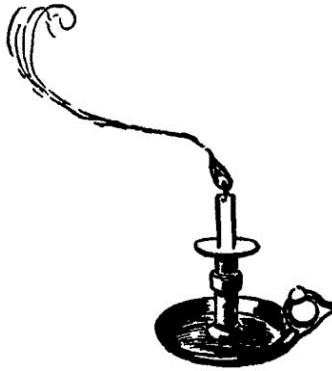


# THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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*****Justified By Faith***

Last month we commented on having Faith in God and used the example of three people in Matthew's gospel who definitely displayed faith and that it was justified in that healing took place, they realized that their faith in Jesus was not misplaced. Having faith in Christ Jesus also restores our relationship with our Creator God; we are justified, made right, by that faith. Galatians 2:16<sup>(ESV)</sup> says this about faith, we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. [or acceptable to God]

Within all of our hearts is an instinctive yearning for peace with God. The law places a death sentence on sin, and all have sinned. To be justified in the sight of God means to be pardoned from this sentence. Only by faith in the atoning death of Jesus can we obtain pardon and be at peace with God. Righteousness through works and "faith-only" doctrines void of the cross are errors many fall into. Both of these ways permit the carnal man to yet be in control. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" Luke 9:23.

Genuine repentance and self-denial are inseparable from true faith. The seed of faith is a gift from the Father to all men and, when exercised, results in trust in and full surrender to God. It yields an understanding of one's own depravity and a clear vision of Calvary. Scriptural works are inspired by the Holy Spirit, they flow freely as a love offering to God from a thankful heart that is already forgiven and not as a payment for sin.

May this **F.A.I.T.H.** acronym be an aid to remind us what that faith means.

**F:** Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Romans 10:17

**A:** Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Ephesians 6:16

**I:** I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last *to be* more than the first. Revelation 2:19

**T:** That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. 1 Corinthians 2:5

**H:** Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: 1 Timothy 1:19

*J.v.L.*



*From the Pulpit*

Scriptural Concepts of Counseling – Part 1 of 2  
*Brother Luke Sensenig*

I greet you in the name of Jesus the great builder of the Church.

Counseling is suggestive of a caring relationship in which one person endeavours to help another deal with the stresses of life.

Our interest is in determining the methods in doing this both scripturally and effectively. I think we all recognize tonight that there are many demands that are placed upon us and there are times that we need special counsel, special help, there are domestic and vocational responsibilities that we face, sometimes interpersonal relational difficulties, sometimes it comes in the form of temptation that assaults us and then too there are those times when some of the difficulties of the past come tumbling out and are added to it and it can be a difficult time. There is also the world in which we live where there are many hurting people and many confused people, there are many despairing people, discouraged people and we do recognize that these to create special times of need in a person's life.

In Matthew 11:28-30 (KJV) Jesus gave recognition to some of these challenges when He said: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly of heart and you shall find rest unto your souls for my yoke is easy and might burden is light."

I think these verses provide a simple yet very effective message of to the weary, the sincere seeker as well as the sin-sick, the disappointed and the lonely. It said Jesus says I will give you rest. And it also teaches us that our Lord has offered to take the undesirable burden from us and places his own burden on our shoulders, and He also assures us that His burden is easy to bear, easier to bear than the one we have found on our own.

Christians are not immune to struggles in life and therefore we are looking at the subject particularly in relation to their own needs, not specifically the world around us, I don't plan to take an in-depth study of our needs tonight, the assignment is rather related to the scriptural methods of meeting each other's needs.

The question that may be raised is: How can we best help those who are in need, how can we help the needy and the searching soul?

In 2 Peter 1:3 Peter reminds us that “His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” I think if we can comprehend that within the body of believers there are answers to be found, He has given us as New Testament believers into the church, it is also true that the Christian victory ought to be normal and defeat should not be normal.

We know that it is not always that way and if there is defeat or discouragement or despair there is hope and there is a way out. I think that is the promise of the Bible.

I would like to look at some Bible concepts of counselling.

From Isaiah 9:6 we have these prophetic words about our Lord Jesus, we are told that He would be called: Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, there are no needs that He does not understand, if there is any counsel to be had we should find it in Him, and He was also called the Word, the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:1) So in Him we have the Wonderful Counsellor, The Mighty God. There are no broken hearts that that He is unable to bind or heal, there is hope.

Jesus also said in Luke 4:18-19: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.

Did He only do that while He walked the earth in those three years? By no means but as He came and left His living message He is promising to do that today as well.

We are glad that Jesus came, we are believers in Him and we do pray for more faith in Him, we are glad that He was anointed to preach and that in

our hands we have the best counsellors manual in the whole world. Today there is an ongoing search for more books, more answers to man's needs and books are being written all the time but here is the best counsellor's manual that we could have, there is none better.

Now does it talk about every specific need and all the techniques? I am saying that this is the best counsellors manual. Did I say there is nothing to be learned from other books? No, I would not want to say that, but I think that in the search sometimes people have forgotten that back here in the Scriptures there are answers for every need.

Another proof, another concept is that we benefit from the exchange of counsel within the brotherhood.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 12 we have the gifts of the Spirit. In Ephesians 4:11-12 we have this reminder that He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. That word edifying means building up, supplying the needs that is what it is speaking of.

In Romans 15:1 we have another reminder that we then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, this in the context of the New Testament church.

Hebrews 12:12-13 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet blessed that which is lame be turned out of the way but let it rather be healed.

These Scriptures apply to the New Testament believer, the Church of Jesus Christ, you lift up the hands that are hanging down and feeble knees and you make straight paths for your feet.

I would like to suggest that if we will lift up the hands that are discouraged and hanging down and the knees that are buckling and feeble we are going to need to get relatively close to each other, we are going to need to get beside each other and he is telling us that.

There is a side of us, we call it the private side of us, where we would rather let the other person deal with their problems and I will solve my own, not to get too involved, not get too deeply entangled because sometimes we get hurt when we did, there are misunderstandings sometimes, and yet if we fail to do this we are not obedient to Scripture. We must know each other and we must share with each other and in that sharing there is the exchange of counsel.

We are also going to need a scriptural understanding and perspective if we are going to be able to make straight paths so that the lame, those that need help; those that are weak kneed, are not turned out of the way. There are a lot of paths today, paths of unsound counsel that are being shared today, paths that the individuals have gone down which became an obstacle to their healing. That is one of the burdens of this assignment that we are alert to the unsafe paths of counsel that are not according to Scripture.

Ephesians 4 and Hebrews 12 strongly suggest that the primary source of counsel should issue, and I say it once more, from the body of Jesus Christ. There may be times when experienced counsel is helpful, someone who has dealt with this particular type of problem there are things that may be learned, but whenever we go to those people for that experienced counsel we need to discern what angle they proceed from lest that which is lame be turned out of the way and again I think that in the brotherhood there can be safety so that in the time of stress or need we don't try to determine that alone but we let someone help us to determine if this is sound or not.

From Ephesians 4 when he says that there are Apostles, prophets, there are evangelists, there are pastors and teachers, it does suggest that leadership has a primary responsibility in this work of perfecting and edifying the body, that is a New Testament concept and it says that He gives these persons and gifts.

Does that mean that they are the only ones that are able to give counsel and that it is always better than them to do it? I think it is not saying that but the perfecting work should not exclude the leadership and we should believe that there is a special gift only to the leadership. Is it always my local pastor or always my deacon brother? Not necessarily, but within the brotherhood there are those that can help me and I think again in this desire to

be a bit private and not expose ourselves too much we sometimes are more ready to go elsewhere when maybe the needs could be met right here.

I would leave that encouragement that we don't overlook the help that is right here placed by God at our disposal in the brotherhood. Sometimes individuals are freer with others and we are not in competition as an ordained body with our brethren who are also able to share but we do sense the importance of sharing together in keeping the best interests of the flock in mind.

Now in Galatians 6:2, moving on to another thought or biblical concept, it says bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. This word burden is interpreted weight from the Greek language it is a weight or a heavy load and we are to bear one another's burdens, that word bear means to endure or carry, you bear the burden, and the concept of enduring is that sometimes these difficult situations that people have may take time, a long time, to help them through, you bear one another's burdens and troublesome even moral faults, this is the idea especially in the amplified King James version, the amplified it is not another version but an amplification from the Greek renderings, and maybe there has been a failure or a mistake or a series of blunders, I think he is saying bear, endure, work alongside, you don't give up but patiently share together.

And perhaps more important at times than the counsel that we give is the effort we put into lightening the heavy load, the word of encouragement and maybe their willingness to step in alongside. Simply supplying a meal to someone who is struggling, you can think of it that way, assisting a discouraged brother or sister in their work.

Now in addition to this idea of bearing one another's burdens James 5:16 calls us to confess our faults one to another. That suggests a transparency, we are open to one another, and pray for one another, we are willing to tell, share what my struggle is, maybe my fault, I have failed and I am weakening and help is needed to prevent us from spiralling downward into the enemy territory, confess your faults one to another, pray for one another that ye may be healed and take the need of our brethren to the great Counsellor of souls, that praying is a part of it.

There can be no good counsel given apart from good praying and we need to think of it that way. James 5:16 says: The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Another concept from Hebrews 3:13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Now from this verse I would like to note from this two aspects of Christian counselling, exhorting one another. You know there are over 60 New Testament references that use the phrase one another, and it means that in the body of believers, the Church of Jesus Christ. there needs to be an openness to receive and to give, exhort one another.

And secondly the Greek word translated exhort is *parakaleo* meaning to call to the side or entreat and means to admonish, to pursue a course of conduct, it gets pretty personal, it is pretty direct that really what you are doing is not helping your problem, so we step alongside of the feeble hands that are hanging down and the weak kneed and it suggests an encouragement and I think that we must all be sure in all of this that we are not side-stepping the biblical pattern of counsel in giving and receiving help within the context of the brotherhood.

There is another concept. In this matter of exhorting, *parakaleo*, it is important that we bring the scriptures to bear on the situation, that we don't just look for wise methods and secular methods of dealing with problems but that we look to Scripture and what does the Bible say, what does the Bible say about this problem? What does the Bible say about joy? What does the Bible say about sins of the spirit? And you know some people will say, they will acknowledge, that they have a problem with anger but what does the Bible say about anger, what does it say? And we know what the Bible says about anger and sometimes we need to just come back to reaffirm in our own minds what it says.

The scriptures also instill hope.

I would like to suggest that hope is the engine of spiritual growth and recovery. Romans 12:12: Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.



We help the discouraged, the despairing to notice reasons we're rejoicing from the Scriptures and exercise with them the virtue of patience and again pray. I like that Scripture in Luke 11 where the friend came at night asking for a loaf of bread because of a wayfaring man stepping in and Jesus said: Ask, seek and knock, A. S. K. Maybe that can help you to remember it. But again in the Greek rendering of those words you have to ask and keep on asking, seek and keep on seeking, and knock and keep on knocking, it is very consistent, that is what that verse literally interpreted would say, ask, can keep on asking, seek and keep on seeking, knock and keep on knocking. And Jesus said just because he is a friend he won't get up and serve him but because of his importunity because of his persistence. (Luke 11:5-13).

We must persist in prayer and I think that is one of the counsels of Scripture. We are thinking about that, bringing the Scriptures to bear on every situation, point out the value of sanctification.

1 Thessalonians 5:23: And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly. I don't know what I am to learn in this experience.

In an attempt to help a sister some time ago I did try to encourage her to see that through this she can learn what God is teaching and maybe she can help someone else. I know we would all like to help someone else, we would rather help than be helped wouldn't we? But let's remember that in the difficult spots in life there is sanctification sometimes there is that which draws and sometimes you know we come through it, and I spoke to a brother recently and I could tell that he was deeply touched by a difficult valley in his life and he would not give anything to go back and experience it again yet he had learned much by it – sanctification. The very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and we don't always know how God will do that, we don't always know how He purifies us; there is no experience we go through in life but that we can become better through it if we let God do His work.

And in times of grief, in times of loss, in times of disappointments don't fail, in times of pain and anguish, don't fail to look to Jesus the compassionate healer who would heal our souls as well as our bodies.

Another scriptural concept is that any who would give counsel should as James says in 1:19: Be swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to wrath. Sometimes it would be easier to react with what we hear only to realise that the only heard a part and that usually is not good. Slow to speak, digest it for a while and maybe ask a few questions. Slow to wrath, we don't let it disturb us or show that toward someone else that we have heard something that didn't quite sound right, you know the times that we will be of most help is when we simply have listened and I think this Scripture that holds a lot of value for those that would exhort to be swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to wrath.

I would like to share a few that I would call safeguards in this matter of sharing counsel.

One is, and this is maybe saying it in a little different way but pay attention to the scriptures that warn against unsound counsel.

Colossians 2:8: Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

There is a lot of what we know as modern psychology today, a lot of philosophy that is borrowed from modern psychology. One is that one of mankind's deep problems is the problem of low self-esteem and if you can somehow boost their self-esteem you will have solved a lot of their problems, they are not thinking rightly about themselves.

We know that it is important that we think right about ourselves. but never mind the fact they would say that the matter of self-esteem is foreign to the Bible and that according to the Bible man's biggest problem is pride and I think we understand that there is a lot more said about pride and nothing about self-esteem, and if we get that straight and in that order we are more likely to get to the root of the problem.

*To be concluded.*



## “Stop Judging Others!

Romans 14:10 (ESV) “Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God”

Judgment is a wonderful faculty imparted to humans in the creation. It is an attribute of God which He has shared with mankind. It is the ability to evaluate facts and evidence, to weigh them up and come to a conclusion based on our training, convictions, conscience, and intellect. It allows us to chart a course which is sane and sensible.

An element of judgement is withheld from Christians. It is the judgement placed on the lives of others, and especially other Christians, that compares them to ourselves and makes a statement about their worth or standing before God. “Stop Judging Others!” is more than a theological study. It is a call to action.

Some verses from the book of Romans (ESV)

Romans 2:1-11 Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. <sup>2</sup> We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. <sup>3</sup> Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? <sup>4</sup> Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? <sup>5</sup> But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed. <sup>6</sup> He will render to each one according to his works: <sup>7</sup> to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, he will give eternal life; <sup>8</sup> but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. <sup>9</sup> There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, <sup>10</sup> but glory and honour and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. <sup>11</sup> For God shows no partiality.

Romans 2:21-22: You then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? <sup>22</sup> You who say that one

must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

Romans 2:29 “But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.”

Some Bible scholars consider that the book of Romans in its construction and beauty is to the New Testament what the book of Psalms is to the Old Testament. Regardless, it stands as one of the important foundations for Christian doctrine. It was written by the apostle Paul from Corinth while on his third missionary journey.

The congregation at Rome probably was formed when enthusiastic Jewish Christians brought the gospel story back to Rome after the day of Pentecost. It was comprised of people with diverse backgrounds. The Jews with their pious, legalistic bent were trying to fuse with the philosophically and politically inclined Romans into the spiritual climate of the Gospel church.

In reading the first two chapters of Romans, one might conclude that the church at Rome must have had a very carnal and sensual constituency.

The “dishonour roll” of sins listed by the apostle hardly leaves any out. It sounds almost like a commentary on twenty-first century society. Paul was probably not indicting the church there. More likely he was laying the groundwork for further teaching on salvation and regeneration. He was simply establishing the fact of universal depravity.

In the context of this study, it also is likely that he was trying to make a very forceful point with the Jewish Christians. As Jews, they had often entertained a holier-than-thou attitude toward all Gentiles. It should not have been difficult for them to see that if they condemned one of the sins he had enumerated, and then committed the same sin; their own condemnation was just as great.

Our senses are constantly sampling our surroundings. Our mind is just as busy processing that input of data. That God-given ability allows us to make decisions about our safety and welfare. When we come into the presence of another person we are aware at once of nuances of colour, shape, expression, attractiveness, age, voice, and many other details. If we are not careful, in a short time we have drawn a conclusion about that person’s personality and character. Many times when we get better acquainted with that individual, it is embarrassing to remember our first impression. This

false impression is called a prejudice, and even on a social level it is important for us to learn to avoid these judgments.

How would you explain why it is not good to judge someone else? Perhaps you would say that we are commanded in the Bible not to judge others.

Truly, that would be an adequate explanation. However, as we ponder Paul's discourse in the background scripture and lesson text, it becomes clear that there is sound wisdom behind his instructions to the Romans that applies to us as well.

It is evident that we never reach a level of sanctification that frees us from all sins and mistakes. Human nature wants to justify those failings. For some reason, we find it easy to overlook our failings while taking a sharp critical view of the failings of others. God, in His eternal equity, cannot condone that selfish deception. No sins find forgiveness without the blood of Jesus being applied.

Some Christians have carried this truth to its logical extreme. They espouse a laissez-faire attitude toward other Christians. "You live your life the way you believe, and I'll live my life the way I believe. Don't bother me, and I won't bother you." Surely our experience of God's love and our knowledge of the Scripture would tell us this is not His way.

The mandate to refrain from judging others is not selective. It simply says "others." We are not called on to decide that someone is eternally doomed in the life he is living—not even someone whose lifestyle leaves us with many questions. He is judged by the Word of God.

Many people today call themselves Christians. If we judge them by our standards, some lives leave a lot to be desired. When they share their faith and experiences with us, are we willing to listen? Do they detect that we do not really believe them? Sometimes these individuals will offer to pray for us or our loved ones. Can we in a nice way thank them for their concern?

Here again, we are not called upon to judge their standing before God. Yet we need to be spiritually honest. Can we just quietly share the way we believe without them detecting a judgmental spirit?

Perhaps our greatest challenge is to more clearly understand our relationship with others in the household of God. In the church there are as many individual walks with God as there are members. Each Christian has a dif-

ferent personality. Each has distinct struggles. Each has failings. We know that our vow to care one for another does not allow us to simply ignore everything our brother or sister does. When we see something that troubles us, it is time to act. But it is not time to judge. Reproof is a kind, non-invasive way to deal with our concern. By gently opening this subject and looking at it and sharing together, light is born, fellowship is enhanced, and a foundation of some sort is laid.

This foundation might include further action. A straying lamb is not always easily restored. Finally, a judgment is needed. The church is called on to consider the matter. If signs of spiritual life are waning, the church must call for fruits of repentance. An unrepentant member must finally meet the ultimate judgment of the church and be severed from fellowship. We recognize that there is a place for judgment to be exercised by the unified body, but not on the personal level.

It is not a coincidence that the Holy Ghost was given at the inception of the New Testament church. The Holy Ghost empowers the church. It might not be accurate to say the church is infallible, but as long as the church is faithful we may rest our confidence in her judgments. In those situations where errors are made, the Holy Ghost will not let the matters rest until they are, in some way, rectified.

A universal judgment is coming. For the unprepared, it is too terrible to contemplate. Then all the judgments which have been postponed will be enacted. Perhaps with earthly vision removed and eternal vision in place, we will fully understand why judgement was not part of our earthly responsibility.



### **THE PRECIOUS WORD OF GOD**

Jeremiah 15:16 <sup>(AMP)</sup> Your words were found, and I ate them; and Your words were to me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart, for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.

Do we recognize all the benefits we receive from the treasure store of the precious Word of God? Man has many questions about life, about where we came from, and why we are here. We are born with a sense of wonder

about life and God which the intellect cannot explain. As we delve into the mysteries of the Word, profound truths are revealed to us by the Holy Spirit.

*The Word* provides a foundation, a bedrock on which to base our lives. Its precepts and promises give us a security that the wisdom of man cannot give. Without the moral anchor of the law of God, man becomes as variable as the wind and the changing seasons. As a child finds a secure atmosphere in a loving home, so can we find solace in the precious Word of God.

*The Word* is our defense against sin. As it permeates our being, it is ever present when temptations come. If the Word abides in our hearts, it becomes a ready weapon whereby we may resist our sinful inclinations. Jesus said that man should not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Matthew 4:41

*The Word* is our love! It is the longing of our hearts! To it we turn in the crucibles of life. We find wisdom there in times of perplexity, and we find consolation in times of grief. We can find wisdom when we are under duress and do not know which way to go. We joy in its promises, and in these promises we find strength for each day.

*The Word* is light! It is proof of the Father's love, the essence of His will for man. Jesus is the light of the world, shining upon every man on earth (John 1:9). His light reveals to us our need of a Saviour, reveals to us the Lamb of God, and makes clear to us the path in which we are to walk in life.

*The Word* is inseparable from Jesus because it is Jesus, and in Him we live and have our being.

*The Word* is the foundation upon which man builds his faith. God speaks to us through the medium of His Word, and the Holy Ghost interprets to us its meaning and application for our day. His will for mankind is revealed by His Word according to His intent and desire. It is the foundation upon which all doctrine is established.

*The Word* causes faith to come to life. Paul writes, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" Romans 10:17. Jesus warned that the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches could cause the Word to become unfruitful, Matthew 13:22. May we let the Word enlighten us and bring wisdom to our way.

Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" Matthew 5:6. How blessed it is to hunger for

the bread of life, for this hunger is evidence of God's wonderful work in our lives. A man can ever be hungering, ever be filled, and yet be hungering for more.

The light of the gospel reveals the truth of a matter to its fullest. It gives a new perspective to the petty, insignificant issues of life and alleviates the offense and misunderstanding often caused by them. It gives us the eternal view by which our carnal desires are reduced and made manageable. It is the wisdom of the Word that helps us to see our own humanness and makes us longsuffering toward our fellowman.

Our world has a vast variety of beliefs and practices, and some allowance must be made for differences of culture, home settings, and lifestyles. Too often, however, man has attempted to dilute the Word of God or even set aside its authority, making allowances for the flesh and yet justifying himself. The Bible says, "Now there are . . . differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all" 1 Corinthians 12:-6. These differences are within the framework of the will of God. That which is outside this framework negates the Word of God.

*The Word* of God is unchangeable and is forever established in heaven. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" Matthew 24:35. The apostle Paul wrote, "For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar" Romans 3:3-4. In the light of the foregoing declarations, what is wrong when we do not believe the Word of God? When people hear something and they do not believe it, are they not in essence saying that they are being told an untruth? When God speaks and we disbelieve, are we not implying that God is untrue? Verily, God is true though every man be a liar.

Revelation 21:8 states that the unbelieving and all liars shall have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone. Many people think that hell is reserved for only the vile sinners, but the Word of God plainly states that "he that believeth not is condemned already" John 3:18.

How far does our faith in God take us? What effect does the Word have in our lives? It should affect our doctrine, our daily decisions and practices, and our view of the promises of God—in fact, every area of life. Our faith should affect the way we meet the challenges and opportunities of each day as well as our relationships with one another and with God.



When we stand firm on the Word of God, the evil one and all our adversaries cannot prevail against us. The glory of the truth is that it never needs to be defended, for truth always prevails. Those who love the Word of God do not justify themselves because the Word justifies them. When a man feels he needs to defend his actions or faith, he is not grounded firmly on the bedrock of the Word. This is not to say that we never declare our faith or speak about it, but that we simply share it with others and leave the rest to God.

Those who have cleansed their lives to walk in God's ways are truly blessed. They can rise to meet each new day with thankfulness and a song in their hearts. They are free from deceit and ill will; they are free from causing offenses and speaking evil. They rejoice with their fellowman in the blessings he receives and are a blessing to those they meet on the path of life.

The psalmist, seeing all the blessings that came from being permeated with the Word of God, had great love and admiration for it. May we "receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save [our] souls" James 1:21. It shows the way to a blessed life. May we let the Word be our guide for life here and a revelation of our future life in eternity with saints in heaven.



### **CALLING SIN WHAT IT IS**

Romans 7:13 (ESV) Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

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 speak-

ing 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. Cheque 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 Achans 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 Saviour. Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. Proverbs 28:13  
 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:7



### **ARE YOU SATISFIED?**

It is likely that every individual is looking for some form of satisfaction or comfort. That holds true for those of every walk of life. There are those who are destitute of many of the essential things that would make them comfortable in life. Then there are those who have it all at their fingertips, and yet the yearning for satisfaction or more meaning to life is the same.

We have the account in John 4 where Jesus speaks to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. The conversation first deals with the water from the well. Then in verse 10, Jesus says, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." In verse 14, Jesus tells her, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."

We all know that natural water will satisfy thirst temporarily but the same thirst soon returns and must be satisfied again. Jesus offered this woman, and everyone, water that would satisfy sufficiently so that thirst would not return. How wonderful this sounded to the woman, but it is obvious that she did not understand what Jesus was telling her.

We can compare the water out of the well with those things that so many people try with hopes that they will satisfy the inner thirst. With that yearning for inner satisfaction, man turns to many things and devices to find true meaning. Changing their appearances by various means, being immersed in the sport's world, shopping and buying beyond their means, and much education would be some examples. Some become overly zealous in spiritual

matters, yet not in truth. Many more things could be mentioned, but are these not all because there is a longing for inner satisfaction? Some get so desperate in their inner frustrations because of not finding what they are longing for that finally death seems to be the only way out.

Is it possible that some of us are not fully experiencing true satisfaction? The apostle Paul says in Ephesians 3:19, "That ye might be filled with the fulness of God." This scripture teaches us that there is a filling to be had that will satisfy, and we will not desire that unfulfilling well water anymore. We talk of restlessness among us and are grappling with things that want to pull us closer to the world. Is that an indication that we are not truly satisfied within? Is this not because we are not freely drinking from the water of life? To be filled with the fullness of God would surely result in an inner rest and satisfaction. When we are well acquainted with Jesus' living water, it will remove that restlessness from us.

There are many things that are a temptation to our youth and all of us: fashions, sports, unchristian use of technology, much travel, attending places of carnal entertainment, and many get-togethers. All these things will somewhat satisfy the inner longings for the time being, but is it not like a drink from the well water only? And after the "fun" is over, the ache inside is only intensified. Others in their thirst and longing for true meaning in life turn to seeking more material gain than God would be pleased with. Wealth will bring a sense of security and satisfaction, but it will not quench the thirst for that inner satisfaction.

In Luke 1:53, Mary, the mother of Jesus, speaks: "He hath filled the hungry with good things; but the rich he hath sent empty away." In her reference to the hungry, she means those who honestly seek for truth. The rich are those who satisfy themselves with the beggarly things of the world. This is not only material riches. She is referring to those who make themselves appear rich spiritually by doing good deeds or having learned to orate convincingly and thus appear rich spiritually.

The good things that the hungry are filled with can only be attained by humbly coming to Jesus and reaching for the water He so graciously offers. That is also what Paul means by "being filled with the fulness of

God." It has been said that it is easier to become saved than to remain saved. When our young children feel the call, they are so troubled and become willing for whatever it takes to have the burden of sin removed. It is heartwarming to listen to them as they tell us, with tears in their eyes, how the Lord spoke peace to their hearts. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him" Colossians 2:6. The apostle makes it dear that walking in Him requires the same as receiving Him. The need to seek out Jesus for a drink of His water is continual.

We are surely living in the end times. For that reason a scripture like Ephesians 5:16, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil," should be a serious matter to us. We have more scriptures that teach us that in the end time there will be more evil. 2 Timothy 3:1-5 presents a clear example of the times we are living in today. As we consider the call to a deeper revival, we will need to be willing to surrender our vessel (self) that we have been using to draw water from the well. We must reach out to Jesus and let Him give us that living water and drink until we are satisfied. The initial drink will cleanse us from all sin, and having experienced His love in our hearts will cause us to ever thirst for more of God and holiness.

In conclusion, let us look at one more scripture: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" John 7:37-38.

By God's grace let us ask ourselves the question, "Am I truly satisfied within?" May God's blessings rest on each one as we partake of the water of life.



### THANKFUL LIVING

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful" Colossians 3:15.

Thanksgiving, such as the Scriptures everywhere teach, is the fruit of living in a thankful state. Man has only one life to live (Hebrews 9:27), wherein he is to bring thanks to his Maker (1 Thessalonians 5:18), "For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" Psalm 6:5.

To be thankful is to experience a heartfelt gratitude for benefits received and favor bestowed. When one begins to entertain the thought that he or she merits such benefits and favors, he makes someone else a debtor to him and thereby loses the blessing of thankfulness. At the center of a thankful heart is the knowledge and feeling of being undeserving.

There are more reasons than one why throughout the entire Scripture thankfulness is commanded, taught, and exemplified. First and foremost, it is the heart and lips' offering of gratitude justly due the Creator and Savior of mankind. Secondly, it benefits man himself. Thankfulness is an essential part of a good emotional disposition. Notice a person who feels no thankfulness and you will see a man or woman with a warped view of life in general. If one has no sense of being unworthy, no feeling of gratitude for blessings and favors bestowed upon him, he will likely serve no purposes but selfish ones.

There are those who feel mistreated by life, which really is a mild way of expressing deeper feelings that God has dealt unfairly with them. This though brings to mind the question of why some can experience greater adversity and heartache than others and yet be thankful for God's goodness. In some cases, perhaps the deceitfulness of the heart has somehow dimmed the truth of the matter.

Humility is the source from which issues forth the overflowing of thankfulness. Much of the world's constant striving for greater economic security, and the Christian is not exempt, can be traced back to a heart that has set its affection on material things. And if one were to search his heart in all honesty for the root of an unthankful attitude, would he not find a proud heart? The apostle Paul states dearly that being unthankful is a sin that will be particularly manifest in the last days. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy" 2 Timothy 3:1-2. Notice the context of serious and grave sins in which he places being unthankful. Pride and thankfulness will not co-habit the same heart.

The thoughtful Christian will observe that the greater one's sense of dependency on God, the greater will be his thankfulness. This also says something about one's faith in an all-knowing Heavenly Father, Matthew 6:32. The most heart-touching expressions of thankfulness have been heard from the lips of Christians of other lands who are less fortunate than we

are. Many of these people would be destitute in comparison to our thinking as to what basic "needs" are; yet they can be truly thankful. These people have no problem with Jesus' counsel in Matthew 6:24-34 and casting themselves on the Lord in their great need, they have found Him to be faithful. Each experience of God's provision is cause for added thankfulness. Contributing to the general state of being unthankful is man's striking out on his own course and not recognizing his utter need of God.

Thankfulness is not necessarily dependent on comparing one's situation with that of another. While noticing others who are less fortunate may cause one to count his blessings, one will get a truer picture and come to a greater grace by comparing his wretched and undeserving self with the goodness and mercy of God. It is this comparison alone that brings true thanksgiving, which will not be squelched when adversity comes. "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" 2 Corinthians 10:12.

Thankfulness has a natural offspring: the spirit of sharing what one has with others. Just as faith without works is dead, so the claim of being thankful without sharing quickly becomes vain and hollow. Jesus stated the principle of the matter when He said, "Freely ye have received, freely give" Matthew 10:8. In this, the blessing is not contingent on the "size" or quantity of sharing but on the heart, as was shown by the widow who gave her two mites (Mark 12:41-44). The benevolence of charitable acts confirms the testimony of thankfulness and pleases God and warms the hearts of men.

Thankfulness is not a lesson that will be learned by study; neither is it obtained by happenstance. In its true essence, it comes only by a vital, personal relationship with God. When the Christian becomes unthankful, he needs a freshening of his walk with the Lord. The Lord alone can give him those eternal values that will take the mind and heart off the beggarly elements of the world. Not only does the Lord give us such heavenly values, He himself is the Christian's treasure.

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