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THE PRIVILEGE OF REMEMBERING HIM

The release of the nation of Israel from Egyptian bondage in the days of Pharaoh and Moses was one of the greatest miracles that had occurred on the Earth to that time. Even with modern organisational aids such as computers, telecommunication facilities and mechanised transport, the size of the event would present modern day organisers with a challenging task. The record is in Exodus 12: 29-39: *"And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, 'Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also'. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, 'We be all dead men'. ... And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. ... And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children. And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle. And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual."*

The **scale** of the exercise alone represents a daunting task. The number of adults on foot - 600,000 - would have presented a challenge in itself, not to mention the children and the *"flocks and herds, even very much cattle"*, all of whom were also on foot. Such a large number bears testimony to the statement that *"when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt"*. (Acts 7:17) So while the organisation of such

a large number might be a miracle in human terms, we are assured that it was all pre-planned by God as He had previously *"sworn to Abraham"*.

The **haste** of the exodus is expressed simply in the words *"that they might send them out of the land in haste"*, and *"they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry"*. Those few words might not convey an accurate picture of the short time in which their departure was accomplished.

Another factor that adds to the **miraculous nature** of the exodus is that the Israelites had been in Egypt for 430 years as recorded in Exodus 12:40-43: *"Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt"*. The Israelites who left Egypt in the exodus had lived in Egypt all their lives, and so the idea of leaving what had become, in earthly terms, their "homeland" was completely new to them.

Israel's memory of the exodus

Nevertheless the Israelites soon lost sight of the great miracle that God had performed in bringing them out of Egypt *"by the hand of Moses"* (Isa. 63:12). Within a few months of leaving Egypt, when dwelling in the desert at Mount Sinai, the people rebelled. The record is in Exodus 32:1-6: *"And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves to-gether unto Aaron, and said unto him, 'Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought*

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us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him'. And Aaron said unto them, 'Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me'. And all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, 'These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt'. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, 'Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD'. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play."

It might seem remarkable that the Israelites could so soon turn away from the true God who had delivered them from Egypt, to worship an idol made by human hands. However the incident shows the necessity for God's requirement, by way of the Passover memorial, for them to each year recall their deliverance. The requirement is recorded in Exodus 12:14- 27: "*And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever.*"...: "*And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance forever.*"... "*And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons forever. And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.*"

The memorial ceremony was to be kept "**throughout their generations by a feast by an ordinance forever**", with a requirement for their children to perpetuate the memorial being specifically included in God's instructions. Consequently Israel celebrated the memorial of the Passover every year and Jesus was accustomed to that frequency: "*Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast*". (Luke 2:41-42) And so it was that during His ministry Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples.

Only Israelites to keep the Passover

The original Passover procedure applied only to the

Israelites who were in bondage in Egypt. However the ordinance that required Israel to keep the memorial of the Passover each year provided for strangers to eat it: "*And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, 'This is the ordinance of the Passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof'. But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. A foreigner and a hired servant shall not eat thereof ... All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. One law shall be to him that is home born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you. Thus did all the children of Israel; as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they*". (Exodus 12:43-50)

The spiritual fulfillment

The Passover was a miraculous event. However the greater significance is its spiritual consequences and there are many pictures that can be drawn.

Jesus is our Passover lamb - "*For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*". (1 Cor. 5:7) He met all the criteria that were required of the lamb at the initial Passover in Egypt: "*Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year ...*" Jesus was without blemish: "*For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, ...*". (Heb. 7:26) . Such was the requirement for the ransom price; the equivalent of Adam before he transgressed.

The blood of the passover lamb protected the first born of Israel from the angel of death - it is Jesus' blood that saves the firstborn of the *Israel of God* (Gal. 6:16) from wrath: "*Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him*". (Rom. 5:9)

Just as God required Israel to remember their release from Egyptian bondage by repeating the feast at the same time each year, Christians (*the "Israel of God"* - Gal. 6:16) are to remember the sacrifice of our Passover Lamb each year: "*For as often⁽¹⁾ as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come*". (1 Cor. 11:26)

Only Christians to keep the memorial

The original application of the Passover to the first-born in Egypt, and the subsequent admission of strangers who had been "*bought for money*", and had been circumcised, foreshadowed God's plan in that the Greater Passover applied firstly to those who were Israelites by birth. The admission of strangers may be considered to foreshadow the grafting in of the

Gentiles into the Israel of God. (Romans 11:17) The picture is complete in detail - they must come in a condition of circumcision, not a circumcision of the flesh but of the heart: *"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God"*. (Romans 2:28-29) Thus we can see that those who are not Israelites by nature but have been grafted into the olive tree, may remember the sacrifice of Jesus by keeping His memorial provided they are circumcised in their heart. There is nothing new about this application of the concept of circumcision because Israel should have understood the spiritual significance of fleshly circumcision: *"Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem..."* (Jer. 4:4)

The format of memorials

The format of the way by which people are remembered in the secular world varies. Jesus did not request any sophisticated format. Jesus had eaten the Passover with His disciples year by year in accordance with God's requirement. It was during His last Passover memorial supper with them that He asked them to remember Him. *"And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God'. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, 'Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come'. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, 'This is my body which is given for you: **this do in remembrance of me**'. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you'."* (Luke 22:14 - 20 KJV) The format by which Jesus' disciples were to remember Him was simple - there was no fanfare of trumpets, no street parade and no one in special robes. He simply asked His disciples to remember Him, and He asked them in the privacy of the upper room, out of sight of the masses, and with no public ceremony.

Jesus' desire to be remembered was not centred on glorifying Himself. After eating the Passover memorial with his disciples, and asking them to remember Him, he retired with them to the garden where He prayed to His father: *"Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might*

know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was". (John 17:1-5) His prayer was not centred on Himself; His only wish was for His father to be glorified. All He asked for Himself was to be reunited with His father in the same relationship that He had with God in heaven before He came to earth.

Personal relationship

In every case, one critical factor that determines the desire to remember anyone, and which also affects the depth of feeling during a memorial ceremony, is the nature of the relationship between the two people; the closer the relationship the greater is the desire to remember them.

Only Jesus' disciples ate the supper at which Jesus asked them to remember Him, which is consistent with any memorial; only those who have had the privilege of some association with the one to be remembered can remember them. So, just as it is a privilege to *"know him, and the power of his resurrection"*, (Philippians 3:10) so also it is a privilege to be invited to remember Him.

And so it is today. Those to whom Jesus' life and death mean nothing do not remember Him at all. It is only those who have been blessed to know Him, and to whom He is *"wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"* (1 Cor. 1:30) who are invited to remember Him. It is only those who appreciate His great personal sacrifice in coming to Earth to be Man's redeemer, the cruel and gruesome nature of His death, and the wonderful consequences of His sacrifice, who are truly able to remember Him.

While the ceremony was and is simple and private, it is the most important ceremony ever to be celebrated by mankind, far more important than the Passover memorial that the Israelites ate year by year to remind them of their deliverance from Egypt. So let us who have been invited to remember Him in this simple but all important way, come with joy and gratitude to His table, and *"keep the feast"*. (1 Cor. 5:8)

(1) Strong's Concordance: #3740 : hosakis -*"how* (that is, with #302, *so*) *many times* as: - as oft (-en) as."

The definition *"how, as many times as"*, is not an exhortation to eat it often, but *"whenever"*, i.e. from now on do it in remembrance of Him and not in remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt. This definition is consistent with the other verses where it occurs in the New Testament 1 Cor. 11:26 and Rev. 11:6 - and with the New International Version translation *"whenever"* in 1 Cor. 11:25 and 26.

THE PRE-HUMAN EXISTENCE OF JESUS CHRIST

John 8:58: *Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."*

The doctrine of the pre-human existence of Jesus Christ has been with us from the days when Jesus himself walked upon this earth during his first Advent. Its beginning comes from our Lord's very own words, such as: (**John 6:38**) "I have come down from heaven," and (**John 6:51**) "I am the living bread which came down from heaven."

When it became apparent to Jesus that many of his disciples were not quite sure about this claim he said, in **John 6:61-62**, "Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before?" We can see that what Jesus said was understood by his followers after his resurrection and ascension. From the words of Peter, in **Acts 2:32-33**, "This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God (i.e. where he was before), and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens; but he himself says, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet.' Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

We see from the Gospels that Jesus declared the same truth to the Pharisees:

John 8:14, "I know whence I have come and whither I am going;"

John 8:23, "I am from above ... I am not of this world;"

John 8:42, "I proceeded and came forth from God;" and culminating in our title verse,

John 8:58, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."

This doctrine, then, forms part of the foundation of Christianity and without it one can make no real sense of the resurrection or of the atoning work that was carried out by our beloved Redeemer and Saviour, our very own Lord Jesus Christ.

However, many theologians dispute the validity of this doctrine. For example, John Macquarrie, in "**Jesus Christ in Modern Thought**," says "Jesus Christ pre-existed in the mind and purpose of God, and I doubt if one should look for any other kind of pre-existence." He adds, "I would reject any personal pre-existence as mythological." Another writer, ²John Hick, in "**The**

Metaphor of God Incarnate: Christology in a Pluralistic Age," says that Jesus was "a human being extraordinarily open to God's influence and thus living to an extraordinary extent as God's agent on earth, 'incarnating' the divine purpose for human life." Hick espouses the basic error of liberal Christianity: He considers the importance of Christ to lie in his teaching rather than his work. He sees Jesus as simply one teacher among many. Such writers attempt to argue against this doctrine, to explain it away to such an extent that it loses any value and, as a consequence, distort the understanding of God's work in history.

It is important to recognise that, in any research, where one starts determines where one will finish. In the above works there is an underlying presupposition that there can be no supernatural or miraculous events in our world. Methodologically, human reason has been exalted to such a level that if an event cannot be explained scientifically, there is a real tendency to disbelieve its truth or reality. The universe is, then, a closed system and in such a system there is no room for Jesus of Nazareth having pre-existed his earthly life in any meaningful sense.³

There are two reasons why it is appropriate to delve into this topic. Firstly, the New Testament is adamant that eternal life is attainable only by a deliberate and intelligent acceptance of, and faith in, Jesus Christ. "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" said Paul to the jailer in **Acts 16:31**. "If you will confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" he said in **Romans 10:9**. And Peter, in **Acts 4:12**, insists that "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." It stands to reason therefore that to gain an intelligent and full appreciation of Jesus Christ, we need to learn as much as we can about him, before his earthly ministry, during his earthly ministry, and after his earthly ministry. We cannot gain a full appreciation by limiting ourselves to the period between his birth and crucifixion. Secondly, it is apparent that God does act in history, intervening to bring about his purposes. But why? "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him" as the Psalmist asks in **Psalms 8:4**. Here we are trying to fathom the nature of God Himself, the nature and

¹ J. Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (Philadelphia: Trinity, 1990)

² J. Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate: Christology in a Pluralistic Age* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993)

³ See D. McCready, *He Came Down From Heaven*, in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, (September, 1997)

extent of his love for us. The answer cannot be obtained without a knowledge of the pre-human existence of Jesus Christ, for it is only as a result of that knowledge that we can really begin to appreciate and embrace that wonderful passage, **John 3:16**, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

In The Beginning

Genesis 1:1 states "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

John 1:1 states "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Jesus, as The Logos, was with God at the beginning. We know that God (the LORD, Jehovah) is from everlasting to everlasting. He is the Everlasting God. (**Genesis 21:33, Psalms 93:2**) The Logos, however, was **created**, the first creation of Jehovah, "the beginning of God's creation" as per **Revelation 3:14**. There can be no disputing that Jehovah, the Heavenly Father is not identical to the Logos. This is not the place to discuss that issue but suffice it to say that the Bible is clear-cut on this issue. Augustine was in grave error when he wrote "Do not imagine any interval or period when the Father was and the Son was not." The Bible expressly states that the Logos "was the beginning of God's creation." One theologian, T.C. Oden has correctly stated "the decisive question of Christian testimony is not whether it is palatable but whether it is true. The vocation of the theologian places the writer under obligation to deliver an accurate reading of Christian teaching, even when it points to a narrow way."⁴

The Logos was with God in a greater sense than physical proximity. The Greek word used, *pros*, instead of *meta*, denotes direction – toward, to, unto – and suggests one looking to another. In this case the Logos was looking to Jehovah, learning from Him, becoming like Him in his character. In all the ages prior to his earthly ministry, Jesus learned from the Father, growing to reflect the same character, disposition and spirit. Paul tells us, in **Colossians 1:15-17**, that "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities – all things were created through him and for him." God, Jehovah, is the supreme creator as testified many times, for example **Ephesians 3:9**, "God who created all things," **Mark 13:19** "the creation which God created," and in **Revelation 10:6**, "him who lives for ever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it." Whilst it is true that God, Jehovah,

is the supreme creator, it is also true that it was Jehovah's good pleasure to work "in" or "through" the Logos to accomplish his purposes. As the first-born of all creation he was used as a "master workman" assisting Jehovah in the creation of all that followed. The distinction is summed up in **1 Corinthians 8:6**, "There is one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist."

The concept of the Logos 'learning' from God, being taught by the Father, is noteworthy because it shows that, notwithstanding his great work in creation, or of his roles as Michael the Archangel and the 'Angel of the Lord', the Logos had yet more learning to do. Here we see the wisdom of God in sending the Logos to earth as Jesus, who, being already holy, harmless, and sinless, was *made perfect* through sufferings. We read, in **Hebrews 5:8**, that "Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who would obey him."

It would be remiss not to here quote that lovely passage from **Proverbs 8:22-31**

22 The LORD (Jehovah) created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old.

23 Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

24 When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water.

25 Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth;

26 before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world.

27 When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,

28 when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep,

29 when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth,

30 then I was beside him, like a master workman; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always,

31 rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the sons of men. (RSV)

This passage has, since the earliest days of the church,

⁴ T.C. Oden, *The Word of Life: Systematic Theology* (San Francisco: Harper, 1989) 2.ix. quoted in D. McCready, *He Came Down from Heaven*, Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (Sept 1997)

been applied to our Lord Jesus Christ in his pre-human existence, and there is no reason why it should not be so, for surely he was the personification of God's wisdom; and in his earthly ministry, he did understand himself to be the revealer of divine wisdom. By his unique use of the term "*Amen*", translated as "Truly" or "Verily", Jesus claimed that his words possessed an absolute certainty. "Truly I tell you" or "Verily I say unto you," as in **Matthew 6:5 and Mark 10:29-30**, are to be understood as "You can be certain that what I say is true, *because I say so.*" This is why "the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes." (See **Matthew 7:28-29, Mark 1:27**) Furthermore, he taught using the forms of past wisdom teachers: proverbs, riddles, parables, paradox, poetry etc. He did not see himself, however, as simply another wisdom teacher but the personification of wisdom itself. We see, in **Matthew 12:38-42**, he said, "and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. behold, something greater than Solomon is here." His unique relationship with the Father, as expressed in **Matthew 11:27** "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son", made Jesus the ultimate wise man. That is why the rejection of him and his teachings would bring terrible judgment. That is why he could say, in **Matthew 23:29-39**, "Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate" for not only had Israel shed the blood of the prophets, murdered the prophets and wise men and scribes, killed, crucified and scourged them, but here, when faced with the ultimate wisdom of God, "they would not."

Michael, the Archangel

The intimate relationship that existed between Jehovah and the Logos, the Father and the Son, at creation did not end there. We see throughout the Old Testament, and in particular, **Daniel 12:1**, that the Logos is also identified as "Michael, the great prince who has charge" over the Israelites. He is, in **Jude 9**, called "the archangel," or chief angel, that is, the first in rank of the 'princes', or the angels. This chief ruler is identified as the Messiah who was to come from the tribe of Judah in **1 Chronicles 5:2**, and with our Lord Jesus at his second advent, in **1 Thessalonians 4:16**, "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the Archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God."

We see him, in **Exodus 33:2**, going before the Israelites, to drive out the "Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites." We see him, in **Exodus 14:21**, parting the waters of the Red Sea. We see him, in **Joshua 5: 13-15**, meeting Joshua prior to the capture of Jericho, announcing himself as "commander of the army of the Lord." We see him, in **Joshua 10:12-14**, "hearkening

to the voice of' Joshua, darkening the sun, so that victory against the Amorites might be achieved. We see him, in **Judges 5:20-21**, causing the Kishon River to sweep away, in a torrent, the forces of Sisera. And we see him, in **2 Kings 19:35**, as "the angel of the Lord", slaying 185,000 Assyrians during the night, causing the departure of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, a departure to his death at the hands of his own sons.

The Angel of the Lord

The term "angel of the Lord" is used many times in the Old Testament and there are many occasions in which we can safely attribute the term to the Logos. We note that the name Michael, means "who is like God?" and the answer to that question was given by Jesus, in **John 14:9**, when he said to Phillip "He who has seen me has seen the Father."

We note that, when the angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar by a spring of water in the wilderness, advising her that her son, Ishmael, would be the father of a great nation, that she, in **Genesis 16:13**, exclaimed "Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?". We note that, when Abraham was about to sacrifice his son, Isaac, on Mount Moriah, the angel of the Lord said to him, in **Genesis 22:12**, "Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing that you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And then, because of Abraham's faith, the angel of the Lord says, in **Genesis 22:18**, "by your descendants shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves, because you have obeyed my voice." We note that, when Jacob wrestled with a heavenly being, in **Genesis 32:22-32**, he was given a new name, Israel, and blessed. Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." We know, from **Revelation 2:17**, that it is Christ who gives the overcomers a new name, "To him who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it."

Other notable episodes dealing with the angel of the Lord, the Logos, the Pre-human Jesus, include Balaam and his donkey (**Numbers 22: 21-35**), Gideon and the Midianites (**Judges 6: 11-24**), and the appearances to Manoah and his wife, the parents of Samson (**Judges 13**). When Manoah enquired as to the name of the angel, "the angel of the Lord said to him, 'Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?'" (**Judges 13:18**). This, of course, is one of the names of the Messiah, as prophesied in **Isaiah 9:6**, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful. Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Conclusion

"Unto us a son is given." Can we see the extent of God's love for us in this verse? The Son of God, the only begotten Son, the Son who did exist with the Father even before the creation of the world, the Son who was the mouthpiece of the Father, the director of all His activities, the Son who was "daily his delight," this Son is given to us for sacrifice. What the Father could not bear for Abraham to do, he did. He did turn his face from his Son to the extent that the Son cries out from the cross of Calvary, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (**Matthew 27:46, Psalm 22**). We have seen that the Son, as Jesus Christ, was perfected through his sufferings and, after his resurrection and ascension, was restored again to the right hand of God. As reward for his faithfulness, he was conferred a still higher honour, to be a partaker of the "divine nature," as in **John 5:26**: "For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself." As for us, we can now appreciate the words in **John 3:16** a little better. Life is the gift of the Father. It is what he wants the whole world to have. It is why we were created. He so loves the world that "he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He gave his Son to be our

Redeemer and Saviour as foretold in **Hosea 13:14**, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."

A knowledge of the pre-human existence of Jesus Christ enables us to understand, love and appreciate him far more than we could without such knowledge. We read in **Philippians 2:6-11**, "though he was in the form of God, (he) did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (RSV)

**Jesus, the very thought of Thee,
Brings comfort, peace and rest;
O! how I long Thy face to see,
And be for ever blest." BSH 191**

A MOUNTAIN TOP EXPERIENCE

It was a nice afternoon; the sun was shining, the temperature was mild and there was no wind. We had not been away from the house for a couple of weeks and we all felt like a break. And so the suggestion was made that we take some time out and go and climb a local mountain. It was only 1200 feet high (350 metres) but none of us had climbed it before, even though we had lived in the area for more than 20 years.

The drive out to the mountain was easy - a smooth road and we were able to drive our car to the foot of the mountain. No physical effort was required.

At the foot of the mountain we had to leave our car and start the climb on foot. It immediately became apparent that progress now depended on individual effort. However initially that was not difficult. The path was well worn from those who had gone this way previously and the incline was gentle. However as we progressed, the gradient became steeper and we began to realise that if the gradient continued to increase it would be a daunting task to reach the peak. Nevertheless we also realised that all we had to do at that stage was to keep putting one foot in front of the other. By doing that we would progress, little by little, towards our goal.

As we climbed, the path became narrower, less well

used, steeper and there were more difficult obstacles to negotiate. Looking ahead up the track, the prospect of reaching the top looked to be beyond us. So we paused and looked back along the path along which we had come. There was a grand sight, one that we had not seen before. The fields made a uniform pattern, stretching out to a distance that was not possible to imagine. We realised that although the climb so far had been difficult, it afforded benefits available only to those who had made the effort. The view stirred us to continue the climb.

We pressed on; the path became steeper and more tortuous, but obstacles that previously we would have deemed to be impossible to pass became nothing more than obstacles that we had to overcome. We had become conditioned to the climb. Also we were stirred by the grandeur of the view behind and the prospect of a grander view from a higher vantage point.

Finally we reached the summit. The sense of achievement was exhilarating. The view was spectacular; not a tortuous, narrow, winding path but a grand view all around. We could see the wonders of creation. "*O! the prospect, it was so transporting!*"

We sat down and pondered our experience. We soon realised the similarity of our experience with our spiri-

tual climb during our earthly lives.

Before we started to climb our spiritual mountain we lived on the plain. We were totally unaware of the view that was available only to those who were privileged to rise above it. Those who live solely on the plain are fully occupied with the routine matters of life, and are unable to see the grandeur and magnitude of God's plan. But it was not a time to boast: *"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others"*. (Eph. 2:3) *"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"* (1 Cor. 4:7)

In order to climb the mountain we had to expend personal effort; no one else could climb it for us. This reminded us that we must make the truth our own if we are to enjoy the spiritual vistas available only to those who climb their spiritual mountain. *"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."* (1Thess. 5:21) *"Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."* (Rom. 14:5) *"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* (2 Tim. 2:15)

Just as we had to see the physical view with our eyes - one could not see it for another - so it is with our spiritual sight; no one can see it for us, we must see it for ourselves. And spiritual sight can only be gained by God's grace - *"Paul planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase"*. (1 Cor. 3:6)

Initially the way was easy, just as the Lord leads us gently by the hand, not suffering us *"to be tempted above that ye are able"*. (1 Cor. 10:13) That was the way Jesus nurtured His disciples: *"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now"*. (John 16:12) However as we progress along the narrow way the path becomes more difficult; *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you"*. (1 Pet. 4:12) In order to overcome we need to keep our objective clearly in mind at all times: *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"*. (Phil. 3:14)

The higher we went the less well used was the path. How accurate is the parable of the sower! *"But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended"*. (Matt. 13:20-21) Rather may we be like those to whom Hebrews 6:9

refers: *"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation ..."* So then, *"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised"*. (Heb. 10:23) Let us be diligent *"to make our calling and election sure: for if we do these things, we shall never fall."* (2 Pet. 1:10 - paraphrased)

We can be motivated by looking back to the life we had before we were privileged to climb the mountain. That does not mean looking back with a desire to return, but rather it helps us to keep in mind the vanity of those goals and the greater goal ahead of us. The people "below" were going about their daily business, fully occupied with the temporal issues of life. To them, whatever they were doing seemed to be the right thing to do at the time. However we were reminded that *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"*. (Prov. 14:12) Yes, mankind must do what seems to be right at the time to earn a living, but in the end that way (those activities) will lead to death, and were it not for Jesus' sacrifice and the resurrection of all mankind, the end would indeed be death. *"...Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible"*. (1 Cor. 9:25)

Looking back also reminded us of the need to be *"gentle unto all"* (2 Tim. 2:24) because *"the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now"*. (Rom 8:22)

Just as the view from the summit was beyond imagination, so we can be assured that our spiritual reward will be wonderful. *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure"*. (1 John 3:2-3) *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing"*. (2 Tim. 4:7-8)

We had no desire to return to the earthly plain, but the time came for us to do so. As we contemplated what that would mean, we called to mind the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:2-5: *"For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit."*

GOD IS GOOD

(This article has been compiled from an address given by the late Fred Grinsted, of Adelaide, South Australia.)

The intention in this address is not to prove that God is good but to highlight the importance of the fact that God is good. Indeed the fact that "God is good" is the second most important fact in the universe.

To the Christian, the most important fact in the universe is simply "God is!" If God did not exist then nothing would exist.

Many learned and intelligent people either doubt or deny the existence of God. They see wisdom and beauty in the design of the human body and other animals and plants but do not realise that a design requires a designer. They know a force must have a source and have learned a lot about the energy within every atom in every particle of matter but do not identify the source. The fact that they do not have "eyes that see" does not detract from the importance of the truth that God **is**. There does have to be a designer and a source of energy and God is both.

Similarly, the greatness of the number who think of God as harsh and condemning does not mean that they are correct nor does it detract at all from His goodness. We see the importance of God's goodness firstly in that which relates to humanity. However we need to learn of Him and not dictate to Him. God's goodness was manifested in creation itself. *"And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good."* (Gen.1:31)

His goodness is also manifested in His providence. *"He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."* (Matt. 5:45)

It was manifested particularly on those special to God, like Joseph. To his brothers Joseph said *"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."* (Gen. 50:20) This example of Joseph is one that shows us something of just how much higher is His way than our way and His thoughts than our thoughts. (Isaiah 55:9) God had a grander plan and purpose than Joseph's brothers. The selling of Joseph to the Ishmaelites (Gen. 37:28) was part of God's plan. It would "soon" bring relief from famine for the people of Israel.

The future

God's goodness has certainly been important in bringing us to where we are. However it is when we

look to the future events that He has planned that we see how the present events show His goodness. Because God is good to all, we can look forward to the future He is still bringing about. There is nothing to fear and when we do not have any fear we can better appreciate His goodness to us in the **present**.

Knowing God is good and all-powerful gives us our reason to **be**. We are part of His creation. We are alive. In our own small way, our very lives are a participation in His creative work. We rejoice **now** in the knowledge that the end product **will be good**. All the miseries around us are temporary. Think of the importance of God's goodness on our very sanity. *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."* (Rom. 8:28) His goodness will work all things together for good for almost every human being. The **good** will be different from individual to individual, but it will always be good.

God created man to be in His image. *"God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness."* (Gen. 1:26) Goodness, including love, is foremost in His character. We should know all about it. We should know just what goodness is.

Think of the ten commandments. Are they not a definition of real goodness? Think of the Law expressed in Leviticus 19:18. *"Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD."* God here reveals the essence of goodness as well as instructing us in the way we are to continue in His goodness. Obedience to these commands will make God's Kingdom a joy to almost everyone forever.

Goodness does not exclude severity: *"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God"* (Rom.11:22) GOD IS GOD. God had to be severe when the whole creation was threatened: by the flood He removed hybrid people, by brimstone and fire He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. He gave extreme instructions to His people to get rid of the false Gods who called for worship of beastliness and violence. There have been limits to the evils He has permitted to bring about the future good He has planned. It is the goodness of God that man is to emulate, not His severity.

Understanding God's Word.

We accept the authority of the Canon of Scripture: *"because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of*

man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. " (2 Pet.1:21) However, we realise that some of the message from God may have been lost in the idiom of the day, in the translation, or even in the word pictures used to convey thought. We need some rules drawn from the overall presentation of the Bible to **"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."** (1 Thess.5:21)

"God is good" is important in the interpretation and understanding of the Bible. "God is Good" is probably at the top of the rules for understanding the word of God. An example of how understanding that God is good influences one's interpretation can be seen in Exodus 34:6-7 which, on the surface, might seem to be self contradictory: **"And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty."** *"By no means clear the guilty"* seems to contradict *"forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin"* The fact that God is Good means that *"visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation"* (as verse 7 continues) cannot be the end of the matter. Even by human standards, that would not be good. It must be part of a process to bring about a greater good.

How blessed are those who see that the last part of verse 7 applies to this present evil world. In it God permits the evil consequences of sin entering into the world to teach the heinous nature of sin whereas **"Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin"** belongs to the future age when all will see the Goodness of God.

The blessing of God's creation

The fact that God is Good is obviously important in that it led to His plan to bless all the families of the earth. **"The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."** (Psa.145:9,16)

Goodness will be paramount in the Kingdom He has planned. God said **"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain."** (Isa.11:9) **"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."** (Rev.21:4)

Love, a prominent part of God's goodness, inspired the plan of blessing, just as His wisdom fitted everything together and His power will bring it to pass.

Bringing about God's Will

To understand the importance of the Goodness of God in bringing His plan to pass, we must ponder some of the features of that plan.

Essential to it is the need for each human being to **repent** of sin even though that sin is the result of his or her having been born a sinner. The ultimate persuasion in that direction will be in the resurrection when all *"come unto the knowledge of the truth."* (**1 Tim. 2:4**) All will then be able to look back on six thousand years of evil coming from a single act of disobedience. Almost all will repent of their own part in that evil.

We have to remember that there are several aspects to repentance. One is the change of direction which repentance brings - the change in turning towards God instead of away from Him. Another aspect of repentance is the discomfort that comes with guilt. Yet another is its self-correcting force. It is suggested that this will be the rod of justice for all mankind in the learning millennium after the resurrection.

Repentance is required before we can lay our guilt at the feet of our Saviour. Repentance acknowledges the guilt. Faith removes that guilt. We need to believe that **"the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."** (1 John 1:7). We need to be convinced that not only do we need the faith that His blood is able to cleanse us, but we need to believe that it has done so and continues to do so.

In the resurrection, the existence and goodness of God will be known by all. It will not be a matter of faith or belief. At that time the Destroyer of Eden will be bound, and sin will be removed from the Earth for ever once the learning millennium and the little season of trial are over. (Rev. 20:3) **"Nothing shall hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain"**. (Isa. 65:25)

Bringing about God's will for all to repent is and will be a very important **achievement** of the goodness of God. **"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"** (Rom.2:4) Notice that this is in complete contrast to one common understanding; that violence (or the threat of violence) from God is what leads man to repentance. Such harshness and punishment of those who have never had an opportunity to know God could never truly reconcile man to God.

God's justice

The dark age teachings that eternal torment is demanded by God's justice as a penalty for born sinners doing what sinners do is contrary to Romans

6:23 ***"For the wages of sin is death."*** It is sin that brings death, not God's justice. It would be a peculiar type of justice that condemned, to eternal suffering, sinners who do not know Christ, or who do not believe He died to save them, never having had an opportunity to know Him.

From the beginning God planned a way for mankind to start again free from the contamination of being born sinners. Our condemnation in Adam was God's merciful provision to enable man to be resurrected. His way was costly. It required God's own Son to pay the penalty on behalf of Adam.

Jesus' death as the ransom for Adam's transgression will result in all the consequences of Adam's sin being set aside. All of Adam's progeny will be just as if they had not been born sinners. Setting aside the resulting sin makes their resurrection consistent with justice.

What a victory that will be for simple, true justice. Almost all will grasp eternal life trusting in Christ ***"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of Him which believeth in Jesus."*** (Rom 3:25,26) Then all will ***"come to the knowledge of the truth."***

As well as thinking of the real meaning of 'good' we have to consider what is 'just'. God would have to be seen as the ultimate in both attributes. The two words 'just' and 'good' can be the root cause of misunderstanding of God's goodness. The fact that 'God is both good and just' precludes eternal torment of any being.

The belief that "God is good" is the second most important fact in the universe and should be an inspiration to us to ***"give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, and not let them slip"***. (Heb. 2:1)

Our message

"God is Good" ought to be our message for the benefit of all who have ears to hear whenever it is "in season" for the hearer. Taylor's Living Bible paraphrases 2 Cor 3:18 as ***"But we Christians have no veil over our faces; we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like Him."***

Health and happiness

Health and happiness from God's goodness is closely tied to our message. On the one hand our message

leads others to a healthy attitude of mind, while at the same time spreading that word reinforces our own health and happiness, as it increases our awareness of God in our lives.

Thinking about those we love is happiness itself. The assurance that we will be together forever secures that happiness. When coupled with His omnipotence and love for His human creatures, God's goodness is the key to health. It removes fear. ***"If God be for us, who can be against us?"*** (Rom. 8:31). ***"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."*** (1 John 4:18)

Psalm 37 has much to help on health and happiness.

V7 "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass."

V3 "Trust in the LORD, and do good."

V5 "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass."

Awareness of God's goodness, power and love removes anxiety and gives us the peace of God. Thus we can continue in His goodness, doing our part. What is it that God will bring to pass? Verse 4 tells us: ***"Delight thyself also in the LORD; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."***

God's faithfulness

Our understanding of God's goodness must include His faithfulness. We can assuredly trust God's promises. We will be reunited with our loved ones who have gone before. ***"They will come again from the land of the enemy."*** (Jer.31:16) ***"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."*** (1 Cor.15:26)

Psalm 107:19-21 provides a concise summary:

"Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses."

He maketh the storm a calm,

so that the waves thereof are still."

Then are they glad because they be quiet;

so he bringeth them unto their desired haven."

Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

**GOD has promised a glorious day,
And by faith we now see it draw near;
Our Redeemer has opened the way,
And soon will its glory appear.**

BSH 103

LOVE ...SUFFERS LONG

In 1 Corinthians 13 verses 4 to 8 the Apostle Paul lists 16 characteristics of love. The first one listed is called "long suffering" in the King James Version and "patient" in the New International Version.

In our day to day communication, the terms "long suffering" and "patient" often mean different things. "Long suffering" is often considered to be associated with pain whereas "patient" is often considered to involve only waiting.

The meaning of long suffering in the Scriptures

The Greek word translated "long suffering" (KJV) in 1 Corinthians 13:4 is "*makrothumeo*" and is defined in Strong's Concordance (#3114) as "*to be long spirited, i.e. (objectively) forbearing, or (subjectively) patient*". The subjective sense applies when it refers to the one in control, while the objective sense applies when it is referring to the one who is under the control of another.

The long suffering of God

The Scriptures tell us that God exercises long suffering. In 1 Peter 3:20 we read that "... *the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing...*" God had predetermined how He was going to destroy the "world that then was" (2 Peter 3:6) but save Noah and his family. God had the power to perform that instantaneously, but it was for the ultimate good of mankind that He require Noah to build the ark, and that it take a period of time. This event has been recorded for our learning (Rom. 15:4). One thing we can learn from it is the nature of God's long suffering. Some have suggested it took Noah 120 years to build the ark. (based on Gen. 6:3) The lesson surely is that if God, who is omnipotent, waited "patiently" while his plan was worked out, how much more should we be who are subject to His plan!

The long suffering (patience) of Abraham

In Hebrews 6:12-15 we are exhorted to be "*followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made promise to Abraham, ... 'surely I will bless thee' ... after he had patiently endured he obtained the promise*". Abraham was 75 years old when God promised that He would give him an heir (Gen. 15:1-4) but it was not until he was 100 years old that Isaac was born. (Gen. 21:5) Abraham "*patiently endured*" for 25 years!

Our long suffering

In James 5:7-8 we read "*Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh*". The exhortation in this text is for us to be "patient

unto the coming of the Lord". God is in control and it is His plan that is being worked out. He has set apart a time for the sanctification of the church (the Gospel Age), and we cannot alter His plan. We must be patient until that purpose has been accomplished. This aspect of *makrothumeo* may be regarded as our long suffering (or forbearance), and arises from our subjection to Him as a higher power. While our "*earnest desire is to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven*" (2 Cor. 5:2), the time frame is not in our hands and our cheerful forbearance is a witness of our love for Him and for His plan.

Long suffering to the world

As well as being subject to God's plan, we must also exercise long suffering towards both our brethren and the world of mankind. The long-suffering we need to exercise towards the world arises from our desire to live godly lives. (2 Tim. 3:12) The challenge is to elevate our thinking above things of the world and to realise that we are despised because they are in darkness. (Eph. 4:17-18; Rom. 13:19-21)

The same principle applies when we are trying to tell others of the good news. While we are to be "*ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear*", (1 Peter 3:15) let us also always remember that while Paul planted, and Apollos watered, it is God who gives the increase. (1 Cor. 3:7) Waiting for the increase might well require considerable patience (long suffering) on our part.

Long suffering to our brethren

We must also exercise forbearance towards our brethren: "*Now we exhort you, brethren, ... be patient toward all ... both among yourselves and to all*". (1 Thess. 5:14-15) "*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love ...*" (Eph. 4:1-2) Sometimes it is difficult to be forbearing with our brethren. Each one of us has some idiosyncrasy that has the potential to irk others. We need to be on guard always not to irritate others, and also to not let others' habits irritate us. We need to remember that we are all in the flesh, and therefore none of us is perfect.

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