



# CHRISTADELPHIAN ISOLATION LEAGUE

## EXHORTATION

Date: 4th October 2020

### SECTION LEADER:

BROTHER RODERICK TITLEY, HOLLIES FARM, ENGLISH FRANKTON, ELLESMERE, SHROPSHIRE. SY12 OJX, U.K.

Readings: 1 Chronicles 18, 19, Ezekiel 30, Galatians 5, 6

## Be Not Entangled with a Yoke of Bondage

There is only passing reference in the Book of Acts to the Apostle Paul's visits to Galatia on his second and third missionary journeys. However, we can learn something of subsequent events from his epistle to the ecclesia which he had established there. They were being led astray by certain Jewish Christians (the Judaisers) who were teaching that believers must first become Jewish proselytes in order to be saved. They tried to undermine Paul's authority by saying he was not a genuine apostle. Paul refutes this, and shows the folly of their teachings by demonstrating that the works of the Law could not give life, and that salvation could only come through faith in Christ (**Galatians chapters 1-4**).

He begins **Galatians 5:1** (NKJ) with the command: *"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage."* The same advice applies to us, not that we are likely to become entangled by the Law of Moses. Our yoke is the bondage of sin and death.

Jesus makes this appeal to the people of His day: *"Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* (**Matthew 11:28, 30**). He was contrasting His teachings with the burdens imposed by the religious leaders of the time (see **Matthew 23:2-4**).

A yoke is an implement used to couple oxen together so that they pull together when ploughing, and it restricts them from deviating to the side. The word is used metaphorically in these Bible passages in two ways. The Law of Moses was no longer in force and had become oppressive; it was a yoke of bondage. In Christ we have freedom from the regulations of the old law which says: *"Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle, which all concern things which perish with the using."* (**Colossians 2: 21, 22**). What an incomparable blessing we have when we are "yoked" to Christ, the Son of God and the future king of the Kingdom of God. Yes, there are restrictions, but all for our spiritual benefit. Yes, we must limit our worldly activities and anything which will cause us to deviate from the way of life in Christ. Yes, we must follow His teaching and example, but what a glorious hope we have when we do. Life eternal!

*"Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."* (**Galatians 5:16**)

Most versions put a capital 's' for spirit here, but I believe it is referring, not to the Holy Spirit, but to the state of mind which is developed by the things to which we devote our minds. We must endeavour to develop the mind of Christ in us. In contrast to the works of the flesh in **Galatians 5:19-21**, the apostle lists the fruit of the spirit in **verses 22 and 23**, and they provide a valuable check-list of our spiritual progress. He says: *"the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law..."* (**Galatians 5:22, 23**).

He starts with "love" which is the foundation for all the other virtues, and like the colours of the rainbow are all part of the white light passing through a prism. There is a similar list in Peter's epistle where he lists the individual virtues first, and ends with love which is the sum of them all. They are exemplified in the life of our Lord. Just think of His words before His crucifixion: *"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."* (**John 15:13**). It is a good exercise to look for

examples of the individual virtues in the record of His life. Can you think of “joy” for example? In the letter to Hebrews we read: “... *who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*” (**Hebrews 12:2**).

But how should this affect us? In **John 15:12**, Jesus told His disciples “*This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*” Sometimes we struggle with this and the apostle Paul recognises this in **Galatians 5:17** where he says: “*For the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another so that you do not do the things that you wish.*” How can we overcome this power of the flesh? Paul grapples with this problem in **Romans 7:24**, and there is almost a sense of despair as he says: “*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*” But he has the answer in **Romans 8:1** where he says: “*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.*” So it is essential that we develop the mind of Christ which we do by reading God’s Word. And just as the fruit of our gardens can be damaged by pests such as birds and insects, or even lack of water, so the fruit of the spirit can be spoiled by the habits we practise. The apostle Paul warns us: “*Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits.*” (**1 Corinthians 15:33**). Reading God’s Word every day is a good habit for we hold it in leaky vessels!

“...My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

This was not only true for the people to whom Christ spoke, it is also true for us, though it doesn’t always seem so! It depends on the things we regard as important, the things of this life, or the things of God. For Christ it was the will of God that was paramount in His life. That is how He could stay asleep in the stern of the boat even when a great storm arose and the disciples come and wake Him up and say: “*Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?*” (**Mark 4:38**). So: “*...He arose and rebuked the wind and said to the sea ‘Peace, be still’. And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.*” (**v39**). Isn’t that amazing! Like the disciples, we know Christ can save us, but like them we sometimes have doubts because we feel we are just too unworthy. We can take comfort from some words of John in **1 John 3:20**: “*For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.*”

Many times the Lord’s absolute trust in His heavenly Father sustained Him whatever faced Him in life. We too can have that trust, though we cannot expect miracles. Think of that time, when weary from the journey He sits by the well in Samaria, and His disciples go to buy the food they need. A woman comes to draw water and He tells her that He can give her living water. When His disciples return from getting the food they are puzzled that He refuses anything to eat saying: “*My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish His work.*” (**John 4:34**). In other words, teaching the truth about His Father and His own role as the Messiah was more important to Him than food and drink. We may not be able to forgo food in such an extremity, but we must not allow our appetite to come before the Lord’s service.

“My Peace I give to you”

In the precious hours that Jesus spent with His disciples before His crucifixion he told them things that would strengthen them when He was no longer with them. The apostle John records His comforting words in **John 14:27**: “*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*” Sometimes we may find peace in everyday life, but it is not enduring. The peace which comes from Christ is the fruit of the spirit, i.e. that trust in God which He Himself had, and which sustained Him in that dreadful crucifixion which He endured. Let us think of this when we remember Him in bread and wine.

**Brother Paul Collier: St Austell UK 04.10.20**