

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 2-19

Vol. 14 No. 2 – FEBRUARY 2017



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

www.anabaptistmennonites.net

For A Conservative Anabaptist Perspective

From The Editor's Desk*Treasuring God's Word and Direction in Daily Life.*

Our ruin is by either living by no rule at all or choosing to follow false rules, we often times go in our own wisdom and strength believing that we are right without seeking advise from anyone and often times not bringing a matter before God in prayer and supplication.

God's Word is a treasure worth laying up in our hearts, our hearts are the only safe place to lay it up, for if it is laid up in our hearts we will not become subject to this shown in Matthew 15:19, For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: nor this in Mark 7:21, For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders.

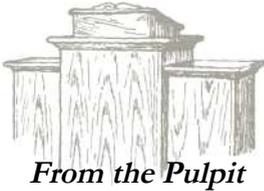
Our minds and memories are like a leaky vessel, they do not, without much care, retain what is poured into them. This is part of the corruption of our nature, temptations, worldly cares and pleasures so we need to daily seek God's direction for our lives and can do this by seeking out the treasure of God's truth in his written word the scriptures and by revelation of those truths through his Holy Spirit who indwells us once we are born again.

With the treasure of God's word in our hearts we can overcome the dominion of sin, we can have victory over the attractions of the world which are out to destroy our soul and eternal salvation, we can feel safe and secure in the arms of Jesus despite all that Satan comes against us with.

We need to seek God daily and plead with Him to teach us His ways so that as we become partakes of His holiness we can also be partakers of His blessings and if we are fed with the bread of life in this way than we should also feed others.

When we do meditate on God's precepts or requirements for our life let us also determine to carry them out, not just think about His precepts but to, actually live them and to delight and rejoice in them knowing that we are pleasing to God and if we do it with sincerity others will see that and be drawn to Christ also.

J.v.L.



Danger of Spiritual Over-Confidence

Linford Berry

Calvary Mennonite Fellowship VA

2012

I invite you to open your copies of the Scriptures to 1st Corinthians the 10th chapter. I would invite you to stand as I read the first 15 verses of this.

1 Corinthians 10:1-15 (ESV) ¹ For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. ⁵ Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. ⁶ Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. ⁷ Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” ⁸ We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹ We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, ¹⁰ nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. ¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. ¹² Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. ¹⁴ Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵ I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say.

Let us pray.

Our Father God this is your word to us we recognise it as such, we thank you for it, it does make us uncomfortable, Lord we need your word, we must have it and so guide me as I attempt to explain to expose to unpack and apply this passage this morning.

May you use these feeble lips and mind to deliver your message to your people. We pray in Jesus name, Amen.

You may be seated.

There are two purposes for this message this morning, two purposes from the text that we have just read, the first one and the most important one is what is summed up in verse 12, "Therefore - what all this is here for, take heed let anyone who thinks that he is something let anyone who thinks that he stands, the context here is our spiritual standing, let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall

This passage demonstrates, teaches that depravity still exists in the life of the Christian and if we think that because we are God's people and we have received God's blessing that somehow we will no longer struggle with our own sinful desires then we are kidding nobody but ourselves and we are in the gravest danger.

So that is the most important thing I want you to take from this passage.

Secondly this depravity, this sinful desire that we carry with us manifests itself in idolatry, it has always done that and in almost every case this idolatry of our hearts is somehow connected in some way to sexual immorality, again it has always been this way, idol worship has always carried with it sexual connotations and overtones and so today I want to make application of this passage to that issue.

This passage can be applied to many different issues but the issue that comes to the front right here in this passage is the issue of sexual immorality.

Now for a bit of context; this passage found in first Corinthians is written to the church at Corinth but ultimately it is written to us, it is written for our instruction, it is written down for our instruction, verse 11, on whom the end of the ages have come, and what he is referring to here is the Messianic age, we are part of that, we are after Christ, this is written for us.

The church at Corinth was much like us, the Corinthians lived in a world that wasn't too different from our world, Corinth was one of the most prosperous cities in the Roman Empire, a city that sat at the centre of trade

routes a very important city in term of economics and also one of the most morally corrupt and sexually promiscuous cities in the Roman Empire.

The church at Corinth was very blessed and very privileged, after all the Apostle Paul was their founding pastor, they had been taught by Apollos, they had been taught by Peter, I mean this church they had the best of the best. At least by outward appearance this church was successful, things were really happening at Corinth.

Does any of this sound familiar to you?

Furthermore it seems that within the church at Corinth there were people who were pushing the envelope, there were people who were testing the limits, the limits of Christian liberty. Two of the big issues written about by the Apostle Paul to the church at Corinth in this book the two main issues the two big issues are Number one: sexual sin, sexual immorality, it was, if not tolerated, at least ignored in the church and Secondly: Christians in the Corinthian church were taking advantage of Christian liberty in the area of meat offered to idols and by doing so they were putting themselves in danger, in grave danger, of being defiled by this idolatrous association.

They were also damaging each other; they were causing other brothers to stumble.

And so in short if you were to sum it up the church at Corinth was presuming on the grace of God, they were presuming on the grace of God to their own hurt to their own destruction.

Again does any of this sound familiar?

And so we must take this passage very seriously, this is not about some abstract somebody else, somewhere else, this is about us, the Apostle's instructions, the warnings, the exhortations are directed to us, this applies to us.

So let's approach the text with that in view let's not ask the questions or point the finger at others, we must examine our own lives, both individually and corporately.

There are 4 parts to this passage.

The first part is the privilege, verses 1 through 4.

The 2nd part is the abuse of the privilege, verses 5 through 10.

The 3rd part is the warning, verses 11 and 12 and
The final part is the solution in verses 13 to 15.

So what is the privilege?

The church at Corinth was made up primarily of Gentile believers, the Gentile believers might not have had such an intimate knowledge of Jewish history although I am sure they would have been aware of it, but Paul is reminding them he wants them to know he wants them to remember.

Now key in all of this even if they were Jews they would have still needed a reminder, we still need a reminder, we forget, we forget what God has done, we forget how God has dealt with his people we need to be reminded and what he is reminding them and us of is this great blessing that the children of Israel experienced coming out of Egypt and being directed to the promised land.

He is reminding us that we have experienced the same kind of blessing, we are partakers of the same goodness and blessing of God as the Israelites were.

So what does this look like in terms of the Israelites?

Well they were delivered from Egypt, that's the story of Exodus, they were delivered from bondage from slavery and they were delivered in a miraculous way through the Red Sea, the sea was walled up on the sides and they walked through on dry land, I mean this is amazing.

Furthermore they were led, they were directed and they were protected by God himself.

You remember the story, the cloud was over them when the Egyptian army came after them God moved that cloud around to provide darkness on one side and light on the other to shield them and protect them from the enemy. God's presence was so powerful that they could actually see it and feel it, it was a safe visible demonstration of God's power and presence, it was a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

The presence of God came between the Israelites and their enemies.

The pillar of cloud and fire continued to direct their movements as they went through the wilderness, the cloud was a sign of the presence of God, when it moved they moved, when it stopped they stopped, it came down

this presence of God came down over the temple of meeting or the tabernacle as it was later developed. It was a great blessing. So not only were they delivered from bondage but they were directed, guided and protected by God himself in very personal and powerful ways.

And thirdly they were immersed into the leadership of Moses that's what it says here, baptised it says here or transliterated immersed, they were immersed into the leadership of Moses, they were identified with Moses, they were Moses' people, they had one leader and that leader was Moses. Furthermore Moses was a mediator between the people of Israel and God; he was their conduit, their avenue by which they related to God.

And fourthly God provided nourishment for them, God provided sustenance for them, He provided what they needed to go on living, He gave them spiritual food, supernatural food, remember the manna that came in every morning, remember the quail that hovered three foot off the ground, quail in such numbers that it fed 600,000 people for a month, that is supernatural that kind of stuff doesn't just happen.

God also provided water, again supernaturally out of the rock, a rock is the last place you look for water, rock is hard, it is cold it is dry, you don't go to the rock looking for water but God made water come out of a rock. God knew exactly what they needed and He provided it for them.

The most amazing thing that I see in this passage is that it tells us that Jesus Christ was right here with them, Jesus Christ was the source of this provision for them.

Here we are in the Old Testament and yet we see that Jesus Christ is shown to be the saviour of the children of Israel, He is shown to be their sustenance that which provides for them daily life.

Now the parallels for us as Christians should be very obvious, we have been freed from the bondage of sin and that's our Egypt, slavery to sin, and this is a miraculous salvation it is accomplished with supernatural power, this is not of their own work lest we should boast that somehow we had something to do with it. The Israelites had no doubts when they went through the Red Sea and they looked back and they saw God destroying their enemies they broke forth in praise to God, they recognised that it was

God who had delivered them, some trust in horses and in chariots but we trust in the name of the Lord our God [Psalm 20:7](#), that's the kind of salvation we have been given and just as the Israelites were immersed into Moses their leader and their mediator so we have been immersed into Christ, we have been baptised into Christ, identified with Christ, He is our leader, He is our mediator.

We are Jesus' people, they were Moses' people, we are Jesus' people, identifying ourselves as one of Christ's.

Furthermore we have been protected and directed by God through his word, the living Word, Jesus Christ himself as revealed in the written word. God has given us richly all things to enjoy, ([1 Timothy 6:17](#)) He has blessed us as it says in Ephesians 1 with every spiritual blessing ([Ephesians 1:3](#)), that's who we are, that's how we have been blessed.

But look what verse 5 says, one of the most tragic verses in all of the New Testament, nevertheless, in spite of all of this, in spite of this great blessing, this great provision, this great direction but nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased.

Now if there was ever an understatement that is one, there were 600,000 people in the company of the children of Israel when the 12 spies went to spy out the land, 600,000, does anybody know how many of them made it to the Promised Land? Two, two of them. With most of them God was not well pleased, except two of them, Joshua and Caleb.

The proof of this issue of God not being pleased with them was that they were overthrown in the wilderness, they were discarded in the wilderness, they died, they did not make it to the promised land so after all these blessings of salvation, deliverance, direction, provision, intercession they did not please God.

Now you would think that all of this would produce grateful, holy, righteous Israelites, you would think that all of this would produce grateful, righteous Christians at Corinth and at Calvary Mennonite Fellowship (or whatever fellowship you belong to), you would think.

So what's the problem?

What was the problem then and what is the problem now? How could there possibly even be a problem, I thought God had delivered them from Egypt, from bondage, from sin, I thought God had provided everything that we

need for life and godliness, I thought that God had even provided the very presence of Jesus Christ, I thought that as Christians we were delivered from this sin how could there possibly be a problem?

Well here in lies the dilemma, the first purpose as I said of this message, depravity still exists in the life of the Christian, if we think that because we are God's people and we receive God's blessings that somehow we are exempt from this, that somehow we will no longer struggle with our sinful desires then we are really fooling ourselves.

God knows better, the apostle Paul knew better, as a matter-of-fact go back to chapter 9 the last few verses right before where we started reading, here is the apostle Paul and he says that athletes compete, they run after the prize, exercise self-control in everything, they do this to receive some honour, some perishable honour but then he says in verse 26, so I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air but I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. [1 Corinthians 9:24-27](#). That's the apostle Paul.

The apostle Paul is worried about this or concerned about this, he realises the danger.

The problem is that we still have this propensity to desire evil as it says they did, verse 6, Now these things took place as examples for us that we might not desire evil as they did, [1 Corinthians 10:6](#).

So although you can take the Israelites out of Egypt it is an entirely different matter to take Egypt out of the Israelite.

Now what kind of desires did the Israelites have that qualified as evil desires?

Do you remember what kind of desires they were?

Well the book of Numbers tells us that they desired melons and cucumbers and some meat to eat, they lusted after the food that they had enjoyed in Egypt and this was labelled as an evil desire.

Now are melons and cucumbers bad things? I don't particularly think so I actually enjoy melons and cucumbers, some of you might wish that instead of melons and cucumbers the Bible had mentioned broccoli or asparagus and Pastor Steve probably wishes they would have mentioned bananas.

The point is that the Israelites had been delivered from Egypt but they still had this hankering, this desire, this inward bent to go back, they valued the temporal pleasure of food and drink and meat, they valued that more than they valued God and God's provision for them.

And this is the essence of idolatry when we value what we want, when we value our own pleasure, our own tastes, our own appetites, when we value that more than what we value that God has done for us that God has given to us that is idolatry, you are now worshipping another god.

This is an issue not just of a statue or an idol in terms of physical dimensions this is an issue of the heart.

Ezekiel 14 talks about this, the word of the Lord came to me: Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their hearts and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces ([Ezekiel 14:3a](#))

That's what he's talking about here.

You know the first account that is referenced in terms of the Israelites is the account of the golden calf we recognise it because we recognise the language, the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play, that's a quote from [Exodus 32:6](#).

But notice it does not say anything about a golden calf here, the golden calf wasn't really the problem, the golden calf was just an excuse more or less for the Israelites to do the kind of things that they had a hankering to do to fulfil their sinful evil desires.

And we have some of the same issues, our struggle is not against flesh and blood that is a physical idol, our struggle is because our hearts are little idol factories, we value our own desires, we value our own pleasures over what God has for us, over what God has provided for us and this is evil and this is real for us, this is where the battle is fought.

That is why the first commandment is the first commandment; the first commandment is thou shalt have no other gods. [Exodus 20:3](#)

And the New Testament version of that commandment is thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, mind and strength. [Mark 12:30](#)

Until we get this straight, until we get the first commandment straight until it is the first thing none of the other things will be kept either, the rest of the commandments will just go right out the window.

Often we would like to think that our problems and our sin are the result of something out there, something outside of us, we would like to think that way because that way we wouldn't have to reckon with and wrestle with what is really inside of us but the first chapter of James as was read earlier makes it very clear where our sin comes from, our sin comes when we are tempted, we're tried, the pressure is on and our lusts, our desires within us rise up and then when that conceives it brings forth sin and eventually death as it did here in this illustration of the children of Israel.

So these verses are very, very graphic in terms of what happens when this evil desire is lived out, not only did the Israelites attempt to fulfil the sinful desires of their heart but they actually rejected, they pretty much thumbed their nose at God, they complained about what God had given to them, and we see what the results were there was judgement, there was death, there was destruction, for some it was almost instant death, for others it was a slow and painful death.

We remember the plagues that it talks about here and the diseases and the snakebites that God brought to them but for all of them with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, for all of them, they would be overthrown in the wilderness they would never experience the promised land.

Now it should not be hard for us to get the message here, it should not be hard for us to see how this relates to us.

The issue here as it is in focus here in verse 8 revolves around sexual immorality, also in verse 7 actually (1 Corinthians 10:7-8) the eating and drinking and rising up to play, that word has sexual connotations, evidently the children of Israel were naked they were having an orgy they were participating in rampant immorality. And this was not the only time (the book of) Numbers talks about it a couple of times where they went to worship other gods and as a part of this worship they became involved in prostituting themselves.

So when we participate in sexual immorality we're basically thumbing our nose at God we're saying God we don't like what you have provided, I

don't like the way you designed it to work, I'm going to do it my own way, I value my own pleasure over your will.

When as a husband or a wife you look at another man or another woman with lustful intent you are saying to God, God what you provided me is worthless I want something else! then you are no different to the Israelites who grumbled and complained about the manna and the quail.

And when you look at pornography you are saying to God, God your design for sexuality is not what I want, I want something else, I want those melons and cucumbers and the meat of Egypt.

And you had best be glad that God is a God of mercy and grace, that God is a God who is long-suffering else you too would be dead.

And notice God did not kill all the Israelites outright, He killed 23,000 here and 3000 there another couple of thousand somewhere else but there were 600,000 of them He did not kill them all at once outright but eventually death caught up to all of them.

So just because you escape the immediate consequences, just because you escape the immediate threat of death from destruction, it does not mean you have escaped you are still in the wilderness and you are not getting out alive.

These things happened to them as an example for us.

And then the warnings in verses 11 and 12 ([1 Corinthians 10:11-12](#)) these things were written down for our instruction, they were written down so that we could benefit from this so that we would not make the same mistakes that they made and if, if we think that we are exempt, if we think that somehow we have got it better or different than they did, that we are not subject to the same issues then we are in gravest danger because he who thinks that he stands must take heed lest he fall.

Proverbs says that pride goes before destruction ([Proverbs 16:18](#)) and my concern is that today in the church at large, in our church, in our hearts that we have far too much spiritual pride that we somehow think that we kind of have got it together, that we really don't have as many problems as they do out there.

Let me tell you if you think that way you are setting yourself up for a disaster, disaster of the kind of proportions that this passage talks about. It has always been this way, God does not tolerate, God does not value the proud heart but the humble.

We look at the children of Israel and say, wow, that was pretty raunchy. I mean they experienced the blessing of God and within 24 hours they are back at their complaining again, just go read Exodus and Numbers, it about makes you mad, what were these people thinking?

We do the same thing. We might not do it out loud but when we sin when we give in to our lusts, when we think thoughts of fantasy we are doing the same thing the Israelites did.

When we violate God's commands, God's order the way God has made things to work in terms of sexuality we are doing the same thing the Israelites did and we might come to church here on Sunday morning and we might feel all spiritual but what happens on Monday morning, what happens Wednesday morning and Friday night?

Now the solution to this problem is here in the final verses 13 to 15, ([1 Corinthians 10:13-15](#)), no temptation has overtaken you that is not common to all of man.

Well that's actually part of the warning I don't find it particularly comforting because you see we want our experience to be an exception to the rule, we want to believe that there is some special mitigating circumstances, some special reasons why I just can't do it. God is saying you're not that special, no, you've got the same issues that everybody else's got.

So get over thinking that you are somebody special and that the rules don't apply to you, that God's judgement does not apply to you. It does!

It is comforting in some way to realise that what I struggle with all of you struggle with in some measure or other but this is comforting in kind of a perverse way because why would I want you to struggle like I struggle? No temptation has overtaken to you that is not common to man but here is the real hope, the real hope in all of this, God is faithful, we're not, the Israelites weren't, the church of Corinth wasn't but God is, God is faithful and God will not let you be tempted beyond your ability.

Whoa, that ratchets up the responsibility.

When you face temptation do you realise that is God is saying you can handle it, you can handle it, I'm not going to give you more than you can handle.

God is faithful He won't let us be tempted beyond our ability but He will with the temptation also provide a way of escape that you may be able to endure it.

Now one day at the market there was a little boy standing by some candy and he looked like he was going to put some in his pocket and he stood there for a long time and finally the clerk spoke to him and said: Looks like you are trying to take some candy.

The little boy replied, You are wrong Mister, I'm trying not to. For the moment he was enduring.

But I feel like that too often we are like that little boy, we like to look at the candy, we like to smell the candy, we like to see how close we can get to the candy, we know we shouldn't take any but we hang around the candy an awful lot.

What does the Bible say, verse 14, ([1 Corinthians 10](#)) therefore my beloved flee, get away, run away as fast as you can from idolatry.

We've already talked about what idolatry is, idolatry is the valuation of any thing of our own pleasure our own desires above what God desires or in contradiction to what God desires. Therefore my beloved flee.

And the apostle says here I'm speaking to sensible people, okay, you can figure this out shouldn't be that hard, if you have a problem with candy or if you have a problem with sexual immorality, if you have a problem with pornography, or if you have a problem with kind of any devious sinful behaviour, you don't go over and try and get as close as you can without falling in, you flee, you run away, you take whatever measures are necessary.

Judge for yourselves, is this not sensible isn't this the way it ought to be and yet why don't we do that? Because you see our desires are corrupt, we still have a hankering for Egypt.

Now that seems pretty hopeless does it not but God is faithful, God is faithful, He provides an escape. Now as soon as we think about escape we think about a place of peace, of rest and relaxation, a place where everything goes well where there is no struggle, we think about heaven right.

Sorry you're not there yet, you're not there yet. This escape that he is talking about it is an escape alright but the language here actually has the idea of you're in a valley and you are surrounded by enemy armies and there is no way out and all of a sudden God opens up a mountain pass and you see it for the first time and you realise there, there is a way I can get out, but it requires you to hike up that mountain, it requires you to strategically get away, it might require you to flee. That might be one of God's escape paths to flee.

But whenever you face temptation there is always a means a way of escape.

Go back with me to verse 9 ([1 Corinthians 10](#)) because here is the real solution, it is not actually in the text, we have to know something about the story that this is talking about, you remember the children of Israel were grumbling again and God sent serpents, they were actually putting God to the test here they were doing more than just grumbling, they were grumbling about leadership and they were taking matters into their own hands and God sent snakes, poisonous snakes slithering through the whole camp and people were bitten and people were dying and do you remember what the solution was?

It is the solution that Jesus Christ referenced himself being, Moses was to take and fashion a bronze serpent and put it up on a pole and then when the people were bitten they were to look at that bronze serpent and they would be healed.

Now there is very interesting things about this, for one God did not get rid of the snakes, the snakes were still there biting people.

Does that relate to any of you? You've still got the temptations, you've still got the struggle, God is not just going to take it away always, the snakes are still there, the snakes are still biting the difference is now there is some hope now you can look at that bronze serpent and trust that you will be healed, you put your faith and your confidence in Jesus Christ and the bite loses its sting.

Victory has been won but you've still got snakes slithering around your feet trying to bite you.

So here is the solution; Jesus Christ.

Now you say well the Israelites had that it says that Jesus Christ was with them, He was following them, yes, but what they needed was more of Him and less of themselves and what we need is more of Him and less of us. So how are you going to do this?

Well you can either flee, that is one way of escape but even when you flee you've still got the snakes with you because there is this desire in your heart and it is bent toward evil so what do we do with that?

Well we meditate on the Word, we immerse ourselves into Christ.

[Psalm 119:11](#) says Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee.

When the test comes we turn to the word of God, don't listen to yourself, don't listen to your own lusts turn to God to His word, you listen to that.

Secondly you pray, Jesus taught us how to pray it is called the Lord's prayer or the disciples prayer, lead us not into temptation but deliver us, [\(Luke 11:4\)](#) you cannot deliver yourself, the Israelites could not deliver themselves, you surely can't deliver yourself you must plead with God to do the deliverance, your turn to God and cry out to Him.

Ephesians 6 talks about taking the shield of faith so that you can quench these fiery darts that come at you [\(Ephesians 6:16\)](#), we must trust God we must put our confidence in him.

And another important element and the 4th one is we must look to Christ just as the Israelites looked at that serpent raised up in the wilderness and Jesus came and said I am that serpent raised up.

You look to Christ, He endured every temptation, He was faithful, we can trust in him you are not going to do this by yourself, you're not going to fight this battle in your own strength you will lose, the Israelites once they got the word that they were going to die in the wilderness because of their lack of trust in God after the 12 spies came back and Moses told the people, sorry you blew it you are not going to go to the promised land. You know what they did?

They got this idea that they were going to go to the Promised Land anyway if God is not going to take us there we are going to go on our own.

And we know what happened they were utterly destroyed, no power whatsoever and Moses warned them and he said God is not with you you're not going to get anything good out of this.

Same thing goes for our struggles, for our temptations, for our struggle with the sin that resides within us, if God is not dealing with that, if God is not in the fight, if God is not doing the work of redemption in your heart you are fighting a losing battle.

There is no test that is more than we can bear, there is no temptation that overtakes us that hasn't already overtaken somebody we have a choice to make, when we fail it is because we have made the wrong choice we chose to listen to ourselves rather than to God, we chose to value our own pleasure over God's pleasure, we chose not to turn to the word of God which is our sustenance and instead we turn to ourselves.

If we fail it is because we turned our attention away from Christ.

Now we've all fallen into this trap many times, way too many times, but our heavenly Father is faithful, He was faithful to the children of Israel time and time and time again and He provides a way back a way to be restored to himself through repentance and confession, through restoration. If you sin, confess your sin, agree with God about the way things really are and cry out to him for his mercy and grace, for his salvaging of your heart. This is the solution and never forget that you have the option to flee.

People say, well I just can't help myself or the devil made me do it or any other number of excuses.

No! God will not let you be tempted beyond what you are able to bear He will provide a way of escape the problem is we don't want the way of escape we like the candy too much, we like the melons and cucumbers and the leeks too much, we don't like the quail or manna that God gave us.

We get tired of the manna, the word of Christ, that's our problem.

So as the apostle Paul said to himself and to the Corinthian church we must discipline our bodies, we must it keep under control lest after having experienced the blessings of God the saving work of God, the provision of God,

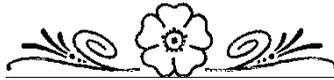
the leading of God, after all of this we would become disqualified, a castaway.

Let's pray.

Father our hearts are heavy because we know, we know deep down inside there is no good thing in us that we are still bent towards sin and Father may we be reminded of this. Oh help us not to think too highly of ourselves but may we think highly of you, convict us, convince us, show us the error of our thinking, show us the awful wretched state of our heart without you and may you work in our hearts this redeeming salvaging work of grace.

You alone can do it Lord it is not ours to do but may we know your way of escape.

Lord show us the things that we need to flee from, show us the temptations that we give into without even thinking and may we turn to Jesus Christ as our only hope, the only Saviour of our souls and will you finally take us to the promised land.



THE DISAPPEARING BOUNDARY

The Kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of this world are definitely two distinct kingdoms. We must come out of one in order to enter the other, as Israel did under God's direction from Egypt to Canaan. He brought them out so He might bring them in. Even though these kingdoms border each other, they are not allies. Nevertheless, the boundary line is becoming rather obscure to many who think they hold citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is both possible and commendable that two nations can be neighbours—drawn into close association—but it is neither possible nor commendable for the Kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of this world to neighbour together. "Whosoever ... will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" James 4:4.

In order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, one must come out from the

kingdom of this world. One must leave the old life in order to enter a new life in Christ Jesus. The call to leave the world is clearly set forth in the Apostle's letter to the young church at Corinth. In this second letter, chapters 6 and 7, we see where Christian life is a separated life. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" 2 Corinthians 6:17.

Men who would want to live in another country will be accepted only as they disannul their citizenship with other countries and pledge allegiance to the country in which they now desire to live. This procedure creates a boundary line that will need to be recognized.

To become a Christian, one must leave the world, and, in addition, he must become a citizen of the Kingdom of Christ; he must come under its rules and regulations. This Kingdom definitely has a border patrol, for the old country is an enemy of the new country.

A disciple of Christ becomes a follower of Christ, and this takes him into a different life. He enters a life of progressive sanctification, a turning away from the old life. "Dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" 2 Corinthians 7:1. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" 1 John 3:3. In Colossians 3, Paul addresses himself to the newborn in Christ, speaking first of laying off and then of putting on. Those who fail to die to this old life and who fail to put it off properly will have border difficulties.

Because of this, the boundary between these two countries is disappearing in the lives of many individuals and churches. In the minds of many, the line of demarcation is so thin that it is hardly discernible. The boundary line, as well as the people on either side, must at all times be apparent and recognized. When the Christian, or a church, loses this border respect, he also loses his influence.

It seems to be only natural and understandable that two nations bordering each other will accept one another, even to the extent of changing some laws. However, this dare not be true of the Kingdom of Christ. The Kingdom of Christ is established in holiness; its people are a "royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" 1 Peter 2:9, and, because of holiness, it

can have no part with darkness, no part with unrighteousness, and no part with devils, 1 Corinthians 14:15-17. In spite of this, the Christian church is becoming more and more interested, as well as involved, in the affairs of this world. History seems to repeat itself. Joshua, a man of renown in Israel, experienced several transitions. Israel sank into unbelief, then rallied and went in to possess the land; in late life Joshua again saw their decline in religion and morality. He again entreated them to turn and serve God "in sincerity and truth."

What might be the cause of this border trouble? Two views are current. The gospel is given a new dimension that allows a considerable amount of that which was "on the other side of the flood;" the other view is that the evil of this world has been modified. What was labelled "world" a century ago has been questioned by many in succeeding generations, and the questioning has come to be accepted in the last decade. Among the many changes that might be mentioned: politics (including voting at the polls), union shops, life insurance, expensive, modern homes, high-priced, flashy vehicles, and copying after the fashions and fads of the world in dress.

Why should these things be? Is it not because, as a Christian, one has not died to the old life? Lot moved toward Sodom, either not looking at evil as it really was or enlarging on the grace of God, believing it was allowable. To whom does James write in chapter 4, verse 4, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" What does the scriptural call to separation mean?

God has never intended to place miles between the Christian and world. Even though Egypt and Canaan were many miles apart, Israel was still surrounded by idol worshipers. Christ did not isolate His followers in a desert land; neither is the Christian now to live in remote places. Isolation, in a sense, would be one answer to the problem of separation, but at the same time it would not be in keeping with God's will, inasmuch as the Christian is to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. This Bible command is not necessarily physical. Neither is this separation distinguished by a particular cut in clothing or by occupation. Jesus has left His followers in the world, but they are not to be of the world. We must go past the external into the heart to find the cause of seeking the friendship of this world.

Satan, in his subtle way, is trying to impress the Christian that in order to

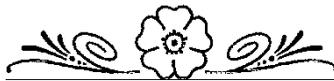
win others to Christ, one must not be so different, not so much separated, and that then the world will be more favourably impressed with Christianity.

Throughout history, God has always said, "Come ye out from among them." God told the sons in Israel that if they would marry heathen wives, their wives would lead them from God. There have been individual Christians in churches that were not in compliance with God's Word who preferred to remain there, believing they could rescue others, but they have found that God blesses only when they obey the command, "Come ye out from among them."

The Apostle John says that the lust of the eye and of the flesh and the pride of life are of the world and that unless the Christian has died to his old life, the temptations will entice him and weaken spiritual resistance and, as Jesus says, lead him into the world.

The Church of Jesus Christ must exert itself in ways and means to solve its border problems. The border patrol must be intensified. Ministers must continue to teach and preach separation; parents must be more alert and prompt in discipline, working closely with those who patrol. The Kingdom of Christ will not merge with the kingdom of this world, but it is to be feared that many will be lured beyond the boundary.

By Min. Richard M. taken from Selected Editorials The Messenger of Truth



CHRIST IS WORTHY

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life ... keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" 1 Timothy 6:12, 14-15.

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou halt created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" Revelation 4:11.

The recent demonstrations in the Middle East of fanatical devotion to Islam

gives one many thoughts. There are radical elements in Christendom, also, which sadly misrepresent the true spirit of Christ. They, too, are intensely devoted to their religion. What drives such zeal other than the spirit realm? But the question that presses the closest is whether believers in the true, meek, humble, defenceless Lamb of God are as devoted and loyal to Him as His worthiness merits. "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" Hebrews 7:26. Such a One surely is worthy of the utmost devotion and loyalty but needs no defines by the arm of flesh.

There is one outstanding difference between the true Christian faith and other religions. The object, centre, and focus of the Christian faith lives! He says, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" Revelation 1:18. We know that He lives, because God has given us that faith, based on the Holy Scriptures, and He lives in our hearts—we experience His presence. The greatest evidence of His presence is the power He gives to conquer sin and evil in one's life. Furthermore, the comfort and help of the Holy Spirit is given to those who believe, so that they are assured of being a child of God.

True knowledge of the living Christ and personal acquaintance with Him go hand in hand with a walk by faith, which genders love and devotion to Him, Galatians 5:6. One not only comes to know Him personally as Lord and Master but, also, as a loving Friend, John 15:15. He becomes our "all we need." "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" 1 Corinthians 1:30; Romans 8:32, true believers experience that even in the everyday things of life Christ is moved by their troubles and dilemmas and conveys their petitions to the Father, Hebrews 4:16.

All of the above is set against the backdrop of Christ Jesus being the Redeemer, a "friend of sinners" Matthew 11:19. He was the only perfect sacrifice for sin—there is no other. Only His precious blood, shed on the cross on Golgotha, quieted the holy law of God. He only was the "spotless Lamb of God." As for man, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" Romans 3:23, and the Law justly demanded death for sinners.

"Therefore being justified by faith [in His sacrifice], we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" Romans 5:1.

This is, of course, "the old, old story," and the fervent Christian delights to hear it again and again. It serves to establish the truth that we are not our own but are "bought with a price" 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Each time it is told sincerely, "softly, with earnest tones and grave," it moves hearts to faithfulness and loyalty.

In the early apostolic church, the experiencing of Jesus Christ and obedience to the Holy Ghost inspired tremendous and notable loyalty and devotion in the believers. The accounts are well known to Bible readers, and the church grew mightily. The good news of salvation in Jesus—His life, death, and resurrection—convinced the believers that He was worthy of all their efforts and, even, their lives.

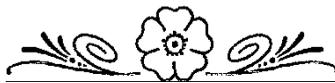
Down through the centuries, this was true of the remnant of faithful disciples, even when the apostate church turned vehemently against them. They had a vision of the worthiness of Christ, and thus many times suffered the loss of possessions and life itself. No sacrifice was considered loss in view of Christ's worthiness.

Affluent times and freedom from oppression and persecution have a way of dulling our spiritual senses. We do not feel as deeply about matters pertaining to Christian life and the welfare of the church of God as others in yesteryear did. Thieleman J. van Braght wrote in his preface to the second part of the *Martyrs Mirror* in 1659, "In former times, in the times of the cross, when men could assemble only under peril of their lives, our zeal drove us in the night and at unseasonable times, into nooks and corners, and into fields and woods. How precious was then one hour which could be employed in stirring up and establishing one another in godliness ... But how is it now? Temporal avocations have the preference throughout ... Simplicity is changed into pomp and ostentation. Possessions have increased, but in the soul there is leanness ... Love has waxed cold, and has diminished, but contentions have increased" (p. 361, 1950 edition). Whether the situation today is to the degree that T. J. van Braght wrote one must leave, but the similarities are undeniable.

In our present setting, another area of caution should be noted: striving for or desiring the praise and recognition of men. This may well pertain to service in the realm of the gospel and its many avenues of service. The genuine value and blessing of any service rendered—personal, committee, board, missionary, or the ministry—is only inasmuch as that service is rendered, from the heart, unto Christ. He alone is worthy of credit and honour. He said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" John 15:5.

It sometimes becomes known that a place of service has been desired out of a spirit of self-advancement. This is in stark contrast to the cost of truly bearing the cross as a result of one's service to Christ, like in the times that T. J. van Braught described. True zeal is greatly needed in our day. But it must be a zeal "according to knowledge" Romans 10:2, that Christ is worthy of selfless sacrifice.

Everything a Christian is or does should rest on the firm foundation of Christ's worthiness. "All other ground is sinking sand." We need not, and should not, shrink to step out in Christian living and service, for Christ worthiness validates it all. Nothing done for Him will be in vain.



Compiled & Edited by: J van Loon
E-mail: shimara2@iprimus.com.au
Web: www.anabaptistmennonites.net