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JUDGE NOT

There seems to be nothing that the natural man is quicker to do, and do continually, than to judge other people. And there is nothing that he is slower to do, and does rarely, than to judge himself.

This attitude is corrected to a degree when a person becomes a Christian; nevertheless there are few Christians who feel that they are not without guilt, and the truly earnest Christian is very conscious of the errors they commit in this way. One cannot help feeling that it would be wonderful to keep the mind entirely free of a judging spirit; many accomplish it spasmodically, but few, if any, are able to maintain that spirit as they know they should.

Times without number, even Christians find themselves, during daily life, forming opinions about people and judging them. How often have people found themselves quite wrong; further contact and better knowledge have given them quite a different picture of a person's character than they first thought.

Circumstances and moods have a terrific impact on the display of character. It is so easy to judge harshly, whereas if all the true facts had been known, no judgement at all would have been made. Instead the person who first made the judgement would have been filled with sympathetic understanding and left all to "Him who judgeth righteously". (1 Pet. 2:23)

There is nothing of a general nature relating to this subject that every Christian does not know. All Christians, at various times, are conscious of the wrong practice of judging others, and from time to time even the finest of Christians find themselves committing this error. It must be always remembered that the Lord will deal with every earnest soul, that the schooling of each Christian will go on until each one comes near to their goal which is to be like Christ himself.

A lesson from Job

This subject of refraining from judging others, like many other subjects, is a very wide one. The book of Job records three men, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar remonstrating with Job, accusing him of self righteousness, and as receiving his just desserts in all the afflictions that befell him.

It might be difficult to fully understand what Job's reaction really was to all this. Reading the account through it would seem that Job is indignant at the charges levelled against him - he knew in his own heart that his character was not as deceitful as these men made out. Nothing stirs the natural man to indignant feelings quicker than to be reproved by one of his fellows whom he knows is prone to the same weakness. The Lord answers Job out of the whirlwind (from Chap. 38), and as a result every vestige of resistance fades and Job confesses freely, "*I know I am nothing; I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes*". (Job 42:6)

Job was brought to the right condition and place but what about those who had "judged" him previously? It is evident that for all their apparent wisdom, they knew nothing as they ought to have known. *"And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, 'My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job'. So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: the LORD also accepted Job".* (Job 42:7-9) So those who thought they had superior knowledge to Job find themselves humbled and compelled to acknowledge him more worthy than themselves. Likewise today, it must not be forgotten

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that "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted". (Luke 14:11)

Judging other Christians

How careful one must be not to misjudge other Christians, how all thought of superior knowledge needs to be instantly repelled. The Lord himself was quite capable of dealing with Job, the three men who railed on Job with their accusations evidently did so on their own initiative. They judged their fellow, therefore the Lord judged them, and humbled them. Consequently it behoves all Christians to heed their Master's exhortation to "Judge not (others) that ye be not judged" (by the Lord). (Matt. 7:1)

One consideration that might help to suppress a judging spirit is to realise that there is no need for anyone to judge another: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." (Rom. 14:10-13) These verses embrace the same teaching. Each one is to not only judge himself but is also to help all others to look into the "perfect law of liberty" (love) by which all Christians are now being judged: "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty". (James 2:12). "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged of the Lord we are chastened, that we should not be condemned with the world." (1 Cor. 11:31-32)

Our daily judgment

Returning to Romans 14:10, the word "judgment" ("judgment seat of Christ") is "tribunal" and so it might be referring to the daily life of the Christian. Every day Christians are standing before the tribunal of Christ, and he is dealing with them, correcting them when wrong, sometimes lightly, mercifully, sometimes with a heavier chastening hand, and bestowing blessings when true and faithful. Every Christian must stand before this tribunal; why then should anyone be so hasty to do the judging and correcting of their fellow brethren - "Let us not judge one another any more, but rather let us be careful not to put a stumblingblock in another's way". (Romans 14:13)

Few things provoke one to anger quicker than a harsh unjust judgment from another. By judging others one is flouting the Lord's direction, and at the same time possibly putting a stumbling block and occasion to fall in their brother's way by stirring him to anger. The Christian's resolve should always be to live so as to promote peace and not to lead any into sin. It must always be remembered that God has "committed all

judgment unto the Son", (John 5:22) and that He in turn is able and just to judge all as the Apostle Paul asserts: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing". (2 Tim. 4:8)

The thought that the church, the Lord's body, is not being judged directly by the Father, is consistent with Hebrews 10:31 - "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God". If we were being judged by Jehovah directly, none of the imperfect race of Adam could stand - all would fall under his just sentence. Hence the importance of realising that God is dealing with the church now as the body of Christ, not imputing our trespasses unto us, but "accepting us in the Beloved". (Eph. 1:6)

2 Corinthians 5:10 reads "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad". This is a similar scripture and it deserves careful study. There is more in the passage than might be recognised at first glance. One translation renders the first portion "For we must all be made manifest before the tribunal of Christ". When do Christians stand before this tribunal receiving judging corrections for the things done in the body? It may well be now, every day of their lives. If it is so, then why should anyone want to be judging others? It is to their own Lord that all must stand or fall and He is quite competent to deal with all. Rather, one should devote their judging spirit to their own position before this tribunal. Each one knows their own circumstances, and if they judge themselves with the spirit of a sound mind in soberness, they will find that they will be spared much judgment from the Lord. On the other hand, if they spend their time judging others, they will find that they are judged.

The terror of the Lord

2 Corinthians 5:11 goes on to say "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences". A very wide circle of commentators and translators has agreed that the word "fear" should be substituted for "terror". What kind of "fear" is in the apostle's mind here? Maybe it is the thought of reverence. Ephesians 5:33 contains almost the same Greek word and it is there translated "reverence", and Young's Concordance defines the word as "to be terrified, affrighted, afraid". Ephesians 5:33 reads "Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband". The apostle was not urging any wife to fear her husband, and so, wisely and understandingly, the translators have used a word with a more correct meaning.

Going back to the word in 2 Corinthians 5:11 it must be noted that the apostle knew nothing about a Lord of

whom men should be affrighted, terrified or afraid. On the contrary he had come to know a Lord who was so merciful and kind and just and good, that he deeply revered Him. As verse 14 says it was the **love of Christ** that constrained him.

Psalm 111 is a wonderful Psalm to convey the real meaning of the word “fear”. The whole Psalm testifies to the wonderful things that God provides and does for all His creatures, and especially for those who know Him and love Him. The Psalmist thus concludes in verses 9 and 10 “*holy and reverend is His name. The fear (reverential fear) of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*” Another has commented “This is the proper attitude of the creature towards the Creator, Preserver and Lord of the whole universe. When He speaks, our ears should be reverently attentive to His voice, and every power alert to do His bidding. The Lord would foster and cultivate in us that reverence that is due to His name, as we would reverence our earthly parents.” Ferrar Fenton has translated 2 Corinthians 5:11 thus: “*Consequently, knowing how to reverence the Lord we persuade men - that we may shine forth to God, and I hope we shine forth also to your consciences*”.

1 Peter 3:15 reads “*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*”. The margin of some Bibles substitutes “reverence” for “fear”. The same Greek word is used here as in 2 Corinthians 5:11 and thus it is clear evidence that in both places it should be rendered “reverence” in order to give the true meaning in modern language.

Consequently 2 Corinthians 5:11 may be paraphrased “*Since we have come to know the Lord, so gracious and beautiful in character that we cannot help but deeply reverence Him, so go on persuading men that they might taste and see and learn to know Him that they too might regard Him as we do*”. The thought of daily appearing before the tribunal of Christ strikes no terror to any heart when rightly understood because all Christians delight to stand there to receive the benefits that they accrue from being there, and with the prospect of finally giving an acceptable account to God - “*every one of us shall give account of himself to God*”. (Rom. 14:12)

Weymouth’s translation of 2 Corinthians 5:11 is a very interesting one in connection with these thoughts. It reads “*Knowing then what the fear of the Lord means, we endeavour to win men, and to God our motives are clear, and I hope clear also to you in your own consciences, despite what other men and opponents of truth and righteousness might be saying about us*”.

Pre-judging

There is still another kind of judging - condemning other workers and writers before the facts are known,

or without taking proper cognizance of the surrounds and circumstances that existed in the time of the writer.

False teaching should not be condoned anywhere or at anytime, but the one who so teaches in ignorance should be dealt with patiently and sympathetically. To illustrate, this is what one commentator says about 2 Corinthians 5:11: “*Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, knowing how much the Lord is to be feared, what an object of terror and alarm it will be to stand at the judgment seat .. it will be a day of awful wailing and alarm when all the living and dead shall be arraigned on trial with reference to their eternal destiny; and when countless hosts of the guilty and impenitent shall be thrust down to an eternal hell. Who can describe the amazing terror of the same ...*”. Those who know the truth are likely to be judging this writer already and are likely to be concluding that they “wouldn’t bother reading his notes, it would be a waste of time”. But read further. He writes “*We persuade men - observe here, it is not we drive men, or we endeavour to alarm men, or we frighten men, or we appeal merely to their fears, but it is we persuade men ... To proclaim constantly the future judgment, and the scenes of future woe, hell fire and perdition - to appeal merely to the fears of men - is not the way in which Paul and the Saviour preached the Gospel. They who fill their sermons with the denunciation of wrath, who dwell on the word hell and damnation ... merely to excite alarm, and who deal damnation round the land, as if they rejoiced that men were to be condemned and in a tone and manner as if they would be pleased to execute it, have yet to learn the true nature of the way to win men to God ... the true effect is to produce tenderness, deep feeling, and love; to prompt to the language of persuasion and of tender entreaty, to lead men to weep over erring sinners rather than to denounce them*”. Here there is a writer who, if he had lived just a little later in the Age, when the light of present truth was more powerfully penetrating the darkness of the dark ages, he would have rejoiced in the greater harmony he would have found in God’s Word. One must not judge according to the light that is now shining - it has not always shone so brightly. And so the temptation to judge this man and his consecration must be suppressed. Observers do not always know the circumstances of another and it behoves them to leave all the judging to the Lord.

May God help all who profess the name of Christ to put away all spirit of harsh judging, and lead them in the way of gentle forbearance, conceding to others the kindly mercy and consideration that they ask for themselves, and receive, from the Lord. All Christians should rather heed the Apostle’s exhortation to the Corinthians to “*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. (2 Cor. 13:5)* Indeed, let all “*judge not, that (they) be not judged*”. (Matt. 7:1)

GOD'S JUSTICE

God, as the architect and creator of the universe, had the right to set the standard that He required of His Human Creation: “*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth’*”. (Genesis 1:27-28)

God had only one requirement of Adam and Eve when they were placed in the Garden of Eden, and that was total obedience. If they ate of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the consequence would be that they would die. When they disobeyed God’s commandment and did eat of the tree, justice required that the penalty be invoked. God could have created robots with no freewill, but this was not his purpose. Mankind was created in God’s image and so Adam and Eve had the freewill to obey or disobey.

The penalty of sin was not simply to die temporarily with the privilege and right thereafter of returning to life. The penalty pronounced gave no indication of any future life - “*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*”. (Genesis 2:17)

The sentence of death was not confined to Adam and Eve but extended to all of their descendants. The Scriptures simply state “*Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous*””. (Romans 5:18-19)

At first glance the condemnation of the whole human race because of the transgression of Adam and Eve might seem to be extremely harsh - one apparently minor transgression bringing about such a severe penalty. Consequently, in order to fully understand God’s justice it is necessary to understand the full implications of imposing the sentence not only on Adam and Eve, but also on their descendants.

In a very short period of time mankind was spiraling downward into sinfulness, with the first murder taking place between Adam and Eve’s own children. “*And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him*”. (Genesis 4:8 KJV)

The human creation degenerated so much that God regretted having created them as recorded in Genesis 6:5-7 “*Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. The LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.”* (NKJV) The Apostle Paul confirms this degradation into sinfulness in Romans 5:12 “*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*” And so we read “*... all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*” (Romans 3:23)

Glimmers of hope

Man has continued in his degenerate state. All mankind has failed to live up to God’s model for them as set out in Genesis 1. However all is not lost. Although the human race as a whole fails to obey God and therefore, on the basis of the sentence passed on Adam, faces extinction, God has a plan that enables Him to be totally just and also to be gracious and merciful. His plan is an act of grace.

As soon as the penalty had been incurred, indeed even while it was being pronounced, the first indication of God’s justice and grace was intimated. The first glimmer of hope came in the statement that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent’s head: “*...the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*”. (Genesis 3:15) Without this glimmer of hope the human race would have been in utter despair, but this promise gave a glimmer of hope that God had a plan for mankind’s ultimate release from the death sentence.

The second indication that God intended to rescue mankind from the sinful conditions of the earth came with His dealings with Noah. Genesis 6:9 reads “*Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God*”. (NASV) God’s dealings with Noah were more than just an example of a righteous man in the midst of a wicked world; they were a picture of what God intended to do in the future. The Apostle Peter says “*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh*,

but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ". (1 Peter 3:18-21) God's dealings with Noah not only showed that God had the ability to provide a way for Noah's deliverance through the instructions to build the Ark and thereby provide a safe haven for Noah and his family as well as for the animal kingdom, but it was also a picture of the salvation that God had planned through Christ. As the Apostle explains "*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us ... by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*".

The massive loss of life and the destruction of the world at that time did not bring mankind, other than Noah and his family, to realize that obedience to God was the only way to have life. The faith chapter in Hebrews (chapter 11) mentions those by name who were faithful to God in Old Testament times, but even they were unable to obtain life as they still came under the death sentence placed on them through Adam. As the Psalmist declares "*none could by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him.*" (Psa. 49:7) Consequently not one of Adam's posterity has ever been able to redress his guilt or to regain the lost inheritance.

God's promise to Abraham

Another illustration of God's ultimate plan came with the testing of Abraham as we read in Genesis 22:11-13 "*And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.*"

Abraham's faith was rewarded with the promise recorded in Genesis 22:15-18 "*And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the*

nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice".

This promise might seem to indicate that God would relent, change His decree and clear the guilty race, but this was not so. Mankind still had to be redeemed from Adam's sin with a price that was equivalent to Adam's status before he transgressed. Since none of his descendants could pay that price it had to be paid by another. God did not leave Abraham in doubt that the only way to blot out and abolish sin's penalty would be by a sacrifice sufficient to meet the penalty. Not only had Abraham's faith in God been tested, but here we also see a picture of God's plan for a sacrifice to pay the penalty for sin.

Still another aspect of God's justice is that the Jewish nation was given an opportunity to obtain everlasting life though obedience to the Law, but they were unable to achieve it because "*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*". (James 2:10). The problem for the Jews was that the human race was incapable of keeping the law because of Man's fallen condition. "*For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh*". (Romans 8:3) Consequently "*the law made nothing perfect*". (Heb. 7:19)

Looking at the world we live in and into the pages of history we see that the human race has continued to fall far short of the model that our Heavenly Father created in Adam and Eve. Some have tried to live good lives and to assist others but all have fallen short of God's perfect standard. The question may well continue to be asked "was the creation of man a mistake or was it part of a greater plan that would show forth God's glory"?

God's Justice

For mankind to have the opportunity to be saved from the curse of death and an opportunity to be reconciled to God a further step was required to meet God's justice. Salvation from death could only be obtained through a redemption that was based upon the fact that the human race as originally created was perfect and upright, an earthly image of its Maker. Man's fall from Divine favor resulted in sin, ruin, and death. All came under this sentence as all were sinners - "*...and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*". (Rom. 5:12)

It was not the pain and suffering in dying that constituted the penalty, but death – the extinction of life. In the case of the sentence falling upon Adam, death was sure even though it was reached by 930 years of dying. Since Adam was dying, all his

children were born in the same dying condition, and were without a right to life. Like their parents, they all died after a more or less lingering process. Thus when Adam forfeited life, as far as he was concerned he forfeited it forever.

Jesus' first advent

At the time of our Lord's birth the whole nation of Israel was in anticipation of the coming Messiah whom they expected would save them from the Roman yoke and restore them to their former glory under the throne of David. We read in Luke's Gospel of two accounts. The first is in Luke 1:67-73 "Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:" (NKJV) The second account is in Luke 2:30-32 when Simeon spoke saying "*For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel*".

Neither Zacharias nor Simeon realized that to bring about this salvation Christ would first have to die as a perfect man to pay the price to redeem mankind. We read in John 3:16-17 "*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved*". (KJV) The expression "*gave His only begotten Son*" was to be exacted in its fullest sense; Jesus was to die as a man.

A price for the redemption of the whole human race was required because the entire race was in Adam when he was condemned, and lost life through him. So when Jesus "*gave Himself a ransom for all*" (1 Timothy 2:6), His death was able to be applied to the whole human race, as an unborn race "*in His loins*", just as the whole human race was condemned in Adam's loins.⁽¹⁾ A full satisfaction, or corresponding price, for all men was thus put into the hands of Justice, to be applied "*in due time*". Jesus thus bought all mankind and has full authority to restore all who come unto God by Him. Thus we read, "*As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were*

made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Rom. 5:18, 19)

The thought of life coming through Jesus after he paid the price for Adam's sin, which had brought corruption and death to mankind, is further explained in 1 Peter 1:3-4 and 18-23 (paraphrased): "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you...ye were not redeemed with corruptible things...but with the precious blood of Christ...Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world...who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God...Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God*". (KJV)

Reconciliation

Thus we see that, with the price paid for mankind's salvation through the redemptive blood of Christ, God's requirement for Justice has been met. With the price paid for mankind's salvation, the work of reconciling the world to God could begin: "*For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life*". (Rom. 5:10) The word translated "reconciled" comes from the Greek word "katallasso" which properly denotes "*to change, exchange (especially of money); hence, of persons, to change from enmity to friendship, to reconcile*." God accomplishes our reconciliation by exercising His grace towards us on the grounds of the death of Christ - "*To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them*". (2 Cor. 5:19)

The death of His Son is the means by which we are able to "*receive the reconciliation*" (Rom. 5:11 Revised Version). Not once is God said to be "reconciled"; the enmity is on our part alone. It is Man who needs to be "reconciled" to God, not God to Man. This reconciliation does not vary God's justice but is in total agreement with it. He always acts according to His unchanging standard of Justice. It is through the merit of the sacrifice of His Son and our Master that we are reconciled to God and by which His justice is satisfied.

⁽¹⁾ The concept of a man's descendants "*being in his loins*" is also applied to Levi. Hebrews 7:9-10 says that Levi was in the loins of his father Abraham, to the extent that he was considered to pay tithes to Melchisedec because his great grandfather Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec. This was so even though Levi was not yet born and was not even one of Abraham's sons, but was three generations later.

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

Mankind faces many problems in everyday life. Many struggle to make sense of their plight and this can mean that Christians are at a loss as to how they can effectively minister to them.

Some Christians might not see where they fit into the Ministry and therefore they might feel inadequate to serve in the Work. However in Ephesians 4:11-12 the Apostle Paul wrote "*He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*" (NKJV) Even so some might feel that they do not fit exactly into any of the categories that Paul mentions. Does this mean that they are excluded from the Ministry? No; earlier in the chapter Paul wrote "*Christ has given each of us special abilities - whatever he wants us to have out of his rich storehouse of gifts.*" (Eph. 4:7 The Living Bible) Every believer has been endowed with the talents that He wishes them to use in spreading the Gospel Message.

Other possible reasons why believers might be hesitant to share the Gospel Message are a lack of confidence that their knowledge is adequate, and that they lack experience in explaining God's word. However the nature of the Ministry varies greatly, and "*doing good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith*" (Gal. 6:10) is part of it. "*For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.*" (1 Pet. 2:11 - 15 NKJV) "*Doing good unto all as we have opportunity*" might have an immediate benefit by "*putting to silence the ignorance of foolish men*", but if not, the effect is not necessarily lost since it might be of benefit in the "*day of visitation*". (1 Pet. 2:12) Thus none should feel that they are unable to be part of the Ministry.

The Ministry

Concerning the ministry to be performed in the present time, the Apostle Paul writes "*Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*" (2 Cor. 5:18-19 NKJV) The question may be asked, "to whom did God commit the ministry?"

There are at least two possible interpretations of the word "US" in 2 Corinthians 5:18 - 19:

- The Apostles only. The Apostles were certainly given this ministry while Christ was on earth, as recorded in Mark 3:14-15: "*And he ordained*

twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sickness and to cast out devils"

- The followers of Christ down through the Gospel Age. Paul referred to some of these as "fellow workers", for example "*Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus*", (Rom. 16:3) and "*Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier*". (Phil. 2:25 NKJV) The ministry was to continue after His departure as He told them just before His ascension: "*...repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*" (Luke 24:47 NKJV) The ministry had to continue until it had reached "*all nations*".

This article is based on the second interpretation and addresses how the ministry of reconciliation pertains to the believer today.

In 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 the Apostle Paul sets out the instructions, or mission, statement that all the children of God are commissioned to carry out, that of the Ministry of Reconciliation. In order to fully appreciate the task defined by Paul it is necessary to understand the meaning of the words "*reconciliation*", "*reconcile*" and "*reconciled*" as they are found in these verses.

Firstly however, it might be helpful to revise the meaning of the English words as they are used today. The word **reconciliation** comes from the verb **reconcile** which, according to the Oxford Dictionary, has the meaning of:

- Make friendly after estrangement (persons to one another, person to or with another).
- Make resigned or contentedly submissive to another.
- To heal (after a quarrel).
- Harmonize, make compatible.

The word **reconciliation** has become widely used in society as Governments and people in general have come to realise that the first step in making amends for the wrongs of the past is to bring the parties together. The aim is to reconcile their differences in all senses of the word. The Governments in many parts of the world have set up "Departments of Reconciliation" to facilitate this process.

Some examples of Reconciliation Commissions are:

- The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which was set up by the Government of National Unity to help deal with the consequences of apartheid. The conflict during that period resulted in widespread violence and abuses

of human rights.

- Indonesian Truth and Reconciliation Commission for dealing with antagonisms in Aceh, West Papua and East Timor.
- Council of Aboriginal Reconciliation Australia. The Council's mission is "*building and promoting reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians for the wellbeing of the nation*".

The word "**reconcile**" in 2 Corinthians 5:18 - 19 is translated from the Greek word "*katallasso*" which properly denotes "to change, exchange (especially of money); hence, of persons, to change from enmity to friendship, to reconcile." The word translated "**reconciliation**" is translated from the Greek word "*katallage*" which means "an exchange," and denotes a change on the part of one party, induced by an action on the part of another". (Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words)

From the meanings of the words in 2 Corinthians 5 it is apparent that, since God has set before the believers a "*ministry of reconciliation*", there is enmity between God and Man.

The Beginning of the Enmity

The enmity started in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. "*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die'*". (Gen. 2:16-17 NKJV) It was not long before God's commandment was broken: "*Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil".*" (Gen. 3:4-5 NKJV) Eve took of the fruit and gave it to Adam who also ate it. The result was that "...*the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked*". (Gen. 3:7 NKJV) God's law had been broken and they were banished from the garden and the dying process began.

The Nation of Israel

The nation of Israel had a special relationship with God, which required them to make yearly sacrifices on the Day of Atonement. While those sacrifices constituted a visible ceremony that appeased their conscience, they could "*never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect*". (Heb. 10:1 NKJV) The sacrifices they made did not reconcile them to God because "...*it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins*". (Heb. 10:4 NKJV) This was so in spite of the fact that the animals they sacrificed had to be perfect: "*You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God a bull or sheep*

which has any blemish or defect, for that is an abomination to the LORD your God". (Deut. 17:1 NKJV)

God's justice meant that not even the sacrifice of a human being could redeem them; "*None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him; For the redemption of their souls is costly...*" (Psa. 49:7-8 NKJV) Consequently if mankind's reconciliation to God had depended solely on Adamic stock, it would not have been possible. Thus the significance of Jesus' sacrifice is evident: "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, ... For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved*". (John 3:16-17 NKJV) The love of the Heavenly Father for His creation and the willingness of His only begotten son Jesus Christ to pay the ransom price opened the way to reconciliation.

The Good News

At the time of Christ's birth the angels brought the message to the Shepherd's saying, "*Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord*". (Luke 2:10-11 NKJV) While the angels' words would have gladdened the hearts of the shepherds, they did not disclose the fact that God had a plan from the "*foundation of the world*" to reconcile mankind to Himself. (1 Pet. 1:20) Jesus, the Christ, His only begotten Son, was to be "*the lamb slain*", "*a lamb without blemish and without spot*" "*who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth*". (Rev. 13:8, 1 Pet. 1:18, Isa. 53:9) What a wonderful provision God has made for mankind!

A Christian's Responsibilities

As followers of Christ it is a Christian's responsibility to proclaim the Good News of reconciliation.. This work began with Jesus when He commenced His life of ministry at His baptism in the river Jordan.

The words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:14 explain the work of reconciliation: "*For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again*". (NKJV) Here is the reason for this ministry to be carried on by the believers today: it is "*the love of Christ*" that compels believers to spread the wonderful news that He died, is risen and is sitting at the right hand of God.

In 2 Corinthians 5:18 Paul explains that "*(God) ... has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ*".

Christians have been brought into a state of reconciliation through Christ. Before they accepted Christ's sacrifice they were opposed to God, alienated from Him. After acceptance of Christ, believers are brought into a state of agreement, or harmony, and are re-united to him. Paul expands this in Romans 5:8-11: "...*justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation*". (NKJV)

Hope for the World

It is wonderful news for believers that they have been saved, reconciled to their Heavenly Father. However this privileged position brings responsibility: "*God has given us the ministry of reconciliation*". The question may be asked "to whom are they to minister?" To many believers the world is so alienated from God, showing no love for Him, rejecting Him as their Creator and disobeying His laws that they are unworthy of reconciliation to God.

Before dismissing such a ministry of reconciliation, it is necessary for the believer to remember that before they received God's grace they were sinners just as is the world. The Apostle Paul declares: "*Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others*". (Eph. 2:3) Additionally it was not just the physical actions that constituted transgression: "*You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart*". (Matt. 5:27-29 NKJV) Earlier in that chapter it is recorded that Christ told the disciples that they could break God's law just by being angry with a brother; such standards put them at risk of sinning by their thoughts alone.

God has a plan to reconcile all of mankind in due time. The words of the Apostle John clearly explain that "*He (Christ) is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world*". (1 John 2:2 NKJV) The meaning of the word "*propitiation*" is that of "*reconciling, appeasing, turning away anger*". The promise is that Christ is the propitiation for the whole world..

It is only when believers realise that in times past they had to be reconciled to God, and their reconciliation was met only by the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they are able to realise the need for the ministry of reconciliation. They must possess the same spirit of reconciliation as their Lord. If they have only an intellectual knowledge of the sacrifice, and do not

realise the great cost of their redemption, then they will never realise the great joy of the task that has been set before them.

Their ministry requires two way contact; they must be in constant contact with God as well as with the people to whom they are ministering, as revealed in the ministry of Jesus. His presence amongst men is the most eloquent testimony to the fact that He possessed the spirit of reconciliation in fullest measure, being continually in contact with his Father through prayer as well as with the ordinary people of that day.

The atonement made by the Redeemer has rendered it possible for God to exercise the benevolence of His nature, and to pardon the offenders. God has not changed, He was always merciful, and good, and the gift of a Saviour and the plan of reconciliation is an expression of His willingness to pardon those who come to Him either now or during the future Kingdom Age. In 1 Timothy 2:5-6 it is explained that there will be a time, called "due time", when those who have not accepted Christ and his Father during this present "Gospel Age" will have an opportunity to understand Jesus' work. The text reads "*For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time*". (NKJV) His sacrificial work, and the reconciliation that it affords, is not yet testified (that is, made known) to the world in general. However the text declares that a time is coming when His ransom sacrifice will be testified, or made known, to all.

The Christians' Joy

How can Christians not rejoice when they realise the great love God has for them, freeing them from the bondage of sin (John 8:34; Rom. 6:18), and the fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15)? How can we not want to spread the "*glad tidings of great joy to all men*", "*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*". (2 Cor. 5:19 NASV)

**O TEACH me Lord, that I may teach
The precious things Thou dost impart;
And wing my words that they may reach
The hidden depths of many a heart.**

**O use me, Lord, use even me,
Just as Thou wilt, and when, and where,
Until Thy blessed face I see,
Thy rest, Thy joy, Thy glory share.**

Bible Student Hymnal 290

THE KING'S SON AND HIS BRIDE

Revelation 19:7 (NIV) reads: "*Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory, for the wedding of the lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.*"

Behind all things, and before all things, is the glorious Eternal One, Lord and Father of all. "*The Lord has established His throne in heaven and His kingdom rules over all*" (Psalms 103:19 NIV). His empire is unlimited, His dominion is supreme, His reign is forever. He is the royal head of all that is, the sovereign dispenser of all that transpires on earth, in heaven, in space and in all time as Isaiah 46:9, 10 states: "*Remember the former things, those of long ago. I am God and there is no other. I am God and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times what is still to come; I say my purpose will stand and I will do all that I please.*" (NIV)

Our Father in heaven has a Son, pre-eminent and above all, the only creation by His own divine hand. Colossians 1:15,16 states: "*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers, or rulers or authorities, all things were created by him and for him.*" The Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 2:7, 8 that this pre-eminent son "*divested himself, taking a bondsman's form, having been made in the likeness of men; and being in condition as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.*" (Diaglott translation) What a wonderful story of parental love, blended with divine justice, is conveyed to us in the fact that God so loved the world that while we were yet sinners, He gave His only begotten Son to be our redeemer. He did this so that He might restore again to divine favour and blessing all who will return to Him after learning of his loving provisions. There is but one such story as God has but one such Son.

Our loving heavenly Father, having provided redemption for all our race through Christ Jesus, has glorified and honoured our dear Redeemer as a reward for those things he endured faithfully through obedience to Him. Philippians 2:9-11 continues "*Wherefore God has highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, ...and ...every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*" (KJV)

In the divine plan, our heavenly Father desired a royal marriage to be arranged for His beloved Son. He was not to be alone. It was meant that he should have a Bride. It was not one individual that was chosen to be the Bride but many individuals. Although they are

many, when compared with the world, the bride is only a little flock. It is hard to grasp the thought that the Creator, when selecting this little flock who would be associated with His Son in the great Millennial work of blessing all the families of the earth, did not invite the holy angels to be the bride, "*Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*" (Heb. 1:14) He has, instead, sent the invitation to our fallen race, to those who have the ears to hear and the hearts to respond to the call of this Gospel Age.

During the process of Her selection throughout the Age, the church has not been the Bride but only engaged to become the Bride. All those who are of this elect church are virgins, pledged to Christ, having the promises of becoming "*joint heirs*" with him, (Rom. 8:17) and "*seeing him as he is*", (1 John 3:2) so "*that where I am, there ye may be also*". (John 14:3) The wedding and the marriage has been before Her, in prospect, as a thing of the future. It has been only an object of promise, of hope, to be fulfilled when She is complete at the appointed time.

The Apostle Paul compares this spiritual marriage with earthly marriage, (Eph. 5:22 - 32) and as the earthly bride shares in her husband's glory, so Christ's bride will share in his glory. When Peter asked Jesus, "*We have left everything to follow you. What then will there be for us?* Jesus said to them, *I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things when the Son of man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel; and everyone who has left houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father or mother or children, or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.*" (Matt. 19:27 - 30 NIV)

In John 3:29, John the Baptist said: "*The Bride belongs to the Bridegroom; the friend who attends the Bridegroom waits and listens for him and is full of joy when he hears the Bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.*" (NIV) Jesus speaks of himself as a bridegroom in Matthew 9:15 saying, "*How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, then they will fast.*" Likewise the Apostle Paul wrote: "*For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ*". (2 Corinthians 11:2)

The privilege of this call to be of the bride class was given firstly to a particular people, but they, as a people, failed to profit by their calling. The servants were sent at first not to call all humanity but those

who were invited. Up to the time of the Redeemer's coming to Earth, the Jewish people had been exclusively God's covenanted people, and they were the first to be invited to be His Son's bride. But as a nation they rejected the invitation; they would not come. After his resurrection Christ gave a second commission to the apostles which sent them into all the world after they had made a beginning at Jerusalem. The result was that a number of those invited responded, adding to the remnant of the Jews as the nucleus of the bride class. But still as a nation they rejected the offer. A nation already guilty of the Messiah's blood now filled up the measure of its wickedness by rejecting forgiveness and murdering the men who were sent to offer it.

The failure of the Jews resulted in the call being extended to the Gentiles. Other guests were now invited to fill the places that the chosen people refused, so the command was - *"Go ye therefore into the highways and as many as you shall find bid to the marriage feast".* (Matt. 22:9) From Jerusalem the call went to Antioch, Samaria, Corinth, Athens and Rome and through all the cities and nations at that time.

Two striking features mentioned in Revelation 19:7, are firstly, the '*marriage of the Lamb*', and secondly that his Wife, the church, '*has made herself ready*'. This is a matter of great importance, for membership of the Bride of Christ relates to a relationship and a new life in Christ. *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come."* (2 Corinthians. 5:17 NIV) Also, in Romans 12:2 Paul wrote *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind and you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will."* (NIV). James, "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" wrote *"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls".* (James 1:19 - 21)

There is a beautiful illustration of the marriage in Psalm 45:10 -13: *"Listen, O daughter, consider and give ear. Forget your people and your father's house. The king is enthralled by your beauty; honour him, for he is your Lord ... All glorious is the princess within her chamber; her gown is interwoven with gold."* Her beauty is the beauty of holiness. Outwardly, before the world, she is not glorious but this will not always be so, for the promise in Revelation 2:10 is *"Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life."* Psalm 45:14 continues *"She shall be brought to the king in raiment of needlework."* (KJV)

In this picture each member of the church who accepts Christ as their Saviour, and the invitation to this

wedding, is given a wedding garment. The garment is Christ's righteousness that is attributed to them as it is written *"To the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he has made us acceptable in the beloved."* (Eph. 1:6 KJV)

However there is a work Christians have to do, and that is to keep their garments unspotted from the world, and to embroider them. Embroidery is a picture of beauty; adornment by the Christian graces. The Apostle Peter expresses it: *"And besides this, giving all diligence add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge self control, and to self control patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love; for if these things be in you and abound they make you that you neither shall be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, for so an entrance shall be administered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ."* (2 Peter 1: 5 - 8, 11 KJV)

We would be discouraged by such a high standard set before us if it were not for the many precious promises of divine help and forgiveness when we fall short. One such assurance is stated in 1 John 1:9 - *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (KJV) Another is given to us in Hebrews 4:15,16 - *"For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come with confidence to the throne of grace that we might obtain mercy and find grace in times of need."*

It has previously been written "We do not know the details of this marriage as it shall be fulfilled, but we are told that with this marriage there is to be a great feast. The king speaks of a dinner prepared and it seems that the various descriptions referring to a feast, a marriage supper, have reference more to the complete enjoyment and feast of blessedness in the heavenly home, the joys of the kingdom in its full manifestation when the shadows of time have given praise to the realities of eternity. It is a feast of perfected redemption. ... As 1 Corinthians 13:12 states: 'Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror but then we shall see him face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know fully even as I am fully known.' And again, in 2 Corinthians 4:18 - 'So now we fix our eyes, not on what is seen but what is unseen, for what is seen is temporary but what is unseen is eternal.' Prayers then will change into praises, crosses into crowns, hope into fruition, feebleness into power, corruption into glory, mortality into immortality, and all the toils and aches and disabilities of this old world will be swallowed up in the perfections and everlasting jubilee of heaven."

May our heavenly Father help each one of us to be faithful to this most blessed invitation.

LOVE ...IS KIND

There are numerous acts of kindness performed every day, all of them springing from a desire of one person or group to help another. Such acts are expressions of love.

Kindness benefits the recipient

One characteristic of all acts of kindness is that they benefit the recipient. It is possible for us to provide "assistance" but for that assistance to "do more harm than good". Every attempt we make to be kind to anyone must have, as its objective, the benefit of the recipient. This means that the focus must be on what the recipient needs, and not on what we are able to do or what we would like to do.

A lesson from the Samaritan

The example of the "Good Samaritan", narrated by Jesus, (Luke 10:30-35) illustrates the two ingredients of every act of kindness; one person has a need and another person relieves that need. The *"man fell among thieves which stripped him of his raiment, wounded (him), and departed, leaving him half dead"*. The man had need of assistance. When the Samaritan *"saw him (he) had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds ... and took care of him"*. The Samaritan exercised kindness towards the man; he saw that the man had need of care, and he helped him. His action was an expression of love.

Spiritual kindness

The kindness shown by the Samaritan was of a physical nature. There is also a need for us to be kind in our spiritual ministry.

Paul was conscious of the need for his ministry to be beneficial to those who received him. He fed the Corinthians *"with milk and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it"*. (1 Cor. 3:2) Likewise he exhorted the Romans to ensure that they did not *"destroy another with our meat"* because to do so would be *"walking not charitably"* (not lovingly). (Rom. 14:15) On his last visit to Ephesus Paul recounted how he had *"kept back nothing that was profitable unto you ..."* (Acts 20:17-38) Paul's focus was on those things that were profitable to them.

Jesus was the first to demonstrate the principle of feeding less experienced ones with appropriate spiritual food. When teaching his disciples He told them that He *"had many things to say unto them but they could not bear them now"*. (John 16:12) His focus was on their ultimate spiritual welfare and so He withheld those truths from them at that time.

These principles are relevant to us today. Should the Lord provide us with an opportunity to minister to others we must ensure that we do not overwhelm them with concepts they cannot comprehend at their present

stage of growth. Failure to observe this principle is "walking not charitably", and such a course is the very opposite of what we should try to achieve.

Kindness in Communication

The Apostle Paul alerts us to the possibility of destroying or undoing acts of kindness by our communication. In Ephesians 4:29-5:2, the Apostle contrasts corrupt communication with that which edifies: *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth but that which is good for the use of edifying"* (building up). In verse 31 he lists some particular aspects of communication that are damaging - *"bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, malice"*. In verse 32 he contrasts these characteristics with an exhortation to be *"kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. ... walk in love ..."* (Eph. 5:2)

God's kindness to the world

In Titus 3:4 Paul says that *"... the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared"*. Both kindness and love are mentioned, and there is a precious truth to be had in distinguishing these two terms.

The love referred to in Titus 3:4 is God's love for, or *"fondness of, mankind"* - His *"philanthropia"*. (Strong #5363). It is God's love for mankind that is behind every facet of His plan, including sending His *"only begotten Son"* to Earth to redeem mankind from sin and death.

However love alone does not require any action. It is kindness that requires action (*chrestotes* - Strong #5544 - *"usefulness"*). There is a parallel between faith and works on the one hand, and kindness and love on the other. Just as *"faith without works is dead"* (James 2:17), so also love without kindness is dead. It is the acts of kindness that flow from one's love that manifests that love. Hence the provision of His son to be Man's redeemer constitutes God's kindness, and it is His kindness that *"appeared"* at Jesus' first advent. Until that time there was no visible evidence how He was going to redeem mankind - there were numerous prophecies and promises but they were invisible. But now both His love and kindness had *"appeared"* - *"become visible"* (*"epiphaino"* - Strong #2014).

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