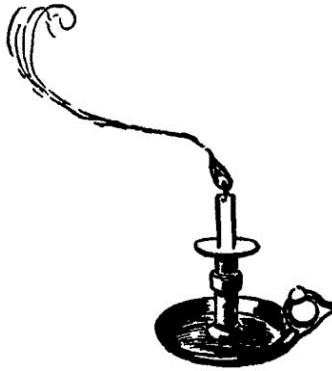


THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

What Do You Know About Promises?

Scripture has many promises given by God, some for a specific purpose, time, place or person, others were more of a general nature both for Israel of old and God's people today. Then there are also references of promises made and broken by people, Scripture also has a good deal of advise as to how we are to view our own promises. Indeed we can learn a great deal from these Scripture verses and our prayer is that you may use them as a study tool for your personal benefit and increase your knowledge of how we are to consider promises, you may find even more promises that speak to your heart and will bless your relationship with and growth in Christ.

- ✚ God's covenant with Noah—Genesis 9:8-17
- ✚ Abraham and Sarah showed lack of faith in God's—Genesis 16:1-3
- ✚ Remembering God's brings peace—Genesis 21:7
- ✚ Why it is important to keep yours—Genesis 29:28-30; 47:29-31; Leviticus 27:9-10; Numbers 30:1-2; Matthew 5:33-37
- ✚ Danger of rash vows—Genesis 31:32; Leviticus 5:4
- ✚ Judah determined to keep his—Genesis 44:32-33
- ✚ Trusting in God's—Genesis 50:24; Joshua 14:6-12
- ✚ God's promise to bring Israel out of Egypt—Genesis 50:24 ; Ex 6:6-8
- ✚ God fulfills his at the right time, always—Exodus 2:23-25
- ✚ Pharaoh broke his to Moses—Exodus 9:27-34
- ✚ Preparing for fulfillment of God's promises—Exodus 12:11
- ✚ Israelites forgot their promises to God—Exodus 19:5-8
- ✚ Important to learn about God's promises—Joshua 21:43-45
- ✚ Be careful what you promise God in prayer—1 Samuel 1:11
- ✚ God's conditional and unconditional ones to David—1 Kings 2:3-4
- ✚ Only as good as the person making them—Isaiah 36:5
- ✚ Comfort in knowing God keeps his promises—Mark 1:2-3
- ✚ Hollow promises of money—Luke 16:13
- ✚ How well you keep them based on your level of commitment—John 13:37-38

Most important of all remember that God's promises bring contentment in every situation—Philippians 4:10-14.

J.v.L.



From the Pulpit

*Separation – Non-Conformity
The Doctrine With A Promise*

One of the most challenging aspects of Scriptural Christianity, or discipleship if you wish, for those who come into contact with true Anabaptism, and I define that as that faith lived out by those early Anabaptists who gave their lives for their faith, is this area of separation from the world and unto God commonly referred to as non-conformity – Romans 12:2

And that, brothers and sisters, we can only achieve if we separate ourselves from the world, I am not promoting isolation from all that is around us for no man is island unto himself as someone once remarked but rather we are to follow the directions of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ to be salt and light in the world without succumbing to the world and for that we need each other. Every day.

Separation.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. 2 Corinthians 6:17-18

I believe there are a lot of people in this world who are making their way along through life not realizing what they are headed for and I think it is important that as children of God we have a right focus and a careful devotion to the Lord that causes us to hear and obey his word which will deliver us in our present walk with him and deliver us in the future as we are faithful to him.

I draw your attention also to the following scriptures

2 Corinthians 6:1-2 ^{1 (KJV)} We then, *as workers together with him*, beseech *you* also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. ² (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)

2 Corinthians 6:11-18 ^{11 (KJV)} O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. ¹² Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. ¹³ Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto *my* children,) be ye also enlarged. ¹⁴ Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? ¹⁶ And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷ Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, ¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Also 2 Corinthians 7:1 ^{1 (KJV)} Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

God's call to separation.

I would like to raise a number of questions in relation to this thought this morning: The first one is: What does it mean to be separate? He says here in our text verse 17: Come out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord.

Now this word separate the English word interestingly the Greek root here means to "set off by boundary" and a word a Greek word that this comes from is the word **horizo** from which we have the English word horizon, it means to mark out or bound.

When you think about the horizon what do you think of?

Well a distinct line of separation between the earth and the sky and in thinking about that it is what God is calling us to do, He is calling us to be separate, to be set off by a boundary, God has a line between right and wrong and wants everyone to be on the side of the right, He wants us to be separated from the side of the wrong.

A 2nd question we raise is: Who or what has God called us to be separate from? What is the focus, who or what are we to be separate from?

Verse 17 basically answers that question: He says come out from among *them*. So who is the *them*?

Well I think if we look carefully over these verses that it would take us back to verse 14, the antecedent of the pronoun *them* is *unbelievers*, be ye not unequally yoked with *unbelievers*. Perhaps it would have reference also to some of the other terms used here but maybe that is the most direct one. God has called us to be separate from unbelievers.

Further in verse 17 God is calling us to be separate from the unclean thing. Be ye separate saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing. Verse 14 uses the term unrighteousness, what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, that is the unclean thing unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness, darkness is the unclean thing.

And in 1 Peter 2:9-10 we have this: But ye are a chosen Generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you *out of what? Why* out of darkness into his marvellous light: ¹⁰ Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Sin creates a lot of darkness and there is much darkness in the world today because of the unclean thing. Verse 15 speaks of Belial, what concord (*agreement*) has Christ with Belial? There is no agreement between them, Belial is a devil, and perhaps this focuses on the devil of devils, Satan himself. And then verse 15 refers to an infidel, this would be a focus as well, being with the unbelievers in the unclean thing.

Verse 16 speaks of idols: what agreement has the temple of God with idols? You say: "Well we don't have idols!" Maybe we don't fall down to wood and stone as many do but it is equally possible for us to worship things above the Lord himself.

And in verses 17-18 he says come out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you and be a Father unto you. If God was not our father He is offering to be our father. Who was our father then if God was not?

Well John 8:44 Jesus said to the Jews: "Ye are of your father the devil and the lusts of your father you will do."

So if we are walking among the unbelievers, if we are living in the unclean thing then the devil is our father and then again in chapter 1 verse 7 this unclean thing he describes here as "all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" 2 Corinthians 7:1, not only the external things that are very obvious to other people, the corruption that we can enter into, but also the internal corruptions that can exist in any one of our hearts. God is calling us to be separate from unbelievers and the unclean thing.

The 3rd question in relation to God's call to separation:
Who or what is God calling us to be separated unto?

Well verses 17 and 18 make it plain. Verse 17 He says come out and be separate and I will receive you and will be a Father unto you. So God is calling us to be separated unto himself. He is calling us to be separated from unbelievers and from sin and to be separated unto himself. In Corinthians chapter 7 verse 1 He is calling us to be separated unto Holiness. Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. He is calling us to be a holy people.

A 4th question: Is it possible to follow God's call to separation with only one of these 2 aspects, that of being separated from sin and sinners and being separated unto God and holiness, is it possible to have one of those without the other?

I think the answer is obvious, we cannot be separated unto God without being separated from sin and sinners, God will not accept us if we are walking in corruption, God will not accept us. We cannot be separated unto God without being separated from sin and from sinners, it is the only to be separated unto God and holiness.

Suppose we tried the other way around, if we tried to be separate from sin and from sinners but we are not willing to separate ourselves unto God what will happen then?

We have our answer in Matthew 12:43-45 ^{43 (KJV)} When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. ⁴⁴ Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished. ⁴⁵ Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than

himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked Genesisera-tion.

The last state of that man is worse than the first. You know the scripture makes it plain here that that is what can happen to anyone of us if we tried to be separate from sin and sinners but not willing to separate ourselves un-to God, we are not willing to give ourselves over wholly to Him then we can look for trouble ahead as our last state will be worse than the first.

The 5th question is: Why is separation necessary? Why does God call us to come out from among them and be separate and touch not the unclean thing?

First of all because sin has separated us from God, we are distanced from God because of our own sin, because of our own corruptions. Of course the devil tries hard to persuade us that really we aren't so bad and that we haven't done that many things wrong, but God on the other hand in mercy and love reminds us that all have sinned and come short that glory of God, (Romans 3:23) and seeks to impress upon our minds the exceeding sinfulness of sin, how greatly our own corruptions have separated us from God. Sin has separated us from God and that is why it is necessary for us to separate ourselves from sin, we all have a sinful nature, we all have sinned, our basic inclination is towards darkness and away from God and so we need to separate ourselves from that.

Secondly separation is necessary because all sin leads to death.

What do you think would happen in this world if God would draw back and would not do anything to hinder man from sinning?

I believe what would happen in this world today if God would draw back and would not restrain evil, man would destroy himself. That is really one of the goals of the devil, whose goal is for man to destroy himself whether it be through taking one's own life or whether it be through taking the lives of others or whether it be through all kinds of corruption. All sin leads to death. So it is necessary for us to separate from sin and sinners because all sin leads to death.

That is true on a personal level as well even though a person in the midst of this world where God is restraining evil and God does have bring men into account for their actions the fact is that any sin leads to death, all sin leads to death. (James 1:15)

The soul that sinneth the Bible does not say might die rather it says that the soul that sinneth it shall die. (Ezekiel 18:4, 20).

Why is separation necessary?

Thirdly because God is holy and without holiness no man shall see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:4) It is a simple fact that no sin shall enter heaven. (Revelation 21:27) That applies to any one of us individually as much as it applies to anyone else, no sin shall enter heaven, God is holy and without holiness no man shall see the Lord and so we need to separate ourselves from sin and from sinners if we want to make it into His glorious presence.

Why is separation necessary? I will share one more answer, and you can add to these, it is because separation is a salvation issue, if we want to be saved, if we want to be in the presence of the Lord forever we must come out from among sinners and be separate. Acts 2:37-41, you may want to turn to that, these are words of the Peter to the multitude on the day of Pentecost you know how he declared unto them the gospel and helped them to understand their personal accountability for the death of Jesus Christ ^{37 (KJV)} Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? ³⁸ Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. ³⁹ For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call. ⁴⁰ And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. ⁴¹ Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

Verse 40, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. What does that mean this untoward generation?

Did you ever hear of scoliosis? It is in English word, it is the name of a physical problem, sometimes people have difficulty with their spine as a

result of which their spine develops an unnatural curvature and that is what scoliosis is. That English word comes from this Greek word skolios which means warped, winding or perverse. This untoward generation, this warped, winding or perverse generation, we know many men are bent on evil.

I realise that there are many sinners in this world today who aren't necessarily out and out to do a lot of sin, nevertheless they sin, but the call of the scriptures is to you and me save ourselves from this untoward generation and it is a call that we need to take seriously if we want to enter heaven.

Back to 2nd Corinthians 6:1: We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

How is that possible? How is it possible for someone to receive the grace of God in vain?

I tried earlier to give a picture to your minds when I said that many people in this world are heading toward an end that they don't realise, they are not paying attention. The picture is this, as you think of driving down the highway visualize a bridge across a body of water with a big section collapsed and here are people driving down the highway looking around enjoying the scenery, thinking about whatever they're thinking, as we likely do many times when we are driving down the highway, totally unaware of the danger that is ahead and just going full speed towards it. That is the picture to my mind in relation to many people that we see in the world, people who are headed toward destruction unaware of the danger that is ahead.

Now how can you and I receive the grace of God in vain? Well we come to God in repentance, we confess to him our sins and He washes them away through the blood of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. What happens to us then as we seek to walk with the Lord? Are we being faithful to him or are we headed back towards that broad road of destruction, where are we going in this life? You know the devil is constantly working to lead us back towards that broad road of destruction and it is all right with him if we became Christians so long as we go back to the mire, so long as we go back to the corruptions, and you know he doesn't really care so much whether we are the worst of sinners in our own eyes or not, it doesn't really

make much difference to the devil which kind of sinners we are as long as we are sinners, as long as we allow some unclean things in our lives. And that is how we can receive the grace of God in vain.

Think of how terrible it would be to become a Christian, walk with the Lord for a period of time, maybe 5, 10, 15, 20, 30, 50, 70 years, 80 or 90 years walking with the Lord and lose out by the way and in the end perish, with those whom we think we are separate from, is that not possible? Is that not possible as we think we are separate from sinners, to think we are separate from sin and at the same time be headed for the same end as they. I believe it is possible.

And so the warning, the invitation of Scripture is God's call to you and me to come out from among them and be separate and touch not the unclean thing. If we touched the unclean thing in any way what happens? You know the doctor who is performing an operation he has to be sterile, he probably put something over his hair, he has special gloves over his hands, they are sterile and if he touches anything that is unclean what happens, does it remain sterile? Well no. As soon as he touches anything that is unclean anything that is not sterile he becomes defiled and there is a danger of being infected by those germs.

Separation is a salvation issue. Save yourself from this untoward Genesisation. That is the message of the scripture, God is inviting you and me to come out from among them and be separate.

The 6th question is: When did separation begin and when will it end?

When did it begin, when was the very first separation? Well it was in heaven when Lucifer was cast out because of his pride.

Someone asked me at one time where did he get the temptation from? And I don't know the answer but if there is good then there can also be evil. We know that God is good and somehow there was that potential, at that time the devil wasn't the devil, he was Lucifer, son of the morning, a created Angel, created by God but he was lifted up with pride and that is when separation began. (Isaiah 14:12) Well you know if there's any pride in our hearts, if there is any pride in us, it will bring us under the same condemnation.

Now when will separation end? When will it end?

Well the Bible makes it plain that it will never end. God is going to create an eternal separation of the faithful from the wicked and the sinners from the saints, God is going to create an eternal separation of his people those who love Him and serve him faithfully from those who do not, the 2nd death.

Revelation 20:14: "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

Eternal separation from God will be the portion of all who disregard God's call to separation. God doesn't want you and me to be there, He wants us to be separated from sin and sinners, He does not want us to be separated with sin and the devil and sinners but He wants us to be separated from sin and so He calls us all: Come out from among them and be separate saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing.

The 7th question: How separate must we be from sin?

How closely you think that we should try to get to it? He says here touch not the unclean thing, doesn't that speak of how separate we should be from sin? Don't even touch it! And I have thought also of the words of Habakkuk 1:13, he was addressing God and said: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity." Cannot look on iniquity. How much closer can we afford to get to sin?

I think we all realise that if we try to see how close we can get to something without actually touching it you know that is a dangerous thing. Suppose we would try to see how close we can get to the fire without being burned, suppose we would try to see how close we can get to the edge of the brink without falling over, what is the merit of that, what's the point, what is the value? Why would we do that in a spiritual sense and try and see how close we can get to sin?

What do you think you would have done if you had been with Lot when Sodom and Gomorrah burned? Do you think you would have been tempted to go back and see how close you could get?

How separate must be from sin? Again the answer from the scripture is: Touch not the unclean thing.

The 8th question: How separate are we to be from sinners?

Perhaps we struggle enough with the other question: How separate are we to be from sin? Because the devil comes along and tries hard to persuade us that things are not as bad as God says they are. Yea has God said? (Genesis 3:1) Oh it is really not that way. And he is still doing that very much. I am sure you have felt his workings in your life, I have, he wants persuade us that it is really not so bad.

But I suppose perhaps that he works even more in this area of the question: How separate are we to be from sinners?

Jesus when praying for his disciples did not ask for them to be taken out of the world but instead asked his Father that He should keep them from the evil. (John 17:15).

The thought comes to my mind just now in relation to how separate must we be from sin? Should we make it our practice to just see how much we can see, maybe with our mobile phone? You probably have if you have a cellphone, if you haven't specifically asked to have Internet connection removed, you probably have it and you know if you have it, if the potential is there, if you pay for the service or if they have given it free to you for a short time, you can punch a few buttons and just see what is there. How close should we get to sin?

Well that is a dangerous path way to go down isn't it? The devil likes to work with the curiosity that is in us, that is a dangerous path way to go down, touch not the unclean thing. Isn't it easier to never start? Isn't easy to call in and tell them to make it where it won't work, they will do it, maybe you have to try 2 or 3 times to get the right person but they'll do it they will make sure that it won't work, and is and it much easier to do that than to see how far we can go down this line and then somehow get back and get things out of our mind that don't belong there, that will defile us.

Back to the question: How separate are we to be from sinners?

This is quite a question isn't it? Because we are in this world and it would be wonderful indeed if when we became children of God, God would just take us out of this world right away into his presence, wouldn't that be wonderful? Sure it would, but God hasn't chosen to do it that way and God has chosen to leave us here and test us and try us, the length of

time is up to him. I pray not that thou wouldst take them out of the world but that thou wouldest keep them from the evil. (John 17:15).

One brother summarized the Christian's relationship to the people of the world this way: It is threefold, Separation, Illumination and Evangelization.

Separation he explained as when confused sheep start over a cliff the individual sheep can only be saved by separating himself from the flock.

That is separation. You know we all are like sheep who have gone astray (Isaiah 53:6) and we are all headed for the cliff and unless we separate ourselves from the sinners who are headed towards the cliff we are going to fall over the brink with them. That is separation.

Illumination, in this world God does not take us away from sinners, He wants us, He instructs us to be involved, Ye are the light of the world, Ye are the light of the world. (Matthew 5:14)

Evangelization: Matthew 28:19-20: Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

I think that is a very good and interesting summary to the Christian's relationship to this world, how separate are we to be from this world?

Well there is separation yes, from the sinners to a certain degree, but not so separate that we are in the dens and the caves away from people, monks in monasteries, God doesn't really call us to live our lives in such a manner because He wants us to be the light of the world. It is Separation, Illumination and Evangelization.

Now when a people try to maintain Separation without the other two what does it end up being? When people try to maintain Separation without Illumination, without Evangelization what does it end up being? Well again according to the brother it tends to become Isolation.

And God has not called us to that. He hasn't called us like I said to live our lives in a monastery away from everyone else. Interestingly the fact of the matter is that there isn't any place where we can go on this earth where we

can get away totally from sin and sinners, it just isn't possible because we are all flesh and we are all subject to sin and we all can fail and this is something that even the monks in the monasteries and others that have done such things have discovered. One thing that we can't do is that we can't get away from ourselves and we can't get away from this old sinful nature that is in us and so we have to reckon with that wherever we go regardless of how many other people are around us.

I think that another thought that the brother quoted was that when a people try to maintain Illumination and Evangelization without Separation they simply gain Acculturation. They get mixed back into this world. There are many religious groups that are trying to do that, they are trying to be a light and they are trying to evangelize but they are not willing to be separate as the scriptures teach and the result is mixing right back in, Acculturation mixing right back into this world. Not everyone who ends up in hell will be an out and out sinner, is that right?

Many will say unto me in that day Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name done many wonderful works and in thy name cast out devils and in thy name done many wonderful works and then will I profess unto them: I never knew you, depart from me Ye that work iniquity. (Matthew 7:2-23)

How separate are we to be from sinners?

Well Jesus as He was in this world went to the publicans and sinners, however He never allowed himself to become defiled by them and so that is the call, that is the challenge to you and me. If we in this world are to be what God wants us to be we also cannot allow ourselves to become defiled by them, we cannot go along with them to the same excess of riot, they think it's strange the Bible says that Ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you. (1 Peter 4:4)

We cannot afford to get too close to sin, we cannot afford to get too close to sinners.

One thing you know, we do need to relate other people in this world, we do need to be light and salt and appeal to them to give their lives to the Lord Jesus, that is our call, that is our responsibility in this world, God has called us to that but we cannot afford to be defiled by sin. We cannot.

You know who are our closest friends, who do we spend the most time with, more specifically who are the ones most enjoy being with, is it people who are on their way to heaven or is it those of whom it could be questioned where they really end up? Is it those who are headed headlong for destruction, speeding on their way not thinking about the big hole in the bridge, you know not thinking about the danger that lies ahead of them.

It is a privilege that you and I by choice can enter into that relationship with God that many of us have here this morning but the challenge that I would like to hold before us is: Are we maintaining it? Are we truly separate from sin and from sinners? If God would call the time to end right now where would we stand, where would I stand, where would you stand? Would we be condemned or would we be in the presence of God forever?

One more question. What rewards has God promised to those that heed his call to separation?

Verses 17 and 18 (2 Corinthians 6). Wherefore come out from among them and be separate saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you. And I will receive you.

You know there are people in this world who reject us, who don't want anything to do with us if we stand for what is right, there are people who reject us. And even when we stand for what is right sometimes we might reject each other, we might do the wrong thing, we might scorn each other, we might belittle each other for doing what is right, that is not the way it should be but we are in this flesh and we can fail.

God will never do that, let's see how does the scriptures say that? He that believeth shall not be confounded. (1 Peter 2:6) he will not be put to the blush I think that is the thought according to Strong's. God will not shame us trusting him, He never will, He will always receive us, I will receive you He says, that is a promise from God, that is not from me that is from God. I will receive you. A wonderful promise isn't it? And will be a Father unto you.

Some of us no longer have a father on earth, some of us perhaps have seen in our own father a number of weaknesses, a number of things that we

wished were different. When God says I will be a Father unto you we know that there are no shortcomings in him being a father unto us but it is the fullness, the very best that anyone could be so He will be to us, I will be a father unto you and ye shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty.

God accepts us into this family wholeheartedly and there is no halfway business. Ye shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty. When you yield your heart to the Lord, when you confess your sins before God you experience that, the fact that God accepted you, you felt the assurance as you were delivered from a burden of sin and guilt and now as we continue to walk with the Lord do we continue to walk in obedience to him and experience his blessing? And you shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty, come out from among them and be Ye separate saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you and be a father unto you and you shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty.

So suppose it is the other way around, suppose we are contemplating, we have a choice before us and we know that this is an unclean thing, maybe it is an action, maybe it is a thought, maybe it is a word, it doesn't really make a lot of difference, we are making the choice, will I touch it or won't I? and we go ahead and touch it, we go ahead and touch it what happens then?

Well, condemnation, condemnation comes. Along with sin, along with touching the unclean thing comes condemnation.

Maybe it is temptation, you are facing the choice you are being tempted to do something that is wrong, to touch the unclean thing in your thoughts, to touch the unclean thing in your words, in your actions, there is a choice, you are being tempted and you call upon God to help you, ask him to deliver you from that, Lord, I don't want to think evil of my brother. I don't want to speak this evil word, I don't want to go on this downward path. We ask God to help us make the right choice. Ye shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty and I will receive you and be a father unto you and you shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty.

What blessing, what peace comes along with that!

In closing 2 Corinthians 6:18, “What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For Ye are the temple of the living God as God has said I will dwell in them and walk in them, I will be their God and they shall be my people.”

These promises are powerful and everyone of us here this morning can have a share in them. May God help us to heed his call to come out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord.



CONFUSION ABOUT LEGALISM

Although the word legalism does not appear in the Bible, it is amply portrayed in biblical history.

But what is it? What are its characteristics? Is insistence on obedience legalism? These are questions that need answers.

John could be called the apostle of love. John 13:34 and 35 expresses the message he often emphasized: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have loved one to another.” John’s teaching is precious to us, because love is the heart and soul of the Christian faith. Love is the grace the Holy Spirit implants in the soul of every new convert, and it gives warmth and life to our Christian experience. Interestingly, the apostle of love also vividly portrayed the urGenesisicy of obedience. He clearly understood that love is the wellspring of acceptable obedience. He repeatedly quoted Jesus’ words verifying this truth. “If ye love me, keep my commandments” John 14:15. “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love” John 15:10. Then in his first epistle: “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” 1 John 5: 2-3. At least ten times, John’s writings affirm the absolute necessity of obedience to Jesus and His commandments.

Other New Testament writers were not silent on the subject either. Matthew recorded Jesus’ teaching, “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings

of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock” Matthew 7:24. Doing Jesus’ teachings is obedience. The author of the Hebrews was inspired to write, “Follow . . . holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” Hebrews 12:14.

Holiness means being set apart to God and made pure. Unless we possess holiness, heaven will be barred to us. It is not achieved without obedience to God’s will. Who could imagine a holy, disobedient person? No one earns holiness; it is imputed to us by faith in the shed blood of Jesus. However, the evidence that holiness has been imparted to a believer is that it bears the fruit of practical, personal purity. Obedience is difficult, if not impossible, to those who have not surrendered all to Jesus by faith in His absolute rightness and a firm conviction of their own imperfection. To obey, we must come to the conviction that our own interests are less important than God’s will. Sometimes we may even obey out of fear of punishment. While such obedience has some merit, it is not the obedience the Apostle John knew. Fearful obedience has a certain amount of torment. Those who know nothing more are in peril of arriving at the judgment with their talent wrapped in a napkin. How many martyrs went to the stake driven by the fear that if they did not, they would go to hell? Rather, they surely were like Jesus, “who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame” Hebrews 12:2.

Some may fear that if they obey without fully understanding all the reasons for what they are asked to do, they are being legalistic. The faithful are obedient to the voice of God, because they fully believe in Him and trust Him. They welcome His direction whether it comes by direct inspiration from God, via their brethren, through the church, or from a written passage of Scripture. They are not free to question whether the direction given them is to their liking or not. They believe God knows best, and they want to obey Him.

Many claim to be obedient but are selective as to what they obey and that is not obedience. King Saul is an example of selective obedience. When Samuel questioned him about having fulfilled the Lord’s directive to totally destroy the Amalekites, he said, “Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord” 1 Sam. 15:20. Although he had destroyed the vast majority of them,

he had saved just a few trophies of his labors. God judged his actions as rebellion and stubbornness. It was enough to cost a budding king his kingdom.

Obedience and legalism are not to be confused.

Let us examine the sin of legalism. Legalism is the perennial peril of the serious religionist as well as to the conscientious Christian. By no means is this error confined to someone with a conservative viewpoint. Legalism is obedience to one's own sense of rightness. It is the fleshly substitute (with Satan's full support) for Genesisuine, God fearing righteousness. One caught in the snare of legalism is usually not lacking in zeal. He tends to be strong in his opinions and aggressive in promoting them. His sense of right and wrong is keenly honed. His confidence in others, therefore, is selective. Those of his party are lauded; but others who deviate from his understanding of the truth are dismissed or, worse, condemned and even easily judged to be lost. A legalistic person tends to feel quite confident of his stand with God, although some, unable to attain the standard they deem to be right, become discouraged and cynical.

Legalism and self-righteousness are two sides of the same coin. Not being born of the grace of God, those who are captured in its tentacles are subject to many ugly spirits. These include superiority, jealousy, criticalness, aggressiveness, and many other attending spirits. None of these attitudes bind them to their brethren with a sense of appreciation and confidence while their words may at times say otherwise, the deep feeling of their hearts is that they have little need of others' care and oversight. Legalism is often cloaked in fair speech. Those captured in it have a sense of rightness that is gratified by advocating truth as they understand it. Often, most of the concepts that a legalistic person embraces are not far from the truth. Yet, lurking in the shadows, one will see "private interpretations" and inconsistencies to Bible truths.

Legalism compares. While faithful believers go back to the solid benchmark of God's revealed truth, those who are legalistic must turn to reason to find their answers. Rather than comparing spiritual things with spiritual, legalism leads to comparing ideas, the practices of others, and what seems practical from one's own viewpoint. In short, it is a condition where the

light of Holy Spirit direction is obscured by one's own rightness. As the end time approaches, we hear voices urging Genesisly warning against legalism while they advocate freedom. Are those warnings based on deep respect and fear of God, or do they represent subtle resistance to complete surrender and obedience to Jesus?

Legalism is perilous to our salvation; obedience is essential.



FERVENT LOVE VERSUS TOLERATION

Above all things have intense *and* unfailing love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins [forgives and disregards the offenses of others].
 1 Peter 4:8^(AMPLIFIED)

To have the love of God in our hearts for each other is a blessing and a gift from our Lord. To continue in fervent love is possible, or Christ would be in the unreasonable position of commanding that we love one another. The burden of this article is to differentiate between fervent love and just tolerance of one another. A fervent heart and spiritual mind can feel and sense when the love of God flows in God's children. The basis for this thought is found in Matthew 24:12, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold," revealing a condition in the last times. Fervency is characterized by great warmth and earnestness of feeling, a fervent hope or prayer, intense and unfailing. This meaning of fervency stands out in contrast to love waxing cold. Christ says in the above verse that a loss of love would be on the increase.

In 2 Timothy, we read of perilous times coming upon us. These times will bring a loss of natural affection; men will be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. Fervent love for one another cannot remain when our love for God has turned away from Him and is placed on ourselves. Sad to say, even natural affection is affected when this happens. Fervency is diminished when self is allowed to rule in the heart of man. A small resentment or hurt feeling harbored in the heart becomes a base for toleration and can affect our relationships with our brothers and sisters. When we allow a

spirit of toleration into our hearts, it becomes divisive and a means for separation. To settle for living with toleration for each other is a peril in our time we do well to recognize. We fall short of biblical teaching when we settle for this standard.

The Psalmist brings out how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, Psalm 133:1. The Scriptures teach that our love should be without dissimulation, Romans 12:9. In the parable of the good Samaritan, we find an example of fervent love. We also see the response of the priest and Levite. These two religious men failed to respond to the man lying by the road, because their love was not sincere. The outward form of these men seemed to be tactful, but their hearts lacked the warmth of God's drawing love. The peril mentioned in 2 Timothy 3:5 is having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. The good Samaritan was constrained by the love of God for the fallen man. Because he was constrained by love, it drew them together rather than allowing him to pass by on the other side. Such a love is much different from the sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, 1 Corinthians 13:1.

One having dissimulated love begins to perform out of a sense of duty. The meaning of dissimulation is pretense, duplicity, hypocrisy. The Pharisee mentioned in Luke 18 prayed thus with himself, "God, I thank thee, that I am not... as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess." The spirit of this Pharisee needed to convince those around him of his righteousness, because he lacked a pure heart. One possessing this spirit will at times exalt some for their own talents and gifts, yet be very critical of others. In this condition of dissimulation or duplicity, some around them are only tolerated. The Scripture in James 2:4 teaches that such have become partial in themselves and are judges of evil thoughts. One having this spirit will not possess a humble, broken, and contrite heart. This spirit does not want to allow an individual to see this for what it really is. This condition lacks the warmth of God's love and does not have the humble attitude of the publican. The publican had little to say except what he knew of his own depravity.

Charity, or love, seeketh not her own. The love of God seeks out the sinner when the individual is guilty and without justification. It is very true as

we sing, “Love found me, I’m yoked to Him in perfect love, love found me.” A person with a self-centered spirit looks into himself rather than being concerned about the good of others. At one time, Zacchaeus was accountable for this selfishness until the seeking Saviour’s love drew him to Himself. He repented before God, thus receiving a new heart. This was much more than mere reformation; it was a work of transformation by the power of God. Now because of this new heart, Zacchaeus began to give and restore rather than take. Once he was known as a chief publican to those around him, but now Christ called him a son of Abraham, Luke 19:9.

The love of God must flow out to others. Love is demonstrated by obedience to God’s Word and inspiration. “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” James 2:15-17.

Surely the Spirit of God wants to draw a line between nominal Christianity and the true faith that works by love. When the true living faith is not as it should be, fervent love is affected and waxes cold. Those who are in such a condition need help to change. When an individual is willing for help in his need and receives a heart washed from impurities, the blessings are remarkable. Old things are passed away, and all things become new. Once where sins, offenses, jealousy, and resentment were permitted, God’s love is restored.

May God’s children not settle for anything less than a full blessing! “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” 1 Peter 1:22.

Faith Will Get Us There – Obedience is the Key

This chapter, Hebrews 11, is often called the Faith chapter and with good reason - the key word in this chapter is faith. Faith is the second

word in the chapter, in fact faith is the second word in 19 verses of this chapter, and found 23 times in the 40 verses which comprise this chapter. As we read from this chapter please remember that faith is not blindly believing something that is not substantial or is irrational but it is something that we have confidence in although we have not seen it and yet we have good reason to believe it is – we have God’s word for it.

Hebrews 11:1-10 (ESV)

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³ By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. ⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. ⁵ By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. ⁷ By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. ⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

Hebrews 11:17-19 (ESV)

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” ¹⁹ He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

In verse 1 of our text assurance of things hoped for it is translated from the Greek word which means confident expectations. Faith is having confidence in something that we have not experienced with our senses, we don't see it, we don't taste it, we don't smell it, but we know it is true and it is real because of the reliability of the One who said it all and promised it, we believe God.

Looking at this chapter we observe the names of many people in the past who exercised faith – they obeyed what they believed. We have names such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob and as the writer says in verses 32: “And what shall I more say” then mentions other Old Testament names known to us including the prophets. Sometimes these people are referred to as heroes of faith but God does not say that they are heroes, even though as you read through this chapter one sees the terrible sufferings that they endured, however the word hero is not found in the Bible, God refers to these people through the writer of the book of Hebrews as those who have lived in the past as being testimonies, as being witnesses of something, witnesses of His truth and they are examples for us.

A question to ask ourselves: When our time on earth is completed will those who come after us remember us as being testimonies or witnesses of His truth and so continue to influence the coming generations until such time as the Lord comes again? May we be like the disciples in Luke 17 verse 5 and ask the Lord to increase our faith as we face increasing animosity to the truth of the Gospel and Christ himself.



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