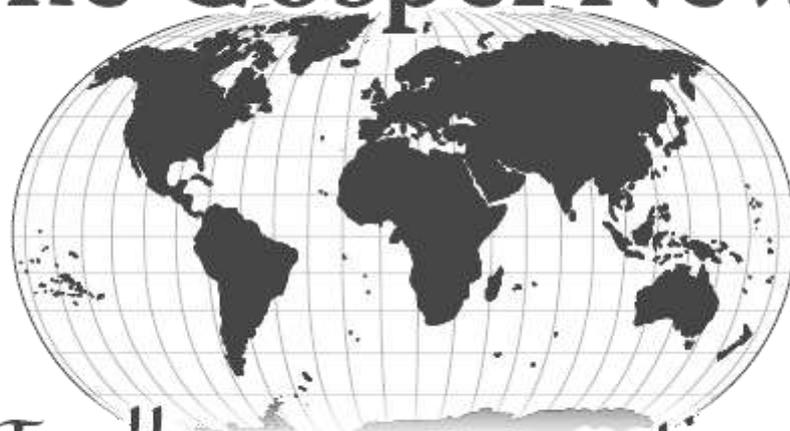


# The Gospel News



“To all  nations”

## Editorial: Wonder

I want to reflect with you upon the sense of wonder which we ought to have as believers. I'd go so far as to suggest that a genuine sense of wonder, of radical amazement, is a characteristic of the believer; and we should be seriously worried if we lack it. The Psalms record the faithful writers' awestruck wonder at God's ways, at the human body, at His acts in history, at creation. Three times a day the Orthodox Jew prays: "We thank thee for thy miracles which are daily with us, for thy continued marvels". And in the evening liturgy they recite the words of Job 9:10: God "does great things past finding out, marvellous things without number". And perhaps spiritual Israel can take a lesson from this; a regular sense of wonder should fill our daily lives. But does it?

I'm sure you've had those rare moments of wonder, of insight, of 'getting it', or feeling you are somewhere along the road of getting it... but where do they come from, and what do they mean? I suggest they are all about our meeting with God. The Bible reveals that God is in search of man. "Like grapes in the wilderness, I *found* Israel" (Hos. 9:10); "He *found* him in a desert land...he encircled him, he cared for him" (Dt. 32:10); "I have *found* David my servant" (Ps. 89:20). Jeremiah's search for believers was a reflection of God's: "Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look and take note! Search her squares to see if you can find a man, one who does justice and seeks truth" (Jer. 5:1). God hunts for us like a lion, Job came to realize; and in this "You show yourself wonderful to me" (Job 10:16). And we are searching for God. Those awestruck moments of wonder are where God finds us at the time we are searching for Him. Both sides are seeking each other; and in those moments, they meet. Heaven and earth kiss each other; there's a click, a flash, between Almighty God and us - as we stand at a bus stop, turn left into Acacia Avenue, lay there on our bed meditating.

## Defining Wonder

Beholding the stars and the natural world led the Psalmists to wonder. But this was not because they saw them as an end in themselves; the writers looked to the God and the covenant with us which is beyond them. The natural creation is a mystery, a question - but not the answer. To simply observe it won't give the answers. "Pitiless is the silence of the sky". Job went so far as to say: "If I have looked at the sun when it shone, or the moon moving in splendour... I should have been false to God above" (Job 31:26-28). The prophets seem to discount any form of nature worship. The answers to the questions creation poses are to be found, to put it bluntly, in the Bible. Humanity senses that there is something 'there' which is within our reach but beyond our grasp; an undisclosed meaning, an allusiveness to some One beyond, a whisper of some forgotten mother tongue, scattered hints, something cryptic. And we need help to get to it. A passing sense of wonder at the night sky as a man glances at it for a few moments longer than usual one evening from his balcony... needs to lead to the questions in response to God's questions: Who is He? What is His Name, His hope for me, His ability... how should I respond? And the answers to those questions aren't in nature itself, but in God's word. "You are great and do wonders... Teach me your way, O Lord; I will walk in your way" (Ps. 86:10,11).

The Lord repeatedly tells the unbelieving Jews of His day *not* to marvel / wonder, but to *believe*. Perhaps we're intended to read in an ellipsis to these passages: '[Don't only] marvel / wonder [but *believe*]'. If we know that "we are of God", that He is with us, with me personally... then our wonder at creation will be of a different order to that felt by the unbeliever; we will be able to feel some connection with the natural world which unbelievers don't feel. We will be able to say with Job that we are "in league with the stones of the field" (Job 5:23). And thus we will feel God's very

real presence; that man is not alone; / am not alone. There is God, and a God who is "for me", Emmanuel, God with us and for us in His Son. The most basic words of Scripture need to be felt by us: "You are with me. Your rod and staff comfort me".

### **Man In Search Of Wonder**

We too often kid ourselves that nobody is really interested in our message. But not so. People are aware that there is something beyond their mundane experience, the emotional flatland and seeking for petty 'fun' which characterizes our postmodern world. Humanity is confronted with a world that alludes to something beyond itself, to a truth beyond experience. Ps. 19 speaks of how the sun, moon and stars speak to humanity with no voice nor words. And yet that very passage is applied in the New Testament to the preachers of the Gospel. In mankind's meeting with us they should be seeing the same unspoken message which there is in the heavens above. We really can lead them on from their vague sense that there's something else out there in life and existence. They may feel that the answers lie shrouded by some impenetrable fog. But we need the spirit of Paul, when he noticed an altar to an unknown God. "Whom you ignorantly seek / worship, Him I will declare to you". People are fast realizing that advanced technology, social reforms, a rational approach to life... simply isn't the answer to our spiritual needs.

### **What Stops Wonder**

If God is replaced merely with a creed, love by habit, then our sense of wonder will wane. "The truth" is a Biblical phrase, but I think it refers essentially to the covenant truthfulness of God to us, rather than implying that those who are "in the truth" therefore know all there is to know about God. If this is what we think - nothing will be very wondrous for us, if we think we know it all already. Every Biblical paradox will be 'easily explained'; there will be for us no sense of mystery left. Whereas I suggest there are many intentional paradoxes in God's word, which defy rational resolution. A statement of faith is all well and good and useful in some ways. But a mere combination of concepts won't of itself produce wonder and awe of God. If misused, it can hinder it. True wonder at God produces creative thinking; for we have interacted with God in those intense moments of amazement, and we will not be inspired by that encounter to return to our familiar paths of thought and behaviour, but rather to quit those rat runs and reach out to Him in newness of life and thinking.

The endless petty things of life naturally stop us having the 'wonder' feelings constantly. In the same way as God has to have some distance and hiddenness from us, so man cannot constantly be enraptured in wonder at God. We can't live in the intensity of the 'wonder' moments all the time. And yet we can too easily glory in the petty distractions of life, rather than seeking to minimize them in our lives. Look up at the sky, and then hold a small coin in front of your eye. That very small thing can obscure the vision of so much. And so it is with the leaking gutters, sick cat, crying baby... And yet I'd say that in the same way there's an afterglow of the evening after the sun has set, so there should be a glow which characterizes our lives, in between the moments of actual wonder.

### **The Spirit Of Our Age**

But like Israel, we can forget God's wonders, lose the intensity of those moments we once shared with Him (Ps. 78:11). Our worship easily becomes mechanical, the flame of praise dies out all too soon. When was the last time you *spontaneously* did something for the Father and Son, or burst out in heartfelt praise, in response to real wonder? It's indifference, lack of passion, which is the besetting tragedy of our age. When did you last really shed tears? When

were you moved, really wrenched in your gut, by the suffering of others, by the sin of this world, your own sin ... When did you last feel ecstatic joy, deep sadness... in this post-modern world of surface level emotion?

In human nature, the pole of regularity is stronger than the pole of spontaneity. We so easily slip into habit, whereas the 'wondrous acts of God' are intended to shake us from this mire of mediocrity. Confronted by a spectacular sunset, modern man at best grabs his cell phone and snaps a picture of it, and then gets distracted forwarding it to his friends. Science and technology have decreased our sense of wonder and spontaneity. Everything can be explained, there's no place left for wonder. Existence has been trivialized; adults spend hours playing dumb games on their keyboards, pressing keys and clicking a mouse in a certain sequence. Study is done in order to get qualifications which enable more money to be earned; but there's a lack of deep personal analysis, any time free from money making is whiled away on the inanities of entertainment. Anything other than 'fun' is frowned upon as too challenging and intrusive. People generally fail to see any ultimate significance in anything. And so when confronted by the overpowering sunset, the sense of awe never runs very deep and soon fades away.

### **Where Wonder Leads**

- Wonder leads to worship. But wonder adds awe and reverence to that worship. And we have to ask how much of that there is in much popular worship today, be it in starchy hymns or rock music. 1 Chron. 16:9 makes the connection between wonder and worship quite plain: "Sing unto him, sing praises unto him; talk of all his wonders".

- The fear or awe of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Wonder isn't a kind of intellectual resignation, giving up on the study of God and retreating into numb feelings. Quite the opposite. True wonder leads to a more earnest seeking after wisdom.

- Related to this, wonder leads to more faith. God reminded Abraham and Sarah: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. 18:14). The Hebrew word translated "hard" is that usually translated "wonder". In our moments of wonder, and as the afterglow of them permeates our lives, it becomes easier to believe that nothing is too wonderful for our God of wonders to do for us. For He *is* the God who does wonders. Jeremiah theoretically learnt the lesson from God's words to Abraham and Sarah; for he alludes to it in Jer. 32:17: "Ah Lord God! Behold, you have made the heaven and the earth by your great power and by your stretched out arm; there is nothing too hard [wonderful] for you". But God has to remind him soon afterwards in Jer 32:26,27: "Behold, I am the LORD.. *is* there any thing too hard [wonderful] for me?". We think we know all about wonder, when actually we don't. Our lack of total faith shows that we do indeed think God's wonder is limited. Because something is hard / marvellous in our eyes doesn't mean it is in God's eyes (Zech. 8:6).

- Wonder leads to obedience. "Before all your people I will do wonders... [therefore] observe that [covenant] which I command you this day" (Ex. 34:10,11). Israel refused to be obedient because they were "not mindful of your wonders" (Neh. 9:17). Ps. 78:32 likewise: "For all this they sinned still, and believed not in his wondrous works". Our perception of God's wonder is intended to inspire us not to sin, to be obedient to Him at whom we wonder.

- Wonder becomes the base motivation for our witness. "Declare his glory among the gentiles, his wonders among the nations" (1 Chron. 16:24). The Psalms are full of this, once we appreciate that in their primary context many of them were David's preaching to the Gentile nations around him.

## **A Scream In The Night**

For we who are in Christ, there will be those moments when the wonder of the truth of God breaks again and again over us, as a joyful wave. Let us right now try to grasp the wonder of it all. That Christ really will come, soon; that now is my salvation nearer than when I first believed. That the feet of Jesus of Nazareth will surely stand on this earth again, and His Kingdom be eternally here; that He truly was a man of my passions and nature, and yet overcame. That death is death, that this brief and fragile life is the time to serve the Lord, with no fiery hell beneath us, but the sure hope of God's grace. That through baptism, I truly am part of the seed of Abraham and a partaker in Israel's Hope. And that by the grace of God's calling, I am delivered from the fog of error which dogs so many about these things. And that there is, in the end, one body of true believers world-wide believing as I do; that the sun that bids me rest is waking my brethren 'neath the Western sky, so that the voice of praise is never silent. And in the end, it shall never be silent - for you and I shall live for ever in God's Kingdom.

There are times of total desperation and disappointment with myself, with my nature, with this world, with humanity, with my brethren. And I know there are just the same for you too. So in our hard moments, the dark nights of the soul, let's seek to grasp the wonder of it all again. Reflect again on the power of those things which we most surely believe. Look at nature. Feel God searching for you; as you search for Him. And may we find Him, and in wonder be revived, may the thrill of knowing again His love for us spark a light in the black, as a scream in the night, bringing us to know again the personal presence and power of Jesus our Lord. Not for us 'the same old scene'; working at a desk hour after mindless hour; changing those nappies, preparing the same food at the same times, day after endless day as we take the same route to work, boarding the same bus, coming off at exit 42; in all these things we can be more than conquerors, in the wonder of knowing Him and His saving grace.

*Duncan Heaster*

## **News from Africa**

**news from kenya**

### **NAIROBI**

Please send me some French *Bible Basics*, I wish to share the good news in French with other refugees here and invite them to our Nairobi ecclesia.

*Bro. Tshomba Kabala*

I hope you and the entire Christadelphian fraternity there are okay. We are also doing well here in Kenya God having blessed our country to once more achieve the political stability that we once enjoyed before the 2007 election that almost tore the country into pieces. Let me thank you for having laid a firm and a strong foundation for me in the true Christianity. There are some areas, for instance, the place of reward, which are difficult to convince someone to accept. Even me I cannot deny that at first I was not troubled with the teaching but it was after carrying out a thorough reading of the books that you had given and in the *Bible Basics* that finally the

truth dawned to me and I accepted it. However, I'm yet to fully understand the true meaning of Satan as some books at times confuse me.

*Bro. Griffin Wafula*

### **OKUMBO**

This is the message of joy: there have been baptisms at Okumbo ecclesia. The interviews were conducted in January. From back row L to R . Fredric Otieno, Michael Osuju and Joshua Masawa. Front L to R: Michael Odiwour, Dickens Otieno, Benjamin Mwatu and Rose Anyango (squatting). Benjamin and Joshua are from Oruba. The second photo is me conducting baptism. May God's care be with them as their Guide and protector.

Bro. James Nganyute



### **news from south africa**

#### **CAPE TOWN**

I am still working on translating *What Is The Gospel?* into my language. It takes time so please bear with me. I wish you Yahweh Elohim's blessing in the work of His Truth.

*Bro. Lassme*

### **news from uganda**

This is your brother called Johnathan Johnstone from one of the small countries of Africa called Uganda. I am so interested in your books of life, I read one of your and it forced me to write to you and say thanks , it is so encouraging. God bless you. Contact me on mobile +256782963786 or write to box 133 Kasese Uganda.

*Bro. Johnathan*

### **news from zambia**

There's a big difference between when we walk alone and when we walk with Jesus (The Way). When without Jesus, the road is just leading to nowhere, but for only as long as the feet may endure and the destination is certain death. While when we walk with Jesus, we are assured that He knows the way and the destination is the Kingdom, where life is in abundance, daily and eternally.

Look up these Bible readings: Psalm 27:1-6, Psalm 91 and crown it with Phillipians 4:19. As we walk that road!

*Bro. Martin Tembo*

## **News from Europe / Eurasia**

### **news from belarus**

#### **MINSK**

With my last breath I wish to somehow glorify our Lord Jesus. I am sorry for not having written so long, you know my situation. I am with you, and with the Truth and with Jesus.

*Bro. Andrej*

#### **ORSHA**

I and sister Ludmila have decided to go to the Ukraine Bible School. It will be a long way and an adventure for us at our age but we so very much wish to see you again.

*Sis. Nina*



*Photo: Sisters Nina and Ludmila at Bible School after their long journey there*

#### **TERESHKI**

As I am unable to attend the Winter Bible School, I have written out my thoughts upon the theme of the letter of James, and hope you can share them with the Brothers and Sisters who come to the School. We here are so isolated and the village is dying. The Magazine is our lifeline to the rest of you.

*Bro. Vladimir*

#### **VITEBSKAYA Obl.**

We would so like to move from here, as in the village there's no access to anything. We are both getting weaker; the wheelchair Brother Duncan brought to us is now broken and we would love if at all possible to have a new one so we can at least be a little bit mobile around the yard in the Summer. Sorry to make such request, we have nobody else to turn to, and if it's not possible then we completely understand.

*Brothers Sasha and Valerij[victims of radiation and immobile]*

### **news from belgium**

## **BRUSSELS**

I am OK by the grace of God, but the end of 2008 was very hard for me. I had a lot of trouble in my mind. Even now I am not very well. But I know that Jesus is in the control and I have confidence in him because "je puis tout par celui qui me fortifie".

*Sis. Evelyne*

### **news from bulgaria**

I am so sorry to see so many young people destroying their bodies with drugs etc. I hope that at least some of them will see there is a better way which we are offering them.

*Bro. Ilian*

### **news from croatia**

We are happy and glad that you are OK. We are trying to do our best here in a difficult situation. We greet you in Jesus' Name

*Bro. Darko*

Thank you very much for the book you sent me. It was a topic that really interested me, so I can't wait to start reading. I have been in very poor health, and spent almost nine months in hospital. My mum also got cancer of breast so I wanted to spend as much time as I can and help her to make feel better even though it is very difficult in such a situation. She felt unbelievable pain, later on chemotherapy and lost all her hair. My dad is in hospital at the moment. He has something with his legs, even doctors don't know what it is. His legs are bleeding and he can't walk for pain. Please, pray for our health.

*Sis. Anita*

### **news from estonia**

We here in Tallinn decided that I should go as our representative to the Winter Bible School, more of us would like to come but the travel costs have increased greatly. We send greetings to all.

*Bro. Mark*

### **news from finland**

*We're delighted to announce the baptism of YE in Espoo during the visit of Bro Charlie Klennert. Originally from China, our new Brother studied Bible Basics online and thus came to us.*

OULU

Always good to hear of what is going on down in Latvia. We will try to come some time to a Bible study there.

*Bro. Marku*

#### **news from israel**

##### **BEER SHEVA**

Immediately on receiving your letter I was so happy that you think and pray for me, that I telephoned Sister Natasha in Karmiel. I was very touched. And please, do continue praying for my family, and for me too. I am having a lot of trouble with my hearing aid and I am quite unsteady on my feet. You mean so much to me. I thank God.

*Sis. Anna*

#### **news from kazakhstan**

##### **ALMATY**

I am sorry to tell you of the death of my brother Anataoly, also my Brother in Christ. We buried him with the help of our neighbours. So, we are very sad, despite knowing the comfort of resurrection in the end.

*Sis. Lena*

##### **ASTANA**

I wait so eagerly for every issue of the Zvezda magazine, my brothers and sisters in Christ have become as true family to me and I can't wait for the news about them and read it several times. I am with you all.

*Sis. Elena*

##### **KOKSHETAU**

It's a shame that our Sisters from here couldn't come to the Bible School as they wished. The way is far and we have local problems here. We are so eager to see you!

*Sis. Elvira*

Things are very hard for us. Fortunately I am still working but my wage is about enough to buy only food and nothing else at all.

*Sis. Sveta*

##### **TAYNSHA**

Thank you for praying for me. I can feel it very much. I in my turn am praying for our dear Sister Ludmila in Kazan, remembering it was her who brought us to Christ here.

*Sis. Alena*

## news from latvia

*We are delighted to announce the baptisms of TATYANA, wife of our brother Kostya, and pray she will be further guided to the Kingdom.*

### **AIZKRAUKLE**

Thankyou for the literature and for running the Bible Schools. I so like to read in *Gospel News* about your lives, how you are doing, and although I don't get out much now I do pray for you all and am grateful to God that you can do what you can for Him.

*Sis. Irena*

### **KRASLAVA**

I received a notification in my letterbox that a parcel was awaiting me at the Post Office, I have nobody to help me at all so it was a long walk for me there, and then back to my apartment. When I was younger I would have thought nothing of it, but for me it was a missionary journey. I very much appreciate the contents of the parcel of books, slowly I am reading them and feel stronger and deeper in faith from that reading.

*Sis. Valerijana*

### **REZEKNE**

I have just lost my job and there seems nothing else available immediately. So it is not an easy time for us with the new baby. We so eagerly welcome visiting Brothers, even in the middle of the night you are welcome.

*Bro. Kostya*

### **SALDUS**

I am very weak now but I wish to inform all that I will try my very best to come to the Bible School. I see God working in my life a lot, even although in a physical sense I don't have much variety in life, but I see Him working for me.

*Sis. Liga*

### **TUKUMS**

I am still suffering after being hit by a car, the driver refuses to give any compensation and so medical treatment is hard for me as it has to be paid for unless I take him to court. I am working a little so I have enough for food but this is about all. I continue to seek the Lord and so look forward to our every meeting.

*Sis. Vaira*

## news from lithuania

### **ELEKTRENAI**

I have been in hospital for two weeks. The medicines you got for me seem to have helped a little. Thank you and God bless you for your kindness.

*Bro. Mantas*

### **VARENA**

I'm missing you here, and very much look forward to our next meeting. God bless.

*Bro. Albinas*

### **VILNIUS**

I am struggling very much to find work after my employer went bankrupt. I managed to get a job processing garbage but it is night shift only and the worst work I ever had to do. I believe all will be well in the end. Also my sister is, I think, preparing for baptism.

*Bro. Ryszardas*

### **news from macedonia**

#### **SKOPJE**

I was very pleased to learn about the baptism of another 10 people in Turkey. I give God thanks. I pray that even many more will come. I try to persuade people here too, but people are not so willing to be baptized or re-baptized. They feel they are fine as they are.

*Bro. Kicho*

### **news from moldova**

#### **CHISINAU**

I am finding all I have learnt from the Bible was, as it were, theory, as now I am being asked to apply it all in practice, due to the illness of a loved one in my family. I thank you for your support and loving care and teaching of me.

*Sis. Elvira*

#### **DUBOSSARY**

I am well here, although I have moved out to a village and things aren't easy here. I am hoping by all means, with God's help, to get to the Bible School. Please pray for me here and don't forget me.

*Sis. Tamara*

#### **OLANESTI**

Our apologies for not having been in contact! We love reading the Zvezda magazine, and noticed the list of questions which you are going to discuss at the Winter Bible School in Ukraine. As we can't get there, we've written out our answers and thoughts upon those questions. We so miss you and would love to see you here!

*Sis. Natasha & Bro Sergej*

#### **STEFAN VODE**

Sorry for not communicating; but this doesn't mean I am not praying for you in the great work of spreading the true Gospel to all the world. I would appreciate some more copies of *Bible Basics* for distribution, so I can play my role here in this town.

*Bro. Viktor*

#### news from poland

##### **GDANSK**

I am praying for you in the work of evangelizing, and here I am trying to do my part too, although here it is not so easy.

*Bro. Marcin*

##### **POZNAN**

I hope so much to come to Bible School in Ukraine next year, God willing! We have started a magazine here for the Polish brothers and sisters.

*Bro. Henryk*

##### **RZESZOW**

I have some people here who are so near to and yet so far from converting to the Truth. I am doing my best with them thanks to the literature you sent over. Please pray for them to decide and to be brave.

*Bro. Adam*

#### news from russia

*We're delighted to announce the baptisms of TIMUR and JULIA. May the Lord keep them strong in Him.*

##### **EFREMOV**

We are so disappointed that the woman we hope to be baptized has pulled out, so we have taken this rather badly. I look forward so much to the Bible School.

*Bro. Oleg*

I am hoping I shall be well enough to come to the Bible School, this is my great moment of the year, to meet with truly good brothers and sisters and remind ourselves of the great hope of eternal life which we have, and which in my state of health, I realize we so desperately need.

*Bro. Boris*



*Photo: Brother Boris displaying some pens given him by Brother Scott from USA*

### **IRBIT**

Since the death of my husband Brother Anatoly, things have not been easy for me, I was in hospital and also lost my job, it's so hard here to find any work and the pension is so very small. Please pray for me.

*Sis. Nadia*

### **KAZAN**

We are encouraged by your support and visits. We were deeply upset to be told by some brothers that we are not true Christadelphians but we know we are, we are reading every day with the *Bible Companion*, and Brother Sasha and Sister Valya join us most days, plus our ecclesia is holding the breaking of bread each week and a Bible study in the week. We have started renting a meeting place in which to gather with people who are wanting to know more. We are reading through the Bible with them, a chapter or so from each book of the Bible each week, and explaining it to them. We thank all for their prayers for Vera, she is much better.

*Bro. Alexei and Sis Vera*

We are thinking of you all gathering for the Winter Bible School, I am simply not able to travel now, but Brother Viktor will go there as our representative.

*Sis. Ludmila K.*

### **KONOPLYANKA**

I so regret being unable this year to come to the Winter Bible School. We are well here, reading with you, praying with you, hoping with you for the return of Jesus soon.

*Bro. Viktor*

### **KORKINO**

I was pleased recently to meet with brothers and sisters in Chelyabinsk, and was very upset to get a letter from my friend Sister Raisa telling me of how she was flooded and was an hour and a half in water to her chest. So I have been praying a lot for her, and am so excited to be coming to the Winter Bible School.

*Sis. Sofya*



*Photo: Sister Sofya at Bible School after traveling several days to be there*

## **MOSCOW**

I pray for you. I am eager to do something more active for the Truth, so I am happy to consider going to baptize the contacts in Novogord if I can do it in a weekend.

*Bro. Igor S.*

## **OKTYABRSKIJ**

We very much miss brother Duncan here, and we are encouraging people here to study *Bible Basics*, especially the older people, they need to see that there is no hope beyond the grave unless we are in Christ.

*Sis. Larissa*

## **ST. PETERBURG**

I have reflected much about how the brothers and sisters built a Bible School in Latvia, this is how we should be, not just talking about our faith, but practically working together. Then I am sure we will understand each other from another angle and build unity between us. May God continue to be always with us and with you all in your service to Him.

*Bro. Valerij*

We are so missing fellowship with our brothers and sisters back in Ukraine. We will do all we can to get to the Bible School, although I am looking out for work, any work, so I may not come if I happen to get a job.

*Sis. Angela*



*Photo: Sis. Angela with her daughter Sis. Iya at the Bible School [Angela didn't get work!]*

## **SARATOV**

The recent visit of Brother Duncan to us here was such a strong encouragement. It was wonderful to be able to gather at the apartment of Natasha and break bread. Now I have bought my tickets to go to the Bible School, and afterwards I plan to go on to see my daughters in Kazakhstan. I shall do this great journey only by God's strength.

*Sis. Raisa*

Thanks so much that you don't forget us but came to visit and encourage us!

*Sis. Irina*

### **SHADRINSK**

I feel my journeys to the Winter Bible School are a kind of homage, my missionary journey; at my age the long distance from Siberia to Ukraine is formidable, but I travel in God's strength and to show my unity with you, as God's ecclesia on earth.

*Bro. Pavel*



*Photo: Brother Pavel at the Bible School- he traveled four days each way from Siberia*

### **TALITSA**

We are still holding the faith here along with Sasha and Lida; also brother Viktor from Pyshma was with us and asked me to send his greetings too to you all. Please pray for our health.

*Sis. Vera*

### **TALOVA**

Of course I am quite unable to come to the Bible Schools but my heart is so much with you. Time flies so quickly, it seems, at my age. My grandchildren are now grown up. I so wish to share with my family the wonderful hope I have of the Kingdom. I am more than grateful to you for showing me this hope.

*Sis. Tamara*

### **VINOGRADOVKA**

I feel very much that my health is failing, and I throw myself wholly upon God. Please send me some warm clothes if you can. As you know I lived most of my life in central Asia where it is warmer, before coming to Russia as a refugee and being sent to this distant place. I keep thinking about the Kingdom of God to come on earth.

*Sis. Galina*

*Comment: Clothing and assistance has been sent*

## **news from serbia**

### **BELGRADE**

I have been troubled here by some defecting to other fellowships, but I do not wish to listen to such stupidity. I look rather to the great signs of Christ's coming which there are in the earth. I wonder whether the financial crisis will lead to the time of trouble such as never was, and the coming of Christ? I am expecting so.

*Bro. Vladislav*

### news from spain

*We are delighted to announce the baptism of WALTER. May the Lord guide him in His way toward His Kingdom.*

I am fine but the problem is that for the past four months now I am unemployed and life is very bad for me. But I put my trust in God who is able to supply my needs above what I think or expect.

*Bro. Rahid*

### news from syria

Things are so difficult for us here. People are fearing contact with Christians because of the culture of opposition there is here. Please pray for us.

*Bro. H*

### news from turkey

*We are very pleased to announce the baptism of another 10 Iranian refugees in Eastern Turkey. See Bro. Charlie Klennert's report elsewhere in this issue.*

#### **ANTALYA**

Thank you very much for caring and praying for me in my illness. May God bless you. I feel His love through you. You are always welcome with us here.

*Bro. Bertan*

My family and myself are so happy to be baptized. I talked to my relatives about the baptism but they said they cannot go out of their city in Iran since the Iranian Intellegence there are very much watching them, even to call them it is very dangerous for them. They said that they will try to go to Suleymanya in Iraq to meet you if they could. God bless you.

*Bro. P*

### news from ukraine

*We're delighted to announce the baptism of MISHA (brother of our Sisters Larisa & Anya) and VALENTIN at the Winter Bible School. May the Lord keep them strong in Him.*

#### **KAHOVKA**

We are so looking forward to coming to the Bible School, it is a great time for us each year to be with such truly good people in Christ.

*Sister Anya*

## **KHARKOV**

We would so love to have come to the Winter Bible School but my health prevents me travelling very far. We so warmly think of you all and continue every day reading the Bible with you according to the planner.

*Sis. Lena & Bro. Vasilij*

I eagerly await every Bible School. I am so grateful for your support of my cataract operation; I can see so much better, and more enjoy reading the Bible chapters each day. I have great hope for the Kingdom, but also the Bible teaches us to look critically at ourselves, so there is a balance.

*Bro. Anton*

## **LISICHANSK**

I am so grateful you are managing to hold another Bible School in Ukraine, and I am going to do my best by all means to get there by God's grace, to be with my dear brothers and sisters in the spirit of Christ.

*Sis. Sofia*

## **POLTAVA**

The Bible School here was indeed very blessed. I am already working on preparing some material for next year's School, God willing. Truly we need such gatherings.

*Sis. Ludmila*

I so enjoyed the Bible School in Poltava, thank you so much for everything there. I was really so encouraged.

*Sis. Tanya K*

## **ZAPOROZHE**

I was quite sure that it was impossible for me to get to the Bible School. But then God really changed things, so that that very week I was free and able to go. I thank Him so much, and you too for the chance.

*Bro. Mikhail*

## **News from the Americas**

### **news from bahamas**

I was a bit afraid of moving into new territory in Christ - especially having to stand out because of my different beliefs and teachings. But it's not time for fear, it is time to forge ahead with truth because the return of Christ is very near.

*Sis. Velyn*

## News from Asia

### news from china

*We are delighted to report the baptisms of XUFEI, WONG and RUTH. May God guide them to His Kingdom.*

I went to meet the contact in Chifeng, Inner Mongolia. Although Chifeng city is very Roman Catholic, our contact Xufei still insisted on studying the Bible without the aid of the church. On discovering the truth he eventually decided to be baptized. It is already winter, the temperature is as low as -15. I got stuck in Beijing and Chifeng city for nearly seven days due to the coming of Chinese New Year. The number of people traveling by train during this year's Spring Festival travel peak is expected to hit 155 million, and it was almost impossible to get the tickets.

*Bro. Ai*

### news from nepal

It is a matter of great joy that Brother Duncan is arriving here again, we have several to baptize from Eastern Nepal. Your continued enthusiasm for the Gospel inspires me to continue my witnessing.

*Bro. Santosh*

## An American Brother In Eastern Europe, January / February 2009

*Brother Charlie Klennert of the Tacoma Ecclesia visited Eastern Europe and writes his impressions*

### Winter Bible School January 2009

The Ukraine Bible school in Poltava Ukraine was an amazing experience for all involved. Brothers and sisters from all over Russia, Belarus, Estonia, England, Moldova, Uzbekistan, Latvia and the U.S.A. all attended. There were around 90 present, including the day visitors from the local ecclesia. The accommodations were well planned by our local sister, Ludmila. The spiritual food was even better. Brother Scott Ketelsen from the U.S.A. gave a series of talks on the Tabernacle.



*Photo: Brothers from throughout the former USSR discussing together Scott's model of the tabernacle*

Brother Duncan Heaster from Latvia brought talks on the book of James and led the daily Bible readings from the Bible Companion. There was amazing discussion on each chapter.



Photo: Group discussion of themes from the book of James.

I brought a series of talks on the prophets. There was even a program with plays, poems, prayers and songs to celebrate the baptisms. Brother Alexei and sister Vera composed poems about the Bible School and recited them to us. One of the evening activities was based upon the list of names in Romans 16. Everyone was given a scroll to write, which they could use as a bookmark, listing the names of those whom they were thankful for. It was wonderful to see how truly a new family has been developed over the last 15 years of unceasing preaching and pastoral work.

*Photo: Sisters from Ukraine and Moldova writing their scroll*

The fellowship was amazing to witness. Brothers and sisters who see each other ever so briefly throughout the year cherished the time they spent together. Old friends were reacquainted and new friends were made. It was an amazing testament to what the kingdom will be like when our Savior returns to earth to establish the beloved truth throughout the earth. We sang, we cried, we laughed, we prayed, we discussed the scriptures at quite some length together.

At the middle of the school we had 3 baptisms: TIMUR from Uzbekistan, VALENTIN from Ukraine, both of whom had studied Bible Basics online, and MISHA also from Ukraine, the brother of our sisters Anna and Larisa. A loving reminder of the power of our doctrine, it is being accepted throughout the world. God is calling out a people for His name.

Sister Larisa's sister Anna was baptized at last year's school, and now their brother Misha was baptized. It's so great to see the Truth spread within these families, many of whom were atheists not many years ago.

The days together at the Bible school will be treasured and remembered throughout the year by all who were involved. If you have a chance to come and see the faith, hope and joy we all experienced, take it. There was young and old alike who felt the power of God at various times in various ways throughout the school. Though we all may be broken, and truly there are many broken lives in Eastern Europe, we have joy in the things of God.

### **Turkey January 2009**

There are times when I read the latest Carelink email and just kind of nod and smile. Could people around the world really be that excited about the things of God? With that type of a mindset I headed to Turkey to see what type of progress is being made with the brothers and sisters in eastern Turkey. So I ask that you please read this and reflect upon it and pray about our brothers and sisters in these most awful situations and if you have any questions or desire to support to contact us.

When Duncan and I arrived in Turkey we went to the safe house to meet up with a couple of sisters. We took them out to eat and headed back to the safe house to wait for brother H, originally from Iran who is hoping to get to Canada this year. As we waited we talked about the Ukraine Bible school and shared pictures and videos of our Russian brothers and sisters. Then we prayed together and had a simple breaking of bread.

We arrived at our destination in eastern Turkey, an internal flight, we met up with our brother S. from Iraq who is living in Turkey waiting for the U.N. to clear him and his family for relocation to a western country. After a short visit we met another brother at this house, brother P. Brother P and brother S. would be our sort of tour guides as we went throughout the immigrant area visiting folks.

To convert from Islam is not an easy thing to do. Many times even family members will turn on you. One such case is of a sister who converted to Christianity and her own father has tried to kill her at least twice. She had to move to a smaller city in Turkey just so her relatives would not find her. In hard line Islamic societies, conversion to Christianity is even punishable by death. I bring this up, so that as you read the accounts below, you will see the faith of our brothers P and S and what they have to contend with as they preach the gospel.

Brother S and brother P have talked to brother S's neighbor about the things of God. They are a young Kurdish couple, M and S, that have fled Iran. We were invited in and all given cups of tea. As we drank our tea, we discussed about the things of the Truth. They had many questions and we asked them many questions as well. We talked about the Kingdom of God, how there is only one God, that Jesus is His son, the importance of baptism, prayer and studying the Bible. The joy and excitement they had in finding a peaceful religion was evident not only in their words, but in their body language. After quite some time in discussion, they demonstrated themselves ready to be baptized, which we did.

This was just the beginning of what was to be the single most profound spiritual day I have ever encountered in my life. We wandered around the side streets to another house of friends of brother P to whom he has preached *Bible Basics*. Since his conversion he has spread the gospel like wildfire. These people are so strapped financially due to the demands of the Turkish government; Turkey makes it extremely difficult for any refugee that comes in to the country. They cannot work legally; if they do work illegally and are caught then they can be repatriated to Iran and the death sentences that await many of them. Plus they must pay a few hundred US\$ each 6 months for residence permits, and also pay for their childrens' schooling expenses.

At the next house where the friends of our brother P lived and visited at times, were 5 people who have been talking to our brothers- P, M, K, A and F. Each one expressed there joy in what they have been studying and what they have learned from our brothers. We expounded upon the things of God at considerable length and heard their confessions of faith. Our lives were talked about, our struggles, the fear of Islamic persecution. One gal told us that she had baptized herself a few years ago when she first believed in Jesus and read the New Testament, understanding that this is what she must do! But now she had learnt more from *Bible Basics* she wished to be baptized again. All five were clearly ready to be baptized into Christ, we. Each little group we met, we talked about the importance of daily Bible reading and prayer to sustain us .

I was amazed at the pure joy these people had as they came to Christ. I reflected on my own life, would I have the courage to convert to Christianity if I knew what lay ahead? Next we met a family of a mother and father and two kids. We sat down on the sofa and drank tea and ate apples and oranges together. We talked openly about the scriptures and were asked all types of questions. The father at the house asked us a most pointed question, "How do I share what I know and believe about Christianity, knowing what the consequences of my conversion can do to me?" We prayed together, the mother was on her knees with her hands folded with her two kids doing the same. They wanted to be baptized so they to can be with Christ in the kingdom. We baptized them [M & F] and encouraged them to be strong in the word and prayer.

At this point we left and headed over to brother P's house. What lay in store for us at our brother's house will forever be etched into my consciousness. A man had come to us to be baptized. He was so excited about the things of God! He wanted so badly to follow Christ in all aspects of his life. Again as we expounded upon the scriptures we could see the "pure joy" talked about in the scriptures. The hope in his eyes, the excitement in his voice, an amazing witness to what the gospel is all about. This is when I truly felt the presence of God. After we baptized our new brother A, he burst into tears of joy. Just imagine being in an Islamic country and a grown man, only a couple of years older than yourself, hugging you while he sobs great tears of joy after he is baptized. He was so thankful and so happy.

As I sat on the bed in the hotel, I reflected upon all these things, trying not to forget any of the details. The people I met, the smiles, the tears, the joy and the pain that we all shared made me consciously aware of the fact that we are living in incredible epoch of time. The return of Christ could be any day. There is so much more that can and should be done. How do we help our new brothers and sisters? How do we encourage their walk in Christ? What can we do? The issues affecting our brothers and sisters are immeasurable. If you have any ideas please write or email us to let us know.

I took a trip to the other side of the world with no expectations. Instead I was given an opportunity to live my faith. To help others come to Christ. I saw the faith of others in trying circumstances. I have brothers who are so alive and excited about the things of the truth that they are not afraid to bring it up to others, even if it puts them in harms way. Please consider any help and support you can give. Come over and see for yourself what is going on throughout the world. I pray that God will keep this journey on the forefront of my mind, to help me be more open about spreading my faith back in my homeland.

### **Winter Heating Support**

Brother Duncan and I drove to Eastern Latvia to bring firewood and warm clothes to a subsistence farmer brother and sister. The car ride was a good 4+hours each way, the temperature was hovering around -16 degrees. It was bitter cold, the roads were icy, but we were not deterred. We even saw wild deer running across the track and fields.

Sister Nina came running outside with her husband brother Gennady to greet us. We were ushered inside, since the time Duncan had informed her we were coming she had been preparing for us. It was amazing the food that she prepared. Here were people who had nothing, willing to share everything they had with us. We sat and ate, they were so proud of the fact that they had visitors and that God had blessed their crops so we could have some of their food. All of the food was food they had grown as subsistence farmers, except for a bit of ham that they had traded potatoes for from a neighbour earlier in the day.

After the meal, we gave them both new warmer coats, which they promptly put on right away. Sister Nina started praying right away about how thankful she was that God has not forgotten them out here in their frozen land. There was conversation of in the coming months when the snow melts raising some chickens for protein. They don't eat meat because they cannot afford it (yes, the meat that we ate was truly a special treat). After some discussion on how best to raise chickens we sponsored their endeavour.

Sister Nina showed us her storehouse where she keeps all of the food that they have preserved to make it through such cold winters. The sustenance of their lives, their prize possessions were the very things that I take for granted more often than not. I thought of my own storehouse at

home filled with exotic vegetables from all over, the meat in the freezer and the ease at which I can get food at anytime of the day at the local supermarket. They were very insistent to load us with their prized preserved vegetables. They were very proud of the fact that although in their 70s, God had given them the strength to still harvest the crops with their own hands. They said they had been blessed with a good harvest last year, thanks to the water pump and irrigation system which Br Steve & Sis Robin Jones [Cindy's parents] had installed on their field.

After the "tour" of the storehouse we went outside and unloaded the truck of the firewood we bought for them. As I helped brother Gennady unload the wood, all we could hear was our dear sister in spontaneous prayer, thanking God over and over again for how much He loves them and for how He had sent us to help them. She had spent her entire monthly pension on buying firewood which had only lasted them three weeks. Two old souls, so very thankful that people cared enough to think of them and help them.



*Photo: Nina overcome with gratitude, openly praying to God with thanks for the firewood. She's wearing the fleece we gave her*

I have never seen poverty quite like this. They are about 5 miles walk over tracks and fields from the nearest shop, and there are very few houses in between. Doctors are out of the question, they simply have to trust in God. Nina doesn't get to the shop the entire Winter. As we drove away heading back to a warm place with warm blankets in a warm car, I had to sit back and reflect at how wonderful our God is. In their poverty, God has called them to a greater service, as servants of a higher calling. He claims them for His kingdom. In their poverty they fed us what they themselves cannot afford to eat and loaded our arms with potatoes and pickled vegetables, taking the very food that they need to survive and giving it to us.

### **Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; Three examples of faith in God**

Nearly 4000 Years ago God made some very remarkable promises to a man named Abram who lived in Ur of the Chaldees, a city in Mesopotamia near the river Euphrates where most of the inhabitants were idolaters.

The promises were as follows: Now the LORD had said unto Abram, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed". (Gen. 12:1-3)

Let us look closely at these clauses in this composite promise which Yahweh made to Abram. One that would act as a good incentive, particularly in Abram's case, was the promise, "I will make of thee a great nation". To Abram this would sound very good news because his wife Sarai was barren. (Gen.11:30)

In spite of this, Abram believed that his wife would have at least one son that would begin the process of developing his descendants into a great nation.

The second promise – “I will bless thee” – is surely much to be desired, coming as it did from the Creator of the human race. A list of such blessings for those who would be obedient to Him were later detailed in the book of Deuteronomy. (28:3-13)

These were applicable to Abram’s descendants who had been brought out of the land of Egypt. They included having a healthy family, good increases in flocks and herds, successful crops, an abundance of food and safety from dangerous enemies. In short they would enjoy prosperity throughout their lives.

The following two clauses – “And make thy name great and thou shalt be a blessing” – would be appealing even though their fulfilment would be unknown. He as a blessing was fulfilled later when he and his men and his friends went to the rescue of his nephew Lot and others from the clutches of marauding kings bent on plunder (Gen.14:16).

Abram’s greatness was also acknowledged by neighbouring landowners when he requested a burying place to buy for Sarah who had just died. They addressed him with the words, “My Lord: thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead” (Gen.23:6).

Lastly, the far-reaching extent of the blessings was also described, “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed”. This clause does not mean that everyone will be blessed: it applies to those who are ‘in Abram’ – those who copy Abram’s faith and seek to understand the meaning of the promises. Details of these have been revealed little by little, down the ages until New Testament times. The Apostle Paul, when writing about the curses contained in the Law of Moses, revealed that Jesus Christ has redeemed us from them adding, “that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ: that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal.3:14). This means that these blessings would be granted to Gentiles as well as Jews through Jesus Christ who has provided the necessary sacrifice to take away the sins of the world.

The apostle Peter also, when addressing the Jews about the Lord Jesus declared, “Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Acts 3:26). Peter’s declaration shows that these great promises have to do not only with material blessings but with spiritual ones too. This ‘turning away from iniquity’ implies a return to a righteous life of faith in God to be rewarded with eternal life in the age to come.

Eternal salvation for Abram and his faithful descendants was, in fact, inferred when he was sojourning a little later in the hill country of Canaan. The details are given as follows: “And the LORD (Yahweh) said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest to thee will I give it, and to thy seed *for ever*... Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee” (Gen.13:14-17).

Here was a clear promise, made to Abram that he would one day inherit that land for ever. It was inevitable that he would die in the normal course of events. Therefore God must have purposed to raise him from the dead at some future time in order to fulfil this promise. There was no scope for believing that Abram was being promised some vague possession in heaven. Nothing could

be clearer than that Abram was being promised not only eternal life but also an inheritance of the land on which he then walked.

However, these great promises could only be realised if Abram complied with the initial command to leave his country, his kindred and his father's house and make the journey to an unknown land that God would show him. It appears that Abram's family was closely knit because of their marriage arrangements. Abram had married his step-sister, and his brother Nahor had married Milcah the daughter of his other brother Haran (Gen.11:29).

Abram had admitted on a later occasion to the king of Gerar the situation concerning Sarai his wife saying, "And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife" (Gen..20:12). It is suggested that the reason for these unusual marriages was that the women of their neighbourhood in the city of Ur, being idolaters, were quite unacceptable as wives and there appeared to be no other alternative.

Abram, having decided to obey the command, gathered altogether and journeyed north-westwards for some four hundred miles along a caravan route as far as Haran. There he and his company stopped for a while to rest. Later Abram renewed his journey to Canaan leaving his father Terah in Haran, so fulfilling God's command.

Twenty years and more passed by and still there was no sign of promised descendants. When Abram requested an assurance that he and his descendants would inherit that land, the LORD made a covenant with him as described in Genesis ch 15, "In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates".

After many years, when Isaac, the son of promise was born and had grown to early manhood, God appeared again to Abram, now called Abraham, with another command to test his obedience, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Gen.22.2). The following verses describe the details of the preparation for the journey to Mount Moriah. In spite of the heartache and the inexplicable nature of the command, Abraham showed every intention of obeying, trusting that God was able to restore Isaac again to life in such a way as would enable him to fulfil all His promises. Without delay, then, together with Isaac and two servants, he went to Moriah and prepared for the sacrifice. So it was that at the last moment, when Abraham was about to slay his son, God stayed his hand calling out to him NOT to slay his son. In the event, a ram caught in a thicket was found which was offered in Isaac's stead.

In this prophetic episode the part played by Isaac needs to be considered. Here was a lad strong enough to carry a bundle of wood on his shoulder for a mile or so. He was therefore strong enough, if he so wished, to resist his father binding him with cords and laying him on a pile of wood in preparation for sacrifice. This shows that Isaac, in submitting to these proceedings, exhibited full obedience to his father Abraham.

No wonder God, in glowing terms, rewarded Abraham (and indirectly Isaac) for his remarkable obedience. "By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen.22:16-18).

Abraham's obedience and Isaac's submission are a wonderful type of the way that God, as the Father of another obedient son, would one day provide the propitiatory sacrifice in a sinless man, our Lord Jesus, to take away the sins of the whole world (1 Jn.2:2).

Abraham's son Isaac continued to dwell in the land of Canaan and at the age of 40 Abraham secured a suitable wife for him from among his God-fearing family then living in Mesopotamia. After a while twins were born to them, Esau being born first about an hour or so before his brother Jacob. They were not identical. The difference of their characters showed up later when on one occasion, when Esau was very hungry, Jacob was able to persuade him to sell his birthright for a bowl of lentils.

It was after this incident that the LORD appeared to Isaac to promise him similar blessings as he had to his father saying, "Dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father, and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen.26:2-5).

Some years later when Isaac was about 120 years of age and had become blind, he prepared to bless his eldest son Esau. However, Rebekah was sure that the blessing should be Jacob's (see Gen.25:23) and contrived to deceive Isaac into blessing Jacob instead. It appears that Jacob was willing to acquiesce and deceive his father and so obtained the blessing. This included the far-reaching promise originally made to Abraham, "cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee" (Gen.27:29). However unethical we may view this transaction of Jacob and Rebekah, it is evident that they all believed that what God had promised he was able also to perform.

Because of Esau's anger at losing the blessings, Jacob had to leave home immediately. Isaac took the opportunity to instruct Jacob to seek a wife from among his family living in Padan-Aram. If successful, this would ensure the preservation of the worship of the one true God in the family.

On the way God appeared unto him in a dream in which Jacob saw a ladder which reached up to heaven. At the top of it the LORD appeared and gave him a promise virtually identical with the one Abraham had also received saying, "I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen.28:13-14).

Jacob subsequently married four wives and had twelve sons and one daughter. At the close of his long life he pronounced a blessing on Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh saying, "...the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth" (Gen.48:15-16).

Finally, we could add that God so highly appreciated the faith and obedience of Abraham that he counted it to him for righteousness (Gen.15:6). The apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans draws particular attention to this graciousness of God towards Abraham, he writes, He "was

strong in faith giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness (Rom.4:20-22).

“Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification”. (Rom.4:23-25)

*Bro. Ralph Green (Torquay, U.K.)*

### **Why Did Jesus Speak in Parables?**

The disciples asked Jesus why he was speaking in parables Jesus quoted, “through seeing, they may not see” (Luke 8:10, Isa 6:9). This quotation simply states that those who are not willing to seriously receive Jesus’ message will find the truth hidden from them.

Jesus likens his preaching in parable to the ministry of Isaiah and also exposed the hard-hearted resistance of the many to God’s warnings and appeal. Jesus speaks in parable because of the spiritual dullness of people. Also, as a means of teaching, parables are easy to remember, eg the parables of weeds, and the sower are both based on familiar things.

Peter asked, “Are you telling us this parable or everyone?” (Luke 12:41). Jesus actually taught the people in parable but used a more direct approach with his disciples (Mark 13:37)

Let us look at the parable, of the wedding banquet. What does the wedding garment represent? The righteousness that God provides to those who accept His invitation. When the king came to see the guests (Matt 22:2-14), he noticed a man not wearing a wedding garment. We are warned to be dressed with wedding garments always, to be prepared all the time because no one knows the day or the hour when the son of man will come.

The man was asked why he had entered without wearing wedding clothes. The king told the attendants to tie his hands and feet and to throw him outside – this expression giving a picture of severe punishment to those who refuse to accept his teaching. Many are invited but few are chosen (Matthew 22:14). God warns us that to refuse to accept Him will result in Him refusing us.

*Bro Emmanuel Kondowe (Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe)*

### **Has Man Pre-eminence Over a Beast?**

Most people will argue that man definitely has pre-eminence over beasts. When man dies, does his soul go to heaven whereas a beast has no soul at all and therefore does not die in the same way? Before making up our minds on this point let us turn to the Word of God.

“For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: AS THE ONE DIETH, SO DIETH THE OTHER. Yea, they have all one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast, for all is vanity. All go unto one place, all are of the dust and all turn to dust again” (Ecc 3:19,20).

Having stated the situation, Solomon now repeats a question which must have been asked in his day: “Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?” (Ecc 3:21). Solomon does not answer his question for he has already given the answer in verse 20: “ALL GO TO ONE PLACE.” We know that none of us has the power to retain the ‘breath of life’.

Photo: *Bro F G Nkomelah*

When God takes away the life-sustaining agency, man and beast die. Solomon put it this way: “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecc 12:7). If the words “the spirit shall return unto God” mean that the soul goes to heaven, then since all living creatures have the same “breath of life” or “spirit”, the souls of all beasts and creeping things must go to heaven too, for it is written “ALL go to one place” and “Man hath no pre-eminence above a beast.”

However unpalatable this may be, it is at least in keeping with the curse put upon Adam. For he was told, “Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen 3:19). It is also in keeping with what Paul said “For as in Adam ALL DIE” (1 Cor 15:22). It also agrees with the following many verses from the Bible:

“For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave, who shall give the thanks?” (Psalm 6:5). “Let me not be ashamed, O Lord, for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent IN THE GRAVE” (Psalm 31:17). “O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence and BE NO MORE” (Psalm 39:13). “What profit is there in my blood, when I GO DOWN TO THE PIT? Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth?” (Psalm 30:9). “What man is there that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?” (Psalm 89:48). “The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence” (Psalm 115:17). “While I live will I praise the Lord: I will sing praise unto my God while I have any being. Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth: in that very day his thoughts perish” (Psalm 146:2-4). “For the living know that they shall die, but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten” (Ecc 9:5). “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest” (Ecc 9:10). “For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth” (Isa 38:18). “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Eze 18:4).

The foregoing are a few of the very many passages that could be quoted to show that when a man dies, he goes to OBLIVION in the grave and not to another form of life. Yet the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is still ingrained in people throughout the world: how perverse is mankind. However, there is hope for the believers of a restoration to life at the return of Jesus when he comes to resurrect the responsible dead.

*Bro F G Nkomelah (Lilongwe, Malawi)*

**Solid Foundation – the Sunday School**

Like a house built on a strong foundation which will not be moved by floods or strong winds so will be a church built on a strong footing. What is this strong footing? I am here talking about a Sunday School. There is an English saying which says, 'Capture them and teach them while young.'

Footballing nations have academies where they capture young and promising footballers and impart to them the basics of the game. The results: great footballers and consistent teams. Now to Christian life: I believe the best we can do is to have strongly supported Sunday Scholars.

It is therefore a challenge to us all to have our children taught from an early age, teaching from the book of life – THE BIBLE. The Bible is the best book to teach good conduct and higher standards acknowledged by God. The Bible says, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old enough, he will not depart from it" (Prov 22:6). Further instruction is found in 4:1-6.

What is the result of all this toil of teaching our children while young? God says in answer "He holds victory in store for the upright. He is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones" (Proverbs 2:7,8).

Our children can only be spiritually strong if we start at a tender age, to feed them with spiritual milk and then introduced them to solid food. This emphasises the importance of the Sunday School. It can be likened to a new-born baby who initially knows nothing, is breast-fed, learns how to sit, crawl, stand, walk and then run.

So a church built on a strong Sunday School will surely be unshakeable and will not collapse but will live by the commandments of God.

*Bro Itai Tembo (Kadoma, Zimbabwe)*

## **Miletus**

Yesterday the well-known evangelist and missionary, Paul of Tarsus, said a tearful good-bye to the elders in Ephesus, one of his favourite congregations in Asia.

Paul, who stopped over here on his way to Jerusalem, summoned the elders to him to see them for the last time. He said that he expected to be arrested by the Jews in Jerusalem, where he planned to attend Pentecost. Therefore he would probably not see the elders again.

In his farewell speech he seriously cautioned them to protect themselves and the whole congregation which the Holy Spirit had given into their care. He compared the congregation to a flock of sheep and said that the elders were the shepherds who had to take care of the flock. Just as the danger of wolves savaging the sheep threatened an ordinary flock continuously, the elders had to guard against people threatening to mislead the congregation with lies.

The congregation in Ephesus was founded under Paul's direction. Recently, after a sojourn of two years, he left when the silversmiths under the leadership of Demetrius incited the city against him.

*From Our Special Correspondent*

## The Depth Of Our Feelings For Our Brethren In The Refugee Camps

As I read the scriptural account of the severe famine that ravaged Egypt and the surrounding countries, I try to relate this to the grave financial crisis now threatening the developed and other countries all over the world. The many ongoing reported job layoffs and loss of homes are bound to adversely affect many families. Organizations assisting the jobless and homeless are feeling the squeeze, with shrinking charitable donations. Governments are desperately working on appropriate measures to resolve this accelerating frightening situation. No wonder the famine cows in Pharaoh's dream were described as lean and ugly. The lean times are on us, and will be bringing some ugly baggage in tow. No doubt this will severely affect occupants of the refugee camps who are dependent mainly and solely for sustenance on these now struggling nations.

With regard to Egypt, God saw well ahead the approaching famine, and being mainly concerned for the comfort of His people Israel, began His plan for resettling them, revealing this in the account He has given us of Joseph's early life and onwards. As He moved Joseph into the position where he could bring his family out of the approaching difficulties, note the great concern and care Joseph revealed for his brethren in Genesis 45: 10,11–“And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: and there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.” Having personally experienced the hardship and misery himself, as a slave and prisoner to foreign people, he could not be comfortable with the knowledge that his brethren would suffer likewise, and he used the power that God made available to him to gather his family close by to resettle them comfortably. God then followed up Joseph's action (Genesis 46: 1 - 4), by encouraging Jacob in a dream to accept his son's invitation to Egypt, assuring him of His abiding presence and continuation of the outworking of His purpose with His people. Note that it was God who coordinated this entire event, starting years ahead of its occurrence, using Joseph as His servant in this operation.

Today our brethren are forced to seek shelter in refugee camps. Their living conditions, compared with ours is just about unbearable. I see Joseph's example as a direct pointer to the move we should take. Jesus, who also himself experienced the hardship and distress of poverty, identifies with the least of his disciples in their distress, and when he returns in his glory will warmly welcome in his Kingdom those who make the required sacrifice to lovingly ease their burdens. In his sacrifice, we are all included in his present mission of freeing us all from the burdensome weight of our sinfulness to resettle us in his Kingdom. Let us also strive, making a start, in this direction with our brethren, focusing on the critical cases – families who are bringing up their young children in a horrible environment - by initiating a planning program, to critically examine each situation with a view to resettling them in a satisfactory state, asking God to lead and empower us through to what he desires of us, and he will do so for the sake of His suffering children.

“ Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:20,21.)

Sis Esther Worrell (Canada)

## **Family Life That Pleases God**

### **A husband's position in the family**

The Bible says that a husband is the head of the family (1 Cor 11:3). A husband should have only one wife and they should be properly married in the eyes of the law (1 Tim 3:2). Likewise a husband should love his wife, just as he loves himself. He should treat her like Christ treats his church. He should never mistreat her but rather show her respect and honour (1 Peter 3:7).

He should work hard to care for his family and must provide food, clothing and housing; he takes a lead in helping his family to learn about God and His purpose.

### **A wife's position in the family**

A wife should be a good helper for her husband and should assist her husband in teaching and training their children. They deserve loving care from her. A wife should have a deep respect for her husband.

God requires children to be obedient to their parents. He expects parents to instruct and correct them. Parents should spend time with their children and study the Bible with them, caring for their spiritual and emotional needs and should never discipline them in a harsh or cruel way.

When married, if mates have problems getting along together, they should try to apply biblical counsel. The Bible urges us to show love and forgiveness; God's word does not encourage separation as a way of solving minor problems.

A wife might choose to leave her husband if he stubbornly refuses to support his family, or if he is violent so that the wife's life is in danger, or gives so much opposition that he makes her worship impossible (1 Cor 7:10-12).

*Bro Nelson Anyals (Amero, Kenya)*

## **The Withered Fig Tree (Mark 11:21)**

"Peter remembered and said to Jesus 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered.' 'Have faith,' Jesus answered" (verse 22). At this point Jesus showed his great authority over everything that is under the sun. Even his disciples were amazed at the great faith Jesus had in the Father. So it comes to us as believers that we must have strong faith and not doubt what we ask in prayer because the Father is ready to give, providing we are asking according to His purpose; "I tell you the truth; if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go throw yourself into the sea', and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him." Brothers and sisters, prayers are not heard because we are following the wrong way in our daily doings and actions before God. He is loving and we give prayers towards him. We expect the Lord to forgive us and reward us, even when we come with bad feelings. The Lord is not going to hear or reward us because of this.

In old times, they used to sacrifice perfect lambs to the Lord. So we need to do our best to be perfect likewise, otherwise we are just wasting our time: "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him so that your Father in heaven may forgive your sins." So let us take heed of what the Bible says and do God's wishes so that what we ask will be given

to us. “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours” (verse 24).

*Bro Farai Phiri (Chegutu, Zimbabwe)*

### **The Truth**

As I sat in my seat in the room,  
Surrounded by those I held dear,  
With human book and Bible in hand,  
I suddenly felt sadness with fear.

I thought on the words left by John,  
To ecclesiastes under God’s care,  
And I thought on the warnings I read,  
Had I heeded the words that were there?

Some had the truth in their hearts,  
But some only truth in their head,  
And those paying lip service to God,  
With just words, empty words, are quite dead.

Some are workers together with God,  
But others are just carried along,  
Like the flotsam that drifts down the stream,  
Like a hymn without words – empty song.

Like the fig tree that only had leaves,  
With no fruit that the Master could see,  
Was this a picture I knew?  
Was this all that was left of me?

How then shall my Master thus meet,  
With a life that is empty and bare  
No fruit and nothing but leaves,  
In that day when it’s too late to care.

So this day I will work in your vineyard,  
This day I’ll arouse from my sleep,  
If I don’t, life is wasted and hollow,  
In the future with sorrow we’ll weep.

Yes, there are workers and drones in a beehive,  
There are those that produce what is good  
But there are those who produce just nothing  
For God’s word they have not understood.

*Bro Nyomilo Lujanga (Bolero, Malawi)*

## **Who's Interested**

A recent international "World Value Survey" reveals that throughout the Christian and non-Christian world more women than men profess to be religious. It also appears that mothers play a greater part in the religious influence of children than their fathers.

Earlier this year a survey by the American 'Pew Forum on Religion' found that nearly threequarters of Americans profess the religion in which they were brought up. It was amongst the other quarter that those who switched religions or abandoned religion altogether were found.

Mormons have grown from six people in America in 1830 to over 13 million adherents today – increasing by about 40% in every decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. How have they achieved this? By intense evangelisation and concentrating on the development and bonding of families.

Today, many people are interested in religion but our generally defeatist attitude that 'no one is interested' is perhaps the biggest drawback to the advancement of the Truth. Let us shake ourselves into action and pray the more earnestly that we may reap the harvest of the Lord.

*Marcus Heaster*

## **Cholera Strikes!**

We have some very disturbing letters regarding the existence of cholera in areas where some of our brethren and sisters are. It can spread rapidly and sometimes prove fatal, but there are measures that can be taken in an endeavour to prevent and control it. The Hesperian Society have produced four helpful leaflets:

How to prevent cholera

How to make water safe for drinking and cooking

How to identify cholera and

How to treat cholera.

*Gospel News* for April/June will include these leaflets for those in Africa. We will be happy to supply further copies for general distribution should anyone wish to have them. MH

*Marcus Heaster*

## **The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-30)**

Even in the world it is the case that the most successful business people have the character of wanting more and more. But in reality, should they be called 'successful'? What is it that they want more and more of?

Because of their desire for more and more worldly things, these guys are doomed. They are not successful because of their craving for money, and the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Tim

6:10). So the issue on the table is about wanting more and more and whether it is right to want more and more.

When the Lord preached the beatitudes, he drew up important lessons. Let us first look at Matthew 5:3: “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” If someone is poor, he doesn’t have enough and everybody really needs enough. So what did the Lord mean? The Lord meant we should be like a poor person always feeling that deficiency. As Christians, he meant that we should be craving to get enough spiritual growth. At all times we should be poor in spirit, but always wanting more and more spiritual growth. For those who are like this: Yours is the Kingdom of God.

Look at Luke 6:21: “Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied.” Just as in being poor, this is not hunger for food that goes into the stomach. There is spiritual food we should hunger for, that is the righteousness stated in Matt5:6. We should have that craving of a hungry person. This should be towards the spiritual food and spiritual water. If we hunger now, for every second we will want more and more of this righteousness – and our Lord will satisfy us.

But if we feel we are rich, if we feel we are already spiritually mature, feel like we have had enough spiritual growth, food and water, warnings are given in Luke 6:24-26. It will be shown that if we never look for spiritual food, we will be hungry.

So brethren, though craving for righteousness might require us to go through times of mourning, we will be comforted and our meekness will enable us to inherit the Kingdom of God on earth.

*Bro James Magombo (Bulawayo, Zimbabwe)*

## **Kingdom Essentials**

I want to write about the four things that a king must have so that the kingdom can be completed: 1. EARTH, 2. PEOPLE 3. LAW 4. E CITY.

Christadelphians understand very well that king Jesus is coming any time to restore God’s Kingdom on this earth which was overturned. In Ezekiel 21: 27, we read that God would overturn the Kingdom “until he come whose right it is, and (God) will give it him (Jesus)”. Hosea said “The children of Israel will stay many days without a king or a prince” (3:4).

### **1. EARTH**

A king is first to have a place to rule, which is earth. The earth is to be inhabited, it was not created in vain (Isa 45:18),

### **2. PEOPLE**

A king without a people is not a king. People will go to worship the King at Jerusalem (Zech 14:16,17). The people will be told to enter into the Kingdom with their king, Jesus. and inherit it (Matt 25:34). If we inherit, we will be glorified together, so let us watch, for we do not know the hour (Romans 8:17; Matt 24:42; 1 Peter 1:4-5), In Revelation 5:9,10, the word of God gives us hope that we are redeemed by the blood of Jesus and made kings and priests and we shall reign on earth.

In the Millennium we will not be alone as believers but with other people to rule over; we being

kings and priests will teach them the word of God. So all these are people under one King on earth.

## **THE LAW**

Every king has his own laws to govern his people.

Without the law, people cannot live well on earth. As the writer of the book of Psalms said, without God's law, he could have perished (119:92). Without law people do their own things, not pleasing to God.

By the way, the law which we are using now is the word of God which is in the Bible. We all heard the word of God and believe it and turned away from our own ways – the law of mind and flesh- (Galatians 5:14) but our law is love. We love each other and our neighbours, Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment" and we love each other.

## **4. THE CITY**

Beside the earth, the people and law, the King must have a city. This is where the King will sit to perform his duties and where judgment will take place. God through His word did not leave us without information as we hope for His kingdom.

The chosen capital city is Jerusalem in Israel. When Jesus comes, he will sit on David's throne in Jerusalem (Luke 1:32). When Jesus was teaching the multitudes he called Jerusalem "the city of the great king" (Matt 5:35). After the war and tumult, the remaining people will go to Jerusalem to worship the king; those who will not go will not have rain in their area (Zechariah 14:16,17). People will go to Jerusalem to hear the word of God (Isa 2:2,3) because out of Zion will go forth the law.

*Bro Edward N Kunikina (Diana Beach, Kenya)*

## **The Power of Godly Relationships**

Most of us relate with different kinds of people. The Bible talks much about this subject. The Greek word 'ecclesia' means a group of called-out ones, these days often referred to as a church. As you look at the word of God, you will see that the church or people of God are encouraged to meet together. They are encouraged to pray together and to encourage one another daily. They are encouraged by the power of godly relationships as they walk together.

We also have to realise that scripture describes the body of Christ as having hands, eyes, ears and other different parts. We are all part of one another. And as part of one another, we draw strength from one another. Each ligament, each part of the body has its own 'gifting', its own talents, its own way of giving strength and knowledge, "From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love" (Eph 4:16. ESV) A big-toe of itself is useless, but forms an essential part of a perfect body

"Confess your faults one to another... that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). This is an example in scripture of the power of godly relationships. All of us need to confess our faults to God because we know we need to have accountability in our lives.

The power of having godly relationships is the power that we need for accountability and for someone to encourage us to seek the Lord, In Hebrews, the Bible tells us to exhort one another daily, not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, to encourage one another and to warn one another lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Heb3:13;10:24-25). All of this is speaking about the importance of godly relationships.

On the negative side, the Bible warns us many times about ungodly relationships and how they can affect our minds and our thinking. Before we know it, we can be led into situations that we should not be in. But we must protect ourselves and surround ourselves with godly counsel (Pro 11:14; 13:20; 1 Cor 15:33). The Bible says “For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness” (2 Cor6:14).

To finalise, be encouraged to surround yourself with godly relationships and flee those who would influence you in a negative way with all those activities that may induce you into sinning against God. It is very important that we have godly believers in our lives with whom we can sharpen ourselves (Pro 27:17).

*Bro Godfrey Egessa (Busia, Uganda)*

### **Bro George Constantine’s Situation.**

The proposed Judiciary meeting in January has been deferred, but this is not as serious as some have anticipated. Bro George first came into contact with the Truth through a CAT advertisement in a Trinidad newspaper, he was instructed via the *Bible Basics Course* and has been an excellent student of the Word ever since. After his baptism a number of efforts to get a reprieve of the death sentence were made without success. The London lawyers acting on his behalf were not only in contact with the Trinidad Judiciary, but also the London Privy Council, with whom we also had some contact. We made a case to demonstrate George’s genuine repentance which greatly impressed the lawyer with George and the way the Christadelphians were dealing with the case.

Photo: Bro George Constantine

The situation changed and various organisations were trying to get the death sentence for all prisoners to be repealed together. There were differences between Trinidad and London and it seemed at one time Trinidad was going to carry out the death sentences. However, a decision was made by the authorities to commute all 52 sentenced to death before July 7th 2004 to life imprisonment. Legally the cases of all 52 are now being reviewed by the authorities and so personal legal representation of individuals was considered of little use at the present time until the principles had been established, especially as they were now all off death row. The problem now seems to be how they are going to apply the decision of commuting Brother George to life imprisonment. Life imprisonment seems to be a minimum of 15 years. George was sentenced to death on February 17th 1995 and so, technically, he could be released February 17th 2010. He was imprisoned four years earlier pending trial. The legal wrangle is how to apply this commuting of the death sentence to life imprisonment. So let us pray that, should the Master tarry, George will be released in less than a year. The problem then will be how to rehabilitate George and we all need to pray for the Lord’s guidance and blessing upon all those associated with that. The authorities do have what appears to be an excellent rehabilitation scheme and at

the moment Bro George is busy on a tailoring course for six hours a day, Monday to Friday. Formerly he was an air traffic controller, and when the next session of training course starts in September, he would like to be considered for the Computer Course.

*Marcus Heaster*

### **The Art and Challenge of Forgiving.**

Some thoughts to stimulate us in practical forgiving

*It's part of the process of our salvation.*

By putting forgiveness into practice we will understand better what God has done for us in Jesus.

*Bring Jesus into the situation.*

We can always share our problems with God and Jesus in prayer. He was tempted in all points like us and He knows the struggles we have - "Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men." We can be truthful with them about how hard it can be to forgive - and let's be honest - it is difficult!

Forgiving is a process not an event.

Be prepared for it to take some time. It might be better to say "I'm working on it at the moment." rather than, "Oh, it's all right," when it clearly isn't all right.

*Don't try to get an agreed version of the events.*

This will always create conflict and tension. It usually means we want our version agreed.

*Don't wait until you get a repentance.*

You may have a long wait! It may never occur! It may not be possible when the person has died or is unknown to us. Nevertheless we must forgive.

*Communication lies at the heart of forgiving.*

One definition of forgiving is "The willingness to communicate when in pain."

*Forgiving confronts the facts - it does not sweep them under the carpet.*

This does not mean being vindictive, but to ignore the problem means it is not being addressed.

*Forgiving is not the same as forgetting.*

God has not given us the ability to forget, so we must develop a strategy to forgive whilst remembering. We can learn from those memories and can grow closer to God when we remember what Jesus suffered as well.

*Forgiving is what is needed when all the excuses have finished.*

If there is an excuse, then forgiving isn't really necessary. Forgiving is needed when there is no excuse - when the injury is compounded by real injustice.

*I can choose not to dwell on the event(s)*

This is the starting point after the initial remembering. There is plenty of encouragement in the Bible to "think on these things" to discipline our minds towards better emotions than resentment (and worse.)

*I choose not to seek revenge.*

Revenge is the opposite of forgiving. If I choose to leave revenge to God, I am taking the strongest step I can to move in a positive direction.

*The future of the relationship may be changed, and re-trusting may not be appropriate.*

Retrusting is not the same as forgiving. To forgive is something within my control, but trust rests partly with the other person, who must earn trust again, if indeed that is ever possible.

*It is good to see God's providence in the events.*

If we choose to see God's hand at work, then the most awful situations can be transformed. God has said He will never leave us or forsake us - and He means it - even when we have suffered grievous wrong. Accepting God's freely given forgiveness is part of the process. In knowing ourselves and appreciating what God has done we are strengthened to go out and forgive others – letting go of pride and self-reliance

*Ultimate forgiving is characterised by Agape love - (charity): "I will provide."*

This is the target. This is what we aspire to. God shows His love to the just and the unjust - to those who love Him and to those who hate Him. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to a knowledge of the truth-"When we were yet in our sins, Christ died for us." It is possible, because Jesus did it, ultimately holding out the promise of eternal life to those who persecuted him. As Paul said, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst."

There are some *myths about forgiving*. They include;

*Forgiving is just for God.*

It isn't. It is a very necessary ingredient in normal human life as an antidote to revenge. As Christians - forgiven sinners - we should be at the forefront of forgiving.

*Forgiving is achieved when you say the words.*

Perhaps it is, but it is usually more helpful to think of forgiving as a process and not an event.

*Forgiveness need only be given after repentance.*

How long do you intend to wait? Their repentance is not in your control. We must address our internal struggle. To do so is the first step in controlling ourselves in the process of forgiving. It will sometimes be the case that the other person has died or is not known to us. Even then we need to cultivate forgiveness.

*To forgive, you must be a martyr.*

No; forgiveness is a liberating and healing concept. There is no need to stand there and take unnecessary abuse without comment. Often it is necessary to say something and direct the other's attention to the wrong. Evil is wrong. Even Jesus commented on that at his trial.

*"You must forgive and forget."*

It is not given to us by God to forget. We need to forgive whilst remembering.

*When I have forgotten, I have forgiven.*

This may be the case for minor matters, but to bury serious matters in our mind does not address the damage that has been done. Many victims, in therapy, need first to remember the event and only then can they begin to address the matter, including the question of forgiving.

*Making excuses for someone is the same as forgiving.*

No, if there is a simple reason why someone behaved as they did, it may cause pain, but there was no evil intended - there was no injustice. We can excuse the person. True forgiving starts when there are no excuses.

*When I forgive someone, I must re-trust them.*

This is not necessary and confuses forgiving with the need to protect oneself and those with us. There may be no lasting grudges held against the other, but there is no need to allow oneself to be put in the position of repeated abuse.

In order to test these ideas you could look at incidents in the lives of these people to see if you can spot some of the elements listed above:

\* Joseph and his brothers - From Genesis 50 v 15 – 21.

(Probably the best coherent description available in Scripture.)

\* Instructions from Jesus - Matthew 18v 15 – 20.

(Read this as an exercise in forgiving - not disfellowshipping!)

\* Euodia and Syntche - Philippians 4 v 2 – 9.

(Imagine the quarrel! See the whole passage for the elements of forgiving.)

\* Paul & the brother at Corinth -1 Cor 5 + 2 Cor 2 v 5- 11.

David and Saul- From 1Sam chapters 19, 24 & 26.

Here are some verses to remind ourselves of the love of God in forgiving us through Jesus -because of what He has done.

Out of the depths I cry to you O Lord; O Lord hear my prayer. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord who could *stand* ? But with you there is forgiveness, therefore you are feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I put my hope. *Psalms 130*

I want you to know that it is in Jesus that forgiveness is proclaimed to you. *Acts 13 v 38*

In him we have redemption through His blood. *Ephesians 1 v 7*

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will. purify us from all unrighteousness. *John 1 v 9*

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ, God forgave you. *Ephesians 4 v 32*

As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. *Colossians 3 v 12-13*.

But we must play our part.

Forgiving is good for me.

- When I learn to forgive I am following the example of Jesus.
- I find peace of mind.
- It releases me and gives me strength to move forward.
- It is essential for my salvation.
- It is only when I know the pain involved that I understand what Jesus and God have done for me.
- "It is in pardoning that I am pardoned."

Forgiving is good for you.

- When I forgive you, we begin to communicate again - we understand each other better.
- You realise the true effect of your actions.
- Hopefully you come closer to God.

*Bro Stev Gretton (U.K.)*

### **God Has Given Us the Capacity to Love Him**

Our feelings come and go but God's love for us never wanes. God's care for us is much more watchful and tender than the care of any human father could possibly be (Psalm 139:17). How precious it is, Lord, to realise that you are looking after and thinking about us constantly. I can't even count how many times a day your thoughts turn towards me. I see skies of blue and clouds of white, bright-blessed days and dark stary nights, and I think to myself 'What a wonderful world'.

We have been in God's thoughts and love from all eternity, His attention never leaves us.

All experience, both the good and the not so good, can make a pattern of blessing and strength. Each moment contains a hundred messages from God. To each cry of, "Oh Lord", God answers,

“I am here.” What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.

Earth has no sorrow that God cannot heal. “The eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deut 33:27). God is every moment, totally aware in intense concentration and love.

No one passes through any area of life, happy or tragic, without the attention of God (Luke 12:30-33). Your heavenly Father knows your needs. He will always give all you need from day to day. Nothing great was ever done without much enduring. “I am still confident of this, that I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord. Be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord” (Psalm 27:13,14).

*Sis Emmy Milliard Assyo (Namiwa, Kenya)*

### **From Childhood to Manhood**

From childhood to manhood life will never stay the same. Children always copy what is familiar to them. They cannot copy what they have never seen or heard. Paul commented “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child but when I became a man I put away childish things” (1Cor.13:11). If we are not serious with our children, if we are not telling them the Truth, then we are failing them.

It is while a child that Samuel was taught the truth. First by his own parents and later by Eli in the house of God. “As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him that he may appear in the presence of the Lord and abide there for ever” (1 Samuel 1:22 RSV). With this verse, I do not think that Hannah brought her child in the house of God at the age of 12, I suggest that Hannah could not have kept being breast fed up to the age of 12 but she brought her boy to the tabernacle at the age of 3 or 4. “And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her a three year old bull and an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and she brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh and the child was young” (1 Samuel 1:24). A three year old bull: was that the age of Samuel when he was brought to the tabernacle of God. An ephah (10 Kg): was it the weight of Samuel? [In the book of Maccabees it mentions that a child is weaned at about three years of age]

*Photo: Lerversey Ntchalachala*

Some people come to know the Truth when they are adults. In our eyes they are grown up people. But when it comes to the Truth, they are children. They are at the early stage in their existence in the Truth. If some people are pastors, or members of other religions and decide to leave their religion and join the Christadelphians, they have to begin at the beginning of our faith.

We should teach the Truth to our children now, and they will take the right action when they grow up. “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15 AV).

If our children are familiar with the word of God, they will increase their knowledge even more when they grow into manhood. “But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child girded with

a linen ephod” (1 Samuel 2:18 AV). There should be no hindrances or obstacles on the path of our children towards God.

*Bro Harmony Ntchalachala (Kasungu, Malawi)*

## **Foundation**

Many writers have written about the faith of the early believers in the first century, but let us look on the extraordinary subject called ‘Foundation’. Foundation means the solid base on which a building is built, usually below ground level. In simple terms, I mean how strong are we in the Lord? or how weak are we?

There are many things that we can share as brothers and sisters as we journey toward the Kingdom of God. Many beloved ones have gone astray due to some weakness in their foundation. To start with, let us turn to Matthew when he talks about two builders who had built their structures based on two different materials: “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house: yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash” (Matt 7:24-27).

Let us take a deep breath within ourselves to find out where we belong in relation to this passage. Are we wise people who build our houses on the rock, or foolish people who cheapen ourselves with the things of this world, neglecting the work of our Lord. Do we then fight among ourselves, pointing fingers at each other instead of doing what is right, in Jesus Christ where we can obtain the strong foundation because he is a rock that cannot be shaken by any gigantic wind.

Sometimes we may feel that serving God is a waste of time or is toilsome: if we do, we are deceiving ourselves. Whatever we have or whatever we do comes from Him, who has chosen us. No other gods can possibly do this.

*Photo: Bro Stephen Siamabi*

Brothers and sisters, how have we built ourselves and what foundation have we used? Have we built ourselves on worldly materials, ungodliness, criminality or immorality? If so, then we should know that our foundation is ready for destruction. If it is based on the rock who is Jesus Christ, then we are moving on the right track.

The prophet Isaiah has a vital issue concerning our foundation: “So this is what the sovereign Lord says ‘See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation: the one who trusts in it will never be dismayed” (Isa 28:16).

What a lovely and inspiring message from this scripture; when we put our trust in this precious cornerstone we will never be disappointed. Maybe some of our relatives have disappointed us because of our beliefs. If so, remember that our Lord Jesus Christ was also disappointed

(rejected) by his own people. Let us do what Jesus did by holding on to his Father, the Living God.

Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who was the chief cornerstone. He was fully tested when he was nailed to the cross for you and for me. This shows how precious he was, since he remained obedient in all the hardships he went through and this makes him our foundation on whom we will never be disappointed. This theme is taken up by Paul: "By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how to build. For no-one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stone, wood, hay, straw, his work will be shown for what it is because the day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work" (1 Cor 3:10-13).

These words are Paul's through our Lord Jesus Christ. This issue is serious to each and every believer because it will be a very shameful experience seeing brothers and sisters failing to enter into God's Kingdom.

Finally, as we help one another to the Kingdom of God we should maintain our building on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him, you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His spirit (Eph 2:20-22). Brethren and sisters, let us hold on to this truth that we have chosen. Let us use our free time in devoting ourselves to the word to nourish ourselves as the daily food of our soul. Nevertheless, God's solid foundation is firm, sealed with this inscription: the Lord knows who are his, and every one who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.

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