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“SPOKEN BY ALL GOD’S HOLY PROPHETS”

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began (Acts 3:19-21)

In Bible Student circles this is not only a very basic and fundamental Scripture, but one of vital importance in the great outworking of our Heavenly Father’s Divine Plan. It shows the glorious purpose He has for this strife-torn planet and its groaning creation. Along with other scriptures it forms the basis or very foundation of hope for all mankind in the coming age.

What a powerful message this is from God! Had it been presented by say three or four of God’s Holy Prophets, this would surely have stressed the importance of the statement, but it was spoken by the mouth of all God’s Holy Prophets since the world began. How powerful indeed that makes the statement, how it shows the great importance in which our Creator holds this work and His desire to pass the message on to those that have ears to hear. It seems rather ironic that here we have a passage so important that it was spoken by the mouth of all God’s Holy Prophets, yet how few can really understand or appreciate its glorious message.

Some of our Christian friends tell us that our Lord’s return ushers in not the times of restitution of all things, but the destruction of all things. This is a classic instance where Satan has blinded the minds, and has put error for truth, black for white. So as we go along let us look at some of the places where the prophets have spoken of the times of Restitution. But first let us look at the word itself and what is to be restored.

WHAT IS RESTITUTION?

The text is the only place where the word Restitution as a noun occurs, though the related verb occurs eight times in the New Testament. Young’s Concordance gives the meaning of the Greek as a putting down again, restoration. A Greek scholar says it means to restore to its former situation, as restoring a sprained or dislocated limb to its former soundness. The Jewish Historian Josephus uses the word to denote the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon and restoration to their state and privileges. Vines Greek Dictionary lists it under restoration (which is the translation in the Revised Version) giving the meaning as “to set in order back again,” “restoration”.

These descriptions are full of meaning. How beautifully they describe the wonderful works to be accomplished during the Times of Restitution. “Back again” for example brings to mind the words of our Master that all in their graves are to come forth, in other words, come back again. Restoration of estates to rightful owners immediately brings to mind Israel’s Jubilee and their restoration to their former estate, a picture of the great work to be accomplished during the times of Restitution. Barnes says that as well as the meaning of restoration the word also has the meaning of consummation, completion or filling up.

We could say that this is a secondary meaning of the word, but again it fits very neatly in place – the times of restitution will be the consummation or completion of God’s program. The ages before Christ saw the completion of Stage 1 – the selection of those we term Ancient Worthies (Hebrews 11) who are to be Princes in all the earth. The close of the Gospel Age will see the completion of Stage 2 – the selection of the Church, Christ’s Bride. Both of these groups will be privileged to have a part in God’s Government in the next age to assist in the great work of Stage 3, which is to be the restoration of Planet Earth and all the willing of mankind.

As stated, this is the only place where the word restitution occurs in the New Testament. Nevertheless we do have a companion verse giving us the words of Jesus in Matt. 19:28 – “And Jesus said unto them, Ver-

ily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel". A different word "Regeneration" is used here but the thought behind it is still the same, and the time period is clearly shown by our Lord's words – "When the Son of Man shall sit in the Throne of His Glory." This links in well with Matt. 25:31, the start of "the parable of the sheep and goats" showing the work of the next age, the thousand year times of restitution period – "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory"

Young's Concordance gives the meaning of the Greek word for regeneration as also meaning recreation, Vines also says that it has the thought of a new birth. Again how well this fits, the times of restitution will be virtually a re-creation; a new birth is also a very appropriate term, as we know the word as used in the Scriptures is synonymous with resurrection, with all of mankind being brought back from the prison house of death. There will be billions of new births during that time.

WHAT IS TO BE RESTORED?

What then is it that is to be restored during the times of restitution? A very brief, comprehensive answer would be – all that was lost in Eden when Father Adam fell into sin. To briefly itemise the various components, the first would be life itself, life everlasting, life that has no end. We put everlasting life first on the list because, without never ending life, anything else that might be restored would have but little value. Further, if life is to be restored, it implies that Adam originally possessed everlasting life before he disobeyed God, and the Scriptures show that to be the case. God said to Adam (Genesis 2:17) – *"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"*

This implies that Adam would not die so long as he remained obedient to his Creator. God did not say – you are on trial and if you remain obedient for a certain period of time I will then give you everlasting life. What God really said to Adam was – I have given you everlasting life to enjoy and this life will never be taken from you as long as you remain obedient, but if disobedient it will be taken from you. Young's literal translation Bible renders the verse: "dying thou dost die" suggesting a slow dying process, and just so it was. It took 930 years for Adam's life to come finally to its close. As we know, a day with the Lord is as a thousand years, so just as God had said, Adam died within the same day in which he ate the forbidden fruit.

But God has promised that, following the resurrection of the Lord's people of past ages earlier referred to, all others in their graves are also to come forth, the good and the bad, the just and the unjust, all will be restored to life, the life that Adam originally possessed. This life will be everlasting, but it will be conditional. All must obey the Creator's conditions. He gives the life, so He is entitled to make the conditions. Jesus said to His followers (Matt 5:48) "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect" This advice will also be applicable to all mankind in the next age; for all who wish to continue living, obedience will still be the test, just as it was with Father Adam. They will receive all the encouragement and help necessary, they will be living under ideal conditions in the glorious home our Loving Creator has provided for His human family, paradise restored.

They will be living in a righteous world where peace, love and happiness will be the norm, just the opposite of conditions prevailing today. Under such a favourable climate we would expect the majority to readily come into line, as we read in the Psalms – "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth." (Psa 110: 1-3) Rev.11:17 speaks of the start of this day of power – "We give thee thanks, 0 Lord God Almighty, which art, and vast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned."

LEARNING RIGHTEOUSNESS

This is the time when Jehovah God reigns through His appointed King, the Lord Jesus, who at that time will be sitting in the Throne of His Glory. This is the "times of restitution", it is also the thousand year Judgment day. In this connection let us read Isa. 26:8-10 – "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, 0 Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Let favour be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the. LORD."

These verses sound contradictory, but they are speaking of different classes of people. Verse 10 is speaking of those who are incorrigible and will not reform even when given favour and a full opportunity. For these the life that God had previously given will come to an end. We would expect that only few would fall into this category but death will still be a possibility until the work of the great anti-typical Jubilee is fully completed (on the 50th thousand year day, following the Millennial Day) as Paul said in 1 Cor. 15:24-26, – "Then cometh

the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

The Times of Restitution will also restore the original character which God gave to Adam, as it says in Genesis 1: 26-27 – *"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air; and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."* We would understand this passage to refer to the character –likeness of God and His Son Jesus Christ. This is the character that will be restored to all who will be accounted worthy to continue living throughout the ages of eternity. As earlier mentioned, they must be perfect as God is perfect.

We saw in Genesis that man was given dominion over the earth and its animals of all kind. This lost dominion will be restored, let us look at Heb. 2:5-9 – *"For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."*

This is a quotation from Psalm 8:4-8. We must bear in mind that this passage is speaking of mankind, some have thought that it was speaking of Jesus, The final verse 9 commences with the words "But we see Jesus" showing that a new topic is here being introduced and that the passage had not previously been speaking of Jesus. The all things that are put in subjection under man are all things pertaining to this Planet Earth. The passage says "but now we see not yet all things put under him", the words 'not yet' implying that some time in the future all things will be put under him; that will be when the Times of Restitution have accomplished their work.

Now we see Jesus, He is the one who made it all possible. Without His willing participation in the Divine Plan in giving His life, there could have been no Times of Restitution, no return from the prison house of death for all mankind. As the hymn says "Hallelujah what a Saviour!"

MANKIND'S LOST DOMINION

We have seen that man's lost dominion will be restored to him and that the character-likeness of his Creator originally possessed by Adam will be restored, so it goes without saying that it will be a very different life from that possessed by mankind today. At present, they have but a small measure of what real life will be like; mankind will be restored to perfect health, no more aches and pains or sickness of any kind – *"And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity. (Isaiah 33:24)* There will be no more lame, maimed or cripple, as the beautiful passage in Isaiah 35 says: *"The lame man shall leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing" and so on. (Verse 6)*

In the opening verses in Acts 3 we see the apostle healing a lame man, a picture of the greater work that will take place worldwide in the "Times of Restitution". Peter was not slow to take advantage of the situation, and said in effect that in that future day, the times of restitution, not just one lame man will be restored but all things will be restored. These "all things" include not just earth's inhabitants but the planet itself. Mankind have allowed their God-given home to deteriorate. By chopping down the trees, over cultivating and poor farming practices, they have produced many great desert areas. All these will be restored in that future day, the deserts will be made fruitful, as the scripture says "will blossom as the rose." We can already see the early commencement of this work-, in Israel, Egypt and other places, the desert is slowly being pushed back, orange groves are growing where there was once only sand. This is just the small beginning, it will take time to fully accomplish this work, but there will be plenty of time for God has set aside a thousand years to complete the full work of Restitution.

What a wonderful and exciting time we are privileged to be living in. It is an extremely troublesome time, we know that bloodshed and violence will steadily increase, but we have been taken into our Heavenly Father's confidence and shown His glorious Plan. So for us it is a very exciting time because we can see the small beginnings of the great work that is to follow the time of trouble. This thrills us because it shows the nearness of the Kingdom, there seems no doubt that the younger generation living today may well see its commencement.

This Planet will be made glorious like the garden of Eden worldwide. In Isa. 66:1 the Lord said: "Heaven is my Throne and earth is my footstool" and this links in with Isa 60:13 – *"The glory of Lebanon shall come*

unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious." This will be a restoration worldwide of that which God originally gave to Adam in Eden – "And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil." (Gen 2:8,9)

We think of our Master's words to the thief on the cross, "verily I say unto thee today, shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (the comma should be after the word today, not as in the AV) The paradise He referred to would be the restored earth, this is where the thief will be with Jesus. This word Paradise is very interesting, Young's Concordance gives the meaning as a park or garden ground and we see in our mind's eye a garden ground all laid out with beautiful trees, the place of God's feet made glorious. Vine's Greek dictionary tells us that it comes from the Greek word "paradeisos" and is an oriental word first used by the historian Xenophon denoting the parks of Persian Kings and Nobles, he goes on to say that in the Septuagent (Greek) translation of the Old Testament, this word is used in Genesis 2:8 to translate the word garden, so the verse would read, "And the Lord God planted a paradise eastward in Eden and there He put the man whom He had formed" That is what is to be restored.

RESTITUTION FORESHADOWED

We could say that the very first place where the scriptures foreshadow the Times of Restitution is Gen. 3:15 – "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" Rather obscure language is used here, but it would be sufficient to give our first parents hope. We note that the serpent picturing Satan would succeed only in bruising the heel of the woman's seed, a non-fatal injury, but her Seed would bruise the head, a vital part of the body, indicating a fatal injury. We note that it is the seed of the woman, who is the woman? In the first place mother Eve herself, secondly Mary the mother of Jesus, there is also a third woman, Abraham's wife Sarah who typifies our Covenant, that portion of the Abrahamic Covenant under which the seed is developed. She also pictures the Jerusalem above which the Scripture says is the mother of us all (Gal. 4:26),

The New English Bible says, "But the Heavenly Jerusalem is the free woman" she is our mother. Sarah is a composite picture, both of the covenant and also the Heavenly Jerusalem, which means the nation of Spiritual Israel, the true Church. The seed that is to bruise the serpent's head is primarily Jesus Christ, but it also includes His Bride, as Gal. 3:29 indicates – "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise" – and in Romans 16:20 – "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all" This will be in the next age during the Times of Restitution, we will assist in breaking down all the evil works that Satan has built up, this will culminate in the fulfillment of Gen. 3:15, with the complete destruction of Satan and all evil.

Many Christians find it hard to distinguish between the work of the Gospel Age and of the coming Age, so let us briefly look at just how different the symbolism is for each Age. During the Gospel Age, the Heavenly Father selects the Bride for His Son, He draws them. (John 6:44) During the next age Jesus draws all men unto Himself. (John 12:32) We in this Age are all sons of God with Jesus as our elder Brother, "He is not ashamed to call them Brethren" (Heb 2:11), whereas in the next Age, Jesus is the Father to the world, a position Adam would have held if he had not fallen into sin; Jesus becomes the second Adam, (1 Cor. 15:45) Isaiah. 9:6, describes Jesus as, "The Father of the Age to come" (Septuagent translation) so in the next Age Jesus the second Adam is their Father, that makes Christ's Bride their Mother, the second Eve, pictured by Rebekah, Isaac's Bride. Her sister said unto her, "Be thou the Mother of thousands of millions" (Gen 24:60)

This would have been literally true of Rebekah as for other women in the early days of the earth, but it was only said to Rebekah, so we cannot doubt that a deeper meaning was intended and, indeed, the Church pictured by Rebekah, will be the Mother of all mankind and the second Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father. So here we have a very clear distinction between the Gospel Age, the time for the calling of the Church, the Bride of Christ, and the Millennial Age, the Times of Restitution. The Church is begotten now by God by His Holy Spirit, so in a very real sense He is our Father and we His children. Jesus is to be the Father of the Age to come, through whom with His Bride all nations are to be blessed.

With our Heavenly Father's help, may we prove faithful and worthy to have a part in the future great Restitution work with our dear Bridegroom and Master. Amen.

"Keep the Door of my Lips"

One great mark of character development is demonstrated by the control of the words of our mouths. How much trouble, discord and disintegration of companies of the Lord's people has been brought about by word of mouth. The apostle Paul admonishes, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Viewing the apostle's

statement, we see clearly that this admonition is very applicable to many religious people today. How many there are who do injury to their fellow creatures with their words and use the same tongue in offering praise to God.

There is surely no evil to which God's people are more exposed than the wrongful use of the tongue. With many it is as natural to gossip as it is to breathe; they do it unconsciously, and many are the peculiar methods which the fallen nature will use in its efforts to stifle conscience, and yet maintain the use of this channel, long after it has been driven from evil practices, which are less common, less popular, though more generally recognised as sinful. It will say, I do not mean any harm to anyone, but I must have something to talk about, and nothing is so interesting to friends and neighbours as something which has a gossipy flavour connected with it. Hence it is that the Scriptures instruct us, "Let your conversation be such as becometh saints" and "Let your speech be with grace seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

How defective are the reasonings of the fallen nature, when the counsels in righteousness of the Lord's Word are ignored. There is a wide scope for conversation among Christian people on the subject of the riches of God's grace in Christ Jesus expressed in His word, and in these things we have that which not only ministers grace to the hearer, but which also adds grace to the speaker. Such conversation showers blessings on every hand, so far as the new creature is concerned, and assists in deadening the old nature with its evil desires, tastes and appetites.

This is no doubt what the apostle had in mind when he said that the Lord's people should "show forth the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light." A heart filled with the spirit of love, the spirit of God, the spirit of the truth, and overflowing at the mouth, will be sure to overflow that which is within, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." A mouth, therefore, which does injury to others, either to fellow members of "the Body of Christ", or to those who are without, indicates an evil heart, and implies that the heart is not pure.

How much we need to hearken to the sentiments of the Psalmist when he beseeches God to "set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth. Keep the door of my lips." (Psalm 141:3) and to the words of the apostle of our Master, "for as He who has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." (1 Peter 1:15) While Peter here is referring to every aspect of Christian conduct, it is our lips and words that will convey that first impression.

May our Heavenly Father so bless and guide us, each one, that our speech may be only and always pleasing to Him and edifying to all with whom we have to do, both among our brethren and those around us. May our daily prayer be, "O Lord, open thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth thy praise." (Psalm 51:15)

The Divine Word

Dearer with every passing hour

Is God's sweet Word to me,

To its blest truths as to a tower,

In troubled times I flee!

For while the heavens and earth shall last

Its promises are sure

Yes! when they both are with the past

Its glories shall endure.

The word of Him who cannot lie,

Who by His own will stand.

When the swift whirlwind sweepeth by,

And in the desert land,

Who sendeth out his angel guard

Above his loved ones' way,

And turneth, by his rod of power,

Their darkness into day.

Whose blessings, promised to the meek,

About their pathway rise,

Like blossoms in a wintry-waste,
 Or stars in storm-tossed skies.
O, I have proved each word of thine,
 My God, as gold is tried—
Never to tear or prayer of mine
 Was thy strong help denied.
I bless thee for each step I've trod
 By the dark waves of woe;
With faith and peace my feet were shod
 Through the wild flood to go!
Hast thou not said, "But for a night
 The weeping shall endure
Joy cometh with the morning light
 O, promise sweet and sure!
Where is my joy?—to dwell apart,
 From earth's poor bonds set free,
Hidden, within thy faithful heart,
 To find my all in Thee.

(Lizzie Baker)

Predestination (Part 2)

FOREKNOWLEDGE

Let us move on to foreknowledge and particularly how it relates to free will.

The main problem relates to individual foreknowledge and in particular its relationship to certain theories of predestination; particularly Calvinistic double predestination. Specifically, if God foreknows the outcome for an individual then the outcome appears to be predestined and hence what room is there for free will? Because of this apparent problem individual foreknowledge has either been denied or sidestepped.

However, without God having foreknowledge of individuals other problems arise:

- (1) absence of individual foreknowledge limits the knowledge of God
- (2) absence of individual foreknowledge limits God's control over His plan.
- (3) absence of individual foreknowledge makes the timing of completion of predestined classes uncertain since classes are composed of individuals.

(4) this uncertainty of timing would make specific phases of the Plan of God uncertain.

To foreknow and foreknowledge come from related Greek words "proginosko" (v) and "prognosis" (n). The verb primarily means to know ahead of time, but to know something ahead of time does not mean that one has destined it to happen. For example the medical term prognosis which comes from the noun form means to predict and to know the outcome of a disease a patient may have. Knowing this does not mean that the doctor has caused the outcome. On the other hand foreknowledge and the ultimate outcome or destiny are related in that the foreknowledge will tell you the outcome. Applying this to God suggests that if he has ultimate foreknowledge then He knows the ultimate outcome or destiny or His plan. As part of God's Omniscience the outcome must be known. The traditional problem has been whether God's Omniscience relates to individuals and if so, does this make free will not free?

One also notices that the word foreknowledge in the scriptures is only used in relation to God.

Complete foreknowledge an attribute of God

Acts 2:22 "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did through Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know—23 Him, being delivered by the determinate will and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken.

1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you and peace be

multiplied.

Of course ultimate and perfect foreknowledge is an attribute that only applies to God.

It is God's foreknowledge that allows his word to accomplish his will and to prosper, as we read in Isaiah 55.

Isa 55:11 So shall my Word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the things whereto I sent it.

The scriptures tell us that God has foreknowledge in an overall and general sense. We read:

Isa 46:10 declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.

To be able to declare the end from the beginning God must know not only the overall plan but also the specifics of that plan and not only in terms of contingencies but the actual specifics. Jesus makes this clear in Matthew 24.

Mt 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only.

FOREKNOWLEDGE: INDIVIDUAL

One also notices that this foreknowledge relates not only to general and specific non-individual aspects but also to individual aspects. We read:

Ac 3:18 But the things which God foreshowed by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled.

God foreknew that Jesus would be slain from the foundation of the world, as we read in Rev 13:8.

Revelation 13:8 KJV

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Revelation 13:8 NIV

8 All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

In fact the very word foreknowledge is used specifically in relation to the death of Jesus after delivery into the hands of those that eventually crucified him

Acts 2:22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did through Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know-

23 Him being delivered by the determinate will and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken

Therefore God's knowledge of individuals and specifically Jesus is a scriptural concept. If Jesus as a human had free will then God's foreknowledge of an individual and freewill cannot be incompatible. In fact Jesus exercised His free will in subjecting his will to the will of God, as God foreknew He would.

That God has perfect foreknowledge concerning individuals is not surprising. We are told that he knows the hearts (intentions) of the children of men

Prov 15:11 Sheol and Abaddon are before Jehovah: How much more then the hearts of the children of men!

Acts 15:8 And God, who knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us;

And that he even sees into the mind

Jer 20:12 But, O Jehovah of hosts, that triest the righteous, that seest the heart and the mind, let me see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I revealed my cause.

FOREKNOWLEDGE: THE BALANCE

If God knows our very thoughts and intentions He must know how we will exercise our free will as He did with Jesus, otherwise God could not have known that He would go on and subject himself to the will of God to the point of being slain. This is the only way that free will and foreknowledge can co-exist. In this way God preserves the free will and yet provides opportunities for the individual to work in accordance with God's plan as in the case of Jesus; around whose perfect sacrifice the whole plan of God turns.

Another example of how this foreknowledge of God works is found in the God's dealing with the sons of Rebecca; Esau and Jacob.

In Romans 9:11-15 we read:

Rom 9:11 (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, in order that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not by works, but by Him that calleth).

12 it was said unto her, "The elder shall serve the younger."

13 As it is written: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with god? God forbid!

15 For He saith to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

We know that the main point is that God calls according to how he sees fit. And it has nothing to do in the first instance with one's will or effort. In man's fallen state there are none righteous no not one, and therefore of ourselves we deserve nothing. Therefore God calls the elect as He sees fit. This is the main lesson.

There are however other interesting aspects to the process. By observing that the call of God is made not on the basis of merit one of course does not mean that God's call is arbitrary and without sense. God calls according to His foreknowledge of that individual and if that individual has qualities that further His plan then He calls. We note that in the Rom 9 verses God said that the “The elder shall serve the younger” and “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated”, even before they were born. For God to be able to say this at the time he either decided arbitrarily (if he did not have individual foreknowledge of Esau and Jacob) or for good reasons. Since our God is a God of reason we would say that he must have done so for very good reasons.

FOREKNOWLEDGE: DESPIsing THE BIRTHRIGHT

We find the reason in the subsequent record of the events and in particular the fact that Esau did not value his birthright and so he sold it to Jacob for a bowl of pottage. In fact Gen 25 verse 34 tells us that Esau despised his birthright.

Genesis 25:34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils: and he ate and drank, and rose up and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

And the writer of Hebrews tells us that by so doing Esau was deemed profane.

Hebrews 12:16 lest there be any fornicator or profane person as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

With this information we can see that the way the situation unfolded made sense. And for God to be able to make such pronouncements before they were even born necessitates God having individual foreknowledge concerning their characters.

There are many other examples of individual foreknowledge one could refer to.

PREDESTINATION

As we have already seen there are many theories on what predestination is. However, if one wants to know how God wanted it to be understood we need to make the scriptures the starting point.

If one searches the KJV for predestination and its variants, we find that it has been used 4 times in the KW. These occur in Rom 8 and Eph 1. They read:

Romans 8:29,30

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Ephesians 1:5, 11

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will, 11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

All these usages derive from the Greek “prooridzo”. Then if one searches the KJV to see if prooridzo has been translated into other English words we get 2 more verses, viz Acts 4:28 and 1 Cor 2:7. In these 2 instances prooridzo is translated determined and ordained.

Acts 4:28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

1 Corinthians 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

The essential point to notice is that in none of these 6 verses in which prooridzo is used, is it used in reference to an individual.

Secondly, the word's meaning according to Strong's is essentially to determine beforehand.

One might ask in what sense is this determining meant. This appears to be given in the breakdown of prooridzo. Prooridzo is a compound word made up of pro which is a primary preposition meaning before and oridzo which appears to have the basic meaning of a limit or constraint. Putting this together, “determine beforehand” carries the idea of setting a constraint in advance.

Next, one notices that this predestination is used in reference to a group or to an aspect of the plan of God and never to an individual.

When a clear constraint is made, it cannot occur at the point of the exercise of free will or it does not have reference to free will, for free will to be preserved. Here we notice that both occur. The predestination refers to a group characteristic which is not the only possible outcome. Or in other words the individual exercises the free will and either the individual will qualify for the elect class or end up in the great company class or

possibly the second death. Therefore the individual running in the race for the prize of the high calling may fall short and the outcome is not determined as Calvinistic predestination suggests.

PREDESTINATION: ELECT CLASS

This group has been determined to be conformed to the image of his son and thereby they are called brethren with Jesus, being this firstborn of these brethren. The use of the term brethren implies that, like Jesus, who is a special type of son, these brethren are also children of God. This is amplified by Paul in Romans 8:16 and 17

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God;

17 and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if so it be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.

These brethren, are of course the elect of God, and we read in Romans 8:29,30-

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Also the reference in Verse 29 to “the firstborn among many brethren” suggests not just the first to be raised from the dead but more specifically the first to be raised from the dead to immortal life, or in other words the first of the first fruits or the first of those of the exanastasis; that is the first of those of the first resurrection.

Verse 30 gives us other characteristics of this predestined class. They have been called and then justified by faith in Jesus. Also like Jesus they are to be glorified. And this fits with that whole class having this special resurrection to immortal life like Jesus.

PREDESTINATION: ONE CALL

Colossians 1:27 To them God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

It is also interesting to note that no other class has been predestined in this way. This emphasizes the importance of this class with Jesus as its head. Presumably, this importance is part of the reason why Paul calls the knowledge of this class who have “Christ in you, the hope of glory” as a glorious mystery (or hidden thing)

The fact that no other class is predestined in this way also emphasizes the importance of this call, and that we are not called to the great company class. Therefore this must be our aim. This excludes all thoughts such as “I will settle for the great company class and therefore I do not have to try so hard” or “I know that I will not get into the 144,000”. If we have been called then that call is to that class and that class alone. And if we have been called to that class then it has to be within the grasp of all of us if we give diligence to making our call and election sure.

Therefore the biblical predestination is a divine determination of the characteristics of this elect class.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it appears that there are major flaws in some of the historical views of predestination. These flaws not only create an unscriptural view of God but also undermine the very teaching of the ransom. Free will is an integral part of the similarity man bears to God, also it appears to be one of the reasons God values so much the final human creation; this is one reason he was willing to send his only begotten son to take the place of Adam. This plan was drawn up before the foundation of the world according to his perfect foreknowledge. The plan is set and sure to be fulfilled. It is not unsure and no part is uncertain. Its certainty depends on the absolute foreknowledge of God.

This foreknowledge extends to the individual level without contravening free will. Foreknowledge allows God to call individuals and provide them with the opportunity to freely willingly give diligence to make their calling and election sure. This predestined class has an important role to play in the plan of God and the basic quality they need, to qualify is to be conformed to the image of Jesus. The call of God is to this class alone therefore we have the possibility to attain to it if we work out our salvation with fear and trembling and remain faithful.

BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH...

As we stand on the threshold of a new millennium let us renew our determination and zeal. Let us remember the first days of our consecration and continue the walk of faith and self sacrifice to the end. Amen. (ES :00/01)

Entered into Rest

Our dear Brother Joseph Benjamin Hiam completed his earthly course on 29 July 2001, after a long life of loving devotion to his wife and family and of faithful service to the Saviour and Lord into whose hands he had early committed his life. The sympathy and prayers of the Lord's people in many parts of Australia and

overseas go out to his dear wife Sister Reta, herself now handicapped, and to the extended family, who will all greatly miss his gentleness and wise counsel.

Bro Joe was born in Traralgon, Victoria, (Gippsland region) on 4 October 1913, one of six children of William and Rachel Hiam. His early years were spent share farming in Gippsland, subsequently he worked in market gardens in Oakleigh (Melbourne suburb), later again as a fitter and turner with a combustion engineering manufacturer. He was a keen gardener and also made many items for the children's home enjoyment. The family testimony to him concludes – “Joe was a gentle, kind and humble man. He would always listen – but never pass judgment. He left a wonderful legacy. He will be lovingly remembered by all.”

William and Rachel Hiam and their family all embraced the message of God's love and His plan of salvation for all mankind and Bro Joe met his future wife, Sis Reta, in the Melbourne Bible Class (Sister Reta with her family had come over from Tasmania) and they enjoyed 61 years together of happy and beautiful partnership in every aspect of their lives. They had three children, Philip, Jan and Rosalie, all happily married. Subsequently, they were blessed with 8 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren.

Bro Joe served as an elder in the Melbourne Bible Class for over 50 years, and as Secretary for much of that time. In recent years, he also provided a guiding hand in the activities of the Berean Bible Institute. He and Sis Reta often extended hospitality in their home to local and overseas visitors. Bro Joe is listed as a speaker in Convention Programs as far back as the late 1930's and he always had a direct and uplifting message to impart. His gentle, sincere and humble witness in his own life and in his service to the brethren has been a blessing to many over the years and he will be greatly missed.

Two favourite hymns were sung at the memorial service:

“I heard the voice of Jesus Say” (BSH 153 – Lynnfield)

“The day Thou gayest, Lord, is ended” (BSH 374 – St Clement)

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.” (Rev 14:13)

Faith Encouraged

“Thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace.” (Luke 8:48.)

No essential element of Christian character is ^I given greater prominence in the Scriptures than faith. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” In this requirement we see the condescending grace of our Heavenly Father, who, though so far above us, yet, like a tender parent, desires the reciprocal love and implicit confidence of His intelligent creatures. Since Christ is the appointed Agent of God in His dealings with men, whom God bids all men to honor, even as they honor the Father, and since He is the appointed way of access to God, faith in Christ is necessarily a part of our faith in God. Those who believe in Christ believe the testimony which God gave of His son through the prophets and through Christ's own teachings, and the mighty works which God wrought by Him, to the end that men might believe, have a sure and abundant ground for confidence, so that faith might not be mere credulity, but a reasonable thing.

To believe in Jesus in those days, when His mighty works astonished the people, and the beauty of His holiness impressed every beholder, was most reasonable to those of simple hearts, who desired only to know the truth of God and to obey it, and who, therefore, had no cross-grained will or prejudice of their own to oppose it. Nor are the evidences, the foundation of faith in Christ, any less reliable today than they were then. On the contrary, they are still more abundant and strong—a firm foundation that can never be moved. In simple faith, reliance upon the testimony of Christ, the sick woman (to whom the words of Jesus in the text verse were spoken) came to Jesus, so fully assured of His power that she did not wait even to call His attention to herself when the multitudes thronged about Him; “for she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole”; and she was instantly healed. Jesus, perceiving her faith, said unto her, “Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.”

This miracle was immediately followed by another, still more wonderful—the raising of the dead to life. Faith had brought an anxious father to Jesus to request the healing of his daughter. But while he was making the request, a messenger came to him saying, “Thy daughter is dead, trouble not the Master.” The messenger evidently knew nothing of Jesus' power to raise the dead, and the anxious father would probably have abandoned all hope except for the Lord's reassurance of his faith, “Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.”

In the former instance the faith was exercised by the patient; but in this case it was exercised by another on behalf of the patient, who, being dead, had no ability to exercise faith. Yet the faith in the power of Jesus of those who had requested the healing was a very weak faith, and when they saw the child was dead all hope departed. They had considerable faith in Christ, but they did not believe that His power extended to the raising of the dead and were quite incredulous at the suggestion of the Lord's words — “Weep not; she is not dead,

but sleepeth”—knowing that she was dead. As in the case of Lazarus, our Lord here referred to death as a sleep, in view of the fact of the resurrection. The term is similarly applicable to the whole human family in the death that came upon all through Adam; because there shall be an awakening, a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. The second death, from which there shall be no resurrection, is never called “sleep” in the Bible.

It is worthy of note, that our Lord took with Him the parents and three of His disciples into the chamber of death, that they might witness the awakening, but when they manifested their lack of faith, He put them all out, and then recalled the dead to life, and permitted them afterward to come in and minister to her. Thus, while He rewarded their faith, weak though it was, He reproved them also, and gave them overwhelming evidence of His mighty power. The statement of verse 55, when relieved of the mists of a false theology, is very clear. “And her spirit came again,” simply signifies, “and her breath returned,” and is so rendered in the Diaglott, the Greek word “pneuma,” translated “spirit” in the common version, signifying breath, wind or the spirit or breath of life.

With the reinstituting of the breathing process and the healing of the physical organism came reanimation, restored intelligence, and the dead lived again. Thus the Lord rewarded even the weak faith, and gave them additional and overwhelming evidence to strengthen and establish their faith. The Lord did not expect or desire the people to have faith without good substantial evidence upon which to base it, but He did desire and reward the faith that was exercised to the extent of the evidence. A faith without substantial evidence upon which to base it, is mere credulity, and generally degenerates into gross superstition, unworthy of the intelligence which God has given us.

This is the Way

“And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.” Isa. 30:21

How often in the midst of life’s perplexities and trials, have weary hearts felt the need of wise discretion and counsel. The counsel sought, however, is not altogether wise; sometimes it is the counsel of the ungodly and sinners, and sometimes that of the immature and inexperienced, and the results of such counsel are unsatisfactory, and often disastrous, and the way pursued in consequence one of trouble and darkness. Such is the way of the world, for it is not in the power of man to direct his own steps (Jer. 10:23). But not so is the way of the child of God. He has learned where to seek counsel, and the counsel of wisdom is always ready to come to his aid.

The prophet describes it as a voice “behind thee.” It is not a voice before thee of some new theology, or evolution, or spiritism, or Christian Science, or other human philosophy, but it is the old theology with all its blessed doctrines of hopes through Christ our Redeemer and Lord, our Teacher, our Example, and our Leader. It is the voice of the Lord uttered through His inspired prophets and apostles from two to four thousand years ago. It is to this Word of Divine inspiration, then, that the prophet would direct the attention of all those desiring wise counsel; in that Word we hear the voice of God saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it.”

If we have come to the forks of the road, to some crisis in our experience—and know not whether to turn to the right or to the left, we should stop at once and listen to the voice, or, in other words we should turn at once to the Word of the Lord, and, by pondering its precepts, and principles, and its illustrations bearing on the perplexing subject, seek to learn the will of the Lord, asking also the leading of His Spirit, and endeavouring to bring the mind into a loving and submissive and trustful attitude. “This is the way, walk ye in it” will be the plain answer to every such inquiring heart.

These words of the prophet were, however, addressed directly to fleshly Israel, though their application to spiritual Israel is none the less forcible. As applied to them it foretells the return of Divine favour to them when the long season of their chastisement and blindness shall be at an end. Then under the Millennial reign of Christ the blind eyes shall be opened and the deaf ears shall be unstopped, and the voice of the whole inspired Word then made clear to their understanding, will direct them in the right ways of the Lord, for the books (the law, and the prophets, and the New Testament Scriptures) shall be opened, and they shall be judged according to their teaching—Rev. 20:12.

The way then indicated to fleshly Israel and to all the world will be a grand highway of holiness; and the ransomed of the Lord shall go up thereon with songs and everlasting joy on their heads. (Isa. 35:10) and the end of that way will be life, and peace—salvation to the uttermost from sin and death and complete restitution to human perfection. While the way of life will be made very clear to Israel and the world in the age to come, it is made none the less clear now to the children of God, who walk by faith—the true seed of Abraham (Rom. 4:12, 10), to whom pertain the covenant and the exceeding great and precious promises in their largest fulfillment.

It is a way of entire consecration to God, even unto death, which implies the burial of one's own will into the will of God – the presenting of self a living sacrifice. In harmony with these two principles – of faith and consecration – we are taught to walk in newness of life, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, but circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, not by sight, but by faith. Rom. 6:4, 8:1; Eph 4:17, 18; 5:15, 16; 2 Cor. 5, 7.

By faith and consecration we have come into a new life as spiritual sons of God, and yet we have the treasure in earthen vessels, and the new life is only in its embryo condition. Hence the necessity of walking after the spiritual instincts of the new nature and keeping down the stronger impulses of the old nature. This is what it is to walk in newness of life after the Spirit, and not after the flesh. To walk after the flesh is to pursue its hopes, aims, ambitions, and since the flesh and the spirit are at war one with the other, it is impossible to maintain the life of both. Therefore it is written, "If ye (spirit-begotten ones) live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify (put to death) the deeds of the body, ye shall live. Rom. 8:13.

While the Word of the Lord speaks thus on general principles as to the way in which we should walk, we are also bidden to come with all the minor affairs of life, to inquire of these Divine oracles. If we know not whether to turn to the right or to the left, we come and find the promise, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and He will direct thy steps." Or, if heavy laden, we find the promise, "Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Then the voice behind brings comfort, peace, and rest in the midst of all life's care and trials if we walk in obedience to its principles and precepts. "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy and upon the Israel of God."

"With a Pure Heart Fervently"

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit" unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently; being begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." -1 Pet. 1:22, 23.

"Love is the fulfilling of the law" of God, and God Himself is love. So all creatures in His likeness, whether human or angelic, have this same chief characteristic. Love presides and rules in their hearts, always exercising itself in ministries of kindness and benevolence. Its most refined and exalted impulses are necessarily toward the fountain of all goodness and grace and glory, but in sympathetic solicitude it reaches out to help and lift up the degraded and vile, while with tender and fervent appreciation it regards the fellowship of all kindred minds.

Thus, God-like love maybe viewed in its three aspects—first, the love of reverence, which is centered in God, whose supreme goodness calls it forth; second, the love of fellowship or affinity for all those actuated by the same sentiments; and, third, the love of pity and sympathy toward all those who have fallen below the standard of moral excellence, or who suffer in any way. While we love God with supreme reverence, surpassing the love of self or of our fellow-men, He also graciously condescends to take us into fellowship with Himself; and all such are co-workers together with Him in benevolent kindness for the lifting up of the fallen, whom God so loved that He gave His only begotten Son to redeem them and then highly exalted Him and gave Him all power in heaven and on earth to restore them.—John 3:16; Phil. 2:8-11; Matt. 28:18.

As members of the fallen race we do not inherit this God-like quality of love. It is only in obedience to divinely revealed truth that we acquire it, being purified thereby from the downward and selfish tendencies of our fallen nature. In other words, as the Apostle here expresses it, by the incorruptible seed of divine truth, which liveth and abideth forever, we are begotten again and have become new creatures in Christ, so that now as new creatures we partake of the new, loving, glorious nature imparted through the Word of truth.

Yet, since we still have this new treasure in the old, marred, earthen vessel (2 Cor. 4:7), we need to take heed lest we lose it, and lest the old selfish nature of the earthen vessel again rise up and reassert itself. Consequently we must be diligent in the exercise and cultivation of the powers of the new nature, that it may thereby develop strength sufficient to ever keep the old nature under full control, so that none of its evil propensities may rise and gain the mastery. Therefore, "See that ye love one another with a pure heart (with disinterested benevolence) fervently."

The language here is addressed not merely to babes in Christ—though it is wholesome counsel to them also—but to those of some degree of advancement, to such as have purified their souls unto unfeigned (not merely professed) love of the brethren. Let all such cultivate this grace more and more, that the whole body of Christ may be firmly knit together in love.

The tendency of all divine truth is to purify the heart. "He that hath this hope (the hope that the truth alone inspires) in him, purifieth himself." Righteousness and the hope of the rewards of righteousness through Christ, are the legitimate effects of the truth upon the heart that truly receives it. But where it is only received into the head, and is resisted in the heart, it only deepens the dye of sin by hardening the heart, thus bringing additional

condemnation, and a fearful looking for of judgment.

This purifying of the heart by the truth is both an instantaneous and a gradual work. When anyone is truly converted to God, there is necessarily a purifying of the heart (the will, the intentions)—a full turning away from sin and evil, and an unreserved surrender of the whole being to God. But as the constant tendency of the old, sinful nature is to re-assert itself, the purifying influences of the truth must be continually applied that the heart may be kept pure and acceptable with God. But let none make the mistake of presuming that the pure in heart are necessarily free from all imperfections. As long as we have this treasure in the earthen vessel we shall be conscious of its imperfections; yet if the heart, the will, the intentions, be pure, holy and true and loyal to God as the mariner's needle to the pole, we are pure in heart, holy and acceptable with God through faith in Christ Jesus, whose imputed righteousness fully supplements all the imperfections of our earthen vessels.

We notice also that this special love of fellowship, to which the Apostle here refers, is not to be exercised toward the world—to whom belongs only the love of pity and sympathy, nor toward Satan or any of the wilful enemies of the Lord and His cause, against whom true love and loyalty to God ever arrays us in vigilant and determined opposition—but toward the brethren—toward them of like previous faith and hope, and of one mind with us, and the Lord. Fervent love, the love of true brotherly fellowship, should indeed exist among all such. They should be in fullest sympathy and cooperation. They should bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ; they should in honour prefer one another, and in love each esteem the other better than self. They should love as brethren, be pitiful, courteous, kind, gentle, true and loyal. As Jesus said, “Love one another as I have loved you.”—John 13:34.

May the love of Christ more and more abound among His people, until the whole body of the Anointed, knit together in love and made all glorious within by its purifying power, is “made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.”

consecrate their lives to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Whenever we make any important decision, there are always many questions we need to answer. For a moment imagine embarking on a business venture. You and your business partners will sit down and try to work out every conceivable detail of the project, such as

1. what are the objectives
2. what should be the plan of action
3. when is the best time to commence the project
4. what benefits should you expect from it
5. how secure is the project
6. what are your liabilities should something go wrong

The project will also involve some considerable costs, and you hope to have sufficient resources to cover them, so the next thing to do is to sit down with a sheet of paper and make a vertical line down the middle. On one side you write down all the things that will need to be paid for, your risks and liabilities and your best estimate of how much they are likely to cost you. On the other side of the line you list all the assets you have at your disposal, including any credit that you perhaps have been given. Then you add up each of the two columns and the relationship between the totals will indicate either the likely success or failure of the entire project.

Our Lord Jesus Christ encourages us to prepare a similar balance sheet when we are considering following in His footsteps, so let us turn to our key text — Luke 14:28-30: “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.” (N.I.V.)

We read in this chapter (Luke 14) that there were large crowds following Jesus. Many of them had different reasons for doing so, no doubt some wanted to listen to His teaching, some because Jesus would feed them when they became hungry (see John 6:26), while others hoped to catch Him saying or doing something that would be unlawful. But to all those who truly want to become His disciples, He has a word of caution: “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” Matt. 10:37,38.

Our Lord does not wish to deliberately turn anyone away, He just does not wish us to be misled into thinking that being His disciple is going to be without any personal sacrifices. Other records of His words confirm this:

- (a) Matt. 7:13,14 “Enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”
- (b) Matt. 10:22,24,25 “All men will hate you because of me. A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master... if the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household.”
- (c) John 16:1-3 “All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue, in fact a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is doing a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me.”

It is difficult for younger Christians to imagine this kind of persecution, especially in so-called civilised countries, but only our Heavenly Father knows to what kind of tests each one as an individual may be put in the future. In Luke 21, Jesus speaks of the times of the end: “Before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name... and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me. (vv.12,16,17)

The apostle Peter in his first letter also mentions suffering: “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the suffering of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed”. 1 Peter 4:12,13. How skilfully he counterbalances the suffering and pain of trials and the glory and honour which are to follow. In 1 Peter 1:6,7 we read further: “though now for a little time you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials, these have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proven genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

The importance of weighing up carefully the costs of following Jesus before such a serious step is taken is shown by His words in Luke 9:62, “No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.” To turn back after once being fully enlightened by God will result in very great loss. For our occasional human mistakes and failures, however, full provision has been made, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness... if anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defence — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.” 1 John 1:9, 2:1.

Returning to our key text, which is about estimating costs, we note that it does not just end with adding up costs. Jesus tells us to do this, but then to compare the costs with the resources we have. Considering these will be far more encouraging; for a start let us turn to a favourite verse — John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” There is nothing new to tell about Christ’s great atoning sacrifice; it is indeed the great resource that we should use on our balance sheet. Without this resource, no further work could commence, no sacrifice of our own could be accepted.

Jesus invites us: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matt. 11:28-30. Further He assures us: “Whoever comes to me I will never drive him away.” John 6:37, and “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” John 14:2,3. These are truly wonderful promises; they may sound simple, but it is such promises that give courage and strength to go on.

In John 1:12 we are told: “Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.” and in Romans 8:16,17: “The Spirit testifies with out spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.” Do we ever imagine what it would be like to be born into some prominent, perhaps royal family? There is surely no comparison between being born of God, being called God’s children, and being born into even the wealthiest, most prestigious family on earth!

Let us look at what else we are promised, in Jesus’ own words:

- (a) John 8:12: “I am the Light of the world, whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
- (b) John 6:35: “I am the Bread of life, he who comes to me will never go hungry.”
- (c) John 4:14: “Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst, indeed the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

We are also assured that for any sacrifices we make, we will receive a far greater reward. Speaking to the disciples and then to all believers, our Lord said: “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. 19:28,29.

We are also encouraged to pray and ask for our needs. “I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.” John 16:23. When Jesus says to “ask in my name” He means to “use my name as a reference, as a guarantee that you are asking in the same way, in the same spirit, as I would ask.” By comparison, we read in James 4:3 how not to ask: “When you ask you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on pleasures.”

Jesus also says: “If you love me, you will obey what I command, and I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever — the Spirit of Truth — I will not leave you as orphans” John 14:15-18. Then in verse 26: “But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

We also have a strong support in our Christian family members — Jesus once said that those who do God’s will are to Him His brothers and sisters and mother. In Romans 12:5, the Lord’s people are compared to members of one body, where each member belongs to the other. In Galatians 6:2 we are told to carry one another’s burdens, and in this way to fulfill the law of Christ. We have each other to share in joys and sorrows, in our victories and falls, and we can count on each other’s love, support and prayers.

We could find still more examples of positive influences on our consecrated lives, but these should suffice to inspire us to look deeper into the costs of discipleship. As we weigh up costs and resources, may we each find a healthy surplus on the credit side and resolve to follow Jesus.

“Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say I find no pleasure in them.” Eccl. 12:1. N.I.V. (RJ: 1991)

Timothy, A Good Minister of Jesus Christ

(continued from previous issue)

“Stir Up The Gift” (2 Tim. 1:3-8)

Paul’s reflections on the trials likely to come upon Timothy would no doubt have had much to do with the Apostle’s prayers for Timothy “night and day”; and he now writes with a view to strengthening him along these lines, reminding him of the genuine faith and piety which he had inherited both from his mother and his grandmother, and assuring him that he believed that this had laid a deep foundation of true piety and faith in Timothy’s own heart. We notice the fact everywhere kept prominent in the Scriptures that according to the Divine arrangement not only are the sins of the parents visited upon the children for several generations, but also that the faith and godliness of the parents, when rightly based on the Word of God and the true promises of that Word, lay the foundation of character in their children, upon which there is the greater hope that a life of godliness and usefulness may be built.

Not only does the Apostle strengthen Timothy’s mind by a remembrance of the goodly heritage of faith and piety received from his mother and grandmother, but in addition he reminds him of the grace of God specially conferred upon him (Timothy) at that certain time when he made a full consecration of himself to the Lord, to be God’s servant; when the Apostle, exercising his power as an Apostle, and as was common in those days, communicated to Timothy by supernatural power an outward gift or token of the Holy Spirit, through the laying on of his hands. The Apostle had evidently either heard or surmised that Timothy was allowing the fervor of his zeal for God to die out, and hence here he urges him to “stir up the gift of God which is in thee.” The Greek word here rendered “stir up” has the significance of *re-kindled*: as though the Apostle said, Re-kindled your gift by renewed energy.

The next verse enforces this view, implying that the Apostle thought that Timothy was in danger of being overcome by *fear*; so as to allow his zeal to abate. Hence he reminds him that the spirit of the Lord imparted to His people is not a spirit of fear, but on the contrary a spirit of power, energy, zeal awakened by love; loving devotion to God, and a desire to please and serve Him; loving devotion to the truth, and a loving devotion to God’s people and a desire to build them up in holy things, and to do good unto all men as we have opportunity. Yet, lest Timothy should get the thought that the spirit of God led only to a zeal of energy — that might at times be unwise in its exercise and do more harm than good — the Apostle adds that the spirit of God which He bestows upon those who are begotten as His sons is a spirit of a “sound mind” — a mind that is fortified and strengthened by the Word of the Lord on every subject, and hence, while thoroughly fearless of man, is wise in judging of times, seasons, and methods for using the energy of love which burns as a fire within the consecrated heart. Would that all of God’s children might appreciate, and more and more obtain, the spirit of a sound mind, by which all of their talents might be used, not only fearlessly but wisely, in the Master’s service.

“Wise Unto Salvation”

Continuing his exhortation’ (3:14,15) the Apostle impresses upon Timothy two things (1) that he had been taught of God, and (2) that this teaching of God had come to him through the Scriptures, which he assures him are sufficient to bring him all the way to the complete realization (in the resurrection) of that salvation which God has provided through faith in Christ Jesus. It will be well for us all to remember that all the graces of the spirit, all the progress in the knowledge of Divine things to which we already have attained, that may have really helped us nearer to God and to holiness, have come to us through the Scriptures of the Old Testament and through the words of our Lord and His inspired Apostles: nor will it ever be necessary to go to other channels for the true wisdom which would prepare us for the salvation promised.

Proceeding, the Apostle shows (Ver. 16,17) that the Scriptures which God inspired are profitable in every direction, and quite sufficient for the man of God, needing no supplements of visions or dreams, either his own or other. They are profitable for doctrine, containing the full statement of the Divine Plan; and no human authority is competent to add thereto. Who hath known the mind of the Lord? Who hath been His counselor? They are useful also for reproof toward others. No words that we can use in correcting the errors of others either in word