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NO 10

LET US GO ON - 4 (Hebrews Chapter Three) LESSONS ON "LOST IN HERITANCE"

I. A FOCUS ON THE "GREATER THAN MOSES" (VS. 1-6). Christ is greater because:

- 1) He combines the ministries of Moses and Aaron (Apostle and High Priest v.1).
- 2) He was just as faithful as Moses in His far greater appointment (v.2)
- 3) He was Builder, not just building:- Father, not just offspring (vs. 3,4).
- 4) He was a Son, not just a servant (vs. 5,6).

II . A REMINDER OF ISRAEL'S WILDERNESS WANDERINGS (VS. 7-11).

- 1) They resulted from not hearing and heeding God's voice (vs. 7,15). See also Num . 14:22; Psa. 95:78; also John 9 : 27 .
- 2) They constituted a "testing" and "grieving" of God for forty years (vs. 9,17).
- 3) They evoked God's wrath (v.11).
- 4) They finally excluded Israel from God's rest (v.11). (See also chapter 4).

III . THE RESULTANT COUNSELS TO THE HEBREW CHRISTIANS (VS. 12-14).

- 1) To guard against such unbelief, - and desertion (v.12).
- 2) To practice mutual and daily encouragement of each other (v. 13).
- 3) To continue trusting, and thus become Christ's partners (v. 14).

IV. A FURTHER UNDERLINING OF THE WILDERNESS TRAGEDY (VS. 15-19).

- 1) It is called "the Provocation" (vs. 15,8). Lit. "the thorough embittering" (same Gk.root as Heb. 12:15, Jas. 3:11 etc.). Recalling the experience of Psa.69 : 21 , Matt. 27:34 etc.
- 2) It was all rooted in unbelief (v. 19) (i.e. failure to go on trusting God).
- 3) There is a suggestion in the AV text of v. 16 that there were exceptions in this rebellion; - a reference perhaps to Caleb and Joshua (Num. 13:30; 14:6 10). But what a minority! There could be a very solemn lesson here!

This chapter, we notice, is addressed to those who are "partakers of the heavenly calling", reminding us strongly of the previous chapter which unfolded the mystery of man's designated dominion, and of our sharing Christ's throne. All who have received such a heavenly calling are evidently intended to learn some solemn lessons from Israel's tragic experiences in the wilderness, - notably the failure of the vast majority to enter into all that had been set before them. What a tragedy for them, and for us, - to have escaped "Egypt" through divine miracle, and yet to "die in the wilderness"! We need to remember that the emphasis here, as throughout the letter, is not on any "lost salvation", but on "lost inheritance", - failure to possess and enjoy all that God has laid open for us, through the work of His Son.

Paul quotes the same history of Israel when he writes to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 10:1-12), again pointing out that it was all intended as an object lesson for us. A few verses earlier (1 Cor. 9:24,25), he had been speaking to them about the race and the prize, pointing out that while many may run in the race, it is but one who receives the prize. He goes on to say that he himself was constantly being exercised before the Lord, lest, having been a preacher to others, he himself should be "rejected" (vs. 26,27), i.e. rejected from the joy and privilege of full inheritance. This links up again with what he says to the Philippians, describing himself as one who "presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling" (Phil. 3:14; -cp. "heavenly calling" Heb. 3:1), and who longs to apprehend that for which he has been apprehended (v.12). This, of course, holds no suggestion of attainment by our works, for that is never possible. Hebrews clearly emphasizes that it is purely and simply a continuing trust in the Lord that will get us into God's full purpose, or unbelief that will exclude us! As Paul said to the Romans, it is they who "receive abundance of grace" who will reign... by Christ Jesus! (Rom. 5:17). Certainly no flesh shall glory in His presence.
(To be contd.) C.R.G.

LETTER FOR PRAISE AND PRAYER

as from HEBRON, Golconda Crossroads, Hyderabad – 500020, AP, INDIA,
Telephone No. 27613066, 2222008 Date : 07-05-2008.

Dear Fellow-Believers in Christ,

Greetings in the precious and mighty Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Whose we are and Whom we follow. In the words of Apostle Paul, we may follow after, if that we may apprehend that for which also we are apprehended of Christ Jesus our Lord. Thus shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, seek to enter into a depth of communion and commitment unto the Lord as we step into the fifth month of the year (Acts 27:23; Phil. 3:12,14,15; Hosea 6:1-3).

Continuing our meditation of the life of Caleb, we see that all through the years, while Israel walked in the wilderness, he wholly followed the Lord. He did not dissociate himself from the rest of the people, and try to act alone. He did not sulk at their behavior, and spend the next forty years bemoaning his unnecessary trials. He quietly took his place with the people, sharing their life and waiting for God to give them the opportunity. When at last the time came, he was in his place as the head of the tribe of Judah, and in the end his patience of faith was fully vindicated - after 45 years.

God's faithfulness upheld him and in the wilderness he was kept alive. Death prevailed everywhere. It was not only round about them, it entered into the camp and continued its work until every man over twenty years of age had perished in the wilderness. Caleb and Joshua however did not succumb to it, for they had committed themselves to the faithfulness of God. "And now behold" one of them was able to say to the other, "the LORD hath kept me alive" (Josh. 14:10). The unbelieving people had struggled and argued in a vain attempt to avoid the dangers of the land. They had tried to keep their lives and lost them. Caleb let go his own life in an utterness of committal to the Lord and he alone - with Joshua was kept alive. Moreover he was kept strong, "I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me" (v.11). Caleb's effort to reason with the people had proved futile. It is more than likely that after that he said very little. Those who reasoned and argued against him might feel that they had defeated him and that his spirit was broken. But silence is not always weakness. He was patient, he must have been. But we must not confuse patience with weakness. Indeed this was the proof that it was divine strength in him, for even after waiting

for many years it was still as great as ever. He endured all the hardships which others had to suffer - the lack of water and the monotony of food - for he was not given any special consideration or favor because of his different spirit. He went through it all and at the end he could testify to undiminished strength. This was a miracle. It was due to the fact that by faith he drew on divine resources. When we attempt to do the will of God in our strength, we may seem to have some temporary success, but in the end we shall wear ourselves out. Time provides a searching test as to whether our life is really based simply and solely on the faithfulness of God. In Caleb's case there could be no doubt about that faithfulness, since after the test of many strenuous years he was still found as full of energy as at the beginning. Those who draw on the Lord's life, gain strength rather than otherwise in all the trials and strains of wilderness

He was kept true to his vision. He not only came back to the land of promise, but eventually he returned to Hebron to the original scene of his faith victory, to the inheritance solemnly promised to him by Moses all those years ago. As we have said that the difficulties are still there, they are not lessened with passing years. Yet the prize was there' also, waiting to be conquered and appropriated by the man of faith. Earlier on he had been denied possession by the carnality of his fellows. He had seen the divine objective, but he made no attempt to break away from the rest of the people and move forward alone. As we have remarked he would have nothing to do with the foolish impetuosity of those who tried to ignore or reverse God's decision that they must return to the wilderness. No, he had to wait. In a sense he had to let it all go. Yet he let it go to God and rested in the Lord's faithfulness. In his spirit he never lost sight, even for a moment, the divine objective, and was not at all surprised when, after 45 years he was able to return and resume his onward movement. Here is the man who "wholly followed the Lord", the man who has "another spirit". He is the man of sustained vision and unchanged purpose and of uncompromising persistence of faith. God honors that kind of man. Caleb was given Hebron for a lasting inheritance. "But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land where into he went; and his seed shall possess it" (Num. 14:24).

It will not be difficult for us to find many parallels between the experiences of Caleb and our own. His story is a challenge to us to call to whole-heartedness in our dealings with the Lord. It may well be that we are surrounded with unbelief. It may well be that our vision of the divine objective cannot at the moment be realized and our patience will be sorely tested. We too may have to let go to let go to God and to wait for Him to bring back to life what seems for the time being to be lost in death and despair. As in Caleb's case, it is not our vehemence, our sincerity or even our tightness which will decide the issue, but our spirit. We shall only get through if we have this "other spirit".

It is good for us to remember that the years of the wilderness wandering were not wasted. Some old element among the people died out - it had to do so. But that was not all. A new generation was fitted and prepared for the inheritance. As Caleb moved into the conquest of his inheritance, he encountered a stronghold which called for the new elements. Caleb uttered his challenge; "...he that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah, my daughter to wife" (Judges 1:12). There is the new life which is the product of our years of discipline. It was there of course and came forward in the person of a young man called Othniel, which means the "power of God". He took the position and received Achsah as his reward. When we look more closely into this incident we find that Othniel was Caleb's own nephew. So this is what had happened during those years of waiting. Within his own home circle, within the sphere of his own personal influence a young man and a young woman had been reared and inspired to have the same spirit of whole-hearted faith, which he himself had shown. God willing, we shall continue in our next issue.

God's servant, fellow-laborers and saints of the House of peace, Rajahmundry, would have us to thank and praise the Lord for answered prayers for the Convocation held in their midst from 30th April to May 4th. In spite of the heat more than two thousand gathered for the meetings. God's servants Bros. Theodore Reginald and B.Timothy, with some of us shared the main ministry. Bros. John Victor, Ch. Samuel and others from Hebron, Hyderabad, helped in the youth gatherings, besides family prayers and interpretation. There were quite a number of decisions for salvation, besides restoration and consecration on the part of the believers. God's servant and co-workers covet our prayers for the follow up work and ministry.

The assemblies in fellowship with us in Kuwait are thankful for enabling Bro. John Victor from Hyderabad to be in their midst for ten days. Let us pray for all such outreaches from our midst to the Gulf countries, for the furtherance of the Gospel and for the extension of His Kingdom.

God willing, the church at Jehovah-shammah, Chennai is planning for a Convocation, to be held at Jehovah-shammah from 24th May to 1st June. We would value your prayers for all that pertains to the preparatory work, in this small compound and that the Lord be our wisdom and sufficiency. Also that He may prepare His messengers for the various ministries.

Praying that the gathering of His people as it is in different regional Convocations for fellowship and ministry of the Word, may be profitable for the upbuilding of the Church and the furtherance of His Testimony in the land,

Acts 6 : 4,7 1Thess.1:6,7 Isa.52:1,7

I remain, Yours in His grace,
K. PHILLIP

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF JACOB - 5 **B A K H T S I N G H**

Unknown to Jacob, Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's and because of the idols in his house he failed to do the will of God-

Rachel and others were worshipping the stolen idols. Because of these strange gods the family suffered but God still had mercy upon Jacob and protected him, because of the covenant with Abraham. The Lord told Laban not to harm Jacob (Gen. 31:29). That is how God protects us when unknowingly we grieve Him and fail Him. At the same time Jacob made a mistake in running away secretly (v. 27) and because of his disobedience his heart was full of fear. Unless we obey God fully, we too will have many tears.

Jacob set up a pillar and Laban called it Jegarsahadutha but Jacob called it Galeed. It was also called Mizpah which means watchtower." The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another" (Gen. 31:49). So God protected Jacob from the hand of Laban, his father-in-law.

When Jacob went on his way, he saw the angels of God, and called the place 'Mahanim'. Even though he saw the angels, his heart was full of fears (Gen. 32:7) God had told him that He will be with him, yet he was full of fear. Unless Jacob put things right his fear would not go. He tried to take away that fear through many devices but all failed. Nothing

could take away his fear. He sent presents to Esau (vs. 13 - 16), in order to appease his wrath. He adopted all such schemes and methods but they all failed (vs. 17-18). He told his servants to go politely and speak nicely to Esau. This shows the fear in his heart. All his schemes could not free him from fear, rather it increased.

At last Jacob admitted that only God could protect his family. He sent them all over (he brook Jabbok, and was left alone. There he met God face to face and God wrestled with him. God broke him and took away his strength and made him a new creature (v. 32) and by this experience taught him: "Jacob, unless you are completely broken and depend upon Me wholly and solely, you will not be delivered from your fears". We too must be willing to be broken, and wrestle and prevail in the presence of God.

Even though God made Jacob a prince in chapter 32, we find him still full of fear in chapter 33. In Gen 31:3, God had promised that He would be with him, yet he is still full of fear. Doubt came into his heart again and again. In chapter 33 he adopted more schemes and methods. When he saw Esau coming to meet him with a band of his men he divided the whole family into three parts. He put the handmaidens and their children first, then Leah and her children and lastly Rachel and Joseph. He found it difficult to trust in the promises of God. He bowed himself to the ground before Esau several times, just to pacify him and remove the anger from his heart, and to protect himself and his family from Esau's wrath rather than believe the promises of God, Jacob depended upon his own devices for protection. But Esau's heart was changed and he received his brother with much love. All the fears and doubts in Jacob's heart were caused by strange gods. In verse 10 he said to Esau: "I have seen thy face as though I have seen the face of God". But this was not true. He had sent those things not as gifts but as bribes, in order to prevent the wrath of Esau. Esau was willing to help and lead his brother, but Jacob was not willing to accompany him. His heart was full of fear and he was unwilling to trust his brother.

God had told Jacob to go to Bethel but he stopped half way. He ought to have gone to Bethel in the first instance, for God had told him that he would help him and take care of him but Jacob did not want to go very far. Instead of going on to Bethel he stayed on at Succoth. He did not want to live too near Esau, because he was full of fear and doubts. Because of his disobedience his daughter brought defilement. Had he gone straight to Bethel as God had told him, he would have been saved from that unhappy experience.

It took Jacob about thirteen years to reach Bethel whereas he could have gone there in one year. In Gen. 35:1 God told him, "Arise and go to Bethel and dwell there". At last he obeyed God, and God appeared to him again in vs. 10-15. It was only when Jacob came to Bethel that God could bless him fully, help him and fulfill His promises. Unless you too obey God fully, He cannot bless you fully.

(Concluded)

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LET US GO ON - 5

(Hebrews Chapter Four)

ENTERING INTO GOD'S REST

I. THE OPEN OPPORTUNITY FOR ENTERING Because of an unexhausted promise (v.1).(See Deut. 12:9; Psa. 95:11).

- 1) The original offer to Israel was not claimed by faith, so it now passes on to us in the Gospel (v.2).
- 2) We need to be sure that we do not repeat Israel's folly, and also fail to enter in (v. 1).

II. THE APPOINTED PRINCIPLE OF ENTERING (VS. 3-6)

- 1) It is the principle of FAITH; "we which have believed do enter" (v. 3).
- 2) It is on that principle that "some MUST enter" (v. 6). (Shall we be among them?)

III . MORE ABOUT GOD'S UNEXHAUSTED PROMISE (VS.7-9)

- 1) It was not just a promise of territorial gain, for it was still being offered after Joshua's conquests of Canaan (v. 8).
- 2) The offer was still being extended in David's day, 500 years later (v. 7).
- 3) It is still available to us in our day! "There remaineth a rest" (v. 9).

IV. MORE ABOUT THE ESSENTIALITY OF FAITH (VS.10,11).

- 1) It implies and requires a complete ceasing from our own works (v. 10).
- 2) NB - Seeing that the promise itself is of sharing God's rest, when all His works were completed and left behind (Gen.2:2,3), it necessarily follows that our entering must follow the same pattern, i.e. "works abandoned"- and the heart now resting. It is basically a matter of enjoying the fruits of a great accomplishment . That is spiritual sabbath-keeping!

V. THE TWO GREAT AIDS OF ENTERING (VS. 12-16).

- 1) 1) The Word of God. This is God's instrument for dividing and discriminating between mere soulless "religion" and true spiritual life, i.e. Christ (vs. 12,13).
- 2) Our Great Priest in Heaven (vs. 14-16). He knows and feels our infirmities (vs. 14,15). His presence there secures for us a boldness to enter in and ask for mercy and help (v. 16).

The emphasis in this chapter is again that of possessing our inheritance, and the inheritance in this case, is described as "entering into the rest of God". Praise God, there is such a thing as sharing God's own tranquility of accomplishment, a peace that is His because of a work fully and perfectly done. The first glimpse of that "rest" is in Gen. 1:31 and Gen. 2:1-3, where we read of God "resting" after His work of creation. Of course, we need to realize that, with God, "rest" is not to be thought of as a method of overcoming weariness, or recuperating, for that is not needed by God (Isa. 40:28). Rather it is a matter of review, rejoicing in an achieved accomplishment, and being fully satisfied with it. And that is the unique "rest" which God offers to share with His people. Even when He offered Canaan to

Israel, that was only to be a type, or a shadow, of an inner blessedness, -"My rest", which He wanted them to enjoy. Even Joshua, after all his victorious campaigns, did not bring Israel into that rest, and we find the offer still being extended in David's time, - 500 years later (Heb. 4:7,8). And our chapter tells us that the offer is still being extended to us in terms of the Christian Gospel (vs. 1,2)¹ But to share such a rest necessarily means that we, too, must cease from our own works as God did from His, and this is what the Hebrews, particularly, needed to learn to do, - just rest, with God, in the finished work of Calvary, and desist from their own busyness in relation to the Jewish rituals and suchlike matters. This is God's call to us, too, and it is an "area" into which we, paradoxically are to "press forward" (v. 11).

The mark of spiritual maturity has ever been "rest of soul", and tranquility of spirit and such, strange to say, is the truest source of all effective Endeavour. Christ told His disciples to carry their "peace" around with them, allowing that "peace" to come upon the homes they entered. (Matt. 10:13). Lord, evermore give us this peace, Thy peace]
(To be contd.)

C.R.G.

LETTER FOR PRAISE AND PRAYER

Hebron, Golconda Crossroads Hyderabad – 500020, A.P., India
Telephone No: 27613066, Date: 20-05-2008.

Dear Fellow-Believers in Christ,

Greetings in the precious Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began". As the years roll on in our pilgrimage, may we all be held in His foreordained purpose and paths in all that is demanded of us in the service of His Gospel and the upbuilding of His Church (2 Tim. 1:9-10; Eph. 2:10; Rom. 8:28-30).

We may consider in the light of the above truth, the life and walk of Patriarch Jacob. It is said in Rom. 9:11-13, "the purpose of God according to election might stand", when the God of Jacob chose him, the younger one born to Isaac and Rebecca, rather than Esau. The longsuffering and patience of God are seen in molding this man into what God wanted him to be. When God begins to work in a person's life He does not stop until He is finished. This is clearly seen in the life of Jacob.

The Lord appeared to Jacob in great tenderness, on his first night away from home. The Lord knew that beneath the surface, Jacob really desired to please Him. God sought to bridge the gulf that existed between Jacob's thought of materialism and his concern for spiritual realities. Jacob began to learn the two sides of life, reaping the fruit of sin and seeing the triumphs of divine grace. He reaped what he had sown in his scheming and carnality, but God also satisfied his deep Inner longing for spiritual reality.

Jacob was under the stars the first night; he was alone with his own thoughts. Perhaps as he reflected on all that had happened, he asked himself, "Was it worthwhile? Will I ever return to claim the birthright and blessing for which I schemed and which I obtained successfully?" Then he dreamed a ladder that was on earth and reached to heaven, with the angels going up and down it. Even this revealed the gulf between him and God at this time. God was at the top of the ladder and Jacob at the bottom. However in spite of the gulf that existed, there was communication between him and God. The ladder reached down to where he was - down to his deepest needs. Yet it also reached up to the very presence of God. What a revelation of God's mercy and loving compassion! God was molding Jacob into

what He wanted him to be. At the top of the ladder was the God of Jacob's fathers - the God of Abraham and Isaac - and He promised to give the land on which Jacob was lying, to him and to his descendants.

On his first night away from home, Jacob received his first direct message from God. In speaking to Jacob, seven times God used the personal pronoun "I". First, He said, "I am", emphasizing His omnipresence (Gen. 28:13). Second, referring to the land God said, "to thee will I give it" (v. 13). Third, God assured Jacob, "I am with thee and will keep thee" (v. 15). Fourth, God promised, "I will bring thee again into this land" (v. 15). Fifth, God told Jacob, "I will not leave thee" (v. 15). Sixth and seventh, God assured Jacob He would be with him, "until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" (v.15). There were no conditions for Jacob to fulfill. There were no "ifs" or "buts" - it was all of grace. God had sovereignly willed what was to be done, and His will would not be defeated even by Jacob's carnality.

When God appeared to Jacob, He gave him a fourfold assurance (Gen. 28:15). He assured Jacob of His divine presence - "I am with thee". He gave him the assurance of divine protection - "I...will keep thee". There was the assurance of divine preservation - "I... will bring thee again into this land". Jacob was also assured of divine promise - "I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of". God revealed Himself and His sovereign purposes to Jacob. God emphasized that He was ever present - that Jacob could never get out of His sight. Jacob was experiencing the spiritual principle that "...all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Jacob's inner eyes were suddenly opened, even as Paul prayed for the Ephesians - "...the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him... that ye may know the hope of his calling... the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints... the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe..." (Eph. 1:17- 19).

When Jacob's inner eyes were opened he was filled with awe, for he saw his undeserved prosperity and the wonderful promise that his descendants would be a blessing to the whole world. This was too much for Jacob. Gen 28:16 says, "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not". Jacob suddenly realized that his whole life was opened to God - that God had seen all of his sins. At the same time Jacob saw God's mercy and grace revealed to him - God was continuing to work on his behalf.

When Jacob realized all this, he was afraid and said, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (v. 1 /). Notice that Jacob called it a dreadful place, even though he also referred to it as the "HOUSE of GOD", and "Gate of Heaven".

This seems to be when Jacob experienced true conversion. One can know the truth about God as Jacob knew the truth, but not be identified with it. He was beginning to realize his true condition and exposed his innermost reactions of fears and failures. However he did not make such statement as David did - in brokenness with true repentance (Psa. 51:4,9). But on his first night away from home he began to realize that God is a personal God, not far off but immediately present, and longsuffering and patient with him in spite of all his deceit and deception.

Jacob made a memorial to God because the place had suddenly become sacred - he had met God there. He made a vow (vs. 20,22), that the Lord shall be his God. He made a vow with conditions. He could not say at that time, "Lord, I leave everything to You". Jacob wanted God's partnership, but he sought God's blessings on the things he had planned and schemed. He made a miserable bargain about food, clothing and journey mercies. We too are guilty of such steps.

God's servant Bro. Samson, fellow-servants and responsible brethren of Beer-sheba, Kadapa, would have us to thank and praise the Lord for answered prayers for the Rayalaseema Holy Convocation held in the premises of Junior College, Mariapuram, from May 6 - 11. It was the first of its kind held in the above premises through the goodwill of the authorities concerned. It provided accommodation and the construction of a temporary pandal to seat more than 5000. God's servants Bros. Theodore Reginald, B.Timothy and Eddy Williams shared the main messages together with some of us. Sisters from Hebron helped in the ministry among sisters and children. Youth had separate gatherings. There were many decisions for salvation and fresh commitment.

God's servant Bro. John Subba Reddy, co-workers and saints of the church at Eshcol, Cloughpet, Ongole, would have us to thank and praise the Lord for answered prayers in regard to the many-sided needs and ministries of the Convocation held in the facilities of the adjacent Baptist Junior College which the authorities were kind enough to give. More than 5,000 were registered as participants. In spite of the intense heat the servants and brethren in the ministry based on the Theme, "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:12), enjoyed the liberty of the spirit in the ministry of the Word. God's servants, Bros. Eddy Williams, B.Timothy, Theodore Reginald, Kenneth Timothy (Australia), Daniel Rai and some of us shared in the ministry. There were more than 300 decisions. Separate meetings were held for children, youth and sisters, the Hebron sisters helping. Saturday morning witnessed a long procession winding its way through the streets and markets of Ongole singing and proclaiming the Gospel. The servants and brethren covet our prayers for the follow up work amongst the newly saved souls.

Praying that we may all be enabled to walk worthy of God in this calling and be thus counted worthy of His Kingdom and glory,

1 Thess. 2: 4, 5, 11 Eph. 4:1 - 3 Col. 1:9 - 12
I remain, Yours in His grace,
K. PHILLIP

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH B A K H T S I N G H

"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

Please note the last part of our text, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life". We can see from God's Word that a great reward is promised to those who overcome. Extraordinary Bible - knowledge or special doctrines cannot make us overcomers. It is the understanding of divine principles which helps us to overcome. From this particular portion we can learn a very simple divine principle for an overcoming and a triumphant life: "Be thou faithful". If we can learn how to be faithful in small things as well as great things, we will know how to overcome.

Smyrna: Consider our Lord's message to the church in Smyrna. This message was brought to people who had to go through extreme suffering. In the seven messages contained in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 the entire period of Church history is portrayed, and out of those the second period, which is represented by Smyrna, is a period of extreme suffering for the whole Church. The word "Smyrna" comes from "myrrh", a spice which was used by the Jews to anoint dead bodies. For instance, Nicodemus brought myrrh to anoint the body of the Lord Jesus after it was removed from the cross. This spice had to be ground into fine powder for many hours before it could be used. They kept on grinding it till it gave out a very sweet fragrance. The more it was ground, the stronger was the fragrance of the powder. In the same way the more we suffer, the stronger shall we become spiritually, and give out a sweet savor of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If the Lord had so desired He could have saved the believers of Smyrna from their sufferings at that time but He did not do so. On the other hand He prophesied to them that they would have to go through greater sufferings. He exhorted them to be faithful, not to be discouraged, and to fear none of the things which they were to suffer. He told them they would have to go through "ten days of tribulation". The number ten is the number of testing. They were to be faithful in every test and trial, and then they would be worthy to receive from the Lord's hand "a crown of life". The crown of life indicates the great reward we can receive from the Lord by being faithful.

Faithfulness is our great need today. Only by faithfulness can we bring life and blessing into the House of God. Because of unfaithful stewards of God, we find barrenness, loss, strife and divisions among the children of God today. That is why we have to learn to be faithful in every ministry we receive from the Lord.

We must learn to be faithful in the gifts and talents given to us by the Lord. See Matthew 25:14,15. In this parable the man traveling into a far country represents the Lord Jesus Christ. Before this man left, he called his servants and gave to each of them a charge or responsibility. He knew their abilities and accordingly he gave them as much as he thought each could profitably use. Thus he gave five talents to one, two to another, and one to the third. In the same way we see that God does not give to us a burden which we cannot bear. Sometimes we may think that our burden is too heavy, but afterwards we will find that He has given us only according to our capacity. He will not take us into any temptation which we cannot bear, as we read in 1 Corinthians 10:13. This is a very precious promise.

God has given some talents to each one of us. He expects us to use our talents profitably. The first servant was asked to render account for the five talents given to him, the second for two, and the third for one. God will not ask us to render account for more than we have received. Thus we cannot compare ourselves with one another, seeing that one might have received more and another less. Just as the servants could not question their master why he had given five talents to one, two to another, and one to the third, so also you cannot question God why He has given a burden to you which is heavier than your neighbors. You cannot say that God is partial. God does not go by human standards. Knowing our individual capacity, ability and calling, He has given to each one of us a burden which we can bear. Rather we should say whatever God has given me I must bear faithfully, and bring forth good result in the particular charge He has given to me.

(To be contd.)

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