

The Wisdom of the Word Shapes A Crown of Glory

"Wisdom," say the scriptures, "is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding ... A crown of glory shall she deliver to thee ..." If thou wouldst, O reader, get this wisdom, happy art thou if thou findest it ... Before the Son of God sent forth his apostles to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom in his name, "he opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures". If thou wouldst gain the knowledge of the wisdom of God which is so inestimable, and which is contained in the word they preached, thou must also be the subject of the same illumination. This is indispensable; for there is no obtaining of this commodity except through the scriptures of truth..."
Elpis Israel p.5

The opening chapter of *Elpis Israel* defines true Biblical faith as "an enlightened faith." Hence the importance of the passage cited above. To possess a faith in God and in His Word which has the power to save, necessitates the "illumination" of the mind. As with the apostles and all who subsequently received their teaching, the "understanding" must be "opened" to receive the knowledge of the Truth. Without this essential knowledge it is impossible to develop an "enlightened" faith.

The crucial indispensability of this prerequisite to salvation was stressed by the Lord. Following his resurrection, and with the disciples still bewildered at the significance of what had occurred, the Master took the necessary steps to dispel their lack of understanding. Luke records two examples of this. "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning him-

self." As a result, "their eyes were opened" and they said: "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Again, having expounded the "things" which were written in "the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms" concerning himself, Luke states: "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" (Luke 24:27, 31-32, 44-45). The wording used in v. 45 is most emphatic. The word rendered "opened" signifies "to open up completely." This indicates that the Lord was determined that no essential gaps should be left in their understanding of vital truths. The word "understanding" (Gk. *nous*), relates to the intellect. Thus they were to intelligently comprehend that which the Lord taught them. The word "understand" is quite different to the word rendered "understanding". Here the word is from the Gk., *sunimi* which

means "to put together." The combination of these key words in this passage convey an unmistakable message: It was imperative that the intellectual perception of the disciples become thoroughly opened up to receive that which had been "written" in the Old Testament scriptures (v. 46), and that they should acquire the ability and wisdom to "put" the scriptures "together" in such a way that their understanding should be based on a clear comprehension of *the Truth*.

This principle, whereby an individual may develop an "enlightened" faith, has remained unchanged.

Truth Essential

"No one," wrote Bro. Thomas, "has any right to set up his own ignorance as the limit of what God hath revealed ..." (p. 4). This statement may be rather candid, but it is unquestionably beyond dispute. A lack of understanding concerning this matter has caused many to remain in a state of ignorance whilst considering themselves to be "religious"; whereas others have strayed into many paths of error, failing to realise that a false gospel is powerless to bring eternal salvation.

Brother Thomas never lost his sense of profound appreciation for the purity of the Word of God. In his endeavour to persuade his readers towards a similar conviction, he repeatedly stressed in *Elpis Israel* that men and women must learn to "rightly divide" the word of Truth from the word of error. Thus he wrote, in clear words of warning: "To call the popular system of religion by which we are surrounded the religion of Christ, is not only a misnomer, but an imputation on the wisdom of God. Infant sprinkling, death-bed repentances, and 'Christian burials', as they are termed, are mere human

inventions. They belong to the apostasy, and are no part of the 'things of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ'" (p. 319).

As a result of his dedicated search after Divine wisdom, Bro. Thomas wrote simply, yet with uncompromising directness: "It is of primary importance that we believe the truth, and not a substitute for it; for it is by the truth only we can be saved". On the same page he stated: "Whatever ignorance may be overlooked, ignorance of the things pertaining to this kingdom (of God) alienates men from the life of God. This is equivalent to saying that no man can attain to eternal life who does not believe the gospel ..." (p. 188).

Such convictions are not popular today; even among some sections of the Brotherhood. We live in an era when the spirit of ecumenism is everywhere in evidence; a manifestation of the frog-like spirits. The word is derived from the Gk., *oikoumenikos*, which relates to all the inhabited earth; hence, by extension, the word "ecumenism" is used to indicate the aim of bringing "unity" to the "christian" church. Christadelphians, with their understanding of *the Truth*, will not be swayed by such truth-nullifying philosophies.

How blessed are the people who understand that "God is truly the only wise physician, whose practice is based upon perfect knowledge" (p.27).

Let us place great value upon the words of our Pioneer brethren, and appreciate them for what they are: Splendid aids towards a clearer and deeper comprehension of the Word of God. With our "understanding opened" more fully to the scriptures of Truth, our "*enlightened* faith" will increase and mature, leading us ever onward, in hope, towards the Kingdom of God. J.U.