

# The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No 250

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## Editorial

Dear Brothers and Sisters and Friends, Loving Greetings,

There are not many things which God has asked us to give special attention to. Of course good Christian living is essential as we read in the Sermon on the Mount and this is always emphasized in the multitude of Christian sects and denominations, but the one thing God has especially invited us to do is to reason with Him with regard to the Atonement. We read this in Isaiah 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." This invitation to understand the Atonement shows the importance of forgiveness, and indeed it cannot be overstated as our salvation depends on it.

Jesus Christ came to take away the sin of the world and to forgive all who will come to Him in faith. These matters we can and ought to reason out as God has invited us to do, but there are some who have said this subject is hard to understand and others say that it takes long spiritual experience; while yet others even say we are not meant to understand it! We feel such people doubt the word of their Creator and without right knowledge and understanding of the Atonement no one can preach the Gospel but a mere shadow of it at best. Surely it is incumbent upon us to learn what we can.

So our main purpose is to set before our readers those things for which we should offer to our Heavenly Father the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving; things wherein we have good cause to worship Him for His great love and longsuffering to us-ward; indeed some of these things the things angels, prophets and righteous men in times past desired to look into, but have only now been revealed to us in the New Testament scriptures that we may rejoice in the light and be glad. We wish to put forward the Atonement in all its magnificent splendour "that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified" (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

Here then is the gospel message in few words but we feel succinctly covers all aspects.

John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" and the Apostle Paul, "we have before proved both Jew and Gentile that they are all under sin." It is evident that Jesus did not take away the sins we still commit, and Paul's words cannot apply to character because a person of moral goodness is as much "under sin" as the worst sinner. The truth is that the whole human family is estranged from God because of sin.

Adam was created at the beginning a man of flesh and blood with the same corruptible nature as all other living creatures. In order to develop character he was placed under a law requiring obedience. He transgressed and incurred the penalty of sin. The account in Genesis is almost universally misunderstood

and it is believed that sin made man corruptible and his eventual death the punishment. But what actually happened proves that this is not so. He had been warned that in the day he sinned he would surely die, yet he lived on for more than 900 years. What is the explanation? Did God change His mind? If we look up all the other instances of the same expression as that in Genesis 2:17 (e.g. 1 Kings 2:37-42) we find that it implies an inflicted death on the day of the crime. Similarly, every instance of the punishment of presumptuous sin was a judicial execution (cf. Genesis 20:7). This is what Adam incurred but it is clear that he was not put to death; but how could he possibly escape if God was not to be untrue to His word? The explanation is the plan of redemption whereby Adam died in law, but under a typical sacrifice his life was spared - he was delivered as Isaac was when Abraham was about to kill him - and he lived to become the father of the human race. God did not change His mind, but He made it possible in His own wisdom to open to man the hope of regaining, by faith, what had been lost by disobedience.

In Romans 5:18,19 the Apostle Paul shows how God has chosen to regard all men as involved in the Sin of Adam. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." They were not made sinners in the sense of being created evil, or obliged by their nature to become sinful; the meaning is that we are legally classified as sinners in a similar way to that which we are by law citizens of the country in which we are born. The sentence of death incurred by Adam 'passes upon' all his descendants, since all who share his life would have perished in him if he had been put to death on the day of his sin. So that Adam is not only the man from whom we are all descended, but he is also appointed the federal head of all who are under the reign of Sin. This is the relationship of being "in Adam" and its vital importance is because if we remain in it, that is, unredeemed, we are inescapably destined to receive the wages of sin.

Sin is literally the transgression of the law and one has to know that a law exists before, in justice, one can be held guilty under it, so that those who are ignorant of God and His purpose are not accountable. But sin is also personified as a king, or master, holding man in bondage, and the reason for this is given in Galatians 3:22, "The scripture hath concluded all under sin that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."

The meaning is that God has appointed a second federal head, Jesus Christ, and the only way we can demonstrate that we have the faith which will make us acceptable to God is to recognize that our relationship, by birth to the first Adam by which we are in bondage under sin, can only be changed by getting ourselves out of Adam and into Christ. To do this we have to believe and obey, dying in baptism a symbolic death to our former life and being re-born by faith as children of God.

Law is the basis of the Divine plan. It is God's will that we should not perish but have everlasting life, even though by our own efforts we cannot earn it. He wishes to be merciful and to show His love towards us, but He will not do so at the expense of the supremacy of law. So there is a double problem - to show mercy, and at the same time uphold a just law which must condemn sin - and it is solved in a wonderful way by the sacrifice of Christ.

Under the supreme law of a righteous God a man who is a sinner does not deserve to live, he has forfeited his life, which means that the death which came by sin is not so much a punishment as a debt. A sinner owes that which he cannot pay without perishing; he owes his life. The basis of the Atonement is that if someone else could be found with the means to pay the debt, and providing the supreme authority sanctions the transaction, the sinner might be free from his debt while at the same time the justness of the law is upheld. God brought Jesus into the world for this purpose.

When Jesus submitted Himself to the death of the Cross, He made Himself the sin-bearer, translating into reality the deliverance from the death foreshadowed in Eden when Adam was covered by skins of animals slain. His death was therefore an exact substitutionary sacrifice, not to appease the wrath of God by the infliction of undeserved punishment on the innocent in order that the guilty might escape; this would have been an injustice; but Jesus voluntarily submitted Himself to the condemnation passed upon Him by wicked men, because He saw Himself as paying the price of their redemption. He was wholly good and innocent; there was no cause of death in Him, but what Jesus knew was that He alone could pay the price of their deliverance. Why He alone?

This brings us to the vital factor in The Atonement which God kept concealed from the beginning - the fact that the Redeemer was to be His own Son. Most Christians believe what is revealed in The Gospels about His origin but they do not understand its true significance.

Born of a woman, He was the same natural flesh and blood as all other men, but as He was begotten by the Holy Spirit His life was not a continuation of the Adam-life but a new life direct from God. He was therefore born outside the state of captivity, not under the reign of sin but free, and therefore in a position to purchase the release of those who were enslaved. Jesus said (Matthew 20:28) that He came to give His life a ransom (*lutron*) for many; the word *lutron* means a price paid. The apostle Paul also wrote (Galatians 4:5) that Christ was sent to redeem (*exagorazo*) and this word means to acquire out of the forum, in the same way as slaves were bought, or prisoners ransomed. So this is how Christ redeemed mankind. We have been purchased out of bondage, the bondage of sin, by the payment of a price. It is a figurative transaction, but it was completed by a literal price, the life of Jesus which He laid down for us on the Cross.

If Jesus had not proved Himself personally sinless, He could not have offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin, because a sacrifice had to be perfect and unblemished before sin could be laid upon it. But, even though He had been sinless, if He had been the son of a human father it would have been impossible for Him to meet the legal claim of sin because his life would not have been His own to give; he would have been in the same hopeless condition as all in Adam.

Therefore, being the Son of God and having proved Himself obedient under temptation He was legally free and morally perfect. Though He could have claimed a kind of equality with His Father, he humbled Himself (Philippians 2:5-8) and became obedient unto death, suffering what was due to sinners, giving Himself the Just for the unjust that He might bring us to God.

The purpose of God in Christ is unique in history, in what it reveals of His mercy and love and in the logical perfection with which it meets man's needs, enlightens his mind and gives him hope. It spans the ages from the moment when God said "Let there be light" to the infinite future when He will declare "Behold, I make all things new." These are indeed things which even the angels desired to look into. Today they are open to us and they show the way to eternal life.

Many will recognise the above treatise as that of our Late Brother Ernest Brady which he wrote in 1987.

With love to all, Russell.

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## A JEW ACCEPTS JESUS

This is the testimony for Jesus written to his friends:

Let me explain how I, Leopold Dreifuss, accepted these truths. Being a natural Jew, and having attended Christadelphian lectures for some time, I became interested in the views of the Nazarene Fellowship.

I don't know whether you know us by this name. Most Christadelphians call us "Renunciationists," or "Clean Flesh Heretics," because of their mistaken idea that we deny that Jesus has come in our flesh.

Now, let me say from the outset that this is not true. Let me make it quite clear to you that we do acknowledge that Jesus has come in our flesh. Now, in the following, I will try to explain to you just where we differ from the Christadelphians, and how I came to be convinced of it.

In our opinion the most essential thing in the understanding of Scripture is to know the Lord, to understand the mission which God sent Him to fulfil. But to understand that we must first go into the questions of Sacrifice and Redemption.

Let us start right from the beginning of Creation and examine Adam's position before He sinned. There we see the first man created by God from the ground and pronounced "very good". He was corruptible, for we read that there was the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. Now, he had only one single commandment to keep - not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. He was given a free will, therefore it was in his power to choose whether he would keep God's commandment or not. But although Adam and Eve were created very good, we must bear in mind that they were corruptible, and could sin if they so chose. For had they not the inclination to sin before they were driven out of Eden the serpent could never have succeeded in tempting them. However, the serpent did succeed, and they sinned.

Now, God said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Let us find out what sort of death it was - natural death, or violent death? Very probably it was not to be a natural death, for he was corruptible in any case and depended on the Tree of Life if he was not to die. But we will discover yet better evidence as to which of the two deaths God meant. In the Hebrew text the sentence "thou shalt surely die" reads "dying thou shalt die." This construction of a sentence is often used in Hebrew, and it indicates a strong affirmation. For example, when we say in English "he did come" in the sense "he surely came", the Hebrew says "coming he came." So, "dying, thou shalt die," means a very certain death. Moreover, the same phrase occurs again later on in Genesis where Abimelech, king of Gera, took Sarah, thinking she was Abraham's sister. God, appearing to him in a dream, said, "thou shalt surely die" - in the Hebrew "dying thou shalt die." There cannot be any doubt that this means judicial death, for he would have died the natural death anyway, and had it not been a sudden judicial death, why should Abimelech have been in such a hurry to send Sarah away. Finally, the phrase occurs when Solomon tells one of his enemies not to cross the brook of Kidron. But Shimei did cross the river, and we read that he was stabbed to death. So here we have the best evidence that the sentence "thou shalt surely die" is a violent, sudden or judicial death.

This death Adam deserved, but, had he suffered it there and then, none of us would ever have lived, and God's purpose to fill the earth with His glory would have been frustrated. This could not be. The first thing God did was to act in mercy. He slew a lamb and thus transferred Adam's guilt to an innocent animal. This, of course, was only a temporary measure, until Christ came, but I shall say more on that later. Only let me say here that God is merciful, but He is also just, a just God who will never repent. Adam's sin had to be paid for somehow. It could not have been forgiven, for how could God overlook the breaking of His commandment and yet establish His authority? The lamb which was sacrificed, and whose skin He subsequently used to clothe Adam and Eve, was only a temporary measure. Of course, God foreknew what He was going to do. But until Christ paid the penalty, the slaying of animals had to continue.

Man was now in a position in which he was estranged from God. God had to keep him from the Tree of Life, because before man was once more qualified to Eternal Life, the first sin, or rather the penalty for it, had to be paid for. Until Christ's advent man's right to Eternal Life was forfeited, or in the words of Paul (Romans 7:14) mankind was "sold under sin."

It is a general principle in Scripture, by which God gives man a choice to serve either good or evil. When man chooses the evil, he has nobody but himself to blame for the consequences. Cain and Abel had that choice: one chose the good, the other the evil. Joshua put that choice before the children of Israel. He said, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." Going back to Adam, he also chose the evil when he transgressed. He was now sold under sin, the servant of sin. Sin is often personified in Scripture as a master. Adam sold himself to that master. This last sentence, of course, is figurative speech, and it really means, as explained above, that he was estranged from God. But let us again examine the phrase "sold under sin." You will, no doubt, know that in old times, when slavery was practised, a slave was the property of his master. Everybody who was born to him while he served became automatically his master's property.

If he wanted to become free he had to be redeemed. With this at the back of your mind you should now appreciate what it means to be "sold under sin." It means that the whole of Adam's posterity was under the master of Sin. In practice, that meant that they were born without the right to Eternal Life, unless they obtained that right by bringing their sacrifices as a recognition of their need of redemption. Needless to say, of course, that these sacrifices had to be brought in the right spirit of faith.

Under the Law of Moses this need was even more pressed home. What was the meaning of the daily sacrifices, the Passover Lamb, the services on the Day of Atonement? Was it not the constant lesson that there was a need of redemption? These sacrifices were not for any particular transgression of any particular

law: for if anyone sinned he had to bring a sacrifice in addition to all these, and if he brought it in the right spirit of faith and true repentance, God forgave him, for how often do we read in Leviticus, “If a soul sin, he shall bring... and it shall be forgiven him.” God does not exact a penalty over and over again - that is not the idea of a merciful God. So the daily sacrifices, etc., must have been for something else.

As you know, these sacrifices in themselves cannot take away sin. The redemption of mankind from this bondage to Sin could only be paid for by the antitypical Sacrifice of Christ Himself. But although these animals could not redeem mankind as a whole, the keeping of the law, together with faith, did give a few individuals title to eternal life, to mention only Elijah, Caleb and Joshua (these last two were the only ones to survive Israel’s 40 years’ journey in the wilderness). There were also Enoch and Noah, before the Mosaic Law, of whom the Scripture records that they pleased God. Even after the introduction of the Mosaic Law we read of many who have kept it. “The law and the commandment is holy, just and good,” and it was “ordained to life” (Romans 7:10).

What was it then that the law could not do? It could give title to eternal life to individuals, and we know that Moses and David, who are now asleep, have obtained a title to it. They were sold under sin as much as anybody. “What the law could not do” was to redeem from Adam’s sin.

When we want to gain information about God’s plan concerning anything, we look at the Old Testament and then apply it to the New Testament. Let us now do that to find out something about the Divine plan concerning redemption.

According to the Mosaic Law, an Israelite who became a bondservant could redeem himself if he had the means; otherwise the next of kin had to do it. But we can learn even more about this topic from Exodus. Israel was in bondage to Pharaoh. God chose Moses as their redeemer. Moses was an Israelite by birth, but by law he was in a position different from the other Israelites, He was not under the Egyptian bondage, for Pharaoh’s daughter adopted him and brought him up as her son.

Let us now apply this to Christ, our Redeemer from the Adamic bondage to Sin. He was born of a woman, our nature. But He was the Son of God, and therefore not under bondage to Sin. For by divine law the man, the father, decides under Law whose the child is. But this will not affect his flesh and blood; his nature is the same. Similarly, Jesus was of human nature, but not born servant to Sin, He was one who had power to redeem. And just as Moses was brought up by Pharaoh’s daughter and dwelt at Midian in the wilderness until the time came that God appointed him his task, so Jesus was brought up with a human foster father, and He went into the wilderness where He was tempted, before He began the preaching of the Gospel.

Because Jesus was of our flesh he had, of course, the same inclination to sin as we all. He had to make the choice between good and evil - between fulfilling His Father’s will and His own will. But where Adam failed, He succeeded. Here, then, are the essential points about Jesus’ redemptive work.

He, like Adam, had a free and unforfeited life. Whereas Adam was the son of God by creation, Jesus was the Son of God by begetting, and thus Adam’s next-of-kin - and hence in a position to redeem Adam from the bondage to Sin. He paid the penalty which Adam should have paid, and which the animals paid in type - that is, a violent death, with the pouring out of His blood (for “dying, thou shall die,” was God’s sentence).

There was no violation here of Moses’ Commandment in Deuteronomy that the children shall not be put to death for their parents’ ...for Jesus gave His life. He didn’t need to give it to reconcile Himself to His own Father: for He was never under Sin, and never forfeited His right to life. But He died for Adam’s sin, which had become “the Sin of the world”; He offered Himself, knowing that He had the power to lay down His life and take it up again - for why shouldn’t He have had that power?

What is mankind’s position today? Adam’s sin has been paid for - God is just, and nobody ever has to die again as a punishment for Adam’s sin. But Adam’s act has left mankind under a great disadvantage. He has cut off all his posterity from the Tree of Life. If we want to obtain eternal life, we must associate ourselves with Christ. Of course, those that never see the Light are just like the beasts of the field that perish. But those who do see the Light become responsible,

I was convinced of this doctrine, for I found it far more logical than anything I have ever heard on religion. Nothing which any minister preaches is anything like it. I have learned a lot by attending Christadelphian lectures. But I have never seen it so clearly. Because I realised this responsibility I was immersed, for once a person sees Light and does not avail himself of this great salvation, he confirms Adam's sin. He is then "in Adam," and Paul writes: "As in Adam all die..." (1 Corinthians 15:2a). This death, which all in Adam die, is the judicial death on the day of judgement, for, from what I have been saying all the time, you should find that it cannot be the natural death; for everybody dies this death - even those who never see Light and are under no Divine law; for where there is no law there is no transgression (Romans 4:15), Hence, those people will not incur the penalty for sin, which is violent death, yet they die a natural death.

Once we are "baptised we are in the same legal position as Adam before he sinned, or Jesus. But, of course, we can forfeit our right to eternal life if we sin wilfully: for if we sin "a sin unto death" now and get our name blotted out of the book of life, there is now no sacrifice but a fearful looking for the fiery judgment. But otherwise, we are now the Children of God, not through anything we have done, but only because of God's mercy in sending His Son. And even so, we are only children by adoption, while Jesus is God's Son by begettal. Well, can you now explain why it was necessary that Jesus should have been born the miraculous way in which He was? And can you now see why men like Moses and Elijah and Noah could not redeem us from "the Sin of the world," although their records show a life which pleased God?

Well, there is just one more topic which, to our great regret, presents a difficulty to many Christadelphians, so that they cannot see many of the beauties of God's word. Concerning this idea of "sinful flesh." This phrase occurs only once in Scripture - in Romans 8:5. All linguists agree that this is a faulty translation. The Greek version says "Sin's flesh". The word "sin" in Scripture is often used for "sin offering" (see Genesis 4:7, which is absolutely without any sense - unless "sin" here means "sin offering" - a lamb, or a bullock; for in Cain's day people were shepherds, and there would be an animal at his door handy if required for sacrifice). And in Romans 8:5 "sin" also means "sin offering," or, according to the margin of my Bible, "sacrifice for sin".

The seventh chapter of Romans is regarded as very difficult by most Christadelphians.

Let us link this up with chapters 6 and 8. In chapter 6, verse 20, Paul says, "for when ye were servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness." He goes on to explain how we were made free from sin, etc. Now he inserts chapter 7, as in parenthesis, in which he describes his position before he was converted, while he was the servant of Sin. Then, in chapter 8, or rather the last verse of chapter 7, he links up his former statement with his new position, and then, in chapter 8, declares: "There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." Now, here the word "flesh" cannot be our natural literal flesh: for we have that after our immersion exactly as before. It refers, of course, to his position before he was converted. This now gives us the key to chapter 7. When Paul says "in my flesh dwelleth no good thing," he speaks of the time before his conversion. For, if in our literal flesh dwelt no good thing, how could our bodies possibly be the temple of God? Finally, let us look again at chapter 8, verse 9. "But ye are not in the flesh" (those brethren were, of course, in their natural flesh), "but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." So, then, the "flesh" means the state before baptism, the "spirit" afterwards, or sometimes, instead of the "flesh" we read about the old man - "put off the old man."

Now, if you think about these things, I am sure that with the interest and scriptural knowledge you have got, you will find out many interesting and beautiful things.

If you want to know more about these beautiful truths, write to me,

Sincerely your brother in Christ, Leopold Dreifuss.

In our Jan/Feb Circular Letter No. 247 we published our correspondence with Brother Bernard Burt in which he answered our challenge to prove four articles of their faith. In his response to the third challenge, “Can you provide Scriptural proof that Jesus had to die to redeem himself?” Bernard made the claim that “Jesus is part of the ‘heavenly things’ which were “purged” by his own sacrifice.” In December last I asked him for further explanation of this but received no reply until the end of May when he sent me the following two articles – the first written by an unnamed Christadelphian, “Finding Eternal Redemption” and the second, “The Sacrifice of Christ – Heb.9 & 13” from his own pen. My responses are included.

## 1. FINDING ETERNAL REDEMPTION

### Expanded Note on Hebrews 9:12

**“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”**

The words in Heb.9:12 need careful explanation, if we are to get the most out of what the spirit is conveying to us. It is also important to realise that NT Greek is a highly inflexive language, i.e. the meaning is controlled by grammatical changes in words which are very definite, consistent and specific, but which can produce extremely comprehensive meanings.

The important phrase is “having obtained eternal redemption *for us*”. Firstly, the italics “for us” are not true to the original, being put there to aid the English meaning that the AV translators thought it ought to be. However, this does not convey the true meaning, not because there is nothing to add, but because all of what needs to be added is not there. This is where the Greek inflexion comes in, that changes in meaning created by the inflexion would need a number of separate English words to convey the same meaning.

Secondly, the word “obtained” is better rendered “found”: e.g. present tense “*eurisko*” (I find); perfect tense “*eureka*” (I have found) and so on. The Greek word in Heb.9:12 is “*euramenos*”, and the ending “*amenos*” tells us four things, all of great importance; it tells us that the word is aorist 1 tense, third person singular, a participle, and in the middle voice. In other words, we would have to use the verb “find” two or three times in English to convey the same meaning.

So, what do these grammatical terms mean?

#### 1. Aorist

There are two forms of aorist tense; they are called Aorist 1 and Aorist 2. The aorist tenses are properly the imperfect tense and occur in the indicative and imperative and infinitive moods. They denote an action that was made in the past and in the continuing sense, e.g. “was finding”. The aorist is able also to reach to the present. In NT Greek, both aorist tenses have the same meaning but are formed in different ways.

The case before us is aorist 1 and denotes that the action has taken place some time in the past without any specification as to when it took place. For example, the angel in the tomb said to the women: “he is risen” or, “has been raised” - Gk. *egerthe* (Matt.28:6), he did not tell them when.

Now then, how can the redemption that the lord found, as we are told by Paul in Heb.9:12 signify an action in the past, going through the present into the future? It comes back to this highly comprehensive form of the Greek verb: *euramenos*.

The aorist 1 tense tells us that the Lord found redemption but does not tell us when. All we know is that the Lord found it before Paul wrote to the Hebrews.

#### 2. Participle

The participle tells us two things:

- (i) the Lord takes part of that redemption
- (ii) redemption is an ongoing action (the participle demands that)

### **3. Middle Voice**

The middle voice is reflexive, i.e. it denotes an action done for oneself. In the verse before us, the Lord found redemption for himself.

The aorist 1 tense does not take the action from the past, through the present and into the future; the participle does that (all other tenses have a participle form). Understanding then according to English grammar that “find” is present tense, “found” is imperfect, the verse should read - “He found for himself, is finding (for us) and continues to find eternal redemption”. This extended meaning is from “*euramenos*”.

Note, that the only thing this structure does not say, is that it was “for us”. It is implied, in that the Lord only needed to find redemption for himself once, and therefore, any ongoing action must of necessity be for others - but it is only circumstantially implied. But it is of grammatical necessity that it was for himself. This is quite a different emphasis from that given in the AV.

Clearly then, redemption is something that the great high priest procured for himself first, and then for his people; and as verse 12 had already stated it was “by his own blood” that he entered into the holies, having found redemption for himself and for others.

### **MY REPLY:-**

I was very pleased to see these “Expanded notes on Hebrew 9:12” from a Christadelphian and while I find nothing wrong with the facts given, I do however find some serious error in the arguments put forward which the writer calls “the true meaning”.

The one thing that is not being said in Hebrews 9:12 is that Jesus died for Himself! The point I am making is that the writer of these notes has missed out a very important point which makes a great difference to our understanding of what the writer to the Hebrews is saying.

We all know there is not a single place in the scriptures which tells us that Jesus died for Himself, nor, I believe, is it anywhere implied.

The Greek word, *apolutrosis*, here translated “redemption” is sometimes translated “deliverance” as we see for example in Hebrews 11:35 - “and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance (*apolutrosis*); that they might obtain a better resurrection.” It is obvious these courageous and faithful servants of God had been redeemed when Jesus died on the Cross and yet the translators used the same word to show that these faithful people, though redeemed by Christ’s sacrifice, were not delivered from persecution but endured it even as Jesus did.

The point that is not sufficiently appreciated is that were ‘*apolutrosis*’ is used in connection with a price being paid then ‘redemption’ gives the correct understanding; however, where no price is involved then ‘deliverance’ is the correct meaning.

I believe Dr Thomas understood this and it’s a great pity Christadelphians no longer believe him when he wrote:-

“Redemption means to buy back, hence it is release for a ransom. All who become God’s servants are therefore released from a former Lord by purchase. The Purchaser is God, and the price or ransom is the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18,19).



I think we agree that the will of God was not accomplished short of the Crucifixion but Jesus tells us that He had established His right to eternal life before He gave Himself to God as a sacrifice for sin when He said, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified" (John 12:24). He also shows that if He had been glorified before His crucifixion He would have remained alone - "Verily I say unto thee, except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

I quote from the writings of Andrew Wilson:- "

"But we would point out... that Hebrews 9:12 declares that Jesus prior to His death had earned His title to immortality. The Greek verb here is in the middle voice and is equal to "having got Him" eternal deliverance. This is accurate, but it is not enough. The English grammarian also terms this "a nominative absolute," which proves beyond dispute that Jesus, prior to His death, had earned His title. It does not say that He entered the Holiest by His own blood and obtained, etc., but that He entered the Holiest by His own blood having obtained eternal deliverance. The tense of this nominative absolute shows that the obtaining preceded the entering - e.g. James, having obtained a revolver, shot the lion. The obtaining of the revolver precedes the shooting of the lion. So Jesus entered the Holiest by His own blood previously having obtained His title to Glorification, directly on account of which God anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows (Hebrews 1:9).

Adam, before he could live eternally, needed deliverance (not redemption) from the natural condition, but he failed to establish his title: Jesus, by obedience, established His title (John 12:24; Hebrews 1:9). The latter, before accepting His merited prize, in Divine Love voluntarily went through the jaws of all-devouring death for doomed man (John 10:18). Breathes not the man who will prove Jesus under the curse."

Jesus had established His right to life eternal before giving His life in sacrifice which over-rides the conclusions made by the writer of "Finding Eternal Redemption".

We could reasonably paraphrase Hebrews 9:12 in this way - "having obtained eternal deliverance (not redemption) He entered in once into the Holy Place by His own blood (for us)." So having already obtained eternal deliverance, Jesus could have only shed His blood for another reason – to establish the new covenant in His blood.

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## **2. THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST – Hebrews 9 & 13**

### **Bernard Burt:-**

Heb.9v12 – see "Finding eternal redemption" – a separate attachment to the e-mail for the translation of the Greek grammar of this verse. The clear implication of these words is that Jesus needed redemption. His last words before he died were "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Lk.23v46) these words were quoted from Ps.31v5 – I believe that when his Father raised him from the dead, he completed the verse "thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth". Again, Jesus need & our need are identical – he needed redeeming from death and so do we.

### **Russell:-**

I have chosen to answer the article "Finding Eternal Redemption" first in order to save repetition.

You say Jesus "needed redeeming from death and so do we" – but I do not believe Jesus needed redeeming from death as I answered above. Paul said, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6:16). It is servants of sin that need redeeming, not servants of righteousness. It is sin which alienates us from God and Jesus was never alienated from His Father. Also it is the forgiveness of sins which reunites us with God and this is accomplished through baptism at which time we enter into the new covenant through Jesus sacrifice followed by daily requests for forgiveness.

**Bernard:-**

The power of the Father did this for him and the same power will do it for us – but it was only made possible for him and for us by his “entering into the holy place” “by his own blood”!

The above conclusion is confirmed by Heb.13v20 “God...that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ **through** the **blood** of the everlasting covenant”.

Consider the following 7 passages where the same Greek words translated “through” & “blood” in 13v20 occur: -

Romans 5v9, “justified **by** his **blood**”;

1 Corinthians 11v25, “This cup is the new covenant **in** my **blood**”;

Ephesians 2v13, “ye...are made nigh **by** the **blood** of Christ”;

Hebrews 10v19, “boldness to enter into the holiest **by** the **blood** of Jesus”;

Revelation 1v5, “washed us from our sins **in** his own **blood**”;

Revelation 5v9, “redeemed us to God **by** thy **blood**” &

Revelation 7v14, “made them white **in** the **blood** of the Lamb”.

In each of these passages the blood of Christ is the means of accomplishing the stated end – so it must be in Hebrews 13v20 – Jesus was raised from the dead by means of the blood sacrifice which he had offered – which was the means of his redemption.

9v12, “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

**Russell:-**

Every one of the above seven quotations deals with the forgiveness of our sins by and through Jesus. Not one can be applied in any way to sinless Jesus so I do not see the connection you are making between Jesus being redeemed from (supposed) sinful flesh and ourselves being cleansed from sin.

You say that “the blood of Christ is the means of accomplishing the stated end” and I suggest the means of accomplishing the stated end was foretold by John the Baptist when Jesus came to Him for baptism - John 1:29, “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Taking away the sin of the world is the stated end accomplished by Jesus’ sacrifice.

Then you say “Jesus was raised from the dead by means of the blood sacrifice which he had offered”, but I say that Jesus died by means of the blood sacrifice which He had offered. His resurrection from death was due to His Father not allowing His well-beloved Son to see corruption because there was no fault to be found in Him; and never having been alienated from His Father He retained an eternal inheritance which was rightly His.

Here I wish to make an observation regarding “through the blood of the everlasting covenant”. The translation “through” is unlikely to be correct. I say this because of how it is used elsewhere.

Your understanding of this verse is dependant on the word “through”. The Greek word is ‘εν’ which occurs over 2000 times in the Authorised Version of the New Testament. Over 1800 times it is translated “in”, 32 times it is translated ‘through’ and less than 300 times by several other words such as ‘among,’ ‘by’, ‘during,’ ‘for,’ ‘on,’ ‘upon,’ ‘to’, ‘with’, ‘within’, etc. Of the 32 cases translated ‘through’ in the A.V. I find in the original Greek it is translated ‘in’ 26 times, ‘by’ 5 times, and once it is translated ‘among’ but never is it translated “through’. It seems therefore that the A.V. translators made the worst possible choice.

**Bernard:-**

Hebrews 9:18-24 – the key word in this passage is *katharizo* (Strong’s No. 2511) – it occurs in the following places:

Acts 11:9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath **cleansed** <2511>, *that* call not

thou common.

Acts 15:9 And put no difference between us and them, **purifying <2511>** their hearts by faith.

2 Corinthians 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us **cleanse <2511>** ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse **it <2511>** with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church,

Titus 2:14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and **purify <2511>** unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Hebrews 9:14 How much more **shall <2511>** the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, **purge <2511>** your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Hebrews 9:22 And almost all things **are <2511>** by the law **purged <2511>** with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Hebrews 9:23 *It was* therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be **purified <2511>** with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

James 4:8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. **Cleanse <2511>** *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son **cleanseth <2511>** us from all sin.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to **cleanse <2511>** us from all unrighteousness.

It is thus translated “cleansed”, “purged” & “purified” – each of these English words expresses the sense of the Greek & I have no issue over which is used.

#### **Russell:-**

I am of course in complete agreement with all these quotations, however your observations in your next paragraph I feel needs questioning.

#### **Bernard:-**

In Hebrews 9 the apostle is demonstrating that what the Tabernacle could not achieve, Jesus did achieve and that certain things which were done in the Tabernacle were “figures” (9v9) for that which was to come, i.e. Christ. So, in v.18-23a, the apostle shows that the Tabernacle was dedicated with the blood of calves and goats which Moses sprinkled on it and all its vessels (v.21) – thus “purging” (v.22) or “purifying” (v.23) it. Then, in v.23 he says that whilst the representations of the heavenly things were purified with the blood of calves and goats, better sacrifices were needed to purify the heavenly things which the Tabernacle represented. The whole context of these verses – vv.11-17 and v.24-28 is the sacrifice of Christ – which is clearly demonstrated to be better than any animal offered under the Law.

#### **Russell:-**

You say “what the Tabernacle could not achieve, Jesus did achieve”. Sorry but I find this incomprehensible. What was it the tabernacle could not achieve? Moses sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices on the tabernacle and the people and the book of the law and the vessels of ministry. These were the pattern of the heavenly things. The heavenly things themselves were purged by the blood of Jesus (verse 23) and it was Jesus’ sacrifice which opened the way to eternal life for the faithful of all ages.

Paul wrote, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh." What the law could not do was give salvation to those in bondage to sin, i.e. the law could not free them from that bondage so "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sin's flesh (i.e. flesh belonging to sin as a Master), and for sin (i.e. as an offering for sin – see numerous commentaries), condemned sin (while He was) in the flesh." (Romans 8:3). This agrees with 1 Peter 3:18 "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" and 1 Peter 4:1, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh," and Hebrews 13:12, "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."

All these clearly demonstrate that Jesus sacrifice was necessary for our redemption; His life in the blood was the precious purchase price; a life never forfeited to sin, but paid as the ransom price for our redemption.

**Bernard:-**

Jesus is clearly part of the heavenly things of which the Tabernacle was a figure, hence he was cleansed, or purified, or purged (whichever way we translate *katharizo*) by the blood sacrifice which he offered.

Hebrews 9:15 gives the reason for redemption - "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption (629 = apolutrosis = ransoming in full, riddance, salvation, deliverance) of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

**Russell:-**

I strongly disagree. Jesus never needed cleansing! Jesus did the cleansing. He was never estranged from His Father, He was "that holy thing" born of Mary, "In him is no sin", "I and my Father are one", "Who convinceth me of sin?" "I am not alone, because the Father is with me" and numerous other such references to Jesus perfection.

Last year, in a reply to John Launchbury I wrote regarding forgiveness: -

The sacrifices under the Law of Moses could not take away sin or they would have continued to this day (Hebrews 10:2) but God had no pleasure in continuing them once Jesus came into the world, because here was something better - "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God," (v.7). "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me". Thus Jesus ended the first covenant to establish the second covenant.

The first covenant was made with the children of Israel as we read in Exodus 24:6-8, "And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words."

This covenant was established with the shedding of blood of the animals and this sacrifice was never repeated as it had established God's covenant with His people until the time came for it to be replaced.

The second (better) covenant which replaced it was established with the shedding of the blood of the Son of God when the "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake" (Matthew 27:51) which showed the first was finished.

At the Last Supper Jesus "took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament (i.e. covenant), which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:27,28).

Jesus' death was a reality. Jesus' death was a sacrifice in the truest sense of the word. Jesus' death established a legal covenant for His disciples to come into covenant relationship with Him and His Father.

Baptism into the death of Jesus brings us into this legal covenant relationship with Him. Jesus' disciples are no longer "in Adam." They are now "in Christ."

It is our covenant relationship that is essential for our salvation, and this covenant relationship is a binding legal matter established on the shedding of blood in sacrifice of the Son of God."

Further to this, it is as you quote - - "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption (629 = apolutrosis = ransoming in full, riddance, salvation, deliverance) of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." Jesus sacrifice then was to pay the ransom price for the deliverance, the salvation of those who had gone before as well as those who were to follow after. He was the means by which heavenly things were cleansed but He himself needed no cleansing.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgement and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."

Jeremiah 9:24

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## Proneness to Sin

**Proneness = propensity, tendency, predisposition.**

During a telephone conversation with one of our readers I was asked if I would put together a few notes regarding "Proneness to sin" which is an expression frequently used in Christadelphian literature, and with which we disagree on the way it is used. We will first refer to some of their writings in order to see how it is commonly understood by them.

**Our first reference** is to The Amended Continental Reunion Committee of North America in a statement they published in 1980 and signed by all the Regional delegates present. They say, "This statement is the result of many years' discussion and examination of the doctrines formerly dividing the Amended and Unamended communities in North America." We quote:-

"The sin of Adam brought consequences for the whole of the human race, every member of which inherited a proneness to sin and the certainty of death.

Men are in no way responsible for Adam's sin nor is there any guilt attaching to them on account of the nature which they bear, even though it is unclean and tends only to sin. Man's guilt is for his own sin, actual transgression of God's law, and not for the natural state in which he finds himself.

Man's plight was such that there was no remedy and no hope of life eternal except by the grace of God. The weakness of man's flesh meant that men not only have the tendency to sin, they all become actual sinners. None can redeem himself, still less his brother...

Redemption was wrought by the love and grace of God, and provides deliverance from both kinds of sin, the sins we have committed and the body in which they were done. The means of our redemption was by God's provision of a righteous man who fully bore our nature with its mortality and proneness to sin...

But, the Bible makes it plain that living righteousness was not sufficient; the redeemer had to suffer death and taste it for every man. This perfection was achieved through suffering and his Sonship was crowned by complete obedience, obedience unto death. He loved the Lord his God with all his heart and soul and mind. This he achieved by overcoming completely and actually the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life which, though active in his very nature, were never allowed to conceive and bring forth sin.

**Our second reference** is from Tony Benson writing in the Testimony magazine:-

Romans 5:19. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one man shall many be made righteous." The question here is what is the significance of the word 'made'?

The Greek word translated 'made' here is not one of the common words for 'made.' People are not literally made sinners by Adam's disobedience, nor are they literally made righteous by Christ's obedience. Those in Christ will ultimately become truly righteous beings, but this is not what the verse is talking about.

The (Greek) word is *kathistemi*, and it literally means 'to place, or set down, permanently.' What the use of this word seems to indicate is that men and women are set down in a constitution or order of things in which sin is inevitable. This is primarily because all mankind has a weak, sin-prone nature inherited from Adam.

**Our third reference** is from Ron Coleman – writing in the Endeavour magazine in which he includes quotes from Robert Roberts and Peter Watkins:-

Christadelphian doctrine... maintains that because of Adam and Eve's sin, their nature was changed from an original perfection and became defiled and abhorrent to God because of its proneness to sin. The only remedy is the condemnation of that fallen human nature. Jesus endured that condemnation as a representative of mankind, not as a substitute.

"The crucifixion of Christ as a declaration of the righteousness of God and a condemnation of sin in the flesh, exhibited to the world the righteous treatment of sin. It was as though it was proclaimed to all the world, when the body was nailed to the Cross; This is how condemned human nature should be treated according to the righteousness of God; it is fit only for destruction. (Robert Roberts – "The Blood of Christ," page 21).

But, it is further explained, it would not have been clear that it was the sinful nature that was being condemned if the death were to be that of a sinner for it would be impossible to distinguish between the actual sin that had been committed and the underlying proneness to sin. So, in order to make the distinction clear it had to be the crucifixion of a man, who had inherited sinful human nature but had not yielded to its propensity to sin.

"It pleased God to require the ceremonial condemnation of this sin-nature in crucifixion in the person of a righteous possessor of it, as the basis of our forgiveness... The man produced through Mary, by the Spirit of God, combined the two essential qualities for a sacrifice; He was the very nature condemned in Eden, and therefore wrong was not done when He was impaled upon the Cross. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." ("The Blood of Christ" pages 26,27).

How does this reconcile the sinner to God? The answer is that it teaches him the true nature of sin.

"The Son of God came in human form. In character He was perfect, yet He inherited from Adam a "serpent" nature which could be tempted to sin. This nature was the cause of the trouble. It had to be cursed and crucified." (Peter Watkins, "The Cross Of Christ." Page 18).

From the above Christadelphian writings we see how the term "proneness to sin" is used to mean that we have been made inevitable sinners and that our flesh is to blame!

I believe the fairly recent change from “inevitable sinners” to “proneness to sin” in Christadelphian writings was made because so many Christadelphians were unhappy with the teaching that we are inevitable sinners or that our flesh is to blame. The expression “proneness to sin” softens the impact and appears to be more acceptable language. But is this honest?

The dictionary definition of ‘proneness’ is ‘propensity,’ ‘tendency,’ or ‘predisposition,’ etc., but it does not mean ‘inevitable’. Christadelphians are not content with this and make it mean what they want it to mean!

While we have no objection to the expression ‘proneness to sin’ and may use it ourselves to acknowledge that we are sometimes apt to yield to temptation, it is very wrong to say or mean we are inevitable sinners. We are not! God gave us free-will - the ability to choose for ourselves what we do, and He gave us commandments to guide our choosing. Choosing to do what God has commanded builds good characters well pleasing to Him. We are tested and sometimes fail but we are never tested beyond what we are able to resist. When we fail it is our mistake, it is our fault, but we can seek His forgiveness day by day. Matthew 18:21, “Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.” How much more will God forgive us if we ask in faith?

To say we are inevitable sinners makes God responsible for only He could have changed our flesh to make us so. Let us not say we are inevitable sinners nor use the expression ‘prone to sin’ to mean the same.

Brother Russell Gregory

**P.S.** What we must grasp is that there is nothing wrong with flesh; it is as God created it. Man is not fallen in the sense that his nature was made defective, but in being alienated from God. It is a legal matter, not a physical. Jesus had ordinary human flesh as Adam at creation and as such He was corruptible, and had the laws of nature been allowed to operate when He lay in the tomb Jesus would have seen corruption. We know Jesus was begotten of God but this did not make His flesh different from ours and neither was He given strength to overcome temptation which is not available to us or else if could not be said He was tempted in all points like unto us (Hebrews 4:15).

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## **Looking through some old Circular Letters I came across this letter of fifty years ago which I felt was timeless and worthy of new readers:**

My dear Bro. Brady, Greetings in Love and Hope.

I am taking on myself the task of trying to express to you my warm appreciation for your circular letter of December date. I am not much of a writer, and always have the feeling that my efforts largely testify to my lack of education. However, I feel you may be prepared to bear with me and perhaps be prepared to give consideration to one or two observations I feel like making. The first in that I can't help a different conclusion to that which you reached during your visit; that any work bearing your name did little else but rouse hostility; and I think the first question to be answered is, “Why do they provoke to wrath?” I have read some of your works with much critical interest, and I have no hesitation in saying - they are just what they should be, simple, forthright and purposeful. Furthermore, you say the same things that I should say if I had to engage in the same work, but as I have neither the ability nor the command of language to express myself so adequately and delightfully, I am grateful that you can do it for me, and I say - God has endowed you richly and to Him be the praise and the thanksgiving. I say then, pay no regard to those things produced by man's wisdom, for what is he to be accounted of, use your ability in the interests of the truth, and no matter whether it offends or pleases, use it.

The truth is a great and wonderful entity, capable of saving and also destroying, and more than sufficient for every need, powerful even to the pulling down of strongholds. I don't profess to believe that it will

destroy the errors and falsehood incorporated in Christadelphianism, nor can we expect it, for straight and narrow is the way, and few there be that find it. There are so many just as I used to be, confirmed in the belief that I had everything, and that nobody else had anything, and neither you or your writings would have received a single thought; and I am prepared to believe that they receive no more regard or respect by probably 99% of Christadelphians, but there is just that odd one, and God uses devious ways to make His calls, therefore I say, let His will be done, and more power to your arm. One further point, your able work has provided many Brothers and Sisters of the Nazarene Fellowship with the means to defend their faith on a scale that would normally have been beyond them, and has also provided them with profitable spiritual exercises.

Now the ground for my contention. The Lord Jesus offended many people, roused the ire of the self-contained and self-satisfied, brought abuse and hostility on Himself. In fact everything that came upon Him was brought about through His use of the truth; he used it as the divinely provided weapon that it was, to condemn falsehood and pride, to destroy the mighty from their seats, and to convince the ungodly of their ungodliness. I can't see that you have done more than follow that example: then please don't be dismayed.

Next, your deprecating attitude to the word of exhortation; it would seem that in this, Bro. S... is the author of some opposition to it. I am prepared to admit that in some circles it has to have an entertainment value, be well-spiced with exposition, and delivered in keeping with the best examples of oratory; then it fills all faces with smiles and a delighted expression which seems to say - Aren't we good. The design of exhortation is something of a very purposeful nature and should be such that it provokes to love and good works, and that is what the Apostle enjoins upon us, and if it has that end in view, then surely we must suffer it, and that is what Paul says. So again I would say, as Paul did to Timothy: Don't let us neglect the gift that is in us.

I feel I might come in in a very limited way on the very vexed question of which death, and if I had to venture an opinion, I would say that this is the outstanding stumbling-block in understanding the real substance of the atonement. The question was asked of a Christadelphian lecturing Brother with 28 years experience behind him, "Why did Christ die?" he was nonplussed. He repeated the question to himself and ruefully retired. It was one of my wife's most trying problems. I therefore think your idea to extend reasoning on this subject is most timely. Though it presents difficulties to so many, it didn't pose any problems for me, and the reason I believe was that I started my considerations where God started to give the record concerning His Son - God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son - and the purpose of that giving was that we might not perish, not that we should not die, and I realized that if, as some believed, that it meant to save us from death, and that the common death of all men, then God had given Him in vain, and I knew that God did nothing in vain. I therefore concluded that it wasn't that death which claims everything of the natural order, and how simply this was confirmed by Paul in his word to Timothy, when he declared that Christ had abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. It was easy to conclude that the reference wasn't to the death of our daily experience, because death was just as much a fact as ever, and this knowledge compelled me to realize just what Balaam was pleading for when he exclaimed (Numbers 23:10), "Who can count the dust of Jacob and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." He knew he must die but his plea was - not under condemnation. May I add here that my wife's reasoning began in the still watches of the night and with the record in Hebrews 11, which says, "These all died in faith," and concluded that if that were true, then they didn't die under the sentence pronounced in Eden.

You conclude that your correspondent largely contributes to his own undoing. I heartily concur, for if the death he associates with the offering of Jesus was, in effect, on a level with that of the two thieves, and merely an end to a natural life, then like the aforementioned Christadelphian Brother, I don't know why Christ died. How clearly the distinction is marked in his own words (Luke 12: 4-5) "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea I say unto you, Fear him."

Even the thieves knew why they were dying; possibly they knew in measure why Jesus was dying. They were paying the penalty for their own misdeeds, but Jesus was found to have no cause of death in Him, therefore could not be dying for the same reason or cause; or must we believe that God paid a truly righteous



man with the wages of sin. The conclusions of the centurion were that truly this was the Son of God, and he glorified God when he saw what was done and said, Certainly this was a righteous man. Then why did He die? The Lord Jesus Himself is the one qualified to reveal the purpose, and His testimony is witnessed so emphatically by God Himself, that one wonders why anyone should seek anywhere outside the divine record for the answer to the question:- Why did Christ die, and why in particular the manner of His death? And anyone who learns from the crucified One the simple and concise answer, can go on their way rejoicing, and with Paul who wrote "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead. And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). They are the people who know who the One was, and the only One who was alive, and of him John wrote (Chap. 1, v.4) "In Him was life", as opposed to the death stricken state of every other man that was "born... of the will of the flesh" (v.13). Jesus confirms this truth when He says (John 5:26), "For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in himself."

Perhaps the question of identity enters largely into this very question, and the scriptural account of the crucifixion makes it clear how vast the difference between a Son of God and a son of Adam. Actual death was the same in both cases; it ended their natural life. But is anybody going to suggest that the two thieves died because of Adam's sin; they forfeited their lives for their offences: the Son of God gave His life for another man's offence. And it was the attitude and behaviour of these men, under the self-same affliction that made it easy for those uninformed bystanders to know which was the Son of God, and yet the people to whom He especially came, knew Him not. And here is the point, they knew what He was but not who He was, and apparently that was what mattered most; and I suggest that that is the difficulty that few people are able to solve to-day. The letter to the Hebrews makes it impossible to mistake what He was; and now, just as then, it mattered above all else, who He was, born Son of God, heir of the world; never disobeyed or offended against His Father's word or will, therefore was never estranged from God; how then did He need to be reconciled to His Father? But in the case of the sons of Adam, how important this matter of reconciliation was. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God; and that is why Jesus died, reconciled to God by the death of His Son, that is when they make their peace with God and become the children of God. If this is true, and Christ died on my behalf, died that I might live, became my Saviour, paid the ransom for my redemption, what did He save me from? What made it necessary for Him to purchase my freedom from sin and death, and in what way am I benefitted by His sacrifice. If, like Adam, my death results from the sentence pronounced in Eden, if I die in bondage to the consequences of sin, then Christ died in vain. It was this same Jesus who said, "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." If the reference was to the common death of all men, then it follows that thus far there has not been found a man who has kept His sayings. This could be the belief of some, for the way some Christadelphians interpret their statement of faith, obedience is impossible, and I would say so too, if I believed that all flesh was full of sin.

You will, of course, appreciate that, largely, I have been citing the things that have had their part in convincing me, that when I pass from this mortal state, I am not being punished for what another man did some thousands of years ago. God has passed sentence of death on no man at any time for any other cause than that of disobedience; add to this, that only those who have been redeemed by God, are subject to the will of God; all others still belong to sin. Sin pays death as a wage. The righteous seek the reward of the sons of God, and like Jesus can say (John 12, 50), "And I know that His commandment is life everlasting." Who then can mistake the substance of the Gospel. If the wages of sin is death, then we have the clear promise - that life is the regard of the righteous, testified and confirmed by the resurrection of Jesus.

I must make one more point in conclusion. This same Jesus speaking his last message to the church at Laodicea, said:- "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the Creation of God," and that can only mean the new Creation of God's promise. In writing to the Colossians, 1st Ch., Paul gives us some details of this One "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature; and he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." And it is this One, in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

Question: "Are we to believe that God's new Creation started under the condemnation of the old?"

Bear with me Brother in my effort to show why I believe in the Sacrifice of Christ and how grateful I am for His wonderful expression of love in laying down His life for His friends, and my earnest hope and prayer is that He may call me friend.

Please receive the sincere good wishes and warm regards together with our love in the truth, to you and to yours from Sis, Allen and myself.

Sincerely, Your Bro. in Christ, T. E. ALLEN

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## **Proverbs 4:1-9**

“Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. For I was my father’s son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.”

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## **Wrested Scripture Straightened Out and Re-set 2nd Corinthians 5:21**

**“For He hath made Him (to be) sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”**

This passage of scripture is one of those which are so seriously wrested from their context and from their true sense, and made to support an idea that is very God-dishonouring. Let us therefore consider this passage, and let us do so in the following natural method, viz.-

- 1. The Vital Word**
- 2. The Verse itself**
- 3. The Chapter in which it occurs**
- 4. Parallel Scripture elsewhere.**

**1. The Vital Word.** The important word is, of course, that which in the Authorised Version has been translated as “sin” (Greek – ‘*hamartia*’) According to the Greek Lexicons this word ‘*hamartia*’ may mean either “sin” or “sin-offering”, according to the sense required. It is found that when the Seventy Jewish Scholars translated the Hebrew Old Testament Scriptures into Greek, they used that word ‘*hamartia*’ to signify both “sin” and “sin-offering”. This explains much, for it was the Septuagint Translation which was in use in Paul’s day in Palestine.

Furthermore, we also find the same thing happens in the Hebrew, where several Hebrew words have each of those two separate meanings. And we must not forget that Paul, when writing to Corinth, was writing to an assembly whose leaders were Jews, and an assembly which would appear from Acts 18 to be mainly Jewish. Those Jews would not misunderstand Paul’s use of that word ‘*hamartia*.’

Here, then are the Hebrew words mentioned, each of which has the two meanings:-

**CHATAAH** - rendered 'sin' seven times, as  
"Oh! this people have sinned a great sin" - Exodus 52:51  
- rendered 'sin offering' once  
"burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required" " Psalm 40:6

**CHATTATH** - rendered 'sin' 169 times, as  
"pardon our iniquity and our sin" - Ex 54:9  
- rendered sin offering 116 times, as  
"Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin offering?" - Lev 10:17  
- rendered Punishment, etc. 7 times.

**CHATA** - rendered 'sin' 165 times, as  
"In all this Job sinned not" - Job 1:22  
rendered 'offer for sin' twice, as  
"Slew it, and offered it for sin" - Lev 9:15

**CHATAAH** - rendered 'sin' twice, as  
"forgiving iniquity... and sin" - Ex 54:7  
- rendered sin offering once,  
"for a sin offering for all Israel" - Ezekiel 6:17

**ASHAM** - rendered 'sin' twice, as  
"Fools make a mock at sin" - Proverbs 14:9  
- rendered 'sin offering' once,  
"Make His soul an offering for sin" - Isaiah 53:10  
" rendered 'trespass' 7 times, and rendered 'trespass offering' - 55 times.

**ASHMAH** - rendered 'sin' 4 times, and 'trespass' 11 times as,  
"Amon trespassed more and more" - 2 Chronicles 55:25  
- rendered trespass offering once,  
"in the day of his trespass offering" - Leviticus 6:5

Consistently with this, the Diaglott thus renders the verse in question: "For Him who knew no sin. He made a sin-offering on our behalf."

**2. The Verse.** When we examine the verse itself, we are confronted with this choice: either to abandon the Christadelphian idea or else to accept the doctrine of the personal pre-existence of Christ. For the actual Greek word is - according to the interlinear Diaglott (and no Greek Scholar will dispute the rendering here) - "Him not having known sin." The Lord Jesus Christ was made '*hamartia*' at a time when it could be said of Him that He had not known sin. If this was at His conception, then He evidently must have existed as a person before then. (And if one says here that at his conception it could have been said of Him that He had not known sin, well - the same could be said of every human being ever born).

The truth is clear and simple: The Lord Jesus Christ was made a sin offering for us at a time when it could be said of him that He had never sinned.

**3. The Chapter.** About what does Paul discourse in this chapter? Is it "sin-nature" or is it actual transgressions? Look at the verse itself: "who knew no sin" - what was that? "Sin-nature? Look at verse 19: "not imputing their transgressions unto them". Was that their "sin-nature"? Look at verse 17: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" - is he "new" by having been released from his "sin-nature" (as they speak), or by having been released from past sins? Surely this.

So, in this chapter, Paul likewise contrasts righteousness with sin, as two opposites. But righteousness is not the opposite of "sin-nature" for according to Christadelphian belief Christ possessed both simultaneously,

**4. Parallel Scripture.** First we will take a parallel passage from Leviticus and then one from Isaiah.

Leviticus 6:26: “The priest that offereth it for sin (*chata*) shall eat it.” We have seen some of the occurrences of this word “*chata*”. Let us note here that while it is sometimes rendered as “offer for sin” it is 29 times rendered as “to make sin” and frequently rendered as “cause to sin”, as “made Israel sin” - 1 Kings 15:50.

Now supposing that the A.V. translators had have translated this passage (Lev 6:26) according to words only, apart from sense, we should have read in our Bibles: “The priest that maketh it sin shall eat it” and the translators would have made & precisely similar mistake to the one they made in 2 Corinthians 5:21. (N.B. “to be” are in italics)

It is the work of translators to give the sense, and not merely to translate according to dictionary equivalents, literally, without regard to sense or idiom.

The translation of both passages should be uniform:-

Leviticus 6:26 - The priest that offereth it for sin

2 Corinthians 5:21 - offered Him for sin, or made Him a sin-offering,

When we look at Isaiah 53 we find there a phrase similar to the one under consideration. The English words vary, it is true, but we shall see that they do not vary in the original. “Make His soul an offering for sin”. We know that “His soul” (which in Hebrew is ‘*nephesh*’) can alternatively be rendered as “HIM”. And we have seen that here the phrase “offering for sin” is ‘*asham*’, which elsewhere is translated as “sin” (as in the example previously quoted). So that a variant translation of Isaiah 53:10 would be; “make Him sin”, which are the words of 2 Corinthians 5:21.

But it is Isaiah 53 that gives the right translation, and 2 Corinthians 5:21 should be made to conform to that method of translation, and not Isaiah made to conform to 2 Corinthians.

If there is any doubt concerning 2 Corinthians 5:21, as to whether it relates to Christ’s birth or crucifixion, there can be no doubt concerning Isaiah 53. There it is undoubtedly the crucifixion that is referred to.

Again, take a three-fold cord:-

Isaiah 53:10 and 9, it pleased the Lord to... make his soul... an offering for sin for our transgressions... he had done... no violence... nor deceit

1 Peter 2:21: Christ... suffered... for us... who did no sin.

2 Corinthians 5:21: He hath made him... sin (offering) for us... who knew no sin.

In all these references the writers were referring to personal sins only, and they teach that Christ was free from such transgressions. There is no mention anywhere in the Scriptures of any atonement for “physical-sin-nature”, and these three writers agree in showing that Christ was put to death as a sacrifice for something of which He was quite free Himself.

I submit that this method of comparing obscure scripture with plain scripture is the only safe and only correct method of attaining to an understanding of it.

In the mercy of God we who circulate these articles have been freed from a grave error which we tenaciously held for years (amazed now that we should have so firmly held to a doctrine which is nowhere found in the words of God). We therefore appeal to you, with confidence, to search the scriptures for yourselves concerning this.

A.H.Broughton

## MATTHEW 20 Verses 17 to 34.

In Luke's Gospel we read "When the days were well nigh come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." Jesus had travelled north to the area around the Sea of Galilee for John's Gospel tells us "He walked no more openly among the Jews, but departed to the wilderness into the city called Ephraim because the Jews sought to kill Him and there He tarried with the disciples." There is the possibility that He had moved to the north because news of the raising of Lazarus had come to the ears of the Pharisees causing some consternation (John 11:47) "And that Chief Priests therefore and the Pharisees gathered a council and said 'What shall we do? For this man doeth many signs. If we let Him alone men will believe in Him and the Romans will come and take away our place and our nation.'" Their fear basically was a very personal thing; they held power and were terrified that they would be deposed by the Roman authorities for not keeping the peace. Continuing in verse 53 - "so from that day forth they took council that they might put Him to death." Caiaphas summing it up with these words "Ye know nothing at all nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people that the whole nation perish not."

The time of the Passover was drawing near, the commemoration of their release from bondage in Egypt, a time when their fervour was aroused and hopes raised that there might be a similar release from the oppression of the Roman rule. Knowing from the scriptures that a Redeemer would come their anticipation would be heightened, maybe now would be the time of His manifestation. Maybe they had listened to the words of the Gospel proclaiming that the Kingdom of God was at hand that this Jesus was the promised Messiah and would announce a resurgence of the nation and the casting aside of the Roman yoke. Indeed they had a Saviour in their midst but did not comprehend the full import of His mission. Namely, that of bringing redemption within the reach of all mankind. Even His disciples closely associated with Him during His ministry, and privy to a far fuller explanation of His message were still blind to God's all-embracing purpose. From the Gospel records we know that He had warned His disciples of His coming suffering and death, and that Peter had rather heatedly rebuked Him saying "Be it far from Thee, Lord, this shall never be unto Thee." A natural human reaction to one he loved dearly. The very idea that anyone could raise their hand against the man they knew as the Son of the Most High God, a man full of compassion, love and understanding for the Jewish people and especially those of lowly estate, and it aroused in them a defensive spirit. They had been chosen by Him and lived in close-association with Him for approximately three years, listening to and conversing with Him, and naturally a strong bond of love had developed within the group, and hearing Him preach to the multitude had aroused in them a new hope and a deeper understanding of the love of God.

Their return to Ephraim, away from the crowds and excitement that was building up in Jerusalem would afford Jesus another opportunity to prepare the disciples for the traumatic events that would take place a short time hence. But even here the crowds still gathered to hear His words and marvel at His miraculous healings, and it was necessary for Jesus to withdraw apart with the disciples, for His words at this time were to be for them alone. "Behold," said Jesus, "we go up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He shall be raised up."

We know that Jesus took many opportunities to withdraw from the people, a time to commune with His Father, and to renew His spiritual energy. We use a modern term "to recharge our batteries." We are all aware that there are times when peaceful reflection and deliberation away from the pressures of everyday life are very necessary, and we are certainly not under the same daily pressures that afflicted our Lord, physically and mentally. Apart with His disciples Jesus would undoubtedly explain more fully than the words in the two verses in our chapter would indicate. Earlier He had told His disciples He would suffer, be killed, and raised again on the third day. On a later occasion He revealed that He would be betrayed. This reference is in Matthew 17:22 "For the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men." Now here, at Ephraim, He was revealing a fuller picture - the betrayal the death sentence and delivery to the Gentiles - the mocking - the scourging - the cruelty of the death by crucifixion, and not only that, but also the Glory of the resurrection on the third day.

The disciples would know from their upbringing under the Mosaic Law that mankind was alienated from God through Adam's sin. But through His loving mercy God provided a way, through ceremonial

sacrifice, entailing the shedding of blood, for the remission of sins confessed. This law was necessary, for Paul wrote to the Galatians “The law has been our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified through faith”, and in the epistle to the Hebrews “It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin.” The life of an animal was not the equivalent of the life of a man, and no offering of a lamb could provide deliverance from the indebtedness caused by Adam’s disobedience. Through Jesus Christ God Almighty was providing a way to remove this condemnation. In John 3:16 we read “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” John the Baptist said of Jesus “Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.”

These points Jesus would be making to His disciples and emphasising the law of Redemption as laid out in Leviticus 25, namely that a near kinsman not only had the right, but the duty, to redeem his poorer brother by the paying of a ransom.

“Behold” said Jesus, “we go to Jerusalem and all things that are written in the prophets shall be accomplished by the Son of Man.” I think it is fairly clear that Jesus must have spent time expounding the principles of redemption to the disciples and how necessary it was that He, of His own free will, must go up to Jerusalem, for He was fulfilling the debt His Father had set upon Him. God had sent His Son into the world not to judge it but that the world should be saved by Him. Despite His explanation the disciples still did not fully comprehend, for a few verses later we read “and they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, and they perceived not the things that were said.” It is possible that their blindness was caused by holding fast to the idea that the Glory of the Kingdom of God was very close. Even the three disciples Peter, James and John, who were privileged to witness His transfiguration and behold His glory, when His face shone as the sun and His garments became as white as light, still did not comprehend despite Jesus ordering them to say nothing until He was risen from the dead. This lack of understanding was necessary, for it required that at His crucifixion Christ be entirely on His own, and we know that near the end of His ordeal on the Cross even His Heavenly Father withdrew from Him. “And Jesus cried out with a loud voice ‘My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?’” He alone, had to bear the burden of our sins, and no one could be with Him to provide any moral or spiritual support or comfort. By allowing His Son to suffer in this way God was demonstrating that despite man’s alienation through sin, He was still prepared to offer the way of redemption. Mankind was helpless and hopeless, and only His Creator could remove this stigma and give him a chance of salvation. In this way God was revealing Himself as a loving and merciful Father in a way that mere words could not express. In the offering of His beloved Son He must have suffered anguish, and that, far more deeply than we can comprehend, but in using this method to reconcile the world unto Himself the impact God made has reached down the centuries undimmed in its glory and promise.

There could be a second reason for the forth-coming death of Jesus to be hidden from the disciples. At His arrest they became a disorganised body, fearful for their lives. For we read in Matthew 26 “Then all the disciples left Him and fled.” The startling news of His resurrection would electrify them and when they beheld their Master, welded them into a body with new energy and purpose.

It is difficult to put ourselves in their position, for we are privileged to discern the whole picture through the Biblical record. No doubt, if we had been there listening to Christ preach the Gospel of the Kingdom with the lifting of the burden of sin and the prospect of eternal life, we also would anticipate that these great events would take place in the normal life span of the person expounding them. The possibility that the Son of the living God, with all His powers, would submit to a degrading trial, scourging and terrible death would be far from our thoughts.

With this in mind, I think we can understand the disciples projecting their thoughts forward to the Kingdom, especially listening to the words as recorded in Matthew 19 “Verily, I say unto you, that ye who have followed me in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

During the journey down from Ephraim to Jericho Jesus and the disciples would be joined up with other parties moving towards Jerusalem. It appears that James and John, the sons of Zebedee, must have found their mother in one of these groups. Their father either showed no interest in the new Gospel of the

Kingdom, or had died, for we find no further mention of him after his sons left him mending their nets when they answered Jesus call, for we read “Straightway, they left their boat and their father and followed Him.” Their mother, Mary, was a devout woman, and a follower of the Lord, for we find her at the foot of the Cross with Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joses. As they travelled, her sons would bring her up to date with the latest news and how Jesus had spoken of the disciples sitting on thrones of authority, and this would focus their thoughts on the Kingdom and their position in it. Although the record in Mark reads that they put their request themselves, there is the possibility the disciples may have been rather diffident and connived with their mother to approach Jesus on their behalf. The request from either source would appear rather presumptuous. “Grant that these my two sons may sit on Thy right hand and the other on Thy left hand in Thy Kingdom.” It could be that James and John had asked their mother to put the request remembering the rebuke that Jesus had given to Peter a little earlier. The appeal was ill-timed, their Lord would be mentally preparing Himself for the ordeal ahead, but their request was understandable, their desire was to be as close as possible to their Lord in the Kingdom, but their lack of understanding of forth-coming events made the request rather brash and unfeeling, but there was no rebuke in the reply and we note that it was to James and John and not their mother “Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” Whilst the two disciples were considering the glory of the Kingdom, Jesus concentration was upon the events that would take place in a few days time, namely His crucifixion, which would redeem man from the condemnation placed upon Adam. This was to be the moment of His glory. By drinking of the cup of suffering and obedience proffered by His Father, remission of sins by the offering of sacrifices would be abolished. By paying the purchase price of His perfect sacrifice redemption would become a fact and no longer would the offer of eternal life be limited to the children of Israel but opened up to all mankind.

John writes, in his first epistle, “Herein was the love of God manifest in us, that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we love God, but that He loves us and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins.” The principle of the Atonement is not punishment, but the redemption of sinners. Christ submitted Himself to the will of His Father because He was aware of what was at stake.

Although the answer to the question “Are ye able to drink the cup?” was “We are able” it was an answer made in ignorance of the events that would take place in the near future. It was an answer that they would remember and consider far more deeply after their Lord’s crucifixion and resurrection, when their minds were opened and they would understand the glorious work of salvation wrought by the Lord Almighty through obedience of His beloved Son. The paying of the ransom price of a perfectly sinless and acceptable life, freely given, that removed the condemnation placed on Adam. They would recall His words “I am the Good Shepherd, and the Good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep. No one taketh it from me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” Only later, in the days when they received the power of the Holy Spirit could they confidently say “we are able”, for they would be filled with the Power of the Spirit and the full understanding of their Lord’s sacrifice and be prepared to lay down their lives in the service of their Lord. “My cup” said Jesus, “indeed ye shall drink.”

Of the two, James we know suffered death by the sword. Acts 12:2 “Now about this time Herod put forth his hand to afflict certain of the church, and killed James, the brother of John, with the sword.” He was one of many who suffered for their belief. There appears to be no record as to whether John suffered a violent death or not.

When the ten heard of James’s and John’s request they were filled with indignation concerning the two brethren. An understandable reaction for all wished to be close to their Lord, but they appear to have forgotten the parable of the labourers in the vineyard. Whether one laboured throughout the heat of the day or only for the last hour in the cool of the evening, the payment was the same. Eternal life and a place in the Kingdom, the gift of God, and God is the arbiter of those who will receive it. A place in the Kingdom is the essential reward. There is no graduation of qualification, but the Kingdom. The Almighty God can allot positions to those whom He wishes. We have the parable of the Talents and the reward of the diligent servant, “Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” As Jesus told the two disciples “to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father.”

On this occasion Jesus spoke to the twelve of the true nature of discipleship. His words clearly indicate that a desire for greatness was not a desirable trait in those seeking a place in the Kingdom. Verse 28 reads: "Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and give His life as a ransom for many." Jesus emphasised on a number of occasions that His disciples must learn a deep and constant humility, a humility that derives from our utter dependence on the love of God and the sacrifice which cleanses us from sin. He said "The disciple is not above his Master nor the servant above his Lord" and on another occasion "I am among you as one that serveth." "A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another even as I have loved you" "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." "For no longer do I call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth, but I have called you friends for all things that I heard from My Father, I have made known to you."

The time was short, Jerusalem drawing nearer each day, Jesus, despite the trials that He was to undergo, did not waver, and we are reminded of His words recorded in Luke: "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." We usually consider His steadfast progress toward Calvary as starting with His ministry, but I think we can go back even further, to when as a twelve year old He said to His mother and Joseph "Whist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"

At this early age He would not necessarily understand fully what His Father required of Him, but He was already aware that He held a unique relationship with the Almighty. His single-mindedness in obeying His Father's will is an example to us all. His sacrifice could be of no benefit of itself to God for its only value is in the response it evokes in us.

Brother Jeff Hadley. (June 1987)