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West Sacramento California,
730 Pecan Avenue,
Westward-Ho Trailer Park, Space 4. November, 1958.

"THE BRUISED REE AND THE SMOKING FLAX".

Dear brethren;-

Isiah 42:3; Says; "A bruised reef shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quinch; he shall bring forth judgment truth". See Mat. 12:17-21. This short figurative statement not only portrays God's dealing with Israel, but us as well.

In this figure, first, we see a reed in a cane break that in some way has become bruised to the extent it would be easily broken but it is let alone and grow as best it would till it fulfilled its mission. So also, it was with Israel, they were bruised by their sins and transgressions, till they would be easily broken; but God in his great mercy let them alone and grow as best they would till they fulfilled their mission; for God had promised some wonderful things through the seed of Abraham. See Gen. 22:17-18; Gal. 3:16.

In the figure of "the smoking flax", we see that at fist brightly burning, but had smoldered to a mere smoke, but was let alone till it fulfilled its purpose. So also, with Israel, at first it burned brightly spiritually, but so many times its spirituality had gotten down to a mere smoke, yet God did not "quinch", what little spirituality they had but let them alone to fulfill their mission as shown by Gen. 22:17,18; Gal. 3:16. Although God sent unto them Prophets time and again to turn them from their evil way; but even so if the spark revived, in a little while they went back to a mere "SMOKE".

We have the same picture beautifully portrayed in Is. 65:8, "Thus saith the Lord, as the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sake, that I may not destroy them all."

Here Jacob, Israel, is compared to a bunch of grapes with the new wine still in it which was the blessing while in Israel was the "seed", (Christ). And for that reason God would not destroy them all, but would leave them till they fulfilled their mission as shown in verse 9. See also, Gen. 22: 17,18; Gal. 3:16.

To my mind this is a very striking picture. When we read the signs and wonders God wrought in Egypt before bringing them out of their bondage; and how soon the flame of spirituality was dimed by their sins and they became, spiritually a mere "smoke". And then, we see them rekindles with more miricles and good things bestowed on them and how soon they again became a mere "smoke" spiritually.

Time and time again they turned away from God and he as many times restored them by sending them prophets . But again, they dwindled to a mere "smoke".

God, alsowrought mighty signs and wonders among both the Jews and Gentiles through Jesus and his apostles; yet in A.D. 54; 2 Thes. 2:7 Paul says, "--The mystery of iniquity doeth already work". Only 21 short years from pentecost and we see the spiritual flame already beginning to dim, and finally reduced to a mere "smoke". Daniel said, --he would wear out the saints of the most high", Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13 7, says"---he would make war with the saints and overcome them".

But in spite of all this unfaithfulness on the part of man, God's great mercy and love is still extended to us; and my dear brother how are we using it? Is history repeating itself And the "flax" is again down to a mere smoke"? Are you trying to fan that little smoking spark back to a flame; or , are you just drifting with the tide?

We are told in Rom.8:9,"But ye are not in the flesh,but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." Again in verse 11, But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you,he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you": Hence,we see from the above quotations that the Spirit of God must dwell in us.

In Gal.4:6;" we are told,"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his son into your hearts ,crying,Abba,Father".

Again we see we must have the Spirit of God and of Christ to be recognized as Gods children.

And we have seen the Spirit God and Christ both manifested towards lost and fallen man; a Spirit of longsuffering,forebearing us in a love that can hardly be comprehended by the mind of man.

Hence for us to have the Spirit of God and of Christ,we must have the same attitude towards one another and twoards God.

Again,1 Jno.4:20;"If a man say,I love God, and love not his brother, he is a liar;for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?".

This is too plain for comment.; and without that love we are nothing. 1 Cor.13:1-3.

Again1Jno.3:16;"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".

Without this Spirit in us we are merely "Smoking flax", with even the smoke to soon disapear. We need not try to kid ourselves into believing if we object to all inovations we are safe whether we have this Spirit or not. We must keep ourselves clean from all the doctrines and commandments of men,Col.2:20-22. But we must also have the Spirit of love,longsuffering and forbearance,patience etc., just as truely as we must object to the doctrines and commandments of men. If we do not; then, we are no more than"a bruised reed and smoking flax".

Paul said,1 Cor.11:1;"Be ye followers togather of me even as I am also of Christ"; Again he says;" -------but we have the mind of Christ",1 Cor.2:16.

Hence we see we must have that same Spirit or else we are but,"bruised reeds and smoking flax".

No, I am not contending we must make excuse for every whim of man when he wants to disobey some command; but on the contrary that we must "----Observe these things without prefering one before another, doing nothing by partiality", 1 Tim.5: 21. Any time we fail to do this,like Israel of old, we have become as a "bruised reed and smoking flax".

One may say,brother Bedingfield,are you not becoming lopsided on that question? My answer is,no; I am just showing up the other side of the picture. Sure,we must deal with those who bring in false doctrines:but we must do it with the "SPIRIT" God has required of us.

Sometimes when one has not the ability others may have we are prone to judge him by the measure we ourselves are able to meet. We must remember God has given unto usACCORDING TO OUR SEVERAL ABI L* ITY",Mat.25:14,15. If the one talent man makes 100% on his one talent he is just as faithful as the man who gains 100% on his five talents.

In Gods sight his spiritual flame is just as bright as the five talent man, and he is necessary in the body.1 Cor.12:14-27.

We are not supposed to just pick out what we want to do and leave something else undone; but we are to "---do all things without prefering one before another, doing nothing by partiality"1 Tim.5:21.

Otherwise,we,like Israel of old, are but "bruised reeds and smoking flax".

And to you dear brother, who already know these things; always remember it is your duty as a brother to help fan that less fortunate brother "smoking flax" into that spiritual flame God intended it to be.

But we have another class among us who fail to assemble and eat the Lord's supper, even though there is nothing in their way more than uncle Charlie and aunt Sue came, or hhe had a sunday headache, or some other like excuse. My dear brother who would do this; did you ever stop to think if the Lord had shown no more interest in your souls' salvation than you are in obeying his commandments, the redemption price would have never been paid? Let me beg of you dear brother, who is in this "smoking flax" condition; that you fan that weak smoking spark into the spiritual flame it should be. And you my strong brother, it is your duty to help him.

Much more could be said, but I have several letters giving us some church news which I believe all will enjoy. So I will close this article by saying my prayer is that our kind heavenly Father will help us to see ourselves as we are and that we all may cease to be a "bruised reed or smoking flax".

As ever, Your's in Christ,

J.S.Bedingfield.

## "OUR MAIL BOX"

Brother and sister Nelson Route 1, box 14 B.M. Somerton Arizona writes: They were to have a weeks singing lessons and a meeting following. They had been to Delta Colorado, Aztec New Mexico; Bellflower and La Habra California; and next summer they are to go to Furnish Canyon Colorado.

Brother Nelson is one of our strongest men in defending the truth against error, and I am glad to see he is so busy. This notice should have been put in the Oct issue but I got it after I had my stencils cut, and too late to put it in.

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Brother R.C.Clements of Broken Bow Oklahoma writes; that his health is still bad but they are still on the fireing line for the gospel.. He also requests the prayers of the faithful brethren. Our hopes and prayer is for brother Clements' recovery.

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Brother Foye Garrison of box 102, Nocona Texas; all is moving along about as usual with them at Nocona. He writes his mother is in poor health. Our prayer is for sister Garrisons' early recovery.

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Brother F.H.Logan of 511 South Sunset, Modesto California writes; that the Modesto church is going along nicely with the exception to sickness among their number. Among which is that old soldier brother Condor and his good wife. Brother Condor is a faithful gospel preacher, and somewhat older than myself. my prayers are that all those may have an early recovery. He also wrote they had done quite a bit of improvement on the church property there.

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Brother A.W.Fenter of Box 151 Jacksboro writes that they have a nice church there at Jacksboro Texas. I thank brother Fenter for his nice invitation to visit him,and only wish I could. I think I met brother Fenter at the Harper- Cowan debate at Graham Texas.

I am sorry to state brother Fenter is a sick man and has reached his three score and ten. Our hopes and prayer for brother Fenter is he may have an early recovery and many more useful years in the masters vineyard. Brother Fenter, I hope you got the bunch of tracts and writings I sent you.

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Brother J.V.Wood of 214 West Marshall Midwest City 10,Oklahoma writes the church there is doing as well as usual except some of the members had been sick and had missed the Lord's day service. We are all glad to know the spiritual health of the congregation there is good but sorry to note the physical sickness.Our prayers are for their early recovery.

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Brother Coy Garrison of 509 Chickasaw Trace, Grand Prairie ,Texas, writes they are moving along as usual,however reports no additions. But he writes they are moving their meeting place to a more convinient place for some they think might be interested in the gospel. Here is a hope with a prayer brother,that your efforts will be crowned with success.

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Brother W.E.Daniels of Broken Bow Oklahoma, who worships in a congregation out from Broken Bow,writes,their church there is getting along nicely. He writes he is going to Stilwell Oklahoma,and from there to Huntsville Arkansas, and from there to Springdale Arkansas and visit with brother Earl Atchley who lives there but worships at Bohannan Arkansas.. He also writes they are having good attendance at church at his home congregation with some outside interest.

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Brother and sister Ray Johnston of 1628 Laurence Eugene Oregon, writes the church there is getting along all O.K. But brother Martin and family had moved back to Texas. . Sister Ellis had a heart attack and would have to stay in bed for some time. Sister Johnstons mother, sister McCay had an operation on her eyes and cold see the wonders of God's nature again. We can all rejoice with sister McCay,but pray for an early recovery of sister Ellis. Bill Mc ay had been down from Yakima Washington and all was well there. Another McCay, Howard Mccay also lives there.Where ever the McCays' go there will be a church.

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A letter fro brother and sister Rex Mickey of Box 100,Route 1,Cave Junction Oregon,says all is well at Cave Junction. This is a fine little church with big deeds.

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Mrs Maude Scott of Lorenzo Texas writes,the churches at Crosbyton Tex., Lorenzo Texas, Abaline Texas, and Carlsbad New Mexico are still carrying on. She had recently visited sister Willis,and brother and sister Bruice of Carlsbad. And her son and family had come up from Abaline to visit her. They worship with the church at Abaline Texas.

If my health will permit,there will be more anon; but if you do not hear from me again,you will know I am not able. I only hope I can carry on till some younger,abler man can take over. As ever , Your's in Christ,

J.S.Bodingfield