

Introduction

Beloved Brethren and Sisters

What is it to be wise as a serpent? The serpent was referred to very early in the scriptures and it was because then having the power of speech it cast doubt in Eve's mind: this resulted in the consequent fall of man when the husband became deceived also.

Genesis 3:1- 5: Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

This is the lie that all Christianity has accepted-“Not surely die “ i.e. that man has an immortal spirit but Ecclesiastes 3:19-22 *For that which befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; even one thing befall them: as the one dies, so dies the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knows the spirit of man that goes upward, and the spirit of the beast that goes downward to the earth? Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?*

This is a truth that most men and women believing themselves to be Christian - followers of Christ cannot accept. It is a fact too hard to face especially when loved ones are involved. The lie concerning this is even propagated generally.

The apostle Paul refers to this subtlety in writing to the ecclesia at Corinth: 2 Corinthians 11:1-3 *Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*

Listening to the serpent at that time had consequences for Eve and her husband and then for all her progeny-the whole human race. Yet there can be no doubt that it was in God's plan. Why-so that a people who love Him, The Great Creator and Father of all things as we are shown in the first book of Moses. But even that has been gainsaid by atheists who claim the wonderful things, marvellous in their beauty and construction just happened on their own or by the natural forces around them. But there is plenty of evidence in all the great wonders of life on our planet (and new wonders are being discovered almost daily) but simply accept the evidence. We do not need to get into their reasoning to refute their propositions.

When The Lord Jesus was addressing His disciples and was about to send them on their mission to preach the Gospel, they were given the power of the Holy Spirit to do miracles and cast out devils (the power to heal all diseases and especially the mentally sick). And it was at that time that the New Testament came into being. Our mission is to study the Word,-both Testaments, to preach the Gospel and ensure that our behaviour is as becomes the servants of God and His Son.

We know that since the time of Jesus and the apostles the Truth became lost. This was feared as Paul said in the same chapter and verse 4: *For if he that comes preaching another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with it*

The apostle Peter gave emphasis in what he wrote to various ecclesias in Asia and other areas: 1Peter 2:9 -12 *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

So, in preaching we must practice what we preach. But this may not be seen by outsiders as the way we should be. In many cases we find them hurtful in denigrating the path we take, even some close friends or relatives. (When I first showed interest in the Gospel immediately my friends left me disowned me)

We see then that the called of God throughout the generations since the time of Christ have a duty not only to preach but to live in the doctrine, obeying the word of God rather than their own inclinations.

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

(we cannot expect those outside of the Faith to change their attitude of their own volition but if they can see that it has

changed us for better people it might affect them). But there is help here from Matthew:5:13-16: *Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

But this conversion of the believer which must take place from baptism is a developmental process. As we grow in the Word so hopefully we become stronger in the Spirit and have deeper understanding of God's requirements

2 Corinthians 10:3-6: *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.*

Obedience to the Word must affect our whole manner of life as indicated above.

But the times in which we live especially in the more developed nations is one of apathy to the things of God. The power to do miracles is more appealing to people than to simply learn about God from His Word.(Yet the Word of God as we have it today is a miracle in itself. It has been preserved ve the centuries It is in two parts, an Old Testament and a New Testament. Therefore it constitutes two witnesses to God's will. And it is especially

important , or rather vital to those who seek to please God, as Paul wrote to Timothy - 3:16,17: *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

Thus, we have a duty to preach the Word and also ensure that our behaviour is as befitting our calling. Baptism symbolises the death of the be old man and the birth of a new person who then strives with every word, thought and deed to serve God as was said when a certain ruler asked Jesus what he should do to gain eternal life (the most important question that can be asked in this life but Jesus directs him to The Truth and then answers his question Luke 18:19 -25: *And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

But the serpents word and will, will prevail in the world till Jesus comes; but we must stand fast and continue upholding the Word of God in our lives even though-in this country there seems to be lack of interest in such matters. Also the established religions offer an easy way. A church which properly stands for a group of believers has become an empty building full of artefacts and symbols and made a thing to worship

Ephesians 6:10 -18: *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;*

Brotherly love to all in Christ

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