

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

A Farewell Note

In 2002 led by the Lord we commenced the publication of The Australian Anabaptist to encourage those in Australia who were seeking a scriptural lifestyle shown to us by brothers and sisters from the Amish Mennonite Church in Montezuma Georgia USA who were regular visitors to many of us. Many of us were made aware of the Anabaptist view of Scripture which in its application to daily life is in harmony with the early church as shown in the epistles and those of us who have continued in the Anabaptist pathway of obedience to God's word in the Scriptures know that much has changed in the so called Christian churches in our country and indeed throughout the world.

Many of God's directions are being ignored or blatantly broken by those who claim to follow him and yet many of them believe they are saved. Let us not judge them but leave it to God to whom we will all answer. Our focus should be on making certain of our own salvation which can only be obtained through repentance and then full obedience to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23.

In 2009 we launched our website AnabaptistMennonites.net as we realized the almost total absence of Anabaptist material available on the internet and the usefulness of the internet as a tool to spread the Gospel as directed in Matthew 28:19-20.

Over the past few years, we have noted that many conservative Anabaptist churches have also realized the ability of the internet to reach into countries where personal evangelism is restricted by governments opposed to Christianity, we have been encouraged over the years by testimonies via our web contact page that bear out the words of the Lord in Isaiah 55:11.

We have decided for a number of reasons to make this our last issue, age being one consideration, as well as the many other Anabaptist resources which are now available on the internet.

We have been blessed by the work the Lord appointed for us but believe there is a season for all things as enumerated in Ecclesiastes 3 and our prayer always was that God might use our efforts to bring others into the Kingdom. The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Numbers 6:24-26^(ESV)



From the Pulpit

*THE IMMINENT RETURN OF CHRIST
A Concerned Brother in Christ*

We live everyday life as we know it. Days and nights pass, seasons, and years. The universe continues in seamless motion just like it has since God created it, and it could well continue just so, for infinity. Everything moves in perfect harmony in the universe. We cannot grasp such precision and orderliness. We cannot imagine how He did it. We simply know that He spoke, and it was. The inspired Word of God begins right there in the first chapter of the Bible, out of nothing—everything.

Just as we know that God set all this in motion, we know also that there is a moment coming when everything will change. Put simply, time will stop. Paraphrased from Webster, *time* is movement or progression in a measurable period. Time is governed by the movement of the earth, sun, moon, and stars. It affects every part of our lives. To have time stop throughout the entire universe will disrupt everything because of the breaking of the incredible forces that keep it all moving, creating time. Jesus said in Matthew 24:29, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken."

Here are His words again in Luke 21:25-27, "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." In a word, it will be spectacular. It will strike fear over all the earth to see those wonders happening, but God's children will not need to fear.

Nobody has ever experienced the enormity of hearing the trumpet, seeing the stars falling, the sky parting, and the angel towering in the heavens declaring the end of time, seeing Jesus coming in the clouds, and seeing all the dead resurrect. They will be coming out of the seas. They will come out of every place where the dust of mortality has ever been scattered. Human

comprehension will be confounded as every soul will wake to that call, seeing those things that are beyond imagining, impossible by standards of earth and time. Jesus told His followers, "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

The Christian will experience that moment with joy greater than the fearful things happening all around. The sound of the trumpet will be to him the sound of mercy and deliverance. To the Christian, it will be a beautiful welcome. For the unsaved, it will be the terrifying sound of judgment. Every heart shall know in an instant what it is all about and that there is no turning around as all enter eternity.

Before the saved enter paradise for eternity, and the lost to their own damnation, there will be a judgment of all nations. Jesus explained some of how it will be in Matthew 25:32, "And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." In the presence of God, the Judge, there will be no questions asked. Each soul who has accepted salvation and kept the faith will know all the security, peace, and belonging of coming home, yet infinitely more. He will then know in perfection the weight of his sins and the immensity of the love that brought the Lamb of God to die and cover him. Each soul who has thrown away opportunities to get right with God will know what it is to remember and be forgotten. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:46).

While time continues, there is always hope and opportunity to heed the warnings. The world in Noah's day had time enough; the building of the ark itself may have taken over a hundred years. The wickedness on the earth was so great that God had decided it was enough. Only the righteous family of Noah would eventually be saved. But up until God closed the door, there was time for the rest of mankind to hear and come. The prophecies fell on deaf ears. Something so fantastic had never happened on the earth, and why should it? Even the wonder of the number of all the earth's animals filing to the ark did not move them to prepare. But when the earth shook and the fountains opened, they knew where they should have been.

Noah had followed God's plan, and all in the ark were safe. It may have been frightening for them to hear all the shouting outside the ark and the begging to be let in as the waters rose and covered the earth. It probably deepened their thankfulness to God for saving them. The wickedness of

man upon the earth was judged, washed away in the flood. The lost perished; the righteous stepped out into a new world.

"But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matt. 24:37-42). "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (Luke 12:40).

Jesus told His listeners that His second coming would be unexpected. He urged them to be ready at all times. He illustrated this with parables of a faithful servant waiting for his master, and, also, the outcome of the unfaithful servant. As he laid out the mysteries of the end of time, his followers wondered, "How shall we know when the time comes?" Here's His answer in Matthew 24:32-33, "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." He made it clear when teaching on this topic that His followers would see and identify the signs of His coming. In our day, the signs are all around.

"Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke 12:37).

What does it mean to be watching? Does it mean keeping our minds focused continually on the thought that the hour is coming? Just as we are told to "pray without ceasing," to be watching must also mean a way of life, the walk with God. That includes Bible reading, prayer, and an open communication with Him any time. It is easy to slip into the casual mentality of Jesus' return as some far-off event and to live for the moment. While we are to enjoy life, we are also to keep the eternal perspective. That means choosing God's way in every circumstance; even the small choices have weight in the end. It takes diligence and focus to choose heavenly treasure over our earthly tendencies. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break

through and steal: But lay up for your selves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:19-21). And where your heart is will make the eternal difference at the judgment.

This affects how we live among our friends, neighbours, and people we meet every day. Are we living to spread the warning of what lies ahead? Life is a race not run against our fellowmen, but with and for them. With them, by running alongside and being a friend; for them, by being there to encourage and support. Neither is the reward given on a "first come, first serve" basis. All shall reach the end sometime or another, or perhaps all together at that hour when the skies part.

As God told Noah to build the ark for that fateful voyage, so the Lord has His Church established to guide souls to safety. Through every age, His true followers have kept the fire of faith burning and lived for His coming. He has always made it possible, even through times when evil surges higher and higher, as in these final days.

There is a natural fear of such monumental happenings. But out of the most frightening circumstances of the heavens and earth passing away, God's children will be transported to safety, just as Noah and his family. God is the same God who was with them when they rode the ark to safety. We can hardly imagine the joy they must have felt as they gathered and worshipped the true God in a new world. That same incredible joy awaits on Heaven's shores, though in a much greater dimension. In our day-to-day lives, what have we done to prepare for tomorrow? More importantly, what are we doing now to prepare for eternity? Because tomorrow morning might find us in eternity. It just might be. What are you doing to prepare for His second coming? The soul who resists the thought, the warning, and chooses instead to stay out and drink of sin's pleasure says, "No, not yet. I've time enough." The soul who is waiting by faith for Jesus' return, heart longing and ready, echoes the closing sentiment of the Bible, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."



CHOOSE YE THIS DAY

Every day, from our first waking moment until we close our eyes in sleep at night, we are given the opportunity and the responsibility to make choices. Some choices are mundane and have no great effect upon either present circumstances or future life. Other choices are life-changing and affect the present and, also, the future destiny of our souls and our posterity. There are times when our vision may get clouded, and we do not realize the importance of the decisions at hand. We can be thankful that the Holy Spirit is with the Christian, and "He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). If we live and walk in the Spirit, we can have the assurance that the choices we make will be blessed by the Father and will be safe for us. However, if we use the influence of this world to guide us, we are setting ourselves up for disappointment and disillusionment.

The most important choice each human is called to make is the choice to surrender his heart and life to God and to accept Him as his personal Saviour. In Matthew 11:28, the great invitation to whosoever will is to "come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." As mankind hears that gentle invitation, the choice that will affect eternity is hanging in the balance. God does not force anyone to serve Him; He gives us the choice. As we yield our wills to Him and allow the atoning blood of Jesus to wash away our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, we have made that choice to let Him be our Saviour. He then will lead us and guide us as we continue to walk in His will. Colossians 2:6 teaches us, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." The Christian life is not just about accepting Christ and then continuing to follow our selfish desires. It is about the continued daily choice to walk in His steps, to follow where He leads, and to do as He teaches through the Holy Spirit and the Word.

Each day we are given the choice to turn our attention and devotion to God or to place the focus of our hearts on the things of the world. In Isaiah 26:9, we read, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." If our desire is to daily know the Lord, He will fill that desire with the good things of His will. There will be grace and power to overcome the temptations that face humanity daily and, sometimes, hourly. There will be the grace to repent and

seek His forgiveness when we, in our weakness, have fallen and made choices that were not His will for us. There will be power to love and forgive when others have wronged us. There will be praise and gratitude instead of complaining and selfishness.

As we continue to walk with God and daily choose to have our lives "hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3), there will be direction for the many other choices we make. God will lead us as we need to make a choice on which vocation to follow. He will help us know when to expand our business and when it is time to say, "I have enough." He will guide our choices in the areas of service and giving. He will help us to understand human love and will direct our lives as we approach the marriage altar. He will be there to guide us as we endeavour to teach God's way to our children. As we age, He will be there to help us as we continue to choose submission, gratitude, and consecration.

Many years ago at the time of Joshua's farewell to the children of Israel, he urged them to "choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). Joshua made a firm declaration that he and his house would serve the Lord. He knew that if God's people would begin, in even a small way, to adopt the customs and ways of the people of that land, they would soon bow down to the gods of their neighbours. The worship of strange gods often incorporated very heathen, sensual, and sadistic practices that the people's base nature was attracted to. Today the gods of the world around us call to the Christian to bow down and worship them. It may be at the altar of worldly business values or goals or in the groves and temples of the music, video, entertainment, sports, technology, and social media world. These gods may come in the form of apps that focus on the worldly values of the day. It may be that the gods of the world will cause us to press the limit of what we can do and will try to find loopholes in the guidelines and protections the Church provides for us.

Today, more than ever, the determination of Joshua is needed by every Christian to make that individual choice that he will serve the Lord God of Heaven regardless of the worldly influences that may surround him. This is not an easy commitment to make, but it is the only way Christians will stand in these last and perilous times. This commitment will not separate

them from the people of God but will draw them into the unity of the believers. It will put God's way above the pressures of peers who may be trying the reins and pushing the boundaries. It will not lead to self-righteousness or formalism but will draw us together with the people of God. It will cause us to carry the mantle of the Lord in love and sobriety and not in a critical or judgmental manner.

Deuteronomy 30:19 says, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore, choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." As we choose life, God will be there to help us live and walk in His will. He will be there to give us the grace to stand and, maybe, even to stand alone. He will be there to comfort us and strengthen us when our commitment falters. He will be there to help our posterity and the future Church to be faithful. May we never forget that the choice we make today affects us and those who follow after. May we always choose God's way so our loved ones will be in the best position to choose life and the ways of God.



A Time for Everything

Most, if not all of us, know the words of Solomon speaking about a time for everything and as we get older the greater the meaning of his words because as we look at what scripture tells us about aging we know only too well that our time is limited and precious especially when it comes to walking with God and we would like share this from a very personal perspective.

Psalms 90:10 ^(ESV) The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.

1 Peter 4:7 ^(ESV) The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.

And these words of Solomon as reminder that the time is now, no matter whether you are 20 or 40 or 80 it is time now –

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 ^(ESV)

¹ For everything there is a season, a time for every matter under heaven:

² a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

³ a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, a time to build up;

⁴ a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

⁵ a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

⁶ a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

⁷ a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, a time to speak;

⁸ a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

We are once again contemplating another year, like us, many will be thinking about things of the past and possibly of what was or wasn't accomplished, thinking of things enjoyed or things that they didn't enjoy, maybe things we wished we could or should have accomplished but something hindered us. At the same time many will be looking ahead, thinking of the coming year and all its possibilities, but one thing is certain some of us may not live in these clay vessels to see another year or perhaps even another day – the end of all things is at hand, it may be for you and I individually being called out of this life or it may be as we read in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (ESV) For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

The end of all things is at hand.

The End here as it is used most often in the New Testament is as the conclusion or termination of an act or a state of being.

The end of all things is at hand.

Peter wrote these words in 1 Peter 4:7 to the believers of the apostolic era over 2000 years ago and they apply equally to all generations. Other writers in one way or another have expressed this truth in the New Testament, here are a few:

1 Corinthians 15:24: Then comes the end.

Philippians 4:5: The Lord is at hand.

Romans 13:11: For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.

James 5:8: The coming of the Lord is at hand.

1 John 2:18: We know that it is the last hour.

Luke 21:28: Straighten up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near.

There could be others given but these I believe all carry the same urgency, the same warning, and whilst these verses speak mainly to the end of time as we know it and the Lord's return, we can apply them with equal weight I believe to our own life in the flesh.

What is the value for us today to ponder on that phrase "The end is at hand"?

This short discourse is focused mainly on the end of all things as it applies to our life here on earth. Many times over the years we have read or heard the words of Psalm 90:10^(ESV) The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.

On a personal level we can testify that in our early years say 20's or 30's and even our later years of 60 and 70 these words did not have the impact they have for us today at the end of 2020.

Why not? Because the Lord blessed us with good health or at least better health than many of our friends and family, as well as and many other blessings we may have an expectation to live longer than those 80 years mentioned in Psalm 90:10. We can also testify that the years we have lived until now were not perfect years, either physically or spiritually, but the Lord was our strength, our rock, and our trust in Him is stayed on the solid foundation of our faith in Him.

But now as we have attained that span spoken of in the psalm, eighty years, we are even more conscious than ever that the end of all things is at hand – including our life here. No, we are not suffering from any illnesses but many of our friends have not reached the age we are at, for them the end of this life became a reality as it will for us. Life as we know it now will not continue, indeed it cannot continue beyond the limit set by God, a limit unknown to us, and hence the warning of Jesus in Matthew 24:42 Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

We recognise that things must change, there are a lot of people calling for change today, things as we know them now will come to an end – the end

of all things. And while God moves in his own timetable, He has not told us exactly when that time will be but He has given us signs that speak to the fact that we are in the last days of the last times, time is running out, time is coming to an end.

The Scriptures I believe imply that the end, both of this world and our personal life, will come suddenly without warning, we are told again by Jesus in Mark 13:33 ^(ESV) Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.

And we need to do that not just when are old but in all of our Christian life. What do these words mean for us now?

I believe it implies responsibility for actions. We are not here just to sit back and let it come but it is a time to prepare, a time to continue to prepare for this change, there is something that we need to be doing, there are some things that we should be aware of.

You may ask surely the Bible has the answer? Yes. it has the answer.

It is in salvation through Jesus Christ and the power to live above the ways of the world seeking first the Kingdom of God, Matthew 6:33

Things, all things come to an end, many are aware of that fact but yet people look for satisfaction elsewhere but don't find it, they don't find their needs or wants or demands supplied, and it expresses itself in the ever-prevalent changing of fads and fashions. They labour for things that do not satisfy and they grow weary, (Ecclesiastes 1:3) Jesus has the remedy and calls those in that condition to come to him, (Matthew 11:28) and a little later on in Matthew 16 He sets the condition and says if anyone would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

To follow Jesus means to give up the quest to please the flesh and its desires. And that is something we often find more difficult to do when we are younger because our needs and circumstances are quite different to when we enter what some call the sunset years of life.

So how do we intend to spend those “sunset” years?

Again, scripture gives us some direction especially in the Sermon on the Mount, it is not just for young or middle-aged Christians, it is for Chris-

tians of any age. Read them carefully and consider how they apply even us in those closing years of life should the Lord give them to us.

Matthew chapters 5 through to chapter 7 applies to our life today, the Sermon on the Mount is Christ's direction for us to live today whether we are 30 or 60 or 80 or older. Just consider these few verses from that sermon and then consider if you have any excuse to say "that is not speaking to me" Matthew 5:13-16 ^(ESV) "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. ¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Ignore them, even in old age and we will no longer be the salt and the light.

You may ask what is life's purpose at 80 or 90. We may say I'm old and can't get about like I used to. We all know that but we can still live a life that will bring glory to God. That is what we were created for, that is what He saved us for. Psalm 102:18

The apostle Paul when writing to the Thessalonian church had some practical advice for them, in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 he tells them they are all the children of light, [*remember Jesus says we are light and salt?*] and he goes on to tell them many things which are beneficial to us today irrespective of age and as we contemplate the end of all things, including our life, we are greatly encouraged to put into practise Paul's advice in verses 16 to 21 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22 ^(ESV) Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise prophecies, ²¹ but test everything; hold fast what is good. ²² Abstain from every form of evil. All these things we can do even if we are housebound or bedfast and thus bring glory to God.

Being old does not defer Satan's plans to entice us away from Christ. Satan is still busy today and he can bring his wares and we must be those who are careful in our life, careful what we look at, careful what we listen to, care-

ful what we meditate upon, think about, careful about our secret thoughts. God knows them, every one of them. We must always be watchful – to the end

Why should we be watchful? Isn't our life nearly done and we have always served the Lord? What can go wrong now? Well many things can go wrong, Satan may give up on enticing us to physical expressions of ungodly desires but I believe he is a master at playing mind games, putting in our minds thoughts and ideas that oppose and try to destroy the purity we must have if we are to see God, Matthew 5:8.

Paul writing to the Philippians gives this advice when it comes to our thought life which is especially important as our physical capabilities lessen, he says in Philippians 4:8 ^(ESV) Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Please note the last four words here – Think on These Things.

And if we keep our thought life pure we can claim the blessings in Psalm 119:1-3 ^(ESV) Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! ² Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, ³ who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!

Carefulness, watchfulness. I believe that it takes a carefulness, a commitment and a watchfulness to continue to be the salt and the light.

Let us commit the keeping of our souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator. 1 Peter 4:19.

We need to trust him for that, but you know trusting him for that also means that we will be committed to His way because that is the way through, committed to following him, committing to living in the will of God, obedient disciplined lives in and by the will and the Word of God.

May we be those who are in the sunset of our years taking up the responsibility and recognising ourselves and bearing the testimony to the world of that, the fact that the end of all things is at hand.

There will be changes yes, but no end.

Remember what is laid up or reserved for us as revealed in 2 Timothy 4:8 (ESV) “Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.”

And then we will be that blessed person spoken of in James 1:12 (ESV) Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

It is clear that that Crown is there for those who bear their cross now.

May the Lord help us to that end and be like those spoken of in Proverbs 16:31 (ESV) “Grey hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life.” With an even better and eternal crown promised in 1 Peter 5:4 (ESV) “And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

J. v. L



PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

There are two main viewpoints on this issue. One is that if a person truly receives Jesus Christ into his heart and repents of his sins, then that person cannot give up his salvation. The other is that if a person truly receives Jesus Christ into his heart and repents of his sins, that person still has a free will to walk away from Jesus Christ, turning back to the world.

Let us look at this issue in the light of the Scriptures so that we may walk in the truth of God’s Word. There is only one correct doctrine concerning this issue. Either we *can* or we *cannot* give up our salvation. One teaching of this doctrine is Biblical, and the other is a damnable heresy. It is important that every person study this teaching, for every individual will stand before Jesus Christ on the Day of Judgment.

Let us begin in Romans 11:13–23. The Bible says, “For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and

thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, the branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. *Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith.* Be not high-minded, but fear: *for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.* Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, *if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.* And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: *for God is able to graft them in again.*”

In the Scripture passage mentioned above, we can see that God is able to and will graft into His family both Jew and Gentile if they put faith in Jesus Christ. We also see very plainly that God is able to and will break off those from His family if they come to the point of unbelief.

Let us now turn to Hebrews 3:12–14. The Bible says, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an *evil heart of unbelief, in departing* from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; *lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.”

The Bible shows us plainly that those who come to God by faith in Jesus Christ and repent of their sins shall remain the children of God if they hold the beginning of their confidence unto the end, Matthew 24:13. But if the child of God develops an evil heart of unbelief, then that person shall depart from the living God.

Hebrews 6:4–6 shows us again that those who become saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, still have a free will to turn from the Lord through an evil and unbelieving heart. The Bible says, “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” In these Scripture verses, we see that the Bible is talking about born-again Christians. These people came to the Lord by faith and are filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they reject Christ so strongly that they crucify Jesus Christ again unto

themselves, not being able to be brought back to repentance. How do we know these people were born-again, spirit-filled Christians? Let us look at verse 4 again, which says, “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, *and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost.*” A person must first receive Jesus Christ before he can be made a partaker of the Holy Ghost.

Let us now turn to 2 Peter 2. The Bible says, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. . . *While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption:* for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. *For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.* But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”

The Bible shows us in this chapter that there will be those that will come into the body of Christ and yet will teach damnable heresies. Some who teach the doctrine of once saved, always saved also teach that those false prophets and teachers were never saved. But the Bible shows us that these people were saved. Verse 15 says that these people, like Balaam, have “*forsaken the right way, and are gone astray.*” If they had never come to the Lord Jesus Christ, then they had always been walking apart from the right way. One cannot forsake what he has never been a part of. The definition of the word *forsake* means “to give up, renounce, to leave altogether, to desert, abandon.”

In Revelation 2 and 3, the Lord Jesus Christ both warns His saints to overcome sin and encourages them to endure the hardships they are facing. To each of the seven churches the promise of eternal life is only to those who overcome. See Revelation 2 verses 7, 11, 17, 26; Chapter 3: verses 5, 12, 21.

As the saints of God, we know that overcoming the sin and hardship of the world is not done by keeping the Law or doing good works. We can overcome the world only through faith in Jesus Christ. The point here is that Jesus Christ is clearly telling His followers that they must overcome. If the teaching once saved, always saved were true, then there is no need for the saints of God to overcome. But the Lord warns and encourages the saints that they must overcome. So much so that if they do not, the *Lord Jesus Christ will spue them out of His mouth*. Revelation 3:16. And let me say, you will either be with Christ for eternity or in the lake of fire.

In Matthew 10:22 the Lord tells His followers, “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that *endureth* to the end shall be *saved*.” And in Matthew 24:13 the Lord Jesus Christ says, “But he that shall *endure* unto the end, the same shall be *saved*.”

It is interesting that the Lord says the same shall be saved. He does not say the same is saved! The words of our Lord Jesus Christ were certainly fulfilled by the apostle Paul, who overcame the world through Jesus Christ and endured until the end. As the Bible shows us in 2 Timothy 4:6-7, “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, *I have kept the faith*.”

Again in 1 Corinthians 9:26-27, the Bible says, “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beats the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, *I myself should be a castaway*.” The apostle Paul knew that he, or any other born-again believer, could reject Christ during any stage of his walk with Christ, even at the end of his physical life. Paul also knew that everyone who preached to others the Good News could himself be castaway if they themselves developed an evil heart of unbelief.

The Lord Jesus Christ shows us those who do not endure unto the end in the parable of the sower. In Mark 4:14–20 the Bible says, “The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the wayside, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and *so endure but for a time*: afterward, when affliction of persecution ariseth for the word’s sake, immediately they are offended. And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, and the cares of this

world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”

This parable is very plain and a simple illustration of how people react to the Word of God (Jesus Christ). The first group of people are those that never receive Jesus Christ, the Word of God. They reject the Word of God, thus condemning themselves. John 3:18 says, “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

The second group of people receive the Word with gladness. These people receive Christ but have no root in themselves and so *endure* but for a time. Afterward, when affliction or persecution arises for the Word’s sake (Jesus Christ), immediately they are offended. These people fall away from the faith, they become apostates. The word *offended* means “to fall away from the faith.”

Those that are within the third soil are born-again Christians that allow the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of other things to enter in, and choke the Word so that it becomes unfruitful. Unfortunately, we see many people in our times as well as throughout history who have fallen into this type of apostasy.

The Bible also speaks of people leaving the faith in 2 Thessalonians 2:1–3. “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, *except there comes a falling away first*, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.”

Let us consider one more chapter in the New Testament. In 1 Timothy 5 the Bible says, “But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, *he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*” And in verses 11 and 12 the Bible says, “But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; *having damnation, because they have cast off their faith.*”

Those that believe once saved, always saved usually quote John 10:29 which says, “My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” In this verse the Lord

Jesus Christ is saying that no one can take a born-again Christian out of the Father's hand. However, Jesus does not say that a born-again Christian cannot turn and walk away from the Father's hand.

There are many Scripture passages that speak to this issue of once saved, always saved. My purpose in writing this tract is to encourage others to study the Word of God and to walk in it, to turn away from the traditions of men, and to faithfully obey our heavenly Father, walking in the Spirit according to the Word of God.

—Brian Brannick



THE DIVINE HIGHWAY

"And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isa. 35:8).

In our modern highway system, there is a borrow pit on each side of the highway where earth is needed to raise the highway. In the old dispensation, things were borrowed from the world to accomplish that which was set in order by the Law, such as, how and where animals were to be sacrificed, the temple, the holy place behind the veil, the mercy seat, etc. Some of this was set in order by the sun and the moon, by which their calendar was adjusted.

In the new dispensation, nothing is borrowed from the world to establish the divine highway. This highway had its beginning in a manger, where the Son of God who had been conceived by the Holy Ghost was born. This highway was above all other ways. Neither the world nor the hands of man had anything to offer in its development. This highway cannot be seen, but it can be walked on by the re-deemed. The kingdom of God is within you and is not seen by observation, Luke 17:20-21. The divine highway is a spiritual highway. Its guidance lives in the hearts of the redeemed and is a way of life.

"Jesus saith I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" John 14:6. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh" Hebrews 10:19-20. The way of the cross leads home.

Salvation is the greatest miracle known to man, that God became man through Jesus Christ to redeem man, His fallen creation, from death and destruction. This is why Isaiah told of a coming highway, a highway that was above all other ways. Nothing would compare to it except the new dispensation of grace. "Exceeding great and precious promises [are given to us] that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature" 2 Peter 1:4. Whoever shall eat and drink of the body of Christ shall live forever. Something divine is eternal with everlasting joy upon our heads. On the highway of God, there is a different course of conduct, a new way of thinking. In it, our speech portrays a conversation that is from Heaven. The spirit of the highway will guide our feet into the way of peace, love, righteousness, joy, long-suffering, gentleness, and the nature of the cross which is divine. The Church is a highway that will take us all home someday by God's help who set the course by Jesus Christ.

There are many people today who believe God is going to set up a literal kingdom on the earth again. We are told in the Word of God that if we try and revert back to the old system under the Law, there remains no more sacrifice for sin. This is what much of the book of Hebrews is about, establishing the new dispensation of grace. A once and for all sacrifice for sin by the blood of Christ has been made. If we fall away from this fact, there is no more sacrifice for sin. If we fall away from the spirit of grace, we become wilful sinners again.

Jesus set up a divine and spiritual kingdom when He was on the earth. Jesus will never break His own rules and revert back to an earthly kingdom, using things of this earth to rebuild the temple again. This kind of thinking is an abomination in the eyes of the Lord. The old city of Jerusalem shall remain desolate until the end of the world. This abomination that Daniel spoke about is still standing in the old holy place and is even gaining momentum. In His Word, Jesus gave us instructions to not revert back to the Law. Would He Himself then revert back to something desolate? This kind of thinking is unheard of in the kingdom and Church of God.

If someone has done despite unto the spirit of grace and has counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, there is still hope in the dispensation of grace. He can call to remembrance how he endured afflictions in the beginning of his faith in Jesus Christ. God is ready to reinstate him into His kingdom and the highway of grace and

power of the Holy Spirit if he will look to the special way He has set in the Gospel of the grace of God of which we were begotten.

There are no interchanges in the highway of life set in order by the Gospel. The only exit is to destruction. We are not some special people or of some tribe in the flesh. We are a chosen generation, a nation bought with a price, purchased with the blood of Christ. We are a kingdom of kings and priests and are in the reign of Christ on the earth. The redeemed out of every kindred and tongue, people and nation are now singing that new song. Now is the time to join that heavenly group of singers, a proclamation of the redeemed. Let us all thank God for the special way He has ordained for the chosen generation through Jesus Christ, our salvation.

Come, let us all unite to sing that God is love. To God be the glory.



GIVING OUR ALL

As one year fades into history and another appears on the horizon, a certain amount of reflection can be helpful in establishing goals, priorities, and changes for one's future. Businesses often take the time to look at their balance sheet to see profits and losses. Those involved in agriculture may analyse yields, production, and expenses to help determine their course of action for the next season. As a Christian, this backward look can also be helpful in establishing areas of needed change and increased depth in our Christian walk.

Two pertinent questions in our reflection could be, what have I given to the Lord, and what am I willing to give to Him? This should be done not to earn our salvation but, rather, to determine if our Christian perspective is aligned with God's will for our lives. It is also helpful to look back through history to help us determine if our standard of giving is of the Lord. One should always remember that the giving of monetary blessings, while important and necessary, is only a small part of a Christian's gifts.

The Scripture has instructions on why and how we should give. In Matthew 10:8, we read, "Freely ye have received, freely give." If we fully comprehend the gifts that we have received as a Christian, we will give. The most important gift to a Christian is the gift of salvation. When love and appreciation for God's great gift fill our hearts, there is not room for the feelings of self that often squelch the spirit of giving. If the love of God does

not motivate our giving, the pressing need might be satisfied, but the value of the gift is but a "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" 1 Corinthians 13:1. In 2 Corinthians 9:7, we read, "Every man according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loves a cheerful giver." Everyone's heart is blessed when those who give time and money do it because they gladly and unconditionally want to share and give to the Lord.

The account of Ruth is inspiring to read when one thinks of Ruth's commitment and love to Naomi and Naomi's God. "And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodges, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" Ruth 1:16. She was expressing her love and willingness to become as nothing and to completely lose her identity. She did not hold onto her home, her people, her way of life, her gods, her future, her belongings, or her very identity. Instead, she gave all to the one true God of Naomi. God saw her gift and was touched by her love and commitment. God blessed her beyond measure. He blessed her with protection, love, and a home with Boaz. He blessed her with children. Perhaps the greatest blessing was her place in the lineage of King David and, eventually, of Jesus Himself. What a marvel of both selfless giving and the unsearchable riches of God. Surely her commitment and unselfish giving should be an encouragement to Christians of all ages and cultures.

We can also be inspired by the little lad who gave his lunch to the Master to help feed the multitude. John 6:9 reads, "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?" It was not a hamper filled to capacity with the delicacies of that day. It was only a small basket wherein were five loaves and two fishes. It was ordinary and common, but when touched by the Divine, it ministered unto the multitude.

Sometimes we hesitate to reach out and share the gifts God has given us. We think our thoughts are not inspirational enough, our singing is not perfected, our house is below the standard, or our cooking does not measure up. So instead of giving we enumerate our excuses and hinder the blessing that the Lord can put on our gifts. Instead of looking upward and outward in our expression of love, we look inward. Our thoughts circle around our own inadequacies and failures. God only asks us to give, and He will multiply. This giving could be a testimony in a worship service, a visit to the hospital,

an invitation to someone in need, an encouragement to someone who is grieving, or a prayer offered. Let us not overlook the simple gifts we can give to God. Let us give them in humility and love and not expect anything in return. God will be faithful. His blessing will rest upon the humble and grateful heart.

Jesus sat in the temple one day, "and he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had" Luke 21:1-4. Jesus' heart was not touched by the liberal offerings of the rich. Instead, His heart of love reached out when He saw a widow approach the offering box and meekly give her two mites, about fifty cents in today's value. She had not given of her abundance, rather of her poverty.

What do we use as a guide when it comes to giving? Do we check our schedules to see if we have enough time to visit the needy, to bake a pie for a funeral, or to encourage the disheartened? Do we check our balance sheet to see if our own needs, and maybe even our wants, are met first, and then we give out of the leftover? Are we making His priorities, both in time and finances, our priorities? God would have us give of our first fruits instead of only from the leftover, and then trust Him for the rest.

As we face the New Year, may we be willing to generously give our hearts and lives, our vows and commitments, our hopes and dreams, our time and service, our talents and finances, and our very being to the great God of Heaven. If we give in humility and love to the Lord, He will "open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10). What a wonderful blessing and comfort awaits those who are willing to love much and give accordingly in the coming year if the Lord tarries.

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