



# CHRISTADELPHIAN ISOLATION LEAGUE

## EXHORTATION

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> April 2020

### SECTION LEADER:

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**Readings: Numbers 20, 21, Proverbs 15, Ephesians 1, 2**

### Lessons for Today from Ephesians

In **Ephesians chapter 1** Paul opens with a greeting, praise to God and his thankfulness for his brethren and sisters at Ephesus. He says in **v16** that he made: *"mention of them in his prayers"*, just as we should be thankful for our brethren and sisters today and make mention of them in our prayers. Those of you who are in isolation and do not have fellow brethren and sisters nearby to meet with may find life in the truth difficult and lonely. You will, no doubt, treasure the visits that you have from time to time. However, even in isolation you can pray for your fellow brethren and sisters and the work that is done for the Lord.

In **v8 of chapter 2**, Paul reminds his readers that they were saved by grace and not works. God gives us so much mercy, love and grace. Our salvation is not something which we can earn through doing a lot of good works. During his ministry, Jesus was asked the question: *"What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" (John 6:28)*. The people asking the question seemed to think that they could earn salvation by doing good works. But this was not the case. Jesus replies in the following verse: *"This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."*

We therefore receive God's grace through belief and faith, that is what is required. On the other hand, we read in the letter of James that faith alone is not sufficient. We must show our faith by our works, things which should come naturally to us on account of our faith. Grace is freely given, but it also demands a free response. True faith will cause us to want to do works which show our faith.

In **Ephesians 3:16**, Paul prayed that God: *"...would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."* This reminds me of the words of Isaiah. Quoting God's words, he says: *"I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." (Isaiah 57:15)*.

We need to humble ourselves, and not be proud. Again, quoting from **James 4:6**: *"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."* He continues in **v10**: *"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."* In that way, we pray that Christ will dwell in our hearts, by faith, that we might know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that we might be: *"filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:19)*.

In **Ephesians 4:2,3** Paul exhorts the brethren and sisters to walk worthy of the vocation in which they had been called. He encourages them to develop the following attributes: *"...lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* Perhaps he had heard that unity was missing in the ecclesia and so this advice was necessary. After all, each member of the ecclesia should believe the same things: *"one Lord, one faith, one baptism." (Ephesians 4:5)*. And so it was important, and still is today, that all should be preaching the same message, provided, of course, that this message is what is taught in the Word.

Having encouraged the brethren and sisters to work together in unity, Paul exhorts them in **v17** that they should; *"...walk not as other Gentiles walk"*. Here, Paul was saying that their life in the truth should be very different from what it was before. Before baptism, their lives may have been like

those of many in the world. And even if they did previously have some religious conviction, maybe they were joined with those: *“Who changed the truth of God into a lie.”* (**Romans 1:25**).

We made the choice to live in Christ when we were baptised and we always need to remember this, lest we slip back into our old life and return to the world. We cannot live in the truth and in the world. We may meet many people who are considered to lead good lives. However friendly they may be, we should sorrow that the life they are living now is the only one that they will have. When we have opportunity, we should encourage them to seek God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the good news contained in the scriptures.

Paul then goes on to remind the Ephesians that they had been taught the truth, just as we have. We need to distinguish the truth contained in the scriptures from that which is taught elsewhere. We also need to ensure that our way of life is in accordance with the scriptures, and not the kind of life that we may have been leading before.

In **Ephesians 4:26** Paul says: *“Be ye angry, and sin not.”* He did not say that it is wrong to be angry, but that when we are angry we should not sin. Paul seems to be quoting from the Psalms. David says in **Psalms 4:4**: *“Stand in awe and sin not.”* I believe the meaning of *“stand in awe”* is in fact ‘be angry’. So David was saying, ‘be angry and sin not.’ Anger can do much damage, so we should be sure that it is controlled. It can be wrong, because Paul listed it in **Ephesians 4:31** and so certain kinds of anger are not right. It can lead to sin, but it is not a sin of itself. This is because we know that Jesus never sinned, yet at times he was angry. However, he was able to control his anger. We are not as strong mentally as Jesus was and so we need to take care over the things which we say and do. If we are concerned about something and it is a serious matter, we should say so, and not hold grudges, or ignore people, or say things behind people’s backs. If we do, then our anger does become a sin. And if we do speak out about something, we must make sure that we do it in a way which is appropriate for a brother or sister in Christ. If we are not sure how to deal with a certain situation, let us pray for guidance and perhaps approach someone whom we respect as to the best way to deal with the matter.

But rather than concentrate on the things we shouldn’t be doing, let us think of what Paul says we should be doing, **Ephesians 4:32**: *“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”* Let us remember how much we have been forgiven. We know that we are not perfect, that we sin and that we must seek forgiveness and God forgives us. Let us do the same to others.

Paul continues in **chapter 5** by referring to the sacrifice of Christ. We are about to remember the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and we must make sure that we are in the right frame of mind. If we are, then we shall give thanks for all things, as Paul encouraged the Ephesians to do. He is always giving thanks that God had chosen him to be a minister, in spite of his previous life. He also gave thanks for the brethren and sisters in so many ecclesias. May we also be thankful for the many blessings that we have received and continue to receive.

Finally in **Ephesians 6:18** Paul encourages the brethren and sisters in their prayers. He asks them to pray for him in his preaching. Paul would have prayed for this himself, but he wanted others to pray for him as well. And this is something which we can do for others. We are not all in a position to preach the gospel in other lands, but we can pray for those who go to seek out those who are keen to know the gospel message. We can pray for them before they go and we can pray for them while they are away. And after they return, we can continue our prayers for those who are learning the gospel and those who are perhaps living the truth in isolation.

As we now partake of the bread and wine in memory of the death and resurrection of Jesus, may we remember Paul’s words of advice and may we remember particularly what our Lord did for us.