

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Timothy 2:19

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in
the house.

Matthew 5:15

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For A Conservative Anabaptist Perspective

From The Editor's Desk

ALL FOR ME

When I think about my Saviour, how He died to set me free, I don't really comprehend it, how He bore everything—for me.

In Gethsemane He prayed, "Father, not My will but Thine" as in the Garden there He knelt, Oh! the agony He felt.

His sweat in blood drops fell; for He knew no sin—but mine.

After Judas had betrayed Him, tried and falsely accused was He. Oh, the hatred and disgrace when they spit upon His face!

And He bore it all—for me.

They brought Him to the governor; Pilate had Him scourged to please. Scourged! many lashes on the back! neither did the whipping ease,

'Til the flesh was torn and bleeding, and His lifeblood was receding, but He took it quietly and suffered patiently—for me.

Roughly, Roman soldiers led Him to the place called Calvary there to crucify my Savior. He would die for you—and me.

There they laid Him on the cross, mangled back on timbers rough, rudely placed by hands so tough, cruel men with hearts of stone

Drove the nails through flesh and bone—nailed His feet and hands so kind to the crude and sturdy tree, but He did not seem to mind and suffered all this pain—for me.

They stand the cross between two thieves, the soldiers mock, his mother grieves – and there He hangs and the nails tear at His feet and His hands of care.

His Father in heaven forsakes Him then; He is left to die for the sins of men.

Then all of a sudden the sky is dark.

The Saviour upon the tree cries loudly, "It is finished!"

And He dies—instead of me.

Died! His lifeblood was not taken for He gave it willingly;

Satisfied the Law, yet forsaken. Died! So I could be set free!

Yes, He died, but love was stronger, and the grave could hold no longer;

For it happened as He said, Jesus Christ rose from the dead! Conquered death so you and I may live eternally!

From The Messenger of Truth Gospel Publishers Moundridge Kansas



From the Pulpit

The Soils

Exposition of Luke Chapter 8

Paul Emerson

Calvary Mennonite Fellowship

Luke 8:1-15

¹ (KJV) And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve *were* with him, ² And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, ³ And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance. ⁴ And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: ⁵ A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. ⁶ And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. ⁷ And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. ⁸ And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundred-fold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. ⁹ And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? ¹⁰ And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. ¹¹ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹² Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. ¹³ They on the rock *are they*, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. ¹⁴ And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to perfection. ¹⁵ But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep *it*, (or retain it) and bring forth fruit with patience.

As we think of the importance of this passage, often called the parable of the seed and the sower, and probably as you look at the emphasis of the Lord in interpreting it more likely we could refer to it for its meaning at least as the parable of the soils or the parable of the various earths, seed plots, whatever.

We would like to give our attention to this passage as it would apply to all of us, every single person here today is spoken of in this passage, and we would like you to think together about what it has to say.

Before we come to do passage let's bow together in prayer.

Our Father in the power of your Holy Spirit we open our hearts for your work, we all need the challenge of this passage, it is easy for us to look at others and see their problems in some cases see their blessings but always difficult to look inward and we know that is only really done in the power of your Spirit and we pray that the Holy Spirit will visit this congregation, every single one of us, in the moments to come and challenge us in terms of our relationship to the Living Christ and the written word.

We ask it in Christ's name, amen.

The background of this passage here in the Gospel of Luke is something of a series of truths that are very interesting I like to think of it as the ministry, I think it has an application to us but we do not want to dwell on that today we want to get on with the parable but in the first 3 verses you have a record of the Lord's ministry in villages, towns, cities preaching, showing the good news, demonstrating the good news to people, it talks about the fact that the 12 disciples were with him in that ministry – many of us tend to stop there as we conceive of the ministry, we think of the ministry as the preachers, those who have the assignment responsibility of preaching and teaching and visiting and all of the various parts of the ministry, if that were true then verse one is the end of the ministry – Jesus and the 12, those He who led them and they who followed him in the ministry in these various towns and villages and cities.

However the passage goes on and lo and behold it talks about some women and I would like to have us think that those women are representative not just of the women but of women and men though it does not name the men here it does not speak of the men in particular, you notice it says

in verse 2 it talks about these women who had experienced the resurrection power of the gospel that the Lord had healed them of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary Magdalen one who had had 7 evil spirits 7 devils demons within her whom He had delivered, and then Joanna and Susanna and it says many others.

You will notice that their role is said to be one of support, I'm sure it wasn't just support such as cooking dinner and those sorts of things although they are very important, but I believe as you read through the Gospels you will find that these women supported him with their presence at the meetings and with various support roles including of course the physical food and other things that they provided and I think that is the 3rd arm of the ministry that we almost always neglect as we think about the ministry, we think of the ministry as the preacher and the deacons and those in training and so forth, various leaders in the congregation, but here this is really the threefold ministry if you will allow me to use the term in a different way – you have the pastoral people, you have those who are following and leading and then you have all of the rest who are supporting and may I say that that is the ministry it is not just leadership for the ministry can compasses everybody in the church in one way or another.

One of the things that we see in today's church is that it has become very segregated, we have the leaders and perhaps sometimes leaders in training such as the disciples were here and then at some other level somewhere somehow you have the rest who take no responsibility for leadership or ministry but actually as you study the Scriptures everybody is responsible in in ministry in some way according to their gifting, everyone is responsible to others in the congregation to provide ministry, support, in this case they supported the leadership and that's fine and necessary but it's only a part of that.

This is an extended application of these few verses we won't take it any further but I would commend it to your thinking that the ministry includes the whole congregation.

Now the Lord speaks by a parable and He speaks to a crowd it says in verse 4 much people gathered together, they had come out and they had come to him out of every city and then He speaks to them by a parable in the parable is given there we read it a few moments ago it is the parable of

the sower, seed and soils or dirt or earth or seed plot however you want to say that, I think soils is a good way to declare it.

He speaks to the crowd by a parable, He interprets the parable to those who are clearly following him and so it is even today we are responsible to give the word to people, all people, but only those who hearts are open will come to any understanding of it, people whose hearts are closed will come to our understanding of the facts and what is said in the sentences and off the events and so on but as far as being open to God's word flowing into them with understanding it will all be something of a parable.

Now there was more to that then this He was speaking to those who had in a sense rejected him and He said he was going to speak in parables so there is more than what I just inferred in the picture however I do think we can make that application that the word of God is no more than a parable to the person whose heart is not right with God who is not open to hear God.

This parable is one that would have in the context of that time been a very common occurrence – the sower goes out to sow, I remember my grandfather still sowing grass seed in the oats by hand in something like this, he carried a bag and he called it broadcasting, I don't know what you old timers will refer to it as that that is the way my grandfather talked about it and it was a very rhythmic walking and sowing with the hand reaching into the bag and it was a very rhythmic procedure – that's the picture that you have here, the sower sowing or broadcasting seed and some of the seed falls on the roadside and some of the seed falls in the rocks and some of the seed falls in the thorns and some of the seed falls on good ground.

And the Lord cries out at that point says he that has ears to hear let him hear!

And one wonders what He meant. We who have commonly read further know much of what He meant but wonder why did He tell this story what is the meaning here? Isn't it interesting that the people apparently don't ask but the disciples do. His disciples asked him verse 9 what might this parable be what does this mean? And He comments, verse 10, unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God but to others in parables that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. Harking back to Isaiah 6 and other such passages that they will hear the word of God without understanding, they will see the living Word of God, I'm interpreting here, they will see the living Word of God and not under-

stand. Now to them He gives the interpretation, not only to them but to every disciple of all time.

We have the benefit of that interpretation recorded here for us what does it mean? The Lord says first of all the seed is the word of God. Now we might debate who the sower is, it is of course in the first place God himself, in the 2nd place by application I think it is everyone anyone who sows the word of God, Sunday school teacher, parent, preacher, missionary, witness, it may be none of the above but all of us are called to be witnesses, whenever we give God's truth to others in whatever way we could be seen as the sower here though the principal so I would be God himself, the seed is the word of God and the soils which is the focus of all of this whole parable and of all the lesson the soils of the hearts of men and women and they are described with this picture to help us understand more clearly how God sees the hearts of men.

And so the Lord continues the interpretation after pointing out that the seed is the word of God He talks about these 4 different kinds of soil upon which the word of God falls.

As I said everyone here is covered in these descriptions, we would hope everyone here would be characterised by the good soil, but whether you are or not I think that it is fair and proper to say that everyone here is covered by one of these descriptions.

The 4 soils are given.

First of all the soil by the road or the wayside, in verse 12, and He says these are the people who hear they hear the word of God then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts lest they should believe and be saved. It is clear then that the people whose hearts are characterised by the wayside part of the parable or the roadside it is clear that they are not saved, they hear the word of God but it says the devil, the enemy, comes and steals it out of their hearts before they believe, – lest they should be leave and be saved.

So this category of individual would be those who hear the word of God, they have heard the gospel, they have heard the word of God taught but the devil comes in and it can happen in church you doesn't have to happen out in the world somewhere, the devil comes in through the mind and just

blinds them and takes the word away before it has a chance to bring to get any root.

There are many people today that this describes, if you have been faithful in witnessing to people about the Lord Jesus Christ you've been faithful in witnessing and sowing the seed you have known some of those who hear the words you say and to whom it seems to make some sense momentarily and then things redirect and they go in a different direction, they may look at the issue of creation or some other area and just turn away, the devil steals the seed as it were out of their lives that it cannot bring forth fruit.

The 2nd category of individual that is spoken of in this passage would be in verse 13 those that are they are on the rock or the rocky soil the stony soil are they which when they hear receive the word with joy and these have no root which for a while believe and in time of temptation fall away. I think these may be those that we grieve over the most, those who hear the word of God and respond very openly and apparently genuinely their response to the gospel is everything that we would like to see it be and then when the trials come, temptations come, when the difficulties in the Christian life come they turn away. When their joy seems diminish the turn away.

You notice how the Scripture describes it there in verse 13 they hear the word, they receive the word with joy and enthusiasm in other words but they have no root, they believe for a while this and then in time of temptation when the going gets rough and difficult, when the persecution comes perhaps or when grief enters the picture or other kinds of temptation they fall away.

The 3rd classification of soil and of men's hearts in verse 14 and that which fell among the thorns are they which when they have heard go forth and I choked with cares in riches and pleasures of this life bring no fruit to perfection or to maturity, completion.

These are not people that fall away in the same way as those spoken of in verse 13 they just never get anywhere, they hear, I would think they may actually acknowledge that what they've heard of the word of God is true but the cares of the world are weighed too heavily and so they compartmentalise we would say in modern day English, they compartmentalise and

they say well this business about faith this is fine but I shall not let it affect the things that I like to do all the things that I want.

Three words are used there, cares, riches and pleasures, those things are the big things in the lives of these individuals and they allowed those things to interfere with the seed of the Word of God growing and so these people bring no fruit to completion or maturity.

I suspect that in 2004 America this may be a goodly portion of Christianity, yes, they accept the facts, yes this is fine, yes this is the word of God, yes Jesus died for sinners, yes, I'm a sinner. But it merely that's as far as it seems to get because of the cares and concerns and riches and pleasures of the world. (*Editor's note: In our experience this is a world-wide picture*)

Now you can weigh some of that in your own mind, think about the things that you would call pleasure will they keep you from the house of God, will they keep you from your daily devotional life? That's only a measurement but I think it's a question that we need to wrestle with because I'm afraid in our country, in our culture that is an awful lot of verse number 14 an awful lot of that kind of soil, an awful lot of that kind of soil in the church today where the fruit from the word of God just doesn't grow, where yes it is accepted but that is as far as it goes.

So as you think of your life could you be wayside soil where the devil snatches out the seed before it has a chance to grow?

Could you be rocky soil where you prospered quickly spiritually after you heard the gospel and then the balloon burst and you fell away?

Or could you be thorny soil were the things of this world and the cares of this life and the duties of the workaday world choke out the word of God before it grows to maturity?

The Lord is very clear that He is talking here about salvation, He says in verse 12 of that soil, the roadside soil, the wayside soil, He says lest they should believe and be saved.

This is not talking about one who is spiritual as a Christian and one who is carnal as a Christian, and there is such a thing as carnality we are not saying there isn't, but what He is saying is this is the difference between those who are saved and those who are not.

Now the wayside soil those people may not espouse Christianity, that seems unclear to me, but the other 2 so far as we've gone the rocky soil, the thorny soil they espouse Christianity I would think that they are not born again Christians at least in the end.

I would have you notice what born again Christian is described as.

Notice in verse 15 but that on the good ground are they rich in an honest and good heart having heard the word keep it or retain it and bring forth fruit with patience.

These are the genuine Christians, it is possible that as you read from verse 13 that those were Christians but those who are genuine Christians who persevere to the end to use the biblical expression would be characterised by the good ground and a good ground has an honest and good heart, in other word the word of God coming to them in the gospel is a heart changing experience, they hear the word and they retain it – show it is a word to the heart heard in the light of Romans 10, retained they don't throw it out they don't turn away from it, and as they continue in the word notice what the rest of the verse says – they bring forth fruit with patience. They hear and keep.

Now is it necessary to work to be saved? No, I think Galatians and Romans are very clear on that.

Is it necessary to work in order to stay saved? Same answer.

But if you don't produce righteous works you are not saved.

In other words works has no part in grace, grace by its definition is the absence of works but the person who is saved by grace through faith from the heart will produce fruit of that grace.

I hope we can grasp that, we all struggle with it but it is so very important.

Only the 4th category gets to heaven, only the good soil gets to heaven, those who receive the word to the heart who continue in it and thus bear fruit as he says earlier a hundredfold, the other gospel accounts amplify that in the several multipliers.

So as you think about that let's reflect on the account of what we call Palm Sunday.

What about those who were crying Hosanna, those who were throwing down their palm branches speaking great glowing words about Jesus Christ but who less than a week later likely many of the same people crying out “Crucify him, crucify him, crucify him!”

What kind of soil were they?

Well perhaps they were the rocky soil who received the word with joy on Palm Sunday but a few days later had turned from it all.

How is it with you? How is it with me?

I know many of us assume that we as a good soil – I hope we are, but that is something that has to be settled between our heart and God’s.

We can deceive each other – we cannot deceive Him.

Is it possible that gathered in this group, and I don’t know, but it is possible that gathered in this group are some wayside people and the devil has brought in all sorts of deception and the seed has no chance to grow.

Is it possible that in this group this morning there are some rocky soils?

Yes, you believe for a while but there is no root.

Is it possible this morning there is some thorny soil where your mind is given over to the cares, pleasures and riches of this world? And even while we have been studying here together your mind has wandered out into the other things rather than being focused on the word of God.

I challenge us, the seed, the word of God is the same, the message is the same, it is the soils that are different.

So what kind of soil are you?

You can’t blame God for the soil, that is who you are and that is your responsibility, God does not make anybody not believe, He issued the call “whosoever will” the gospel, the word of God is shown without prejudice and bias – it is for all.

What kind of soil are you?

Let’s pray.

Thank you Father for your word, for this the parable of our Lord Jesus Christ, take this scripture burn it into our minds and to our hearts, use it to challenge us, convicted as an director as in our response to you through the blessed Holy Spirit, we pray in Christ’s name. Amen.

TRUE FAITH

“O my kind reader, it never fails that where true faith is, there, also is the righteousness of faith; where there is unfeigned, Christian love, there also is obedience to the holy word, and where there is true, sincere repentance there also is an unblameable life, according to the truth; this is incontrovertible...”

"Where there is such a faith which brings forth a new, converted and changed mind; which makes us dead unto sin and leads us into a new life; changes us from Adam to Christ; puts off the old man with all his works and puts on the new man with his works and thus conforms all his thoughts, words and works to the Spirit, word and ways of the Lord, behold, there is true repentance to which the holy prophets, John the Baptist, Christ Jesus, together with all the apostles and pious servants have so earnestly pointed us and so faithfully admonished us" (*Menno Simons Complete Works, second part, pp. 27,28*).

"Faith is manifested by works, even though we are justified only through grace. Man can have many outward godly works, and yet no living faith; but it is impossible for anyone to have a living faith without godly works. For as the body is dead without spirit, so faith without works is dead. We have not been created anew to stand there as fruitless trees, nor to be found by God without good works. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" Ephesians 2:10. Fire produces flames; water causes dampness; the good sap of a good tree brings forth good fruit; out of a good spring sweet and good water issues forth; so also does living faith bring forth good fruit and godlike works. Whatever man sincerely believes, that he will also do. Abraham believed that God bade him, and for that reason he did as he was bidden; and though he became justified by faith without the assistance of works, he received the sign of circumcision, "a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had being yet uncircumcised" Romans 4:1-11. And then, when his son Isaac was already twenty or more years old (according to Josephus) he believed God, and by doing so, his faith was made perfect (James 2:18-26). Abraham had lived by faith many years before he was asked to sacrifice his son; but nevertheless, he had to be tried to prove whether he actually believed God

"This faith yields a holy life because it is of the heart and consists of the committal of body, soul, and spirit to God. A man's life will correspond with this faith. Of course, it includes repentance toward God and a turning from sin unto righteousness.

"This faith produces peace of soul, for in this the soul finds justification, which produces pardon and acceptance. In this the soul finds sanctification or grace to deliverance from the power of sin. It has ceased to war with God and has found a resting place in Christ. As this total committal to Christ is made, it will mean true obedience to Christ. This is why faith is the only condition of salvation!"



THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

An extract from "The Complete Works of Menno Simons" portraying the Church as the Bride of Christ

"Even as there was but one Adam and one Eve; one Noah and one ark, one Isaac and one Rebecca, so there is but one church of Christ, which is the body, the city, the temple, the house and bride of Christ, having but one gospel, one faith, one baptism, one supper, and one service; walking in the same way and leading a pious, unblameable life, as the Scriptures teach."

"Say, beloved, if you are the church of Christ, why are you not obedient unto him? If you are the body of Christ, why destroy its holy members? If you are the children of God, why trample upon your brethren? If you are the servants of Christ, why not do the things he has commanded? If you are the bride of Christ, why not hear his holy voice? If you are the truly regenerated, where are, then, the fruits? If you are the true disciples of Christ, where is your love? If you are the true Christians, where are your christian ordinances of baptism, Supper, deacons, ban and life as commanded in his word? If you are the truly baptized ones of Christ, where is your faith, your new birth, your death unto sin, your unblameable life, your good conscience, your christian body into which you were baptized, and your Christ whom you have put on?

"O beloved brethren, error has been rampant long enough! Christ Jesus will be no longer mocked as a fool."

"To the scattered saints and the others at Dortrecht... "Therefore, thou beautiful daughter of Zion, fear not, since your entrance is prepared so abundantly.

"O thou fairest among women, therefore the filthy wrinkles that disfigure thee must be put from thee. Cant. 1:8. O thou fair bride of Christ, constantly adorn thyself more and more with the wedding garment of righteousness, and also trim your lamps with glorious faith and imperishable love, that you may not lack these, as did the foolish virgins, but that you may ever possess them abundantly, that thereby the light of Christ may shine in you, and be manifested by you, to the praise of God, the edification of your neighbor, the salvation of your souls, and as a light to the world, and for a testimony unto them. Although they then hate you, because the bright, morning star, Christ Jesus, has arisen in your hearts, bear it, and be not surprised at it, for Christ, who is the light Himself, was hated and cast out by the darkness before you. 2 Pet. 1:19; John 1:5.

And from The Martyrs Mirror, pp. 907-908, by Jan Woutersse Kuyck, 1572)

"O thou fair queen, remember at all times, how loathful and unwashed thou didst lie in thy blood as an outcast, and that the most mighty, richest and eternal King, the fairest above all men, chose thee, washed thee, purchased thee with His own blood, and accepted thee as His queen. And if we always think of our redemption, it is, or ought to be, an admonition, to cleave to the royal Bridegroom alone, and not to forsake Him through wantonness or presumption, and run to others; for he that forsakes Him, him He will also forsake. His jealous love cannot bear or tolerate it, that one loves another more than Him; such a one is not worthy of Him."



Treasure.

Matthew 6:19-21

¹⁹ (KJV) Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: ²⁰ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt,

and where thieves do not break through nor steal: ²¹ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The miser lay on his lonely bed;
Life's candle was burning dim.
His heart in an iron chest was hid
Under heaps of gold and an iron lid;
And whether it were alive or dead
It never troubled him.

Slowly out of his body he crept.
He said, "I am just the same
Only I want my heart in my breast;
I will go and fetch it out of my chest!"
Through the dark a darker shadow he leapt,
Saying "Hell is a fabled flame!"

He opened the lid. Oh, Hell's own night!
His ghost-eyes saw no gold!-
Empty and swept! Not a gleam was there!
In goes his hand, but the chest is bare!
Ghost-fingers, aha! have only might
To close, not to clasp and hold!

But his heart he saw, and he made a clutch
At the fungus puff-ball of sin:
Eaten with moths, and fretted with rust,
He grasped a handful of rotten dust,
And shrieked, as hosts may, at the crumbling touch,
But hid it in his breast within.
And some there are who see him sit
Under the church, apart,
Counting out coins and coins of gold
Heap by heap on the dank death-mold:
Alas poor ghost and his sore lack of wit-
They breed in the dust of his heart!

Another miser has now his chest,
 And it hoards wealth more and more;
 Like ferrets his hands go in and out,
 Burrowing, tossing the old about—
 Nor heed the heart that, gone from his breast,
 Is the cold heaps bloodless core.
 Now wherein differ old ghosts that sit
 Counting ghost-coins all day
 From the man who clings with spirit prone
 To whatever can never be his own?
 Who will leave the world with not one whit
 But a heart all eaten away?

To understand the words of the Lord is the business of life for it is the main road to the understanding of the Word himself. And to receive him is to receive the Father, and so to have Life in ourselves. And Life, the higher, the deeper, the simpler, the original, is the business of life.

The Word is that by which we live, namely, Jesus himself. And his words represent—in part, in shadow, in suggestion—himself.

Any utterance worthy of being called a truth is human food. How much more the Word, presenting to abstract laws of reasoning, but the vital relation of soul and body, heart and will, strength and rejoicing, beauty and light, to him who first gave birth to them all!

The Son came forth to be, before our eyes and in our hearts, that which God had made us for, that we might behold the truth in him, and cry out for the living God, who, in the highest sense of all is the Truth, not as understood by the intellect, but as understanding, living, and being—doing and creating the truth. "I am the truth," said our Lord; and by those who are in some measure like him in being the truth, the Word can be understood.

Let us, therefore, now try to understand him.

Sometimes, no doubt, the Saviour would have spoken in a different fashion of speech if he had come to Englishmen instead of to Jews. But the lessons he gave would have been the same. For even when questioned about a matter of passing importance, his reply contained the enunciation of the great human principle that lay in it—changeless in every variation of changeable circumstance. With the light of added ages of Christian experi-

ence, it ought to be easier for us to understand his words than it was for those who heard him.

➤ **The Heart As God Sees It**

I now ask you to examine the power of the Lord's word for in the context of, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

The reason he adds it here is not obvious on the surface. It has to be sought for because of its depth and at the same time its simplicity.

But it is so complete, so imaginatively comprehensive, so immediately operative on the conscience through its poetic suggestiveness, that when it is once understood, there is nothing more to be said, but everything to be done.

Is the Lord saying that the reason for not laying up treasures on earth is because of their transitory and corruptible nature—that the moth and rust and thief will cause us to lose them?

No. He adds for: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

What is *with* the treasure must fare the same as the treasure. The heart that haunts the treasure house where the moth and rust corrupt will be exposed to the same ravages as the treasure and will itself be rusted and moth-eaten. The treasures are nothing; it is the condition of the heart that is everything! Many a man, many a woman, fair and flourishing to see, is going about with a rusty moth-eaten heart within that form of strength or beauty!

And does not the rust and the moth mean more than mere disease?

Does not the heart mean more than the heart? Does it not mean a deeper heart—the heart that is your true self—not the physical heart? The self that suffers, not pain, but misery? The self whose end is not comfort, or enjoyment, but blessedness, even ecstasy? A heart which is the innermost chamber wherein springs the divine fountain of your being? A heart which God regards, though you may never have known its existence, not even when its writhings under the gnawings of the moth and the slow fire of the rust have communicated a dull pain to that outer heart which sends the blood to its appointed course through your body?

If God sees that heart corroded with the rust of cares, riddled into caverns and films by the worms of ambition and greed, then your heart is as God sees it, for God sees things as they are. And one day you will be compelled to see, no, to feel your heart as God sees it; and to know that the cankered thing which you have within you, a prey to the vilest of diseases, is indeed the centre of your being, your very heart.

➤ All Worship of the Transitory Corrupts

This lesson does not apply only to those who worship Mammon and who give their lives and best energies to the accumulation of wealth. It applies equally to those who in any way worship the transitory, who seek the praise of men more than the praise of God, who would make a show in the world by wealth or taste or intellect or power or art or genius of any kind, and so would gather golden opinions to be treasured in a storehouse of earth.

And not only to such does it apply, but surely also to those as well whose pleasures are of a more visible, transitory nature still, such as the pleasures of the senses in every direction, even when lawfully indulged, if the joy of being is cantered in them.

To all who derive their pleasure and satisfaction and joy from the transitory in all its forms, these words bear terrible warning. For the hurt lies not in the fact that these pleasures are false or that they pass away and leave a fierce disappointment behind. The hurt lies in this—that the immortal, the infinite, created in the image of the everlasting God, is housed with the fading and corrupting.

The immortal soul clings to the heart (the seat of being), until it becomes infected and interpenetrated with all the heart's diseases of self, which assume in the immortal a form more terrible by its very superiority, so that which is mere decay in the heart becomes moral vileness in the soul; that which fits the one for the dunghill casts the other into outer darkness. Then it descends with the heart into a burrow in the earth, where its budded wings wither and mould and drop away from its shoulders, instead of haunting the open plains and the high-uplifted tablelands, spreading abroad its young pinions to the sun and air, and strengthening them in further and further flights, until at last they should become strong to bear the God-born into the presence of its Father in heaven.

Therein lies the hurt of laying up treasures on earth, that in so doing the God-life in us is corrupted and eaten away.



BUY THE TRUTH AND SELL IT NOT

We are living in a changing world. Values once held are being eroded and watered down, morally, materially, and, yes, even spiritually. Many products that were once trustworthy and durable are now being made with substitutes. Many products now appear on the shelves with markings, such as, “artificial aver,” “imitation aver” or substitutes. Some major companies are known to make some items for some of their distributors with substituted materials that are not as durable as the items sold in their own franchise. Many products must be marked “genuine” or “original aver” or “authentic” to try to keep their reputation. Schemes of smaller packaging, diluted ingredients, and imitation flavourings etc., are designed to sell the same amount as previously, yet with less of the genuine ingredients. At the same time, they want to realize increased profits. In medications, and perhaps other commodities, generics are being offered. The dictionary says generic means “relating to but not protected by trademark.” Many things are made to appear genuine or authentic, but beneath the shine, something less expensive and not as durable and, therefore, not as costly to produce has been substituted for the original. For instance, the vehicles produced in the present day have many parts made with plastic or fiberglass instead of metal which, when under test, do not hold up to original standards. I do not mean to be critical, but times are changing. There is a list of synonyms for substitute and artificial that come to mind: cheapened, watered down, diluted, simulated, fake, hypocritical, and counterfeit. My thought, however, is that the things we now have are not what they used to be.

It has impressed me that in the beginning, Satan came as an angel of light, portraying something false, directly contradicting God, and he deceived Eve. He is still up to his tricks today, coming as “a wolf in sheep’s clothing.” People today are trading the true and tried for that which is not authentic. The Wise Man warns us in Proverbs 23:23, “Buy the truth, and sell it not.” Obviously, he was aware of that danger long ago. The Apostle Paul warned Timothy (and us) that there are people “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” 2 Timothy 3:5. So-called Christians today have the talk, but not the walk. Paul describes them in Titus 1:16: “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him.” Recently I read a story of a school boy challenging his teacher

about a certain Christian principle. The teacher professed to be a Christian, but when challenged, he made the comment, “But I am not a religious Christian.” People today want the rewards of being a Christian but have watered it down to make it easier on the flesh, ending up with a counterfeit that will not be accepted when put to the test. Many early reformers realized that all was not well and made efforts to reform that which had degenerated. All the while, the truth was in existence, but they settled for something that was not genuine. Although they made efforts to re-establish certain principles, it seems they did not find the authentic original and settled for less than the truth. The angel to the Laodiceans warned them that because they were lukewarm and not hot, they would be rejected (Revelation 3:15-18). In verse 18, he counsels them to buy gold tried in the fire, so they need not be ashamed and white raiment that their nakedness would not appear.

Again I am impressed with Matthew 7:21-23, where Jesus said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you.” They had a form but will be rejected for lack of obedience, of watering down, diluting, and making excuses. Brethren, may we not be of those who sell the truth in exchange for a counterfeit or substitute. God is not a man that He would change. If we love Him, we will hold fast to that which is true so that no man can take our crown (Revelation 3:11). In that day, we will be judged by the Word (John 12:48). In closing, may I remind us of Jesus’ last warning, “And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Rev. 22:19). Have we become so used to substitutes that they no longer seem so serious? Have our senses been dulled by the continual reckless handling of the Word of God to the point it no longer pains us? I believe that the gates of Hell will not prevail against the truth, but may we be counted among those faithful on that day.

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FINDING THE RIGHT WAY

Amidst the multiplicity of churches and doctrines today, many people are asking, “How can I know which is the right way?” This is a worthy question and one for which God would surely like to give an answer. Even people who have chosen a church and doctrine will find this question presenting itself to their minds. And those who, from their youth, have accepted and followed the faith their parents taught them must, at some point in life, confirm in their own souls, that they are, indeed, on the road that leads to heaven. In his writings, Menno Simons names six signs by which the true church (the right way) may be known. We will list them here in abbreviated form (See *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, pp. 739-74)

1. In the first place, the sign by which the church of Christ may be known is the salutary and unadulterated doctrine of His holy and divine Word...where the church of Christ is, there His Word is preached purely and rightly.
2. The second sign is the right and Scriptural use of the sacraments of Christ, namely baptism. .. [and] the participation in the Lord’s Holy Supper by the penitent.
3. The third sign is obedience to the holy Word, or the pious, Christian life which is of God.
4. The fourth sign is the sincere and unfeigned love of one’s neighbour. ,
5. The fifth sign is that the name, will, word, and ordinance of Christ are confidently confessed in the face of all cruelty, tyranny, tumult, fire, sword, and violence of the world, and sustained unto the end.
6. The sixth sign is the pressing cross of Christ, which is borne for the sake of His testimony and Word.

These signs are confirmed by the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, and agree with the tenor of the entire Word of God. They contain, for the Christian today, direction, encouragement, challenge, and warning. For those who sincerely seek God’s way, they hold the clear, simple light of truth. For those who have found God’s way, they affirm the “right way home” and encourage to faithfulness. They challenge us to continue in the path they mark and to preserve the truth they contain for coming generations. They quietly, solemnly warn us “lest at any time we should let them slip” (Hebrews 2:1). All the signs listed above are weighty and should be

considered gravely by anyone who desires the way of truth. Yet, in the circumstances that surround us today, the first and the last points may be of special importance. Paul instructed Timothy to “give attendance to . . . doctrine” (1 Timothy 4:13), yet few professing Christians show much knowledge of biblical doctrine or much interest in it. Most people seem content to passively accept whatever religious teachers and writers offer, or they say, “Well, this is the religion my parents and grandparents followed. I guess it will do for me.” By their carelessness and indifference, they are saying, “Doctrinal truth doesn’t really matter.” Yet Jesus cared enough to give careful instruction on how to live. God cared enough to have it written down in black and white and preserved for all generations. He has given to each individual the wonderful privilege and the onerous responsibility to seek out, to know, and to embrace truth—to “follow truth as blind men long for light.”

God gave to Moses detailed instructions on how to build the tabernacle. When the construction was about to begin, God emphatically told Moses, “See that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount” (Hebrews 8:5). This tabernacle served as God’s dwelling place among His people, and it was important to make it according to His careful instruction that it might be a home befitting Him. Today, our bodies are to be a holy temple for the God of heaven, and we are “builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:22). It is, then, of paramount importance that we build “according to the pattern” given to us in the doctrine of the Word. The sign of the “pressing cross of Christ” also merits special consideration today. Menno Simons writes, “This very cross is a sure indicator of the church of Christ.” It seems likely that only those who know and love the Lord will have grace to accept this cross and all it means. This cross identifies the bearer with the meekness and lowliness of our Lord. It makes one of “no reputation.”

Upon this cross, selfish and illicit desires die. Here undue self-interest perishes and grace is found to carry out the Christian duties of loving our neighbours and enemies, living peaceably with all men, and seeking the welfare of others above our own. From the viewpoint of what the cross does to the old Adamic nature, it is little wonder it has become unpopular and even unnecessary in the minds of nominal Christians. Yet Jesus said,

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24) Jesus’ words are very clear, and they make no exceptions. To follow Jesus requires a personal and intimate experience with the pressing cross of Christ. Everyone who names the name of Jesus should know first hand what the cross is and what it means.

We should all be able to tell of those times when the bearing of that cross caused the banishment of some personal delight or desire but afforded a way for the will of God to be done in us. We should know its pressure daily. At first sight, the cross may well appear to be a fearsome thing. In reality, the blessings it brings outweigh the pain. The Apostle Paul writes of how this cross brought him to really know Jesus “and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings” (Philippians 3:10). There is, probably, nothing in life as gratifying as experiencing the power of Christ—a power beyond and above our own ability—that enables us to do what we know, in our hearts, to be right. And there is nothing sweeter in human experience than to know that, in bearing His cross, we have been allowed to fellowship a little in the sufferings of our Saviour. This knowledge assures us that we love Christ enough to suffer for Him and that we are labouring together with Him.



Sonnet II

0 God, my prayers are feeble, weak and cold,
 My pleas half-hearted, like my saltless tears
 Which insincerely fall; I would be bold
 But falter in the face of all my fears.
 0, God, my heart is stony. It receives
 None of your grace, Lord. Let your Spirit speak
 And break my heart of stone. My heart believes
 But how my flesh resists; my flesh is weak.
 I am not yielded. Bind me; make me still.
 Then smelt me, Lord, and burn the worthless dross
 Refine again, again, again, until
 I melt, and purer count all else as loss.
 God make me brave and true, and give me grace.
 Perfect my heart till it reflects Your face.

Leon Troyer PA

The Conquerors.

Jesus and Alexander died at 33,
One lived and died for self, one died for you and me.
The Greek died on the throne, the Jew died on a cross.
One's life that triumphant scene, the other but a loss.
One led fast armies forth, the other walked alone.
One shed a whole world's blood, the other gave His own.
One won of the world in life and lost it all in death,
The other lost his life to win the whole world's fame.

Jesus and Alexander died at 33,
One died in Babylon, the other at Calvary.
One gained all for himself, and one himself He gave,
One conquered every throne, the other every grave.
The one made himself God and God made himself less,
The one lives but to blast the other but to bless.
When died the Greek for ever fell his throne of swords,
But Jesus died to live for ever the Lord of Lords.

Jesus and Alexander died at 33,
The Greek made all men slaves, the Jew set all men free.
One built a throne on blood, the other build on love,
The one was born of earth, the other One from above.
One won all this earth to lose all earth and heaven,
The other gave all that all to Him be given.
The Greek for ever died, the Jew for ever lives.

Anonymous



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