

## THE BRETHREN OF CHRIST.

**"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."  
- Heb. 2:11.**

This portion of the word is of a highly important character, and of great concern to us, for it clearly reveals our relationship to the law of the highest. It is vastly important that we understand from the word of God what is written concerning the calling, character and relation to the world, of the individuals that sustain so close a relationship as is implied by the brethren of Christ, so that we can compare our character and relation to the world, with what is written concerning the same in the word of God, and see whether we are able to identify ourselves with the inspired portrait of the characters of those who shall finally be reckoned the brethren of Christ, the Son of the living God.

In the first place let us consider the calling of the brethren, for the Scriptures certainly teach very emphatically that they are a called people.

Who is it that calls them? for if they are called, some one must call them. We will refer to the word and see if we can find who it is that calls, and how they are called. "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called." Rom. 8:30. "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 before the world began. 2 Tim. 1:9.

How does God call? Let Paul answer: "Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thes. 2:14. Then God calls by the gospel. What is the gospel? It is the voice of God by Jesus Christ proclaiming glad tidings of a coming kingdom. God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time

past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, wherefore he saith, "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." Heb. 3:7. Jesus called by the gospel when he was on earth, and then he gave the commission to his disciples, and so the calling goes on through the long dark night until the fulness of the gentiles are come in. "My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me and I give unto them eternal life." John 10:27. The sheep are the same as brethren.

We will now notice what is meant by following Jesus as the Good Shepherd who giveth his life for the sheep, for it is said that his sheep follow him, and if they follow him they must pass through the same road that he passed; and a description of the follower of Jesus will also describe the character of the brethren. Well, we cannot follow Jesus in repentance, for he knew no sin, but we can follow him in immersion, and in reality this is the first step that can be taken in following Jesus."

After he was baptized Jesus was tempted of the devil, and must the brethren who follow Jesus, follow him in temptation? Yes, it is necessary that we be tempted. He tempted Jesus, and shall he not tempt us? My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope. So, then, temptations are necessary, that our faith may be tried and patience wrought **[R811 : page 4]** out in us. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life. God who calleth us is faithful and will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear; but will with the temptation make a way to escape that we may be able to bear it.

Thus, if we would follow Jesus the Good Shepherd, we must be tempted as he was tempted, and we must also resist temptation, as he resisted it. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

If we endure the temptations that befall us, we shall be able to identify ourselves with the character of the holy brethren as recorded in the word of God. Read Luke 22:28-30.

The many brethren that compose the body of Christ are like Christ in worldly circumstances. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called."

"Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him." 1 Cor. 1:26; Isa. 2:5. Jesus was very poor and humble when on the earth. "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head." "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich." As he is, so should we be in this world.

Brethren, let us now consider our love to each other. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another." "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "And this is the message that ye love one another, even the message that we heard from the beginning."

Thus, if we are in the marvelous light of the glorious gospel of Christ, we are loving one another; if not we are in darkness even until now.

Who is my brother in Christ? "He that doeth the will of my Father in heaven the same is my sister and brother."

If what we have said concerning the poor circumstances of the called of God, be true, it is very easy to understand these striking characters of poverty and affliction which describe the circumstances of the majority of the called of God; and these characteristics of poverty are synonymous with the tribulations and sufferings through which we

must enter into the kingdom of God. "And if we suffer with him we shall also reign with him." "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him." We notice also, that some were able to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and entertain the stranger, and minister to the sick and prisoner, which illustrates the love that exists among the real brethren of Christ. "Hereby perceive we the love of God because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye gave them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" 1 John 3:16-18; James 2:14-17.

Thus, we have in these two statements of the apostles, a sample of faith which worketh by love, a pure, holy love, the first fruit of the holy spirit; a love far different from the sectarian love of the present day, that loves only its creed adherents. This love which is shed abroad in the hearts of believers by the Holy Spirit which is given unto them, is found only in one sect, and that sect was everywhere spoken against in apostolic times. Acts 28:22. And this sect is everywhere spoken against to-day. I candidly ask the question, brethren, with all sincerity, can a man be a brother of the Lord Jesus today, and not be hated by the world? Has human nature changed, or has the word of God ceased to be true since Christ and his apostles ended their ministry? "Marvel not my brethren, if the world hate you, we know that it hated him (Christ) before it hated you." "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of this world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." John 15:19. Are not the disciples of Jesus hated by the world today, as they were 1800 years ago?

But where shall we go to find the world today? The civilized world is called the Christian world today. So, then, if this be true, there is no world to hate the brethren of Christ. But, may it not be a mistake to call the civilized world "Christian?" Then, we have Christian nations, and all these nations fully equipped for war, and ready to slay each other. Whereas, we read in the Book of God of only one Christian nation composed of individuals that must not fight, nor "resist evil," and when "smitten on one cheek to turn the other also." Thus, if the word of God be true, it is a great mistake to call the nations "Christian."

Then, again, the so called Christian world is divided into three great churches, the Greek, the Catholic and Protestant; and the Protestant is divided into a great many more churches. Yet on the authority of the Book of truth, none of these churches is "the church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of the truth." Let there be no schism in the body, the "church." Where, then, shall we find "the church," the body of Christ? They are in the world, not among all churches, but among all nations; and, furthermore, they are in Christ, and also in the doctrine of Christ.

This may sound strange to some, that one cannot be in Christ without being in his doctrine. Well, let us hear how the Word reads: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed." 2 John 10:11. In the face of this statement, who will say doctrine is not essential to salvation? The word of God, and the doctrine of Christ are identical. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." "He that abideth in the doctrine **[R811 : page 5]** of Christ, hath both the Father and the Son."

Now, all can see where the brethren of Jesus stand, and where the world. The relation of the brethren of Jesus to the world during the period of Satanic government is, that of enmity and isolation; "The

friendship of the world is enmity with God." "In the world ye shall have tribulation." The church and the world are antagonistic to each other. There is enmity between the woman's seed and the serpent's seed. "He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." You cannot wed the true church with the world; you might as well expect oil to mix and remain with water, as for the brethren of Jesus to love and fellowship this present evil world. "What communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?" "If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." "Evil communications corrupt good manners." The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. And what a striking similitude there is here between Jesus and his brethren. He was in the world, and the world knew him not. Though we are not known by the world, yet "God knoweth them that are his," and Jesus knows his sheep, and they follow him. The followers of Jesus are looked upon by the world as a worthless set of men, despised and rejected, and made the object of ridicule and contempt, just as Jesus was. As Jesus came forth from the dead vitalized by the Spirit of God and the power of an endless life, and became the first born among many brethren, so will the brethren spring into immortal being, bearing his glorified image, when he appears to avenge his own elect. Then let the world scoff and ridicule, and persecute, and if the will of the Lord be so, put to death; they cannot obliterate the future immortality. If we would follow Christ, we must suffer. If, when we do well, and suffer for it, we take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps. 1 Peter 2:21.

Such is the position of the brethren of Jesus in this world, out of which they have been chosen. I tell you the brethren of Jesus are not interested and engaged in building fine houses and desiring to dwell in elegant and decorated mansions, and arraying themselves in costly apparel, and embellishing their persons with jewelry of corruptible gold and silver. They are content with such things as they have, and by

faith are persuaded that they have a better and enduring substance that will outrival all the glittering splendors of earth, and shall remain eternally unblemished by the rust and decay of time. The substance of things hoped for is about to be revealed; the dark night of sin and suffering is far, very far spent; the glorious morn of heavenly glory is about to break upon the world, and the little flock that have kept the testimony of Jesus, and shared with him in sufferings and temptations, are going to take the kingdom, and will be associated with Christ in the work of restitution that shall perfect forever the nations of the [R812 : page 5] renovated earth. Then will the holy prophets, apostles and saints, be eyewitnesses of the glorious events that they long ago foretold, believed, and for the faith in which they once suffered and were put to death. Abraham, the recipient of the promise, will behold the fulfillment of the promise, that in his seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. The resurrected church, (the royal seed) will attest its fulfillment; the renovated nation of Israel, and through them the universal conversion of all nations, will attest the farther and universal fulfillment of the God-given promise, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The glorious verification of eternal truth approaches; the sheep have nearly all heard the voice of Jesus; the times of the Gentiles are knelling to a close. Be ye also ready and watch unto prayer.

– *Ira Forbes.*

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