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THE GRACE OF HUMILITY

"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;" (Philippians 2:3 NASB)

Throughout the Scriptures the quality of humility is consistently commended to us as an element of character to be earnestly desired and carefully cultivated. The Apostle Paul says, "Pursue Love" and understanding that humility is a component part of love ("love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up") therefore Paul is saying in effect, "Follow after humility." Yes, humility, like all the other beautiful graces that go to make up the Christ-like character, must be carefully cultivated by the children of God. Paul says in Romans 12: 16, "Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation." (NASB)

The wise man in Proverbs 16:19 says, "It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly Than to divide the spoil with the proud." Again, A man's pride will bring him low, But a humble spirit will obtain honor." (Proverbs 29:23 NASB) In Micah chapter 6 under the heading "What Does the Lord Require" the following advise is given "But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God"

All grand and noble-minded characters whom the Lord has used in the past have been humble-minded. "Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination in the sight of the Lord." Apostle Peter writes "You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time," (1 Peter 5:5-6 NASB)

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was a living exponent of the grace of humility. See Him leaving the courts of heaven to take the lowly estate of man in order to be the sin-bearer and Saviour of fallen man. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9 NASB)

The opening sentence of the Sermon on the Mount is "Blessed are the poor in spirit (the humble minded) for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Again, He said, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." (Matt. 11: 29.) Paul's words in Philippians 2 help us in seeking the grace of humility— "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." (Phil. 2: 3.) Those who naturally have a humble mind have no difficulty in esteeming others better than themselves, but there are some who naturally have another attitude of mind.

This is not necessarily their fault, for they may have been born with larger self-conceit than others. But even if we were born with humbleness of mind, we should take care that self-conceit and pride do not come in. Sometimes in their own heart some people feel boastful of the knowledge they possess. They like to shine, even though they know they have no more brilliancy than others.; they would like to obscure the shining of others that they might be the more noticed in the darkness. It would, therefore, be a safe matter for each of us to follow the Apostle's suggestion to cultivate this humility of mind and never allow it to be lost. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (1 Pet. 5: 6; Luke 14: 11.) God would do this abasing, not in a vengeful spirit, but because

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the one who would vaunt himself must be brought low.

There might, however, be circumstances when some who appear to be vaunting themselves really are not doing so, but circumstances and conditions make it seem so. Therefore, to best fulfil the Apostle's injunction, we should, as he suggests in this text, cultivate the spirit of humility — not considering our own good qualities so much as those of others. If we have some good qualities, let us be thankful to God, and remember that every good gift comes down from the God of all grace. We have nothing that we have not received, whether it be by natural endowment, or by the grace of God in Christ; so we do well to remember Paul's advice "not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think," but to think soberly of ourselves, remembering that it is by the grace of God that we are what we are. "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12 NASB) We stand only by virtue of God's grace in Christ; without Christ we can do nothing.

In comparing ourselves with others, let us look at our own blemishes. There are very few in whom we cannot see some good qualities, good traits. If, therefore, we look at our own imperfections and the good qualities of others, we shall find ourselves more and more appreciative of others; and this will, be of assistance to us in running the race. The consideration of our own imperfections would tend to make us very humble of mind and keep us in this attitude of mind.

We know that "all things work together for good to those who love God." Through His Word our Lord has provided for such the "Balm of Gilead" for their encouragement, and the anointing oil and the comfort of the Scriptures. The Lord does not cast us off if we are not wilfully wrongdoers, and if we take the humbling things in the right spirit; that disposition is what He wants. Those things which would humble us in the sight of others and in the sight of the Lord Himself, will, if we are rightly exercised by them, work together for good to us. Such He will bless and lift up and give an appreciation of His love.

For each one to look merely upon his own things, interests, welfare or talents, and to ignore those of others, would manifest a general selfishness and, consequently, a dearth of the spirit of Christ, which is a spirit of love and generosity. In proportion as we are filled more and more with the holy spirit, love, we shall find ourselves interested in the welfare of others. This was the mind, disposition, or spirit which was in our dear Redeemer, which He so wonderfully manifested, and which we must copy and develop in our characters if we would be of the "little flock," who shall be joint-heirs with

Christ in His glory, concerning whom God has predestinated that to be accepted with Him to this position we must be "copies of his dear Son." (Rom. 8: 29.) See Mark 9: 33-35 ; Matt. 18: 1-5.

The subject of this lesson is one for the most careful and prayerful consideration of every child of God, and especially of all who are in any way tempted to ambition and rivalry, or vainglory in the Lord's service. While the humility of the Lord's apostles is very marked in their subsequent careers, in the beginning, of their course they were all to some extent influenced by the old ideas which it was the object of Christ's teaching gradually to eliminate.

After the peculiar experiences on the Mount of Transfiguration and the selection by the Lord of three of their number for that notable occasion, the question of relative prominence in the kingdom was naturally suggested to their minds, and apparently it led to a dispute which manifested some selfishness. It was to correct this disposition, and to show its antagonism to the spirit which must prevail in the kingdom of God, that our Lord sought an opportunity to converse with them on the subject. "And he came to Capernaum, and being in the house, he asked them, what was it that ye disputed about among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace, for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest." By and by one of them inquired, "Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

Then followed the lesson, so important to the apostles, who were subsequently to be exposed to great temptations to ambition and rivalry among themselves for the chief place in the estimation and in the hearts of the people of God—the kingdom in embryo—among whom they were all to be leaders and teachers, chosen witnesses of God. And the Lord would have them be not only witnesses of His truth, but exponents also of the power of His spirit in transforming the heart and moulding the character into graceful conformity to the divine will. But if the lesson was thus important to the apostles in their position as leaders, it is also important to the whole church, all of whom are, to a greater or less extent, exposed to temptations to rivalry and ambition. "And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith to them, If any man desire to be first (i.e., if he manifest the spirit of rivalry), the same shall be last of all, and servant of all."

The spirit of rivalry being the very opposite of the spirit of love and meekness which must characterize all who shall be counted worthy of the kingdom, this statement is seen to be the logical sequence of such a course; for if such a one shall ever enter the kingdom he must first have that disposition thoroughly removed ; and if it be deep

seated or long cultivated, it may take considerable time and discipline to accomplish it, while, meantime, others, not so afflicted, may be engaged in the more rapid development of those graces of character and of mind which fit them more and more for extended usefulness and service, thus necessarily leaving the one under discipline to be the last and least, instead of the first and foremost.

Jesus wanted the disciples to take this lesson to heart and ponder it well, they were to become as little children with simplicity of heart, meekness, truthfulness, freedom from ambition and rivalry, faith, confiding trust, love, obedience, teachable, indifference to social distinctions and popular opinions, and guileless. The possession of such a child-like spirit indicates that the man is not overestimating himself. He views himself as God sees him—as a very imperfect man, striving in much weakness to measure up to the standard of a perfect man, and realising that his best efforts still leave him far short of the mark of perfection. And so he is humbled, in consideration of his failures, rather than puffed up by comparing himself with those of still lower attainments.

The parable of a man with a beam in his own eye trying to pick a mote out of his brother's eye was a forceful method whereby the Master instructed the necessity of humility on the part of those who would be taught of God. Humility is here, as elsewhere, put as a foundation virtue. The Latin word for humility is "humus"—ground. This implies that it is soil out of which other virtues are produced. One has said, "The more a man does examine, the more does he discover the infirm ties of his own character." Another has wisely commented, "Ten thousand of the greatest faults in our neighbours are of less consequence to us than one of the smallest in ourselves."

Let us give earnest heed to the wisdom of the Word of God and "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God," remembering that "God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble."

The Apostle Paul urges us to "Consider Christ" in Hebrews 12: 3, and in Phil. 2: 5 he says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," and goes on to describe and explain that the mind which was in Christ Jesus was the mind of humility. Although He was in the form of God, He thought not by robbery to be equal with God,—He did not meditate a usurpation of Jehovah's power or position. On the contrary He humbled Himself; He made Himself of no reputation; He divested Himself of all His power and honour as the pre-human Logos ; He took upon Himself the form of a servant ; He humbled Himself ; and Paul goes on

to show that the humbling of Himself did not end with His step down from a very high form of spiritual life to the lowly estate of man. Consider His utter self — forgetfulness; nurtured by a humble maiden, born in an obscure manger ; lovingly cared for by lowly parents to whom He was subject until He became 30 years of age—manhood's estate under the Law.

Even then, when our Lord appeared as a man—a perfect man—crowned with the glory and honour of perfect manhood, the humbling, process continued. He had not only laid aside the symbols of His glory and become man ; but when He was a man He humbled Himself. Humiliation was a constant characteristic of Him as a man ; He did not aspire to high honours; He did not affect pomp and parade ; He did not demand the service of a train of menials, but He condescended to the lowest conditions of life. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." "I am among you as he that serveth."■

A Prayer

Heavenly Father, Holy One!
May Thy will in us be done;
Make our hearts submissive, meek,
Let us ne'er our own way seek.

Loving Saviour, we would be
Ever more and more like Thee,
Free from pride and self-desire,
Fervent with a holy fire.

Jesus, Master, we would bear
In Thy sufferings a share;
Help us, Lord, to follow Thee,
Heavy though the cross may be.

Fill us with Divinest love,
With Thy spirit from above,
May we patiently endure,
Trusting in Thy promise sure.

Blessed Lord, Thy saints defend,
Watching o'er them to the end;
Day by day their faith increase,
Keep them in Thy perfect peace;

Comfort, strengthen, guide and bless,
Lead them through the wilderness,
And when Thy due time shall come,
Gather all Thy loved ones home.

Poems of the Dawn

RAISED IN GLORY

"He is not here, for He has risen" (Matthew 28:6 NASB)

Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightening, and his garment as white as snow!

You can possibly imagine how they must have felt, when they saw this messenger from God sitting in their presence! The guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. The angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said, come see the place where He was lying, and go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him: behold I have told you."

He has risen are some of the most profound words ever spoken outside of when God addressed Moses. In these words the entire future of mankind was hanging in the balance! Go quickly and tell them, "He has risen."

As the Apostle Paul tells us in 1Corinthians 15:20, "But Christ has been raised from the dead, the *first fruits* of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive."

In His final words to His disciples when He appeared to them after His resurrection Jesus said, as we find in Matthew 28:18, "*All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I command you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*". Even to this very day we have been enlightened to understand the Holy scriptures, yes having an insight into the scriptures that the world has not!

When Jesus spoke these words He was fulfilling the prophesy that Isaiah had spoken hundreds of years before. These words are found in Isaiah 9:6,7. "*For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders: and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace. On the throne of David and over His*

kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD Jehovah of hosts will accomplish this." Of course we see this direct fulfillment as future, in the millennium, however the groundwork is being laid for this kingdom as we speak! Jesus in the beginning of that period will bring forth all who are in their graves with the assistance of His church. He has earned this God-like status from His Father to bring about the ultimate will of the Father.

In the gospel of John chapter 5 starting with verse 25, we find Jesus speaking to the crowd, again this is a prelude to the millennium, but also to His followers down the age, us, brethren. "*Truly truly, I say unto you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and those who hear shall live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of man.*". "*Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. I can do nothing on my own initiative. As I hear I judge; and My judgment is just because I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent me.*" Jesus Spoke these Words prior to His crucifixion.

We are extremely blessed, for our relationship is with Jehovah, our Father, through the covering of Christ Jesus, righteousness. Our petitions in prayer are to the Eternal one. Or as the prophet Daniel says, "The Ancient of Days". The world does not have this privilege brethren! Remembering what Jesus said after His resurrection, go, preach the gospel to the whole world.

We are to be witnesses for our Lord Jesus. Some of us consecrate and begin our witness earlier, while others come later in life, but to the same end. The scriptures give us examples of the earlier and later. In Acts the 7th chapter we see the deacon Stephen completing his walk at a relative early age, while the Apostle John lived into his nineties.

The account of Stephen's experiences are similar to that of our Lord Jesus. He also performed wonders and signs. They were both tried by the Sanhedrin, and they both prayed for the forgiveness of their killers!

Are we not also to be compassionate to our enemies? Does it not say that God loved us when we were yet "*Sinners!*" We are told to hate the sin not the sinner! Do not despair brethren. For God and His Son look at what we can become, not what we are! There is a story told of Michelangelo while he was carving on a block of marble. The individual observing asked him what he was carving, his answer was, "I'm trying to release the angel contained therein". God looks at the heart.....

When Jesus picked Peter to be a foundation of His church don't you think the other disciples must have wondered why, and even grumbled. Here was a man who was unruly, course, uneducated, and only a fisherman. How could Jesus pick such a man?

We find the answer to their possible question in the book of Acts beginning in the 5th chapter, verse 14. *"And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women were constantly added to their numbers; to such an extent that they even carried the sick out onto the streets, and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on any one of them, and they thought they might be healed. And also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick, or afflicted with unclean spirits; and they were all healed!"* Jesus saw into the heart of Peter and knew what he would become!

On the other end of the spectrum we look at the Apostle Paul. Are any of us as educated as he was, or hold such high power? Here was the man who held the coats of the men who brutally stoned Stephen to death. In Acts chapter 9 we read of an unusual account about Saul. Acts 9:10-18. *"Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, 'Ananias', and he said 'Behold here am I Lord'. And the Lord said to him, 'Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for behold he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.'"*

To test your faith, you might ask yourself, would you be willing to follow these instructions? But Ananias answered, "Lord I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon Thy name." But the Lord said to him, *"Go for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake."*

And Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit", and immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he rose and was baptized."

The principle of this account is found in 1Samuel 16:7, we quote, "For Jehovah seeth not as man seeth. For the man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart."

Saul, a man who had destined himself to rid the land of these so-called Christians, became the Apostle Paul, who wrote over 14 books of the New Testament, if you include Hebrews!, Jesus saw into his heart and knew what he could become.

As we examine the time of Jesus' resurrection once again, we turn to the book of John and read a beautiful account of the tenderness of Jesus to Mary, a disciple, as she viewed the empty tomb. Now remember this Mary is the one who anointed Jesus feet and was scolded by the disciples. John 12:1-8. *"Jesus therefore six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. Mary therefore took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume, but Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for 300 denarii, and given to the poor people?' Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. Jesus therefore said, 'Let her alone, in order that she may keep it for the day of my burial.'"* This woman had been given prior knowledge of Jesus impending death, whether she realized it or not. The information had been given from on High!

Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she beheld two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been lying. And they said to her, "Woman why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around, and beheld Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, *"Woman why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?"* Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away". Jesus said to her, "*Mary!*" She

turned to Him and said to Him in Hebrew "*Rabboni*" which means teacher."

This tender scene was Jesus' assurance to Mary that everything was alright! And again to give assurance to His disciples, Jesus appeared to them in a closed room the first day of the week. Jesus came and stood in their presence, and said to them, "*Peace be with you*" And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples therefore rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

After the resurrection, many events took place. Events that would fix firmly in the minds of Jesus' disciples that these things had actually come about as He had foretold!

When the angel of Jehovah spoke the words, "He is Risen", the kingdom of God had begun. The adversary's fate had been sealed! Brethren, do you not realize you also, are the kingdom of God! In Luke the 17th chapter we read the account of the cleansing of the lepers, Jesus made an astonishing statement! In this account! In the story, there were 10 lepers. All were healed, nevertheless after they left, only one returned to come back to give thanks to God through Jesus. Jesus told him, "Rise and go your way; faith has made you well." Now being questioned by the Pharisee as to when the kingdom was coming, Jesus answered and said the kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, "Look here it is, or, there it is! As he was speaking to them he made this astounding statement. For the kingdom is in your midst". Jesus was telling them that he was the beginning fruit of that kingdom! As co-laborers of Him, brethren, we become part of that kingdom of which He referred. With Him, we are the kingdom of God!

As feet members of our Lord, we have a great responsibility to represent Him in a loving and informative way. As feet members our commission is clearly spelled out in the book of Isaiah, chapter 52 verse 7, we quote, "*How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace, and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, and says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'*" This was the commission Jesus gave to His disciples upon His resurrection! We are the "John Class". In no other religious group do you find this encouragement.

After three and a half years of Jesus' ministry, and following His death and His resurrection, the angel of Jehovah spoke saying, "*He is Risen*". This announcement coming direct from heaven, clearly demonstrated that Jehovah had accepted Christ's sacrifice and had given His approval for the great work that was to follow!

In the book of Matthew we are given nine very

important teachings that were given to those who were gathered for the sermon on the mount by our Lord. He gave these teachings, for He knew that He would not always be with them in person. I'm sure these teachings came to mind after His resurrection.

These teachings if you will are a road map to the kingdom. If they are followed faithfully, you will never fail! "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted, Blessed are the gentle for they shall inherit the earth, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied, Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy, Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God, Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God, Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, Blessed are you when men cast insults at you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you on account of Me*"

His final admonition was, "*Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*"

We must exercise great self-control in this walk. As the scriptures in Luke 21:19 says, "*By your patience will you gain your lives*". *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.*"

"He is not here for He has risen" ■

*I walked today where Jesus walked,
In days of long ago.
I wandered down each path He knew,
with reverent step and slow.
Those little lanes they have not changed,
A sweet peace fills the air.
I walked today where Jesus walked,
And felt His presence there.
My path led through Bethlehem,
Ah! memories ever sweet;
The little hills of Galilee,
That knew those childish feet;
The mount of olives hallowed scenes
That Jesus knew before;
I saw the mighty Jordan roll,
As in the days of yore.
I knelt today where Jesus knelt,
Where all alone He prayed;
The garden of Gethsemane..
My heart felt unafraid.
I picked my heavy burden up,
And with Him by my side, I climbed
The hill of Calvary, where on the cross He died.
I walked today where Jesus walked.
And felt Him close to me.*

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SHAVUOT-FESTIVAL OF WEEKS

"You shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks, that is, the first fruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year." (Exodus 34:22 NASB)

All Jewish males were required to appear before the Lord. "Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to Me. "You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. And none shall appear before Me empty-handed. "Also, you shall observe the Feast of the Harvest of the first fruits of your labors from what you sow in the field; also, the Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in the fruit of your labors from the field. (Exodus 23:14-16 NASB)

Jehovah made a promise to Israel if they fulfilled His laws "...I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your borders, and no man shall covet your land when you go up three times a year to appear before the LORD your God." (Exodus 34:24 NASB) Moses was told "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." (Exodus 34:27 NASB)

Obedience to God's laws brought a promise. "He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you." "You shall be blessed above all peoples; there will be no male or female barren among you or among your cattle". (Deuteronomy 7:13-14 NASB)

The Festival of Weeks was an occasion to present the first of the wheat crop to God. In Israel, agriculture was the basis of the economy; the basis of life. People's welfare and wealth were tied to the land. The reward for the hard work of tilling and planting was the harvest.

The term weeks was used to describe the time period from the barley harvest until the wheat harvest. It is called the Feast of Weeks because God specifically told the sons of Jacob that they were to count seven sevens of weeks (seven complete weeks) from Firstfruits (Leviticus 23:15; Deuteronomy 16:9), and then on the "morrow" this feast was to be observed. Seven sevens of weeks are forty-nine days. Add one additional day ("on the morrow"), and it brings the total number

of days to fifty.

Interestingly, the field harvesters were to leave the corners untouched in order for the poor and immigrants to gather food for themselves: "And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God." Lev. 23:22.

The children of Israel were not to simply bring the firstfruits of the wheat to the Temple (as they brought the firstfruit of the barley at the Feast of Firstfruits), but rather two loaves of bread. These two loaves were specifically commanded to be made with fine flour and baked with leaven (Leviticus 23:17), and they were to be used as a "wave offering" for the people.

These two loaves, however, could not be eaten until after the ceremony was completed and could not be placed on the altar due to their leaven content. In addition to the wave offering, two lambs, one young bull, and two rams were to be offered as burnt offerings before the Lord (Leviticus 23:15-22; Numbers 28:26-31). The feast was concluded by the eating of communal meals to which the poor, the stranger, and the Levites were invited.

The loaves differed from all the other meat-offerings, being made of leavened dough, because in them, their daily bread was offered to the Lord, Who had blessed the harvest, as a thank-offering. They were therefore only given to the Lord symbolically by waving and to the priests "The priest shall then wave them with the bread of the first fruits for a wave offering with two lambs before the LORD; they are to be holy to the LORD for the priest." (Leviticus 23:20 NASB) ■

"These loaves were made of "fine" or wheaten flour, the quantity contained in them being somewhat more than ten pounds in weight. As the wave-sheaf gave the signal for the commencement, the two loaves solemnized the termination of the harvest season. They were the first-fruits of that season, being offered unto the Lord by the priest in name of the whole nation. The loaves used at the Passover were unleavened; those presented at Pentecost were leavened - a difference which is thus accounted for, that the one was a memorial of the bread hastily prepared at their departure, while the other was a tribute of gratitude to God for their daily food, which was leavened." JFB

*Shavuot has a double significance. It marks the all-important wheat harvest in the Land of Israel (Exodus 34:22) and it commemorates the anniversary of the day God gave the Torah to the entire nation of Israel assembled at Mount Sinai, although the association between the giving of the Torah (*Matan Torah*) and Shavuot is not explicit in the Biblical text.

PENTECOST

"Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me;" (Acts 1:4 NASB)

Christ's last message before His ascension

"Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. "You are witnesses of these things. "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.'" (Luke 24:45-49 NASB)

The apostles had been on a momentous journey of 3½ years witnessing their master performing many miracles, even raising people from the dead. They had heard him speak in ways that astounded the people and the officers of the Sanhedrin informed the Pharisees "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks." (John 7:46. NASB). They had seen Jesus betrayed by one of their own (Judas), taken by night before the Sanhedrin, charged with blasphemy, then to Pilate, charged with sedition, whipped and humiliated before the Roman Soldiers. They witnessed the Chief Priest and the officers call for him to be crucified preferring a criminal to the Messiah. They had seen him crucified, buried and raised on the third day and finally being taken up into Heaven.

Before Christ's ascension he instructed them "not to leave Jerusalem", they were to stay in the city. The word "stay" in the Luke account has the meaning of "to sit down". The disciples were not told by Christ how long they would have to wait to receive the promise of the Father. The wait of ten days must have seemed long, they had so much to tell the people about Christ and the long-promised kingdom. For the space of ten days; they continued to wait, and not to depart. They were to sit still and be silent in the sense that they were not to begin to preach. No doubt much time was spent in prayer and Christian discussion on what they had witnessed, plus no doubt wondering what this gift from the Heavenly Father would accomplish in their lives. Before His death, Jesus had spoken to them say if they kept His commandments, that His Father would send a Helper, one that the world would

not receive because they did not know or acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, the son of God. In John's gospel Jesus sets out its purpose "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me," (John 15:26 NASB)

The day for this miraculous gift had arrived, "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with

the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4 NASB) All this was part of God's plan as with it being a festival day there were Jews from all over the world in Jerusalem.



One of the first public signs of the gift of the Holy Spirit was that those gathered heard the

disciples message in their own language. (Acts 2:6-11). The listeners knew something strange or miraculous had occurred, these men from Galilee, supposed lower class where able to communicate in the many languages that were spoken throughout the Roman Empire.

John Gill writes of the Galileans that they are "*rude, unpolished, and unlearned men; who had never been brought up in any school of learning, and had never learned any language but their mother tongue; and that they pronounced with an ill grace, and in a very odd manner; and which made the thing the more astonishing to them.*"

At first the people of Jerusalem who witnessed this miraculous phenomenon were astonished, with some attributing the proclamations of the Christians to drunkenness (Acts 2:12-13). Some of the crowd tried to dismiss the disciples by declaring that "They are full of sweet wine."

The effect of the Holy Spirit was most noticeable in the Apostle Peter. Just seven weeks before while Jesus was before the High Priest, Peter denied three times that he knew Jesus. "Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you

talk gives you away." Then he began to **curse and swear**, "I do not know the man!" And immediately a rooster crowed. (Matthew 26:73-74 NASB) Then in John 21:15-19 is recorded Jesus's challenge to Peter "do you love me" three times, followed by the Lord's instructions to "feed my sheep".

What a change came over Peter, now filled with the Holy Spirit, boldly explained the event to the crowd as a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh" (Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28). What a challenge he gave those with a hearing ear, "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-- this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power." (Acts 2:22-24 NASB) Peter explained how his listeners could also receive this Spirit: "Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:38-39). God used the miracle of the people hearing the Gospel message in their own tongues and Peter's preaching to add to His Church. "And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation!' So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls."

Lessons

The selection of the Passover lamb

"This month (Nisan) shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you. "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household." (Exodus 12:2-3 NASB) Nisan was to become the beginning of the ecclesiastical year. This day corresponds to Jesus riding into Jerusalem, "They brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it; and He sat on it. And many spread their coats in the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. Those who went in front and those who followed were shouting: "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!" (Mark 11:7-10 NASB)

The death of the Lamb

'You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight. (Exodus 12:6 NASB) This is also the day that Jesus gave his life for all mankind, Paul states "For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed." (1 Corinthians 5:7 NASB) Peter reminds us that we were redeemed "with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ." (1 Peter 1:19 NASB)

The First Fruits of the Barley Harvest

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them... you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. 'He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. 'Now on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb one year old without defect for a burnt offering to the LORD. 'Its grain offering shall then be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire to the LORD for a soothing aroma, with its drink offering, a fourth of a hin of wine. 'Until this same day, until you have brought in the offering of your God, you shall eat neither bread nor roasted grain nor new growth. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. (Leviticus 23:9-14 NASB)

We are not left in any doubt as to how this feast was fulfilled by Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul tells us clearly: Jesus Christ "is risen from the dead and has become *the firstfruits* of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). The wave-sheaf offering represented Jesus Christ, who was the "*firstborn* over all creation" and the "*firstborn* from the dead" (Colossians 1:15, 18). His resurrection was the same day during the Days of Unleavened Bread on which the first sheaf of grain of the spring harvest was to be waved before God. Just as the sheaf was waved to represent the entire harvest to the left and the right, so the resurrection of Jesus was not just for Himself. He represented the many that 'shall come from the east and the west' (Mat 8:11) to faith in Him and be raised from the dead as well! As the offerings that were made on the feast of firstfruits were a sweet savor to God², how much greater was the sweetness on the day Jesus rose from the dead?

Pentecost

This was the time of the presenting of the first fruits of the wheat harvest. One interesting difference from the first fruits of the barley harvest was the presenting of two leavened loaves. This could picture the call of the Church who are not "holy, harmless or undefiled" as Christ was, but draw from sinful mankind, both from the Jews and the Gentiles.

Romans 8:29 speaks of Jesus Christ as "*the*

firstborn of many brethren." Yet the New Testament Church is *also* considered to be firstfruits. In speaking of the Father, James said, "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of *firstfruits* of His creatures" (James 1:18). God's Spirit within us identifies and sanctifies us—setting us apart from the world. *"If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ,"* wrote Paul, *"he is not His,"* and *"as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God"* (Romans 8:9, Romans 8:14).

The significance of the Bible writers calling these people of God firstfruits becomes evident when we consider John 14:6. Here Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. *No one comes to the Father except through Me.*"

Few people understand that God follows a systematic plan, symbolized by His Holy Days, to save *all* of humanity by offering *all* people eternal life in His Kingdom. In this world we are simply at *the beginning* of the harvest for the Kingdom of God those who if faithful unto death will receive a spiritual reward. The resurrection of the whole of mankind is in the Millennial Age to come.

The Bible teaches us that *God must call people* (John 6:44; John 6:63). Our Creator, therefore,

controls the timing of His harvest. When God founded His Church by imparting His Spirit to believers on the Day of Pentecost 50 days after Jesus' resurrection, It was the beginning of what Joel prophesied, that God will ultimately pour out His Spirit on "all flesh" (Joel 2:28-29).

The Holy Spirit at work

The coming of the Holy Spirit dramatically changed the lives of the early Christians. The book of Acts is filled with accounts of the early Church's remarkable spiritual impact on the surrounding society. A transformation was so evident that nonbelievers accused the Christians of "turning the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). Such was the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit.

To fully grasp how God's Spirit can work in our lives, we must comprehend what the Holy Spirit is. In Scripture the Holy Spirit is described as the *power* of God at work in our lives (Acts 1:8; Romans 15:13, Romans 15:19), the same power that was at work in the ministry of Jesus Christ (Luke 4:14; Acts 10:38).

Paul told Timothy "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline." (2 Timothy 1:7 NASB)■

BR. HENRY GREENHALGH

27TH JANUARY 1935-3RD FEBRUARY 2018



Brother Henry finished his earthly course on Saturday the 3rd February 2018 at the age of 83. Br Henry was from Gympie, Queensland, Australia .

He was able to stay at home on the family farm and in the care of his immediate family, Henry spent his last weeks and days in the place that he loved and cherished. But even more so he drew strength from the words and messages of comfort the dear brethren sent to him. He loved to study the word of God.

He loved to attend conventions in Australia, USA Europe and England. He enjoyed the fellowship of the brethren near and far that he met in person or by phone. A quiet and gentle man, an ambassador for Christ - we will miss him very much.

He respected people for who they were and if by chance, if he could have made a fuss - maybe he would have said "Keep the Faith".

"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints." Psalm 116:15

A Preview of the Kingdom

"Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache or a pain, nor any evidence of decay-not even fear of such thing.

Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty in human form and feature that you have every seen, and know that perfect humanity will be still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have there tears wiped away, when thus they realise the resurrection work complete."

The Divine Plan of Ages Page 191
Revelations 21:4

How RVIC Came to Be

Work on the **Revised Version Improved and Corrected (RVIC) Bible** began in Ann Arbor Michigan, USA in 1959. Peter Parsons, papyrologist from Oxford University, visiting that year, told me that the University of Michigan had the largest collection of Bible papyri in the Western Hemisphere. Prof. H.C. Youtie graciously soon granted me free access to the Papyrology Dept. and its library.

The 4th-century Sinaitic and Vatican 1209 manuscripts were known in 1885, when the Revised Version (RV) Bible was published. Since then, more-ancient Greek manuscripts were being discovered and published, every few years in the Oxyrhynchus Papyri volumes, the Chester Beatty Papyri in the 1930s, and the Bodmer Papyri just then being published.

Succeeding years were spent reading manuscripts (often with the help of a diatrop) and published texts, and then comparing them for accuracy.

After waiting forty years in vain for an updated and improved Variorum Bible (1876), it called for beginning work on one.

Zwerdling lectures at Ann Arbor: Ephraim Speiser on Genesis 1-11, Frank Moore Cross on Dead Sea Scrolls, and G. Ernest Wright on Old Testament archaeology, and others, added light throughout the Old Testament. Physics may enlighten some things about the creative days of Genesis 1. Historical linguistics casts light on Genesis 11.

Accuracy must be the primary goal. Best accuracy comes from starting with one of the best translations and improving it. Rotherham, American Standard Version (ASV), New American Standard Bible (NASB), and a couple of others,

would each have been good starting points. But the ASV was chosen because its language is most similar to the familiar King James Version (KJV, or AV), and its copyright is expired.

When Hebrew or Greek is more ambiguous or more specific than can be clearly expressed in English, footnotes are needed. The RV and ASV improved on the KJV for consistency (concordance) in translating words; the RVIC furthers consistency, especially for words with potential theological significance. When New Testament manuscript evidence is cited, the reader will not automatically know how reliable individual manuscripts and ancient version are: so progressively less reliable manuscripts are shown in progressively smaller font sizes. Appendices explain the manuscript evidence and how to use it, problems and solutions in translation, chronological data, and a comparison of other English translations for accuracy.

The RVIC is not to be a Baptist, Lutheran, Bible Student, or other-fellowship translation. Almost everyone (including its editor) will be able to find several expressions he likes, and at least a few he dislikes (or would have preferred the apostle had re-worded things). The RVIC is still not perfect, but is thought to be the most accurate English version yet. Converting it into twenty-first century English is left to others.

James B. Parkinson, 2018

To view the RVIC on the web go to:
<https://herald-magazine.com/christian-literature/online-bible/>

Or

For information on the Christian Resources App for phone or tablet. The RVIC Bible Download available and is easy to navigate. The App is FREE
<https://bibleresources.info/christian-resources/>

Convention Announcements

Sydney Convention 11th to 13th May 2018

Theme: "The Divine Plan of the Ages"

Location:

Bethsham Camp and Conference Centre

70 Wyee Road Wyee NSW 2259

Information: Email: australianbiblestudents@gmail.com

Call: Richard 0466 038 225

Queensland Convention 5th to 7th Oct 2018

Location:

Alexandra Park Conference Centre

13 Mari St, Alexandra Headland QLD 4572

Information: Email: darryngreenhalgh@hotmail.com

Call: Darryn 07 5483 1946

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PREACH THE WORD: EXHORT

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2)

Paul after reminding Timothy to reprove and rebuke the brethren at Ephesus who had "gone after their own lusts" he was then to exhort the brethren with great patience and instruction.

Paul, writing to Timothy states "Until I come, give attention to the *public* reading of *Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching." (1 Timothy 4:13 NASB) Timothy had to become familiar with and understand the scriptures before he could 'reprove, rebuke or exhort'. As the word '*public*' is supplied, the reading of the scripture could be in public or private. Timothy would have access to the Old Testament, but he may also have been acquainted with the classical writings of Greece as Paul was. (Acts 17:28; Tit 1:12)

Exhort

The word exhort in 2 Timothy 4:2 is Strong's number G3870. It is found 108 times in the New Testament.

Παρακαλέω parakaleō (*par-ak-al-eh'-o*)

From G3844 and G2564; to *call near*, that is, *invite, invoke* (by *imploration, hortation or consolation*): - beseech, call for, (be of good) comfort, desire, (give) exhort (-ation), intreat, pray.

Vines adds to the meaning of 'to exhort', that is "to urge one to pursue some course of conduct (always prospective, looking to the future, in contrast to the meaning to comfort, which is retrospective, having to do with a trial experienced)."

Brethren

Paul reminds the Thessalonians that he, Silvanus and Timothy had a responsibility to exhort the brethren "just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 NASB) Barnes writes "as a father would his own children" means that "*With an interest in your welfare, such as a father feels for his children, and with such a method as a father would use. It was not done in a harsh, dictatorial, and arbitrary manner, but in tenderness and love.*" The purpose of his exhortation was that they should walk worth of God, who had called them. They were to live in a manner that would honour God, this means that their lives should not bring condemnation on God or His cause, especially

when they realise the great reward that is on offer for those who are faithful.

Elders

Peter also exhorts the elders of the flock stating "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock." (1 Peter 5:1-3 NASB)

The brethren are the "flock of God" and the elders are therefore under shepherds. They take their position not by compulsion but with a willingly heart to serve. They were to do it not for sordid gain, that is not to make themselves wealthy at the expense of the flock. This does not mean that the flock could not support them (1Ti 5:17-18). A mercenary spirit is incompatible with true eldership. The last part of the verses could be summed up with Elders should be examples, not dictators to the flock. They should be leading the flock from the front, not driving them from the rear. They need to remember that the flock is God's, not theirs.

Conclusion

To exhort the brethren is a necessity for the ecclesia, both the group and the individual. It is to encourage us to grow more into the grace and knowledge of our Heavenly Father and to encourage us to live a life worthy of our calling. "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." (Ephesians 4:1 NASB) The end result should be that we become more Christ-like as we continue our journey on the narrow way. ■

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