspirations can only be understood by those who are striving to attain the same spiritual level. Do not foolishly expect everyone to see the same as you do.....remember it is like a foreign language to them”. Only those who receive the Holy Spirit of God can share what Christians come to understand – the revelation of God’s plans and purposes relevant both to the present and the future.

Further, all who do learn these things have a responsibility to declare them. Isaiah wrote – “in quietness and

confidence shall be your strength”. We all need to remember this; a true Christian should be always calm, never agitated. The world, especially today, prompts us to learn speed, everything must be done as quickly as possible, but the Christian is to learn calm. Most people like to observe a calm person, one who does not get “all stirred up” when things go wrong.

The Kingdom of God, when things on earth will be as fully controlled as in heaven, is still future, and we look forward to it. But it is also true that the kingdom of God can be within us. When it is, others become apprised of it. Example is a powerful sermon, someone has said – “I would rather see one than read one!” To quote the words of a man called Hess – “I want my life to shine for Jesus, so that everywhere I go, the watching world will see and learn that He loves them, and His saving grace to know”.

When the time comes that the Christmas message is truly operating, the whole world will know that God loves them, everyone!” That will be the time when what is referred to as “the groaning creation”, under the present rule of Satan, will come under the rulership of Christ and when every knee will gladly bow to Him and every tongue will confess that He is Lord of that Kingdom, where nothing will ever hurt or destroy anymore. (W A Smith)

*“And the angel said unto them, Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you, Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men”. (Luke 2:10-14)*

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## JOSEPH IN EGYPT

Every side of Joseph's character as presented to us in the Genesis account is beautiful. Wherever we see him, he conducts himself most nobly. Through all the various life experiences, he kept his love for his father at all times. Through faith in the Most High and perseverance in trials, he moulded a lovely character and became a type of the Saviour himself.

Joseph provides a valuable lesson for us, firstly on **pride**. We read in Genesis 39:21 that 'the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and gave him favour.' This fact is expressed several times in the Scriptures; even under adverse conditions he was favoured in so many ways. Joseph could have quite easily permitted these experiences to develop a great deal of personal pride. Perhaps it was his personal brilliance that caused him to rise to eminence in Potifar's house. He could have thought it was his superior abilities and intellect that gave him the authority in prison and enabled him to interpret dreams. Joseph could have quite easily reasoned this way, after all it would be quite human to do so, but he reflected the attitude of Jesus whom he pre-figured. We remember our Lord Jesus gave all the credit to God, saying in John 5:30 'I can of myself do nothing.' Had Joseph adopted another attitude, he would not have been exalted but would have fallen instead. We read in Proverbs 16:18: 'Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.' So let us ascribe to the Lord every good thing we receive, remembering well James 1:17: 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.' This is illustrated in Psalm 75:6, 7: 'For promotion cometh neither from the east nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one and setteth up another.'

Next we have a lesson of **patient endurance**. Sometimes when we are seeking to serve the Lord and the brethren to the very best of our abilities, sudden trouble may arise on the horizon and adversities may come upon us. The powers of darkness seem to triumph, the Lord seems to have abandoned us. These were Joseph's experiences. Jesus also had such an experience when he cried as recalled in Matthew 27:46: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Anyone can have such experiences, and when this happens let us react just like Joseph did – doing the very best that we can from day to day, remembering that Joseph did his very best to effect his own deliverance from prison by asking the butler to mention him to the pharaoh when he interpreted his dream. It is interesting to note that Joseph did not try to explain the misdeeds of those who were responsible for his experiences. So we take

a lesson from this and refrain from indulging in evil small talk against those who may be responsible for some of our unhappy experiences.

If God permits things to happen over which we have no control, then we are to accept them with good grace and not indulge in running others down for their misdeeds. There are times when it is proper and necessary to explain certain facts, but we as Christians are to refrain from all unnecessary evil accounts, even in our own defence. This is by no means an easy assignment to take on, but Joseph performed it well and we are to do likewise. We recall that the Lord saw fit to keep Joseph in prison for another two years after he interpreted the dreams as the butler forgot about Joseph and said nothing of him to Pharaoh. Not a word of complaint is recorded on the part of Joseph having to wait another two years in prison. What a man of faith! What a man of righteousness! Could we behave as Joseph did? He set us a fine example of complete trust and reliance on God.

There is one incident which initially on face value seems to suggest that Joseph may have forgotten his old home. This took place when his first son was born in Egypt and he named him Manasseh, as recorded in Genesis 41:51: 'For God hath made me forget all my toil and all my father's house.' But Joseph did not mean that the coming of this child into his home blotted out all memory of his father. The words reveal the warm heart of Joseph burning for his old home and his domestic ties. Joseph never forgot his father in Egypt. All through the story of the brothers' visits to Egypt we have snippets of Joseph's love for his father. Little did those men from Canaan know how eagerly the great governor listened to their words about any news of his father. When Joseph pressed them with the charge that they were spies, they just casually dropped the words recorded in Genesis 42:13: 'Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not.' They spoke carelessly but the words told Joseph that his father was still alive. These few words would have sent a thrill of gladness into his heart.

We recall the brothers went home and came again, and when they stood before the governor his first words were, in Genesis 43:27: Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive? The brothers saw nothing in these short direct questions but only the genuine enquiry of a nobleman, however deep underneath there throbbed a tender warm heart. When Judah presented his plea for Benjamin, referring again

and again to his father at home, his old age, his loneliness, his bereavement, and that his love for Benjamin was so deep and so tender that he would die if the lad was not returned to him, little did he know the chords he was touching in the heart of the great man to whom he was speaking. It was this picture of the aged, sorrowing father which most of all moved Joseph as he listened to Judah's words, and when Judah ended his speech Joseph broke down. He could not refrain himself any longer, and said amid sobs in Genesis 45:4 'I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.'

Another lesson of this story is the **graciousness** with which Joseph forgave his brethren. Seeing his brethren ill at ease when he revealed himself to them, his first and instant reaction was that of pity and mercy. He was truly gracious in his forgiveness. He almost convinced them that they had done him a real favour by selling him as a slave to Egypt. Listen to his loving words in Gen 45:5 – <sup>5</sup>'Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life...' <sup>7</sup>to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. <sup>8</sup>'So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.' Such gracious words! His brethren knew that they were guilty of a great sin, a sin equivalent to murder; Joseph well knew it, too, but he also knew that the Lord had overruled it for the very best. As he talked, the guilt left their hearts and for the first time in 23 years their minds were at ease concerning Joseph. Let us, like Joseph, be merciful towards those who may sin against us. Let us endeavour to give the gracious answer using loving words. The Lord was with Joseph supervising all his affairs, making everything come out just right. So was our Heavenly Father with His Son, Jesus, throughout His earthly ministry and finally glorified Him. So, we have the assurance in Romans 8:28 'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.'

After Joseph had given assurance of his forgiveness, he asked them to hasten to their father. Note the wording here. He addresses him now as 'My father', and paraphrasing Genesis 45, verses 9-13: 'Say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt, come down unto me and tarry not. Ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt and all ye have seen, and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.' He sent also wagons to bring his father over the rough roads as gently as possible. He even sent presents – 20 asses carrying provisions and comforts for their father's return journey. Finally, word came to Joseph that his father was approaching and he made ready his chariot and rode out to meet him. Who can picture the tender meeting? The Bible seldom indulges much in sentimental narration and yet the picture it

paints here is most vivid to us all. In Genesis 46:29 we read Joseph 'presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.' It had been some 22 years since Joseph, a lad of only seventeen, had gone away from home to carry the messages and tokens to his brothers, expecting to return in a few days. He had never seen his father's face since that morning, and the bottled up love of all those years found expression in the warmest of greetings. We go away for a week, a month or a year and the greeting is ever so warm and tender from our dear ones. Try to imagine 22 years with no news.

Let us go back and try to imagine Pharaoh's court of splendour and the scene there. Egypt was at the time the leading world of civilization and culture. The court of the pharaoh was a great place of splendour as we have recorded in various history books. Picture the scene: Jacob was a plain shepherd without worldly rank or honour, withered, limping and famine-driven. What a contrast was presented by these two men, the governor of Egypt and the patriarch of Canaan. Joseph led the old shepherd into the presence of the greatest king with pride. He told pharaoh of the coming of his father. Amid the splendours of rank and power, Joseph never forgot his father. When his father came to him bent, withered and limping, he honoured him as if he had been a king. During the remaining years of his life, he nourished him in almost a royal estate. When Jacob was dying, Joseph stood watching by the bedside - the Prime Minister of Egypt by the shepherd of old. Through all the years, his love continued in a warm and tender manner. When his father was dead, he honoured him with the burial of a prince.

All this illustrates the nobility of Joseph's character. The lesson is clear – children should honour their parents. Nothing more sadly mars the beauty of life than anything that shows lack of family love and respect. The beautiful example of Joseph should inspire in all children whose parents are alive a deep desire to give them comfort, gladness, tenderness and tender care as long as they shall live. In the Old Testament it is stated in the commandments as we read in Exodus 20:12 'Honour thy father and mother that thy days may be long in the land which Jehovah, thy God, giveth thee.' We all remember our Lord Jesus' words in Matthew 19:19: 'Honour thy father and mother.' If we are blessed with wealth or plenty, they should share in it with us. Perhaps they have gone short themselves along the way so that we might not want, or that we may be fitted for a better life. If we have risen to a higher position than our parents had, we should bring to them the sunshine that is ours so that we may brighten and sweeten their old age as well.

There is another part of the story of Joseph and his fa-

ther that gives us some valuable lessons. Let's go back to the Hebron scene, to the time when his brothers came home from Egypt after Joseph had made himself known to them. They told their father that Joseph was alive and that he was governor of Egypt, but Jacob could not believe such news. His heart was overwhelmed. For more than 22 years he had mourned Joseph as dead; now to hear that he was alive and in Egypt was just too much for the old father. In Genesis 45:26 we have: 'And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.' His sons, however, were determined to make him believe, repeating the words of Joseph, and while he still listened he was somewhat bewildered and doubting. The wagons Joseph had sent to carry him to Egypt were driven to the door, and the asses bearing the good things of Egypt also. These somehow convinced Jacob, and note how his spirit was revived in Genesis 45:28: 'And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.'

Why did the sight of the wagons help jolt his memory and make Jacob believe that Joseph was alive? Wagons were not known in Canaan at that time, at least not wagons such as those from Egypt. The number of spokes per wheel specifically made them Egyptian at that time. Egyptian wagons had six spokes per wheel and it was a bit of a trade mark in the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty as they were the ones who invented the slim 6-spoke chariot wheel. In addition, the chariots and wagons were very heavily built. Joseph must have indeed sent them. Also, the fruits and other goods sent to Jacob's door were unmistakably from the land of Egypt. They could have only grown beside the Nile.

Some of the experiences of Joseph in Egypt seem to point us forward to those of our Saviour and remind us that we have a risen Lord in heaven. We know that our Lord Jesus died on the cross, slain by wicked hands. We know that he was laid in a grave and that a stone was rolled before the door. The gospel assures us however that He is alive forevermore. To Jacob, Joseph was dead; Joseph, though, was alive in Egypt. That was what the sons told Jacob. Jesus Christ is alive in heaven, as the Word of God tells us. Not only was Joseph alive, he was ruler over all of Egypt. Jesus is alive forever more beyond death, is ruler of all things and King of Kings, Lord of Lords. Note our Lord's words in Matthew 28:18: 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.' And in Revelation 1:18 'I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of death and hades.' Jacob was convinced Joseph was still alive in Egypt when he saw the tokens he had sent. Our Lord Jesus sends us blessings out of heaven which prove to us that He really is alive there. He answers our prayers when we place our petitions before

our heavenly Father. Do they not bring comforts for our sorrows when our heart is burdened?

This world, dear brethren, is famine stricken. There is really no bread here for our spiritual nourishment. Our Lord Jesus said in John 6:35: I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall not hunger and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.' Heaven has its storehouses. Daily there come to us from these reserves blessings just right for you and me. They meet our daily needs exactly, they seem to come at just the right time. The forgiveness of our sins, the peace that fills our hearts, the joy that comes in sorrow, the answers to our prayers, and the blessings of providence – who else but Jesus could send all these heavenly good things to us? These are the best proofs to us that Jesus lives and rules in heavenly blessedness and glory. To know that Christ, though unseen in heaven, ever lives to make intercession for us, that He sends blessings down to us on earth, heaven's good things, is a very precious truth.

This is a joy that fills our heart but there is something more, something better. Go back to the scene. Joseph's wagons came and took Jacob from the land of hunger with its mere handfuls of good things from the land of plenty and bore him right into the land of plenty itself, where his son ruled. He was met on the border of the country by the son who had died to him but was yet alive. He welcomed him with the warmest welcome; he presented him to the king who bade him dwell in the best land, and there he stayed, close to his son, nourished by him with an abundance of all that he could ever wish for. We see how beautifully true all this is in application to Christ-believing ones in this world. Here our joy is very sweet but we only have a little foretaste of the heavenly good things to come if we are faithful to the end. By and by the wagons will come for us and take us into the presence of Christ if we are faithful. How comforting are the words of our Lord in John 14:3: 'And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there you may be also.'

When Jacob got into the carriage and drove away from his old home, he was not sad. He was leaving his old walks and place of sorrows, he was leaving famine and want to go into a land of plenty, and that is what is in prospect for us. We shall leave the land of tears and separations and go into the presence of the Lord and the loved ones. Our Saviour will meet us on the edge of that blessed country. He will welcome us with the tenderest of love. He will present us to His Father, not ashamed to own us as His friends, His brothers, His sisters, before heaven's angels. If we are faithful to the end, He will give us a place near to Himself. Let us well remember the words of our Lord, 'I go to prepare

a place for you...that where I am, there you may be also.' Our Joseph has gone before us to prepare a place for us, and when we are prepared for the place He will come again and take us to Himself so that where He is there we may be also.

Word was sent to Joseph one day that his father wished to see him. Jacob knew he must die in Egypt. However, he did not wish to be buried in that strange land. He wanted to lie in the land of promise, so he asked Joseph to swear to him that he would not bury him in Egypt. Jacob wanted to be buried beside his father and mother in the cave of Machpelah. Jacob's was a strong faith in God's promise to give Canaan to his descendants. He believed that the promise would be fulfilled and he wanted his grave to be where the home of his future children would be. He wanted his family, though still abiding in Egypt, to have a constant reminder that Egypt was not their home. Quickly, no doubt, Joseph set out to do all he could to honour the name and memory of his father. His body was embalmed and then probably followed the seventy days of mourning as was the custom in Egypt. After this the patriarch's dying command was obeyed, and the twelve sons with many Egyptian friends, among them men of rank, bore the body away to Canaan and laid it to rest beside the bodies of his loved ones at Hebron in the cave of Machpelah.

After the burial of his father, only one incident in the story of Joseph is recorded. When Jacob was gone the brothers grew very uneasy, we are told. They thought that their father's influence was the restraining force on Joseph from seeking revenge upon them. In Genesis 50:17 we have the words recorded: 'And Joseph wept when they spoke unto him.' It pained him to learn that they doubted his love and forgiveness after all those years. Seventeen years of such generous love as Joseph had shown to his brothers in Egypt should have made it impossible for them to even suspect his forgiveness. Do we ever treat our friends so? Do we ever treat Christ so? Do we ever doubt His forgiveness or question His love for us whatever our experiences may be? Joseph was pained when he learned of the fears and distrust of his brothers, but his patience did not fail. Note his words in Genesis 50: <sup>19</sup>'Fear not: for am I in the place of God?' <sup>20</sup>'But as for you, ye thought evil against me: but God meant it unto good to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.' <sup>21</sup>Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them and spake kindly unto them.' This was the answer to their distrust. His generous love never failed. His answer to them was an assurance of affection. After this incident Joseph lived 54 years but nothing is told of these years. We can picture a ripe and beautiful old age full of honour and usefulness.

At last the time came for Joseph to die, as it must come to us all. Genesis 50 records the scene: <sup>24</sup>'And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob.' <sup>25</sup>'And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.' <sup>26</sup>So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.' Joseph was embalmed but not entombed in Egypt. Egypt had long been his home; it had been the scene of all his honours and triumphs. His wife was an Egyptian, his friends were Egyptians, but he was still a loyal Israelite and he would not lie in an Egyptian grave. In the epistle to the Hebrews 11:22 we are told: 'By faith Joseph, when his end was nigh, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.' This truly showed his faith in God's promises concerning his people. His faith was so strong that he refused to be buried at all in Egypt despite his rulership there. His burial must wait until his people went up out of Egypt to their very own land, the land of promise. Doubtless, Joseph felt that his body left among them unburied, waiting to be carried away to Canaan and buried there, would do more to keep their hope alive than if it lay at rest in yonder Hebron with the patriarchs. Every time the Israelites saw it they would remember why it was unburied and their thoughts would turn towards their Promised Land.

By and by things grew dark in Egypt. The dynasty of the pharaohs and Joseph's friends gave way to a new dynasty who cared not for his memory and who became jealous of the Israelites. Bitter oppression followed and in those days of gloom, who knows how much the unburied body of Joseph with its unspoken words of hope helped to keep the Israelites focussed on the future land. Then one night there was great excitement in Goshen; the hour of departure under Moses had come. Note the record in Exodus 13:19: 'And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn to the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.' Then followed forty years of marching and wandering, and during all this time the body of Joseph was in the column or in the camp. For 40 years, It really was a constant reminder that it was to be buried in the Promised Land, as it finally was. Joshua 24:32 reads 'And the bones of Joseph....buried they in Shechem in the parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor.' It was here that God promised Abraham that the land would be given to his descendants. (Gen 12:6,7)

We may take two lessons from Joseph's dying words.

One is a lesson of faith, 'I die, and God will surely visit you.' He would die, but the fulfilling of God's purposes would go on. Someone has said, 'God buries His workmen but carries on His work.' We each have our little part to fulfil in the divine purposes and then we shall die, but the work will go on. God ever lives, and His promises and His plans halt not. The lesson would be that we should so live that the memory of our life and its influence when we are gone shall inspire all others who stay behind. The memory of the just is blessed. Joseph's faith as expressed in his last words manifests the future hope. In effect he was declaring, 'This is not your home. You are but tarrying here as strangers and pilgrims. By and by you will go to your Promised Land.' Such should ever be the impression our lives make and that our memory keeps alive in other hearts. We should so live that when we are gone the recollection of us will make others think of heaven as home. Let us then seek to be so filled with Christ that every influence of our life should incite others upwards towards God and onward towards

imperishable and everlasting things.

Perhaps most endearing of all, Joseph is renowned for his forgiving spirit so that even his brethren could not quite believe it. But Joseph convinced them that the circumstances were all overruled by God for the preservation of life. What an excellent picture of Christ, who suffered unjustly surely more than we could possibly conceive of at the hands of a hateful generation, but who accepted it all without a complaining spirit and offers to the wondering world and to His Jewish brethren, as they will see in due time, full forgiveness of sins secured by His own sacrifice. What an example to us to have a patient, forgiving spirit, ready to relax personal grievances, to acknowledge them as known and overruled by God for a higher good. We can embrace this attitude in our hearts now, even in otherwise bitter circumstances. May the spirit of faith and forgiveness so beautifully exemplified in Joseph so long ago be developed more and more each day in all our lives. (AK 12/03)

## “WALK WITH GOD”

### “They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (Gen 3:8)

Let us cast our minds back to the time of Creation and the Garden of Eden. Stop for a moment and imagine our Heavenly Father walking in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the evening taking in the sights and the fragrances as the evening descended. We can only imagine that this was a daily occurrence. We can imagine that He often spoke with Adam and Eve and we can imagine his disappointment and sorrow when they transgressed his words and He had to banish them from the Garden.

The thought of walking with the Heavenly Father is a theme brought out in many books of the Bible, but David the Psalmist brings out some of the most beautiful thoughts such as:

- Ps 23:4 “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me”. (NAS)
- Ps 56:13 “For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, indeed my feet from stumbling, so that I may walk before God in the light of the living”. (NAS)
- Ps 119:35 “Make me walk in the path of Thy commandments, for I delight in it”. (NAS)
- Ps 86:11 “Teach me Thy way, O LORD; I will walk in Thy truth; Unite my heart to fear Thy

name.” (NAS)

### “Teach Me the Way”

However, the one that is good to concentrate on is found in Ps 143:8 “Let me hear Thy loving kindness in the morning; for I trust in Thee; *teach me the way in which I should walk*; for to Thee I lift up my soul”. (NAS) Should not this be the heartfelt prayer of each of us - “*teach me the way in which I should walk*”. What a great privilege we have in being able to come close to our Heavenly Father. Paul told the Ephesians in Eph 2:8-10: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (NAS)

At the time that our Heavenly Father called us and accepted us in Christ, He had the power to give us perfect human bodies and minds for our walk ahead. However in his infinite wisdom He saw it was better for us, and for the outworking of His purpose, that we have to contend with the sinful tendencies and imperfections of our fleshly mind and body. We are told in Romans 12:2 “... be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”. (KJV) This renewing of the mind should also result in the transforming of our character. These changes however are not instant, but gradual and are accomplished in proportion to the faith we manifest and the effort we put forth in the doing of

the will of God.

If we are to be faithful disciples of Christ we need to take time to consider the significance of the office as a minister of Christ and as a steward of the mysteries of God. We recall again the words of Paul already quoted and which stand out boldly, "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, that we should walk in them." We are pointedly reminded that the main feature of God's purpose during this Gospel Age, is the calling and development of the new creation, the Church. The Church members are destined in the counsels of God to be His instruments in the deliverance of the whole groaning creation in the coming Age. Meantime, we are told in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 "Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us;" (NAS)

The divine foreknowledge and prior marking-out of the Christian path is also well brought out in Ephesians 2:10: The Christian's first *conscious* approach to God is, as the Bible teaches, through faith, and even this is a divine gift bestowed by our Heavenly Father. This coming to God is plainly expressed in Hebrews 11:6: "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." How encouraging are these words. They are not words of warning but of hope as long as we come in the right heart condition as we read in Hebrews 10:22 "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water".

Paul sets a good example of drawing near with a true heart; he had realized his great error in persecuting the Church before his conversion and his love since for the brethren set the example for our love for one another. His brotherly love extended to all Brethren but especially for the churches he had been instrumental in bringing to Christ. They were his children, and no self-sacrifice was too much in his care for them. The precepts he had given them were good but his example was far more effective. One of the things for which Jesus found fault with the Pharisees was that they told others what to do but did not practice what they preached. As we read in Matt 23:1-3 "Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things, and do not do them". (NAS)

## To Follow in His Steps

Jesus himself left us an example that we should follow in his footsteps. This example was the most effective, the most lasting lesson our Lord could give, for he shows us how to follow the precepts of His Father's Word. Peter tells us in his first epistle 1 Pet 2:21 "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps", (NAS) "Following in Christ's footsteps" is the true secret of Scriptural living for those who have consecrated their lives to Christ and wish to please their Heavenly Father. He shows us the degree to which we must yield our wills unto God. We must devote our whole heart and life to Him, and in so doing we please and give honor to Him. All that is of worth in our Christian life comes to us as the result of a union with Christ by faith and as a gift from God.

Let us return to the thought in Ps 143:8 "*teach me the way in which I should walk*"; (NAS) How are we to know how we are to walk in the ways of our Heavenly Father. The thought of "Walking with God" is that our life as a New Creature is one where we are constantly dependent upon Him. We cannot take a step alone without the fear that we would stumble. The figure of "walking" used in the text suggests something very practical. It presents to our minds the thought of "plodding along the pathways of our daily life." Our Christian walk means that we must be close to our Heavenly Father and in so doing we will have His help in our every-day duties- family, work, or in the schoolroom. It is in these places that we are called to be His witnesses. We especially need our Heavenly Father at our side in the hard and difficult times when we are faced with trials, or fierce temptation.

Again, the thought of "walking with God," suggests that we have been reconciled to Him, by the operation of His grace, without which, no one could live in His presence. It suggests the thought of friendship and of close acquaintance. One of the interesting examples of walking with God was the case of Enoch as we read "Enoch walked with God" (Gen 5.22). We are not informed just how God made known to Enoch His way. We may be assured, however, that sufficient knowledge was given him to enable him to lay hold by faith of the fact that God was pleased with him and that he had the privilege of His fellowship. We may be sure that he must have desired the friendship and companionship of God, and therefore his desire was towards God as told in Amos 3:3 "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (KJV)

## The Christian's Walk

What do we mean by the Christian's "walk?" It is our Journey on the Narrow Way, and how our thoughts, words, and actions on the journey, as others look on, reflect our Heavenly Father. The Apostle Paul indicates very clearly what this work or "course" of the

Christian should be. He provides us with a sevenfold description in his letter to the church at Ephesus:

**The New Creature should:**

- **Not walk according to the course of this world. (2:2)**
- **Walk in good works. (2:10)**
- **Walk worthy of his/her calling. (4:1)**
- **Not walk like other gentiles. (4:17)**
- **Walk in love. (5:2)**
- **Walk as children of light. (5:8)**
- **Walk circumspectly. (5:15)**

**(1) The new creature should not walk according to the course of this world.** “And you who were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience”. Eph 2:1-2 (NAS) We see here that one of the first things required of us to walk with God is to change our direction, that is, we are not to walk “according to” or “under the direction of” the prince of the power of the air.

**(2) The new creature should walk in good works –** As already seen, this is God’s specific purpose for His people.(Eph 2:10) Although we are not saved by good works, they are a necessary part of our Christian development and our Lord tells us in Matt 5:16, that they do have a purpose “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (NAS) The purpose of the works is not to bring glory or benefit to us but to our Heavenly Father.

**(3) “The new creation should walk worthy of the vocation with which they are called”.** This vocation or calling is the highest of all, for we are called to represent the Lord and Master who redeemed us. We should seek to glorify and honor him in all of our activities and try never to dishonor Him. We are told in 2 Tim 1:9 ...”(God) has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity”, (NAS) Our vocation (or calling) is to be as servants of God and our earthly vocation should not hinder our service to him. If we are sincere in our desire to be joint-heirs with Christ and to be prospective members of His Bride, then we need to study to improve our vocational skills.

**(4) The new creature should walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,** We are not to be satisfied with mere avoidance of gross sin and immorality. We are to nurture the spirit of the Lord and of a sound mind to direct our joys and

sorrows. Whether we are attending a wedding or a funeral or social occasions we should always act to the glory of God and put aside the influences of the world. The world teaches nothing of gentleness, kindness, patience, and faithfulness to the Lord, which is our duty. We are told in Matt 7:13-14 “Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it”. (NAS) We have to have our minds set on thing above, not on futile earthly matters.

**(5) The new creature is to walk in love.** “Walk in love, just as Christ also loved us, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma”. (NAS) Love must become the controlling influence in our lives: our words, our actions, i.e. in everything that we do or think. Paul tells us “*Love is the fulfilling of the law*” (Rom. 13:10). Our Lord Jesus Christ instructed us “*A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you*” (John 13:34). It is the Apostle’s point that we so love one another, in obedience to the Master’s command and example, that we would be willing to surrender everything, even our lives, for one another. We should be ready to sacrifice choices, assets, or our preferences for a few days or a few months, or for a few years if this is what is needed to help our brethren on the narrow way. Although these sacrifices should be mainly along the lines of their spiritual interests, in some cases it may also be their material needs.

This spirit of love controlling us should extend our love also to our neighbours. To love them means to seek ways to serve them. “*Love worketh no ill to his neighbour*” (Rom. 13:10). Love means not taking advantage of a neighbour, love will not cheat him; love will not injure him in any manner. Love would not prompt us to tell stories about our neighbor showing him in an unpleasant light. Love reminds us to “*speak evil of no man.*”

**(6) The new creature is to walk as a child of light..** In Eph 5:8 we are told “*you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light*” (NAS) We become children of light when we take into account all that is just, pure, noble, kind, that is all that is in harmony with our Heavenly Father’s character and Word. These are the things that will be the greatest benefit to the neighbours and friends of the new creature. As children of the light, we should see development in our character, this light will shine more and more clearly upon the paths of those we associate with, our neighbours, and our friends as well as the Brethren. As children of the light we should not hide our light, but rather allow it to be displayed: enlightening and enriching all those with whom we come in contact.

**(7) The new creature should walk circumspectly**  
"Circumspectly" has the meaning "looking carefully all around at every step." As Christians we cannot live carelessly, we have to look around and recognize the various pitfalls that may be put on our pathway to catch us unawares. We have to seek God's wisdom and counsel so as to make firm and sure progress on our walk. Phil 1:27 "...conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; (NAS)

This circumspect life is essential because of the unceasing activity of Satan against the followers of the Master. His snares are both gross and subtle as suits his purposes, but they are permitted by God to come upon the new creation to test and bring about growth. As one nears the goal of Christ-likeness in his character, the tests seem to become more constant and the more vigorous as the Adversary grows more diligent in his efforts to discourage and stumble the true wheat of this Gospel Age. Our circumspection is demanded because we claim to be the offspring of God, new creatures, begotten of the Holy Spirit, and as a result our lives should shine as a reproof to the evil in this world.

We can see clearly that much effort, planning and prayer has to go into our walk with God each waking hour if we are to achieve our goal of following in our Master's footsteps. It will be well worth the effort if

at the end of our earthly walk we hear our Master's voice. 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' (NAS) Matt 25:23 May this be the experience of us all. Amen. (RC:01/04)

### A Closer Walk with Thee

I am weak, but thou art strong;  
Jesus, keep me from all wrong;  
I'll be satisfied as long  
As I walk, let me walk close to thee.

#### Refrain:

Just a closer walk with thee,  
Grant it, Jesus, is my plea,  
Daily walking close to thee:  
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be.

Through this world of toil and snares,  
If I falter, Lord, who cares?  
Who with me my burden shares?  
None but thee, dear Lord, none but thee.

When my feeble life is o'er,  
Time for me will be no more;  
Guide me gently, safely o'er  
To thy shore, dear Lord, to thy shore

## “THE PROPHET JONAH”

The word of the Lord came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it because its wickedness has come up before me" <sup>3</sup>But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.' (Jonah 1:1-3, NIV)

If you have ever had to do something that you desperately did not want to do, you will understand the state in which Jonah found himself when God called him to go and preach against the city of Nineveh, and why he set off in another direction to Tarshish.. Joppa, Jonah's port of departure is on the east coast of the Mediterranean and is approximately level with the Jordan valley and Jerusalem. We are not told where Jonah was at the time of God's calling, but we know that Joppa was within a long day's walk of his hometown, which, as 2 Kings 14:25 tells us, was Gath-hepher, in north-eastern Zebulun, about half way between the Dead Sea and the coast, and approximately 10kms from Bethlehem. Tarshish was a port some 2500 miles away in the

Western Mediterranean area. So why was Jonah so fearful of carrying out God's clear instructions? What prompted him to deliberately disobey the Lord and head in the opposite direction? To understand Jonah's reaction, it may be helpful to look briefly at some of the historical details of this time

Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire which, according to Halley, endured as a world empire for about 300 years, roughly between 900 and 607 BC. Its rise to power began at about the time of the division of the Hebrew Kingdom at the end of Solomon's reign, whereafter it continued to grow stronger until it gradually absorbed and destroyed the Northern Kingdom (Halley, p.363). Archeological evidence for the might of ancient Assyria has been gradually revealed since the mid-1800s with enormous palaces being discovered by the English explorer and adventurer, Austen Henry Layard, who started to work on some of the great city-mounds of northern Mesopotamia. Furthermore, the reputation of the Assyrian kings as fierce warriors and uncompromising rulers is borne out by an examination of the art from the ruins of their rediscov-

ered cities. The palaces were covered with sculptures and reliefs to awe any visitors into a “sense of helpless submission” (Potts, p.36).

We can now begin to feel some of the sense of awe and trepidation which Jonah must have felt at the mention of Nineveh. Not only was he being asked to travel a huge distance away from his home to the heartland of Assyria into the midst of a land of cruel, powerful and sadistic tyrant kings, but he was also commanded to go into the “lion’s den” and instruct them to mend their ways or face destruction. We are not specifically told in the Scriptures why Jonah chose to ‘flee from the Lord’, although Jonah hints at an excuse in Jonah 4:2, stating that he knew that God would relent from sending calamity on the city. Elsewhere in 2 Kings 14:23-29 Jonah was recorded in a positive light as a servant and prophet of God when he prophesied that Jeroboam would increase Israel’s territory at the expense of Syria. Speaking of Jeroboam, the Scripture reads in 2 Kings 14:25: ‘He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plane, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amitai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher’.

The year of Jonah’s calling is difficult to establish but was probably around 800 BC. Having received God’s instruction, Jonah being human and fallible was evidently terrified at the prospect of having to berate the most powerful nation of his age at a time when the northern kingdom of Israel was being destroyed by that very nation. As we know though, God had a number of lessons in store: for Jonah, for Nineveh, for the Jews, and for the whole world. We are very familiar with the rest of Jonah’s story, so let us paraphrase the events recorded in Jonah chapters 1 to 4. Having boarded the ship at Joppa, so the Scriptures tell us, a great storm arose which threatened to scuttle the vessel (1:4). The sailors, having discovered Jonah asleep, cast lots to determine who was responsible for the calamity, and the lot fell on Jonah (1:7). Jonah was then forced to tell his story and to admit that he was the reason for their danger (1:9-11). Despite concerns about causing Jonah’s death, the sailors threw him into the sea, as he had requested. The raging waters became calm and the sailors, in fear, offered a sacrifice to the God of Jonah (1:12-16). God provided a fish to swallow Jonah, in which he stayed for three days and three nights (1:17). Inside the fish Jonah expressed his remorse, and in a psalm-like prayer praising God for His might, he vowed that he would fulfill the task which the Lord had set (2:1-9).

God commanded the fish to spit Jonah out onto dry land and again the prophet was exhorted to go to Nineveh (3:1,2). This second time, Jonah was obedient and

proceeded to the city with the message “forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned.” (3:3,4). The series of events which followed seem somewhat extraordinary. Firstly, the Ninevites believed God’s message and repented, with the whole population from the lowest slave to the king himself putting on sackcloth and ashes (3:5-7). Secondly, the king put out a decree commanding the whole population to give up their evil ways in the hope that God would show them compassion (3:7-9). Chapter 3:10 tells us the outcome of this action: ‘When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened’ (3:10). Now, strangely, instead of rejoicing at the people’s newfound attitude, Jonah becomes angry with God, saying “Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.” (4:3) Apparently thinking that God was still going to destroy the city, Jonah sat down under a shelter a little east of the city to see what would happen (4:5).

God caused a vine (KJV “gourd”) to grow, to shade the prophet and ease his discomfort, but the following morning the vine, being chewed by a worm from God, withered and Jonah was left to suffer in the blazing sun under the influence of a scorching east wind, and once again he expressed his wish to die (4:6-8). For a second time, God asked Jonah whether he was right to be angry about the events that had occurred, with Jonah indicating that he did think that he had this right. Finally, God demonstrated that His mercy is available to all people by comparing the vine with the city, saying, ‘You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?’ (4:10,11)

It is very interesting, in the context of Jonah’s mission and what was happening in the two Israelite kingdoms at the time, to look at the contrasts which are recorded in Jonah’s story: God’s chosen prophet was the one resistant to God’s will, while those whom we would expect to have no reverence for God such as the captain of the ship and the people of Nineveh were genuinely concerned for themselves and their fellow men. Jonah did not wish to do the right thing and warn Nineveh, yet the sailors showed the right attitude when they tried to avoid throwing him into the sea. Jonah’s attitude also changes from one extreme to another; for example, he was willing to die to save the sailors by being thrown into the sea, yet he later sat outside Nineveh hoping to witness its destruction.

It seems plausible, however, that Jonah’s mission also

served as a sign to Israel that God is interested in all people and that the Jews should not have become conceited in their position as His chosen people. If we accept this understanding, knowing that the Israelites would have continued to read the message of the book of Jonah after the accomplishment of its events, we could understand that Nineveh could represent Gentiles in general; those who do not know God yet may be willing to listen. Jonah could be a figure for the Jewish nation who, despite its favoured standing with God, often refused or questioned its Heavenly Father, failing to recognise that its position was not necessarily set in stone, unchangeable for all time, and that God was interested in the ultimate salvation of all nations. We, too, need to heed this message and not hold too high an opinion of ourselves, as Paul points out through his analogy of the ingrafted branches in Romans 11:21.

### New Testament Connection

We can now examine the few New Testament verses which mention Jonah, and consider why he was referred to as a sign. The references are in Matthew 12 and Luke 9. Matthew 12: <sup>38</sup>Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. <sup>39</sup>But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the prophet Jonas: <sup>40</sup>For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. <sup>41</sup>The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.' Here is a somewhat fearful comparison for us to ponder. We know that Nineveh was very wicked and that, as Nahum and history record, it was eventually judged and destroyed by God. Yet Jesus used the example of Nineveh's original repentance to demonstrate that its people were capable of considering the words of the minor prophet.

The comparison then is with the Jewish people of Jesus' day, who were not able or not willing to consider the words of their Messiah, although His words and mission were far greater than those of Jonah. Earlier, in verse 40, Jesus spoke of the only sign that they would be given. Surely the greatest sign ever to all mankind was Jesus' resurrection from the dead after three days in the tomb (see 1 Cor.15:4) and this, from His explanation, is the way in which Jesus meant us to understand the 'sign'. Once cast into the sea, Jonah was as good as dead except for the gracious intervention of God; likewise, Christ was totally dependent upon His Heavenly Father once He had committed Himself to the crucifixion. The key point is that both came out by the power of God.

Further in the Luke account we see Jonah used as an historical warning and a sign Luke 11:29-30: <sup>29</sup>And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of Jonas the prophet. <sup>30</sup>For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.' As with all signs, prophecies, parables and allegories in the Bible, we need to use caution when assigning interpretations to the different elements and especially to ensure that we observe the explanations given. Jesus clearly identifies Jonah as being a 'sign unto the Ninevites' and calls the Son of Man a sign 'to this generation'. The obvious parallel which comes to mind is the three days and nights figure – Jonah in the fish, Jesus in the grave, with the result each time being life restored. Having looked at the Old Testament account, It is important that we do not try to press the whole of the Jonah story into this 'sign'. The basic message for us is that, in due time, God will provide the opportunity for salvation for all through the resurrection of His Son. (LR:12/03)

### A NEW YEAR

A New Year dawns to mark for us  
The measured beat of time,  
An opportunity is thus  
Extended thee and thine.

What will we do, what will we be  
In the new year ahead?  
What growth and progress shall we see  
As upward we do tread?

God grant that as the sands of time  
Run low within our glass,  
Our faith and hope and love sublime  
Shall bring His will to pass.

Martin C. Mitchell

### THE NEW YEAR

Into the silent past the year has fled,  
With all its hope and fear, its joy and pain;  
And now, like an interminable plain  
On which our eager feet have yet to tread,  
The New Year lies before our gaze, o'erspread  
With golden prospects; hopes that once in vain  
Were entertained now spring to life again,

And heaven's bright sunshine gleams above our head.  
Oh, glad New Year, unsullied yet and free  
From taint of sin are thy propitious hours;  
Thy cloudless countenance, serene and mild,  
Assures us of our God's fidelity,  
And bids us in His service use our powers,  
That all thy moments may be undefiled.

W.H. Pepworth

# THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT-MEEKNESS

The word “meekness” is rarely used in our society today, and when used it is often thought of as meaning “weak”. However in Christian circles meekness does not mean weakness, but strength.

Strong’s Concordance defines *meekness* (#4236) as “gentleness, by implication humility”. Humility describes a condition of the mind and heart and does not mean weakness. It is the fruit of inward power, a disposition that is gentle, mild and tempered. Whereas gentleness relates to actions, meekness describes the inner willingness for one to serve and accept God’s dealings with us.

We see the disposition of meekness in Christ. Our Lord was meek because He was not occupied with self, but came to serve His Father: “*For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me*”. (John 6:38)

There were several instances in our Lord’s earthly ministry where His meekness was manifested. One instance was when He “*went into the temple of God and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, ‘It is written, my house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.’*” (Matt. 21:12-13) This instance was one where His meekness required Him to take physical action.

On the other hand Matthew 27:13-14 records an instance when His meekness was manifested by restraint: “*Then said Pilate unto him, ‘Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?’ And He answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly*”. Also the instance recorded in Matthew 26:62-63: “*And the high priest arose, and said unto Him, ‘Answerest Thou nothing? What is it which these witness against Thee?’ But Jesus held His peace*”.

Our Lord was truly meek, strengthened by His inner conviction and desire to serve His father. He was as a lamb when He was led to the slaughter, when He was scourged, when a crown of thorns was placed on His head, when He was spat upon, and when He was physically beaten. All this tested our Lord, and especially since He knew that at any time He could appeal to His Father who would at once give Him more than twelve legions of angels. However He knew that the time had come for Him to complete His Father’s work on earth, and so He opened not his mouth. They led him to Golgotha, gave Him wine and gall, and crucified Him.

These instances are true evidence of the meek and humble character of our Saviour. Do we have meekness to that degree? Our Lord’s invitation in Matthew 11:29 is to “*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls.*”

Meekness has to be sought, it is a fruit and not a gift: “*Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought His judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger.*” (Zephaniah 2:3)

The fruit of meekness is directly contrary to the inclinations of the flesh: “*Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, ... that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh ...*” (2 Cor. 10:1-3) Those in the flesh might regard our meekness as pride or self sufficiency; we need to be careful that, at all times, our boldness comes from our meekness: “*in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves*” (2 Tim. 2:25)

“*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, ... even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*” (Colossians 3:12-14) “*Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom*” (James 3:13)

## A Prayer

My Lord, in the midst of life’s discords, make me an influence for the promotion of thy spirit of peace. And in all the relations that go to make up the round of life’s experience, let me be an example of thy gentleness, that it may be seen that I have been with thee, learning the perfect ways of God.

Amen

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