

# THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 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**

In Acts 17:23 the Apostle Paul portrays the Athenians ignorantly worshiping the unknown God and goes on to explain to them who this unknown God is in the subsequent verses in that chapter.

For those who know and follow that “unknown” God Paul declares to the Athenians to be the one True God how many have thought about the other “unknown gods” or perhaps we should say the “unacknowledged gods” that may be present in our lives.

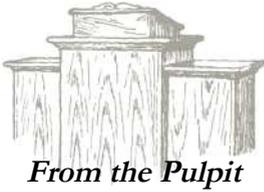
The Old Testament is full of dire warnings from the one True God about not following other gods and in fact calls them idols, Deuteronomy 6:14 speaks particularly I believe even to our day and age when God says, “You shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you.”

When we consider God’s warnings in the Old Testament about other gods perhaps then we shall see a greater importance in Paul’s words to the church at Corinth in 2 Corinthians 6:16 and the church at Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 1:9 in respect of other gods or idols

Apostle John urges us to keep ourselves from idols, 1 John 5:21 and from all this we see that other gods – idols – are to be avoided and put aside and Jesus himself in speaking to John in the Book of Revelation has some very strong words of condemnation to the churches at Pergamum and Thyatira (Revelation 2) in case we missed the warnings in the Old Testament passages and the letters of the Apostles.

Surely there must be a reason for such warnings, God does nothing without reason and purpose and a thorough reading of the words of Scripture in relation to worshiping and following other gods and idols will reveal to us that like all other choices in life there are consequences some will lead to eternal condemnation and others to eternal consolation in the presence of God, his angels, and all the other saints who have made it their choice to NOT follow other gods or worship idols.

What is it in our life, yours and mine, that is another god, an idol and will keep us away from that eternal rest in heaven, 1 John 2:16 is a list of things in the world that can and do attract us and can so easily become those other gods and what saith the Lord about that? “Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you.” 2 Corinthians 6:17. Will you, will I be welcomed by God?



AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES  
*Brother Jerry Wadel*  
 2006

*From the Pulpit*

We would like to think this evening of the authority of the Scriptures, unless we have the Scriptures as the foundation of our lives, our beliefs, our practice we are not on a stable foundation.

What we believe about the Word of God is very important. And we say: Well that is elementary, that is we understand that! but it is foundational for us to know, to understand God and to understand man's relationship to his God because it is the Scriptures that lay that foundation and sad to say there is a difference between believing that the Bible is God's word and believing in the authority of the message.

Brother Paul pointed that out this evening in the devotional and there are many people that will say: Yes, the Bible is true. But then they deny the authority of the Scriptures upon their life

And so tonight I want to think of the authority of the Scriptures upon our lives, how we must relate to it and to understand it to appreciate it.

I would like to begin with these verses from Isaiah 40 and in verse three we have here the call: [Isaiah 40:3-8](#) The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. <sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: <sup>5</sup> And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see *it* together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*. <sup>6</sup> The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh *is* grass, and all the goodness thereof *is* as the flower of the field: <sup>7</sup> The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people *is* grass. <sup>8</sup> The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

Notice there the authority of his cry in relation to the word of God and the saying in verse eight, the word of our God shall stand forever. It is very important that we understand the word of God as foundational in our lives because it is God's revelation of Himself to us.

It is here in the Scriptures that we find salvation because there is no other message that God gives to us as human creatures in relation to the revelation of Himself.

I would like to think first of all this evening in relation to the authority of the Scriptures:

Why do the Scriptures have authority? We are going to be noticing various references, I'm going to basically give them, recite these verses, but why do the Scriptures have authority?

First of all the Scriptures have authority because they'd bear the character of the divine author.

Now we could turn to [John 1:14](#) where it says: Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory to glory as the only begotten son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

In other words we have the Word of God which is there speaking of Jesus Christ and He was made flesh and dwelt among men and there He was the living representation of truth, He was a living Word of God and there as He spoke it was the words of God and so we have there illustrated for us the fact that the Scriptures have the authority because they do the character of the divine author, He was the representation of God in human flesh.

Also the Scriptures have authority because of the inerrancy and absolute truth that the word contains.

In [Psalm 119:142](#) it says: Thy word is truth.

There it gives it is a settled absolute, Thy word is truth.

[Psalm 119:89](#): For ever our Lord Thy word is settled in heaven.

And repeatedly in the Scripture God refers to Himself as a God who does not change. He says in [Malachi 3:6](#). I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed,

And so there is the basis here of absolute truth in the Scriptures.

Also the scriptures have authority of God's method of transmitting it to men. I would like to turn back to second Peter, this is a familiar Scripture but I think it is a very important Scripture in understanding how God transmitted His words to man. [2 Peter 1:20-21](#) <sup>20</sup> Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For the prophe-

cy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.

Now I would understand this Scripture to be telling us in verse 20 first of all where it says that Scripture is not of any private interpretation. I think that means as in the original language it has the idea that those who transcribed it, in other words put it into print, the holy men of God, there was no human error or there was no human influence upon those words as they were written out. Also verse 21 tells us because it came not by the will of man but holy men of God spake as they were moved.

The idea there of moved is as if they were carried, you know they were carried along.

In another place Peter tells us that a lot of times they wrote things that they did not understand, it was revealed to them that it was for some time future that they were writing these things. But it is important to understand that the Scriptures have authority because it was not tampered with by man and how God transmitted it to us.

You think of 30 to 40 writers over 1500 years yet there is cohesion, there is unity of thought, these are not the words of mere men, no these words were not tainted by the humanity of the writers but they were transmitted by God as the author. And so I think tonight, I believe tonight that the Scriptures have authority because of that.

The Scriptures also have authority because they are eternal, they are timeless in scope.

We think tonight of the saints maybe of the Reformation or even further back than that even, who had the Scriptures and could read them and study them and make application to the times in which they lived and now we today are able to read the same Scriptures and make applications to our day, there is something that is timeless here of this authority that is bound in that timelessness. If the world should stand for another hundred years, we don't always can't see how it could, but if it would the same Scriptures would be there in 2106 for the people of God to take and apply them to their day and find the answers for life.

There is authority there in its timelessness. There in [Isaiah 40:8](#) The word of the Lord shall stand forever. [1 Peter 1:25](#): The word of the Lord endureth for ever.

And so that gives the Scriptures authority.

The Scriptures also have authority because they are alive.

In [Hebrews 4:12](#) we have there that the familiar Scripture: For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, the idea of the word quick there means it is alive.

Now you may say: Well, how is it alive? It is alive and we believe that but how was it alive? Well there may be many illustrations but have you ever been reading the Scriptures even in your private devotions or someone is reading it in church and yes, you have read over this passage many, many times but suddenly you see something that you never saw before and there is just something there that grips your heart. It is a new truth that was there.

Well the word of God is alive you see.

Another way in which it is alive is that a person can be reading from a passage in the public setting maybe like this and the holy spirit can take that verse and apply to this need and that need and that need maybe in different ways and maybe you are visiting after church in explaining how something struck it in that Scripture. And they say, Well I haven't thought about that but they thought about this other thing.

Jesus said in [John 6:63](#) The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life.

The word of God is alive.

The Scriptures also have authority because of their prophetic accuracy...

How many times in Scriptures, and I didn't count this up, but how many times in the Scriptures is a statement like this made or something similar to it where we would read: "Then was fulfilled the saying that was written." That concept or that thought is repeated over and over in Scripture, then what was written was fulfilled, or in relation to Jesus many times, that Scriptures might be fulfilled.

Jesus said not one jot or tittle shall pass from the law unto all be fulfilled, [Matthew 5:18](#).

There is accuracy there. We enjoy at times going back and looking at very prophecies that may be related the coming of Jesus Christ, the messianic prophecies and notice the accuracy of their fulfilment and it gives the Scriptures authority because God can say that this is what is going to happen, 100 years, 500 years, 1000 years, and that is exactly what happens, it was fulfilled. Sometimes on the self-same day the Bible says.

The authority of the Scriptures can also be seen in its enduring qualities.

Some of the children here remember the stories you read about people trying to destroy the Bible and how it was maybe a crime to be caught carrying a Bible, well there would be many stories we could think about in relation to this even today that is happening.

I had to think of one in the Bible in Jeremiah 36 where King Jehoiakim as he had that roll that was read there before him he took a penknife and cut the leaves out and threw them into the fire, they wrote some more and he cuts more out and threw them away. That is just one of the enduring qualities of the Scriptures and I think that gives it authority. What happened on that occasion was he didn't destroy it, there was just another one reason and of some more added to it, judgments upon him for what he had done, additional words.

Many men have tried to destroy it in many different ways but I think we can see the authority of the Scriptures, it is the word of God in its enduring qualities, it cannot be destroyed.

The Bible also speaks with authority on scientific matters whether it is the stars or some of those aspects of astronomy, [Job 9:1-9](#).

Another interesting one would be when the philosophers many years ago were arguing whether the earth was a sphere or whether it was a flat disc, you know the Scriptures had already said that it was a sphere, the Bible spoke with authority in relation to the compass of the earth. It wasn't flat.

We have the book of Ecclesiastes their referring to hydrology and the water cycles. It is only in the last few hundred years that they really understood that and you go back to the book of Ecclesiastes and read some of that and it makes sense because now they understand it, but the Bible was right all along, the Bible speaks with authority on scientific matters as well.

The Bible is authoritative voice on historical events.

We have in the book of Daniel Belshazzar spoken about and for many, many years secular archaeologists refuted that, they said there is no evidence whatsoever for a man like Belshazzar. But you know in recent years they have uncovered clay tablets that record some of the dealings of Belshazzar, in fact they not only know about him now they also know the names of some of his sisters and even his personal secretary. But for many

years you know they said well they didn't think that he existed but the Bible spoke with authority and there in the book of Daniel is Belshazzar.

And those are we could say are peripheral to the aspects of faith but I do think it is good at times to understand that have that simply it is there, the Bible stands, we don't have to worry about archaeologists will uncover in relation to the Scripture we are not to worry about that, the Scriptures speak with authority.

The Scriptures also have authority because it is God's final revelation to man.

We expect no other revelation from God. In fact Paul says in [Galatians 1:8](#) if an angel comes and preaches another gospel let him be cursed. It is God's final revelation to man and that gives the Scripture authority. I would like to think now what does the authority of the Scriptures do for us? How does it relate to our lives? Is it more than just a matter of interest, it is more than a matter of intellect but what is the practical aspect? I believe that the authority of the Scriptures give us a solid point of reference.

The Bible is not relative, the Bible is a book of absolutes and I believe that if we understand man, if we understand how God speaks of man and outlines the needs of man in the Scriptures we understand that mankind was designed to live with absolutes. And what we see in the world today is where people tried to live without absolutes and to deny the authority of the Scriptures.

Man was designed to live with absolutes otherwise there is an internal vacuum of reality that man cannot live with and that's why you had people going to such great extremes to find what they say is meaning in life, it is because all things become relative. But the Bible and the authority of Scriptures give us that point of reference. Without the absolutes of Scripture man you can say is lost in a sea of relativism where finally nothing makes sense and that is where the philosophy of man leads, where finally nothing makes sense any more.

It gives us a solid point of reference, it gives us answers to the three most important questions of life. Where did I come from? Why am I here? And where am I going?

You see it gives us that reference so we can understand and it helps us to understand life and to make sense of life in relation to eternity.

The Scriptures also have the authority and the power to expose man for what he really is.

This also is important in our lives to understand the authority of the Scriptures. The Scripture has the authority to condemn us and to bring guilt. It tells us that man's problem is sin and also with that I believe it gives a person of sense of we say being found out, where looking into the Scriptures, where there is a guilt of sin. And you know how it is before a person has surrendered their heart to the Lord it wasn't really enjoyable to read the Scriptures you know and feeling that condemnation, it felt like God was frowning upon them through the Scriptures.

Well that is the authority of the Scripture to condemn us because of sin. It is that sense of being found out.

It is like the story of the Chinese man that was given a Bible by a missionary. One day he brought the Bible back and he told missionary that he did not want the Bible anymore and the missionary asked him why? And in a literal translation he said this: "Every time I read it kicks me!" And isn't that what the Bible can do to us? It has the authority to condemn, to expose us for what we really are, to realize that there is somebody that knows something about us that maybe nobody else knows and it is just there and it points into our hearts.

The scriptures tell us with authority the answer to man's need. It reveals what God planned to do about this sin business and it reveals the Lordship of Jesus Christ, it reveals the provision of Jesus Christ and it speaks of that with authority that the answer is repentance and forgiveness, and that is with authority.

**Romans 11:33** I think here is where Paul's heart just bursts forth, opens in expressing the thrill of this thought where it says: O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

You see the provision of God and the Scripture can give that with authority.

The Scripture also has the authority to justify and sanctify a man. If we meet the conditions for salvation we can know the acceptance of God is assured.

We have that in **1 John 1:9**: If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins. And the Bible says that with all the authority of God that when we meet the conditions in confession God will meet the conditions and do what He says He will do in the forgiveness of sins. And we accept that tonight by faith, we believe and accept that.

Well also there is the authority of the Scripture that gives us security.

**Hebrews 13:19** speaks of Christ as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast and which entries in two that within the veil.

In times of grief or loneliness or possibly discouragement the Scriptures give us security and give us hope, give us strength.

But in the last one in relation to the authority of the Scriptures we must remember tonight that no one will ultimately escape the authority of the Scriptures.

We are solemnly warned of the consequences for it nor in his claims. Jesus said: The word that I have spoken the same shall judge him in the last day. **John 12:48**.

Not only does the Scripture have authority today in relation to our lives and the claim of God upon our lives and the responsibility and accountability we have to Him but you know the authority of the Scriptures reaches right into eternity and right unto the day of judgment where we face it again in judgment. And it shall judge us in the last day.

Tonight the question for us before God is this: What does the authority of the Scriptures mean to you, to me? And how am I in my life relating to the authority of the Scriptures that God has given to us? Do the Scriptures bring rest to you? Do they bring comfort to you? Or do the Scriptures make you feel condemned? make you feel like running away and hiding? Tonight it is a question that we must each answer before God.

We would like this evening to give an invitation to anyone here that feels the condemnation of God upon their life because of maybe that feeling of being found out, the feeling that the eyes of God are upon you and that He is not satisfied with your life. Is your heart right with God? Is my heart right with God?

That is the question we must answer before God here tonight and everyday.

## HOW THE BIBLE CAME TO BE

The Bible did not just simply happen; nor has it been preserved by accident or without effort. It came about, in part, to preserve the truths that were orally passed from generation to generation. Every copy of the early Bible had to be tediously copied by hand. There was no printing press of any kind. The writing was done on scrolls, perhaps about thirty feet long. These were unrolled, often on the floor, to read. The Bible was written over a period of 1100 years.

The first person mentioned in the Bible as writing down God's commands was Moses, who lived about 1500 B.C. Some have scoffed at the idea that Moses could have written about the creation, the creation being long before Moses' time. Herein, the Bible is set apart from all other writings. The Bible is written by God-inspired writers. It took 1100 years until what we now know as the Old Testament was finished.

While there were approximately forty men who put the text of the Old Testament into writing, Scripture points out that the true author of the Bible is God. In almost every book of the Bible, the human writers assert that their words are the words of God. The biblical writers all believed themselves to be instruments for God's teaching and the spreading of His gospel. These men were inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit to spread the message of God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

God chose each one of these writers specifically to tell a unique part of the divine message. We have the Bible today because God used people who desired His will, above their own, to deliver His message. The Bible came to us through believers who were called to tell of God's great love, as well as those things that are pleasing and displeasing to Him (2 Peter 1:21). At least some of the New Testament was actually letters written and sent to the churches and to ministers. One example: In Paul's letter to Timothy, he wrote the following: "The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring it with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments" 2 Timothy 4:13.

The Bible was first divided into chapters and verses around A.D. 1200. This work was not divinely inspired. Several different men divided the Scriptures into chapters and verses over a period of years. The idea behind it was to make scripture passages easier to find. The system we see commonly today was put into place by Robert Estienne, or Stephanus, who used the numbered verse system when printing the Bible in 1555, which is

less than five hundred years ago. The Geneva Bible version (an English version published in Paris, 1560), preceded the famous King James Version. This is the numbering system nearly all Bible versions have used ever since.

Canonization of the Bible occurred over a period of many years. To canonize the Scriptures means that a group of believers, or the church, studied the writings to decide which ones were divinely inspired and should be included in the Bible as we know it today. The book of Thomas was not included because it was felt it contained unsound doctrine and, therefore, was not divinely inspired. The sixth and seventh Books of Moses were excluded because they contained occult practices and other questionable things. In fact, it is questioned if Moses actually wrote them. And even if he did, they are not considered divinely inspired. The books of the Apocrypha were deemed as not divinely inspired and are not included. It upholds Judaism and some of its practices.

There are at least ten or more writings that were never canonized into the Bible, because they, obviously, were not written by divine inspiration. They bear such names as The Gospel of Adam and Eve, The Testament of Joseph, The Gospel of Judas (which upholds him as a good man and ends with the betrayal scene), and others. There are ultra conservative groups today that believe only the four Gospels were divinely inspired, and the rest of the Bible was written by good writers and are good reading but are not written by divine inspiration.

Thirty-nine books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New Testament were eventually accepted as the divinely inspired writings of the Bible. It is interesting to note that the New Testament is arranged in the same order as the plan of salvation. The closure of the canon reflects a belief that revelation to man has ended (as far as Scripture is concerned), and thus the inspired texts could be gathered into a complete and authoritative compilation. No more may be added. Bible scholars call the Bible a closed canon.

It is not possible to prove that the Bible is authentic to those who do not believe it.

It is not needful to prove that the Bible is authentic to those who do believe it.

*Brother Eli S*

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Names are taken for granted. Everyone has a name. Some names have a meaning rooted in a given ethnic language, while others have no particular significance of themselves. However, behind every name, contemporary or old, is a person whose spirit, character, and conduct are identified with that name. It is the person behind the name that makes it precious or reviled.

In the positive and pleasant sense, it is the goodness and self-sacrificing nature of the person that makes their name precious to others. For this reason, a mother's name is often thought of as the sweetest name on earth. It matters not whether it's an old fashioned name or newfangled; it's the love and genuineness of the person that makes it dear. The closeness between a husband and wife also proves this truth.

The Scriptures record several occasions where Heaven named the person. The most notable of these is the Saviour. An angel appeared to Joseph, and said, "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:20-21).

In the case of Jesus, it is clear that His name was chosen by Heaven because its meaning spells out His mission: "He shall save his people from their sins." But unless the work of the Lord unto salvation becomes an experiential knowledge in one's heart, the name of Jesus remains only a historical matter. But upon repentance, when one has believed in Jesus and has experienced the forgiveness of sins and the new birth, that Name becomes precious. It is of utmost meaning when one says, "He saved me from my sins."

In the Latin American cultures, many boys are named Jesus. This is sometimes reduced to a nickname. While not disrespecting any person's name, in this instance the name of Jesus means no more than any other common name. But when anyone with the name of Jesus in Mexico or South America finds salvation, the name of the Saviour takes on a completely different meaning. It means forgiveness, grace, and power over sin. After finding salvation through Jesus' blood, that name should continue to be precious and become ever more meaningful to the believer. The above quoted verse says that Jesus came to "save his people from their sins." His very name signifies that. Who are those people? Christ being born of Jewish lineage, the Hebrew stock would have been "his people." But the Scrip-

tures give another dimension also: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" John 1:11-12.

Thus we see that true believers in His name have become "his people."

The Lord continues to "save ... from their sins" those who are truly His people. The Scriptures teach a conditional security, the condition being abiding in Christ (John 15:4-8) and obedience to the Holy Spirit (note Jeremiah 7:23-24). This does not subtract, though, from Christ's power to keep us from falling and preserve us from evil (Jude 24). As an example, it is often questioned how many times one has been spared from harm and accident and didn't realize it. Likewise, what believer fully realizes how much the Holy Spirit has interposed the power of Jesus' name between us and Satan designs? In this way, that Name is saving us from sin and evil.

Believers bring their petitions, and thanksgiving, to the Father in Jesus' name. The Lord taught His people to do so (John 14:13). This should be done with spiritual understanding (1 Corinthians 14:15), not just in mere formality. His name is synonymous with the favor of the Father because He pleased Him so; whereas fallen mortals have no merit or goodness to plead. Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" Matthew 28:18. Thus, Peter said to a crippled beggar, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" Acts 3:6. Peter himself had no power, but he appealed to the power and authority of the name of Jesus. The apostle Paul said to an evil spirit in a young lady, "I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour" Acts 16:18.

The church of God must be governed, which of necessity requires authority. Paul told the Ephesians elders, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" Acts 20:28. This oversight and feeding is done by the power and authority resident in Jesus' name. There is no other name that obligates men to repent and do right (Acts 4:12). Neither is there any other name that heals and comforts like that of Jesus (Malachi 4:2).

When a dignitary of a national government is introduced to an audience, protocol dictates that everyone stands in recognition of his position. His position or name carries the power and authority of his country. There is

coming the Day of all days when all men shall kneel down, not stand, at the name of Jesus. Because Christ "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross ... God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow" Philippians 2:8-10.

There are details concerning the Day of Judgment that one can only imagine. It will be both terrible and glorious at once. The kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him (Revelation 1:7), while the righteous shall rejoice (Luke 21:28). There will be no need of an introduction when He appears in the clouds through the parted skies. But could it be that from millions and billions of lips will come that name, "Jesus!"? Then shall every knee bow at His name, the ungodly in terror and utter subjection but the righteous in worship and anticipation.

What's in a name? If it's the name of the Son of God, the answer is, "Everything."

"The scriptures state that a man deviseth his own way. For this reason, man ought to check his ways and see if they balance with God's order or whether too much power is flowing his way. Life needs to be checked with the teachings of Jesus and His apostles to see if it balances with God's way." —*Selected Editorial courtesy "The Messenger of Truth"*



### **OFFENSE** – *Brother Galen.*

I would like to share some thoughts on offense. Satan is having far too much success in causing spiritual weakness and discouragement among the children of God today. It is sad to say that some have made shipwreck of their faith and will face eternity with this sin in their hearts. That this sin would be on the increase and abounding in the last time is borne out in Jesus' words, "And then shall many be offended" Matthew 24:10.

Today we use the word offend, or offended, to mean hurt or wounded feelings. It is an emotional response that occurs when something at the seat of our affection has been violated. In the Scripture the word offend includes a broader meaning and usage than the way we use it today. The words stumbling block or stumbling stone are used to mean the same thing. The temptation for offense is part of our human experience; it is around us like water surrounds a boat. It is a pressure that is always there and finds its

way into a crack. Jesus said, "It is impossible but that offenses will come" Luke 17:1. Offense comes most often in our closest social circles. So it seems that in our close interaction as a brotherhood, we have an environment that lends itself to offenses.

"For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company" Psalm 55:12-14.

### *Causes*

The cause of offense can be real or imagined, intentional or unintentional. Offenses can be laid in our childhood that we carry into life. Some can survive our conversion experience.

I feel that being offended is a condition of the heart. Given the right circumstances, the heart is susceptible not only to a spirit of offense but to many others as well. We have the parable of the heart that was empty, swept, and garnished. Because of its emptiness, it was open to many spirits. Oh, the peril of an empty heart!

"Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!" Luke 17:1. Can a truly humble person offend others? When I begin to leave off the graces and attributes that accompany salvation and give in to the baser inclinations of the flesh, when, because of my will and impatience and selfishness, I cause offense in another, I will stand condemned by this verse.

Let us be honest. We can cause offense, as well as be offended, and most offended people will offend. We are to be people with gracious words, and yet many offenses are given unintentionally, unknowingly, and unwillingly. Many times we are totally unaware that we have caused an offense. It may exist totally in the imagination of the offended one. In that case, we are not under the condemnation of the above verse.

So then, what do we do when it comes to our attention that we have caused offense? Our first reaction might be, "I didn't do anything wrong! I didn't mean that!" or, "I was in the right, and if he or she has a problem, that's for them to deal with!" But when we consider that the eternal flame is the judgment of offense, can we just ignore it? If some brother loses the way because I offended, where will I stand? To have caused offense is a very serious thing. We will need to reconcile with our brother before our

communion or fellowship with God can be complete. We cannot look on things as totally the other party's fault.

"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" Matthew 5:23-24. I do not know how far this goes, but perhaps our gifts could be our abilities, callings, and responsibilities. Reconciliation is of more importance to God than the gift I am bringing. "And all things are of God, who ... hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" 2 Corinthians 5:18. When we can go in humility to the one we have offended and when we have done what we could to reconcile with him, then God will give us rest and peace.

Can we set a guard in our interaction with one another so that we do not lay the foundation for offense? "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children" 1 Thessalonians 2:7. "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" Ephesians 4:32.

I believe that in every Christian's life, a time will come when he will encounter an experience that will take him to the depth of his faith. Quite often this can be the temptation to become offended. In the parable of the sower, Jesus said that some seed would fall on earth that had no depth, and when tribulation or persecution would come, they would be offended.

### ***How do we recognize and deal with offense?***

There are signs that indicate we are offended. Some of these may be:

~ Looking for the faults of others in order to bring them down to our level. We find that almost everything a certain person does is wrong or done out of a wrong motive.

When that person does right, we attribute it to an ulterior motive.

When this person speaks, we challenge him.

We try to avoid the company of that one, and when we are around him, we are closed and withdrawn.

~ Offense is progressive. When we allow it in, it brings the spirits of criticalness, jealousy, ill will, slander, backbiting, inferiority, anger, harshness, and aggressiveness. It attaches itself to an "object"; we "eye" the person and focus on him and his faults while looking for things to support our way of thinking. We try to bring them down. If something good is said about

our object, we bring up the other side and disqualify the good.

Cain and Abel are an example of this, perhaps the first recorded case of offense. God told Cain, "... sin lieth at the door ... and thou shalt rule over him" Genesis 4:7. Another example is found in 1 Samuel 18:9, "And Saul eyed David from that day forward."

~ Offense builds a wall. We avoid the person or persons and tend to be withdrawn and uncommunicative. "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong [walled] city: and their contentions [offenses] are like the bars of a castle" Proverbs 18:19. Walls keep those out who want in, and bars keep those in who want out. We might think we are protecting ourselves, but the wall is between God and us; so the Lord cannot be on our side. We become captive to our offense.

~ An offended person thinks he is misunderstood and feels compelled to tell his side and push his point. Offense distorts our thinking. We act unrealistically and without sound reasoning. It is something we brood on. When asked the cause for the offense, there is little to say. This spirit seeks support and builds strange friendships that are close with little in common except shared offenses. "Looking diligently ... lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" Hebrews 12:15.

~ Offense will affect the way we act and speak, even the way we vote in church. Offense defies our reason; we cannot reason it away. Even though the offended one tells himself, "What happened really wasn't all that bad," or, "I shouldn't be bothered by such a little thing," or, "I know he didn't mean it bad," the offense remains. Reasoning gets us nowhere; we have to repent of it, not just forgive. Reasoning drives offense underground, muting the symptoms, but leaves us weak and discouraged. We will have to face our heart's condition to be healed.

~ Perhaps the greatest danger lies in denying that I am offended. Why would I deny it? To admit offense is to also admit that the views I have promoted may be tainted. This brings a fear that they will be discounted altogether. Admitting offense takes humility, for it is an admission of pride. I will have to let go of my opinions and my perceived rights.

It will be most helpful to recognize the early signs of offense and, with God's help, admit it. "For the word of God is ... a discerner [revealer] of the thoughts and intents of the heart" Hebrews 4:12. We will need that "Discerner"! We will need to repent of our heart's condition and come to the re-

alization that we are the ones who need forgiveness, not the ones we have been focusing on.

***What can we do to avoid offense?***

~ We will need to resign ourselves totally to God. He knows the circumstances in life we now face, and He cares, sees, and understands. Yes, He has allowed them, and He has allowed them for our good. We are the lively stones for His temple in heaven, and here we are chiseled and made ready by the circumstances we face.

~ We will need to guard our hearts and thoughts. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" Proverbs 4:23. And we will need to forgive. "Forgiveness is the key which unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hatred. It breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness."

Written with a desire to help in the struggle against offense.



***PRIDE***

"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:6 says, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

"We hear much of a decent pride, a becoming pride, a noble pride, a laudable pride. Can that be decent of which we ought to be ashamed? Can that be becoming, of which God has set forth the deformity? Can that be noble which God resists and is determined to abase? Can that be laudable, which God calls abominable?" (quotes are from A Dictionary of Thought, copyright expired).

Pride is taking the credit to ourselves for a God-given talent. Lucifer was a superior angel before he became proud. Pride is thinking higher or lower of ourselves than we ought to think. We fight pride when someone develops a superior ability in something they have never excelled in but in which we have always excelled. If we cannot love them, pride rules our life.

"Let me give you the history of pride in three small chapters. The beginning of pride was in heaven. The continuance of pride is on earth. The end of pride is in hell. This history shows how unprofitable it is."

Dignity (quality or state of being worthy or honored) and love are two words that people use to define pride. A virtuous woman works well with her children and housework. Her husband loves her dignity. If he does not thank God for her, he may boast far above measure. When God, the living, is thanked, then love is a blessing. Loving dignity is not pride but a command of God. We must take no credit to ourselves. Expressing gratitude for another's dignity (state of being worthy) without any base interest lurking at the bottom of it is love.

We as Christians sometimes fear to perform in a dignified manner because we fear we will become proud. "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you" Hosea 10:12. When we perform in dignity, God blesses us. We then have two choices: to let our hearts be filled with love and thankfulness to Him, or to be filled with pride because of what we think we did in our own strength. When we think our strength is more than it is, that is the devil whispering in our ears. We must then resist the devil, so he will flee from us. Thank God! Our strength is even greater than we think when God is behind us!

Following are questions with references, first printed by Gospel Publishers in 1965. *[start quotation]*

—What is pride? It is an exaggerated self-esteem, arrogance, or the showing of this in behavior. —What is the Word of the Lord with reference to it? "Be not proud" Jeremiah 13:15

—Why shouldn't people be proud? "An high look, and a proud heart ... is sin" Proverbs 21:4 —What is God's attitude toward a proud look? He hates a proud look. Proverbs 6:16-17

—What does pride come from? "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" 1 John 2:16

—What caused Satan's downfall? His exaltation and pride. Isaiah 14:12-15

—What are some evidences of pride? Looks - Proverbs 6:17, vain display Isaiah 3:16-24; 1 Peter 3:3, seeking for applause, Acts 12:21-23, seeking honour of men, 1 Samuel 15:30, John 5:44, high-mindedness, 2 Timothy 3:4, lovers of themselves, 2 Timothy 3:2, boastful speech, Psalm 12:3, not being easily entreated, James 3:17, loving pleasure more than loving God, 2 Timothy 3:4.

—What are some of the fruits of pride? Contention, Proverbs 13:10, exal-

tation, Luke 14:11, Matthew 11:23, conforming to the world, Romans 12:2, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, 2 Timothy 3:4.

—Is ornamentation of the body and of apparel considered pride? Yes. Read Isaiah 3:16-26.

—How serious is pride in the eyes of God? The sin of pride is listed among the "death" sins. "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud" 2 Timothy 3:2.

—Does the Bible approve of any form of pride? It does not.

—Do not people say that we must have a little pride about ourselves? They may say so, but cleanliness, respectability, and the like are not pride but common decency.

—What of people who say they are proud of their children, their homes, and so forth? They either are not aware of what they say and don't mean it, or they should repent of being proud.

—How then shall we look upon pride? "Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished" Proverbs 16:5. God makes no reservation for pride. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" James 4:6.

—What comes before destruction? "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" Proverbs 16:18. *[end quotation]*

None have more pride than those who think they battle none. What? Is the devil dead? The Word of God is our sword. It is not designed to be idle. God blesses us when we do His will. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" 2 Timothy 4:7-8). A perfect performance is one in which we get up when the devil knocks us down. Thank God for prayer!

An example

"At a wedding a father smiles proudly at his daughter." A proud smile is a conceited smile, according to the Bible. The terms we use today are not always accurate. A proud look must be repented of when we realize we are guilty of it.

"At a wedding a father smiles fondly at his daughter." His heart is overflowing with love for the spiritual young man at her side. He has thanked God often for the groom's spirituality and has expressed his gratitude with family and friends. This is the pure, bubbling-over love, joy, peace, grati-

tude smile; when God sees this smile, He smiles, too.

We see the pride of the world's education system. We say that in eight years our children learn more than some do in public schools in twelve. Some have boasted of how quickly Mennonites learn. Boasters may not realize they are boasting, but this pride must be repented of when God imputes the error of this boast to the heart.

We have seen God in our education system. We learn of God and how to follow Him from our teachers. After eight or nine years of schooling, we are taught a trade by godly brethren with godly principles. For this, our hearts are filled with love, joy, and gratitude, not for our good works but for God's help in making this happen.

Pain and pride are brothers. We feel this when our works come under test. Maybe a brother tells us that what we are doing is not wise. We feel the devil attack us with the demon of pride. We must choose God, and love will destroy the pain of pride. Then it is God who must receive the glory for the victories we have won!

*Brother Chad*



### **CALLING SIN WHAT IT IS** *by Brother Jake*

Romans 7:13 reads thus: "Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful."

All avid Bible readers are aware of the sins listed in Romans 1, Galatians 5, 2 Timothy 3, and several other places in the Bible. There is little difficulty in pronouncing things sinful when the evidences are clear. However, it appears that the less evident inconsistencies of practice are much harder to discern and identify as being sinful. It, therefore, becomes increasingly difficult to repent of them and to sanctify us from these impurities of the flesh and spirit.

Part of the reason for this is that our modern religious vocabulary offers easy euphemisms (less offensive substitutes) when speaking about the sins and different shades of inconsistencies among us today. Terminology in use today offers synonyms that make evil sound less serious and sinful. Together with this, we are often quite willing to let exceptions, allowances, and consideration of prevailing family traits lessen the gravity of our

judgment of sin. Several mild examples follow:

\*A man says, "I'm not curious; I just want to know everything." Therefore he keeps on being a busybody at the cost of others' inconvenience.

\*A disgruntled boy, after being called to the table at an unwanted time, is asked, "So, you are hungry?" He answers, "No, I'm not hungry. I just don't want to eat right now!"

\*Someone is asked, "Are you perhaps somewhat envious?" His answer, "I'm not envious; I just want what others have!"

\*Another one, who is questioned as to whether some greed is showing, answers, "I'm not greedy; I just want more."

\*A lady with an excessive amount of trinkets standing around is asked, "Is there perhaps some pride in your life?" She answers, "I'm not proud; I'm a person who loves beauty."

The world is in no position to help us. By its standards, the murderer is judged to be temporarily insane or psychologically unfit to stand judgment. Adultery is called free love and, therefore, justifiable, especially if the marriage is not working smoothly. The drunkard is a pitied alcoholic, temporarily unaccountable for his actions. And the greedy are considered good managers.

The law courts have lost their sense of true justice. They are often incapable of serving sentence to the offenders because of opposing laws that stress human rights. Not too many years back, divorce was not talked about openly; it was whispered mouth to ear. Bankruptcy was an evil seldom heard of, and certainly not among Christian people. Check fraud was a very serious offense that the law courts dealt with quite severely. Today, these sins are so commonly reported and read about in the daily news that they hardly get one's attention anymore.

The enemy of our souls has fabricated fashionable substitutes for various Christian virtues. These camouflage the true condition of the heart. Whenever possible, Satan offers tolerance for true charity, a quieted conscience for the peace of God, and regret instead of repentance. He suggests self-pity and tears for godly sorrow, self-discipline for the grace of God, conformation or reformation instead of transformation. He recommends positive thinking for faith, a foreign spirit for the true Spirit, goodness for holiness, and personal polish for true benevolence. The list could go on. The devil peddles his wares unabashed, seeking an entrance to the hearts of the

unwary and ignorant and even to those who know better.

What is the answer for those who are true Christians? Surely, all is not lost! The Bible stands as our monument of truth. Its undeniable examples of righteousness and truth are still entirely applicable today. The account of Cain is a stark reminder that our unchanging God will never condone murder. Telling a lie is never going to be any more acceptable than it was in Ananias and Sapphira's day. Adultery is shameful and very sinful and will bring its consequences, as seen in David's case. The rich today are still advised to sell all that they have and give to the poor and then follow Jesus, as the rich young ruler was told. The Lord still resists the proud as He did Nebuchadnezzar in his day.

The Achan's of today will eventually be found out, and what people whisper in each other's ears will finally be shouted upon the housetops. We are well advised to diagnose our tendencies and activities properly, since every word and deed will eventually come to the light. It will be to no avail to try to hide on the Day of Judgment. No rocks can cover the transgressions of mankind, now or ever.

If we find it hard to name our sin or to diagnose it properly, a bit of help from our spiritual brethren, who know us well, could bring us onto the right track.

Are we willing to call the all too familiar girl-boy relationships carnal courtship? We all understand the tendency that is built into the human makeup. But the teasing and pairing off in school or after church services can easily lead into sin. It needs to be recognized for what it is. Evasiveness and covering up by our children is serious enough to be checked before a habit is formed. Different forms of fleshly entertainment do little or nothing for the welfare of the soul. Reasonable restraint on our youth and children strengthens Christ's teaching on self-denial in their lives and prepares them for stronger Christian living in adulthood.

The answer to sin is true repentance and the precious blood of our Savior. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" Proverbs 28:13. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" 1 John 1:7.

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