

# 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

### God's Choice we are His Portion    Our Choice to be God's Portion

As true believers, followers of Christ, we can and should worship and glorify Him for the gift of salvation, it is our choice to do that, additionally we should also gather as God's people to worship and glorify him for the gift of salvation whether we do it weekly or daily, Hebrews 10:25.

Because of the sin of Adam and Eve and the eventual shortcomings of God's chosen people Israel, God determined to restore the broken relationship between Himself and man, God chose to send Jesus to so that through His death and resurrection we might have the opportunity to become His portion as we today too often also have our shortcomings when it comes to our relationship with God.

Here are a few Bible reminders about choosing to be God's portion:

Psalm 16:5 The LORD *is* the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.

Psalm 73:26 My flesh and my heart faileth: *but* God *is* the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

Psalm 119:57 *Thou art* my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words.

Psalm 142:5 I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou *art* my refuge *and* my portion in the land of the living.

Lamentations 3:24 The LORD *is* my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

There is plan and place for all no matter our station in life or what circumstances we may find ourselves – may we chose God as our portion as He has chosen us to be His portion as we read in 1 Peter 2:9-10: But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: <sup>10</sup> Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Will you choose to be His portion or be a left-over to be discarded on the Day of Judgement?

J.v.L.



*Dead To Sin Alive In Christ –  
Part 2 of 4 on the Book of Romans  
Linford Berry - 2014*

*From the Pulpit*

We are looking at the book of Romans in 4 sections and this 2<sup>nd</sup> section is Chapters 5 to 8.

Romans is a book about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it is what the apostle Paul set forth to accomplish, to make known the Gospel of Jesus Christ and this book is an extended discourse on that very Gospel, it is an explanation of the Gospel particularly as to why we need this good news. How does this work and finally what difference does it make?

Those are the questions that the apostle Paul is answering in this great work in what has been called by many the greatest letter ever written.

In the first 4 chapters of the book of Romans Paul makes a case for why we need the Gospel, in chapter 1 and part of chapter 2 he demonstrates that the Gentiles, or pagans, are under the righteous condemnation or wrath of God because they have rejected him, even what little they know of him through creation they have rejected, and so He has brought increasing darkness into their experience and they are suffering now because of their sin, He is bringing the consequences to bear on them.

In chapter 2 and on into chapter 3 he points out that the Jews, God's chosen people, they aren't really any better off than the Gentiles because even though they have the oracles or law of God (Acts 7:38) they have rejected God, in that they have determined by following the law of God, the oracles of God, they will be made righteous through their own efforts and thus rejected God, God says the only way to be righteous is by trusting Him and Paul demonstrates this in chapter 4 where he uses Abraham, the father of the Jews, to demonstrate to the Jews that indeed righteousness comes only through faith in God and not through trust in humanity or human ability.

At the end of chapter 4 Paul says that this wasn't just for Abraham this justification through faith in God, this wasn't just good for Abraham this is good for all of us – if we believe God and trust that what He has done through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is sufficient then we too will be counted righteous as Abraham was.

In chapters 5 through 8 Paul goes on to explain how this works, he has demonstrated why we all need to Gospel because we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, Gentiles, Jews, all of us.

Now how does this work?

These 4 chapters are indeed rich both in theology and in practical implication and it would be good and beneficial and interesting if we were to dig very deeply into them but today I want us to catch kind of a bird's eye view of these texts, these 4 chapters in the book of Romans, because I think it is good for us to understand how these verses, these claims of truth in the book of Romans fit together.

Too many times, as I said previously, we take these verses out of context, we take these truths in the book of Romans and pit them against each other or we pit the truth here in Romans against the truth we find in the Gospels and I believe we do that because we don't understand the overarching premise of this book, of the gospel itself.

First of all I want you to look back at the very end of Romans chapter 4, our righteousness in the sight of God is not dependent on our own ability, it is not dependent on our ability to keep the law but is dependent on God and what He has done and our trust and confidence in God who has done this, this God who has the power to raise Christ from the dead.

And then notice this Christ, our Lord, it says died or was delivered up for our trespasses, our sin, and was raised for our justification, Christ was delivered up, He was crucified, He was killed for our sin, for our trespasses and He was raised in the resurrection for our life, for our justification, for our righteousness and this sets the stage for everything that is to follow in chapters 5 through 8 that is why the first word in verse 1 of chapter 5 is therefore.....

Whenever you see that word “therefore” you need to look back and see what it is there for, it is there to tell us that it is because of Christ’s death and resurrection we are now beneficiaries of the grace of God.

These last verses in chapter 4 also set the stage for the context or the ideas that Paul is going to unpack and develop here, primarily the idea of death and life which is the title of our sermon today “Dead to Sin, Alive in Christ.”

We have here in Romans 4:25 something of the reality of death and life and this should inform, and clarify, everything that follows in the book of Romans, what we are talking about is death and life; we will explore how this works in various facets.

First of all though the cross of Christ, the death of Christ is a glorious thing but it’s a terrible thing. As we have noticed here already the death of Christ is how our sins are dealt with, Christ died, He was delivered up for our sins. It is through the death of Christ that the righteous wrath and judgement of God is satisfied, propitiated is the old word which means the wrath of God is averted it is taken care off, it is absorbed, and so Christ’s death breaks the power of sin over us and removes the wrath of God against us, Christ takes that wrath, Christ takes in his body the wages of sin which is death even though He himself isn’t a sinner, it says in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21 that for our sakes He, that is God, made Christ to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Do you understand what is happening here?

The innocent is dying for the guilty so that the guilty might go free.

That messes with us doesn’t it, it messes with our sense of justice and fairness and rightness, the innocent doesn’t get punished for the guilty, no, the guilty are the ones that bear the punishment or should do.

And so what Christ has done on the cross is of glory, the innocent dying for the guilty so that the guilty might go free so that the justice and wrath of God would be satisfied, what glory that is, but that is only half the story and down through the ages the Church has often been guilty of only promoting the first half of the Gospel, trust in Christ, Christ died for you, He has taken care of your sins, you are forgiven, He has wiped away the guilt, the wrath of God toward you has been averted, yes it has.

But there is more.

Without the other half of the good news the cross is not so great, the rest of the story is that Christ was raised from the dead for our justification, not only is our sin problem dealt with but through resurrection life we can be positively righteous, we can become the righteousness of God.

This is what is meant by justification to be made right, to be made righteous, this is not merely the removal of sin, although it includes that, but it is a putting on then of what is right in place of what is wrong, but notice, death comes first and then life and this is the way it always is in God's economy, death and then life.

Now let's look at how this works in more detail here in chapter 5.

In chapter 5 we see that this justification, this work of Christ through his death and resurrection, has made it possible for us to have peace with God. You see as long as we were sinners subject to the righteous wrath of God there was no way for God to be at peace with us and for us to be at peace with God, his position towards us was one of wrath and judgement as we saw in Romans chapter 1 and 2. It is not a position of peace.

We were his enemies it says here in chapter 5 verse 10, look at that, for while we were enemies, that's who we were, that is who we are apart from Christ, you cannot be at peace with an enemy, there was no way for us to come to God and receive anything but wrath and destruction and punishment.

But Christ's death and resurrection make a way possible for us to have peace with God, Christ takes that wrath, that judgement He bears in himself so that we can have peace with God and with this peace comes access through Christ, through him we have also obtained access, a beautiful word access, by faith into the grace of God. As his enemies we had no access to the grace of God we had access only to the wrath of God but because of what Christ has done now the door is open and when we trust God we can come in and we can experience the glory of God.

It is wonderful news, the best news there is.

But we experience the glory of God the same way Christ did, are you ready for this, we experience the glory of God the same way Christ did and how did Christ experience the glory of God?

Through suffering, through death and then the subsequent resurrection.

So we see in Romans 5 and Romans 8 that the experience of suffering is woven through this Gospel, it is woven through these chapters in Romans, it is woven through the entire Word of God, it is because of this reality that we can rejoice in our suffering, not just grin and bear it, but actually rejoice in it, positively rejoice, we are experiencing the glory of God just like Christ experienced the glory of God through suffering and death.

Now this is one of the very key distinctives of Christianity, this is one of the things that makes Christianity different from every other religion in the world, there is no other religion where their God suffers with us and for us thereby giving true meaning and true purpose to our suffering.

So we see that this reconciliation to God is made possible through the work of Christ and that his subsequent suffering, his serving to bring glory to us and hope to us through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us, we see that this is a pattern after Christ in what He experienced on the cross.

Secondly in the last half of Romans chapter 5 we see that this dying and this living is directly related to who we are in, to who we are in.

In chapter 5 verses 12 to 21 we see that the reason we sin and the reason we die is because we are in Adam, that's our problem we are in Adam.

And you say what does that have to do with anything?

Let me break it down for you, we have already learned from Romans chapters 3 that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Why is that, why do we sin? Well we sin because we are sinners and we are sinners because Adam sinned.

That's the argument here, follow with me, we don't become sinners because we sin rather we sin because we are sinners, there is a key distinction here. You see who we are at a very basic level, apart from Christ, is a sinner, that's our nature, that is who we are, it is what defines us and this is the result of Adam's sin, this is our nature, we inherited this from Adam, all of us.

And now you say that isn't fair, I wasn't there in the garden of Eden, I didn't commit the sin that Adam committed why should I be charged with that sin, with that failure, it isn't fair, why should I suffer the consequences of someone else's sin?

Yes but you were there, you were there in the sense that Adam represented you, matter of fact if you would have been there you would have done the same thing maybe even worse. Remember who Adam was, remember how Adam came to be, Adam was created perfect, Adam had direct face-to-face communion with God prior to his sin, he had all of the advantages and none of the disadvantages that we have.

Do you think you would have done any better than Adam? Do you think you would have made a different choice?

So while it may seem unfair to you it is nevertheless true that in Adam we all sinned.

Now those who would deny this teaching of Scripture regarding original sin due to it not being fair must also then deny the gift of Christ in the Gospel. For you see the way that we are made right with God is through a representation and identification with the new Adam, Jesus Christ, you see that here in these verses.

So if you don't want to be a part of the old Adam and his sin then you cannot be a part of the new Adam's righteousness because that is how it works.

If it isn't fair to be held accountable for Adam's sin it certainly wouldn't be fair to benefit from Christ's death and resurrection neither of which you can participate in directly but both of which you can be in through representation.

We can't have our cake and eat it too.

If there is no doctrine, if there is no teaching, if there is no truth of the original sin then there is no truth of Christ's redemption and the Gospel, in Adam we all sinned, in Christ we can be made righteous.

This is about identification with Christ, this is about being in Christ just as we are naturally in Adam.

The only problem is that we must die to the first Adam before we can live in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Adam, we cannot be in both, we cannot identify with the new Adam while still being in the old Adam.

And this is what Christians are referring to when they talk about being born again, why is it necessary to be born again to have a new birth? Because we must die first from the original birth, from first birth into Adam,

and be born again into Christ. Jesus said you must be born again in order to inherit eternal life.

This means you must be dead to Adam and alive to Christ and that is what chapter 6 is all about: Dead to sin and self and alive to God.

Now the apostle Paul anticipates the objection to the argument that he has just made which is that through no effort of our own we are in Adam, you are born this way, you didn't choose to be this way, you are born in Adam and you suffer the consequences of that birth.

And now Christ comes and through no effort on your part He dies, He is raised again so that you can be in him.

The objection comes, and you are probably wrestling with it yourself about now, so if I am a sinner because of nothing I have done in myself and if I am made righteous through no action of my own then I might as well continue on doing what I want to do, right, I might as well continue to sin so the grace of God can continue to abound.

And the apostle Paul in the most forceful language in the book of Romans and you will read it time and time again says, No, by no means, God forbid, it doesn't work this way!

He says how is it even possible anyway, how can we who died to sin still live in it?

You see if you have identified with Christ that means you had to de-identify with Adam, you cannot have this both ways, either you are in Adam and continue enslaved to sin or you are in Christ and walk in a new way, a new path.

Romans 6:3-5, Here he says don't you know that all of us who are baptised in Christ are baptised into his death, we died to the old Adam, and we are raised now in new life just as Christ was raised from the dead, we participate with Christ in his death and in his resurrection, we die to Adam, we are raised in Christ for if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

And here comes the important part; We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

So in order to be alive in Christ we must die to Adam which is a representation of our self, we must die to who we are in Adam in order to live in Christ. This is the reality of the Christian experience.

When we come to Christ in faith we change our allegiance, this is the biggest part of what trusting faith is, are you going to trust yourself or are you going to trust Christ? That is the test, that's the issue who are you going to trust, are you going to trust yourself or are you going to trust God and if you trust God that means you must die to yourself.

Indeed this is what is pictured in the death of Christ, the death of Christ wasn't just about a man hanging on a cross, that was the kind of front and centre public kind of view of the crucifixion, but remember what Christ experienced in the garden of Gethsemane, remember when He said "not my will but Thine be done." That was a part of the cross, that was a part of the death, not my will but Thine be done.

And then when He was on the cross He says, Father into thy hands I commend my Spirit, I'm giving myself up to you Father.

And so Christ pictures for us that kind of death to self that we must experience, death to self and surrender to God, we exchange our allegiance from ourselves with Adam as a sinner to that for allegiance to Christ, identity in Christ and this happens as we die to self.

So this means then that it is impossible to continue living in sin under the power and domain of sin and be in Christ because if we do so, if we continue to live in our selfishness and in our sin we are basically making a statement saying my identity hasn't changed, my allegiance hasn't changed, I am still a sinner.

And this is what he goes on to illustrate then in the last part of chapter 6.

The apostle Paul explains here in Romans chapter 6 that we must die to sin, we must die to self in order to experience new life in Christ.

And the last part of chapter 6 goes on to explain the actions or the fruit of our lives demonstrate to whom we belong they demonstrate where our allegiance is, so it says you are the slaves of the one whom you obey.

Now that seems pretty obvious to us at first glance you are the slaves of the one whom you obey, yeah that's right. So if you offer yourself up as a servant to self and sin guess whom you are a servant of, guess who you are slave of, guess who you are in, you are still in Adam.

If you offer yourself up to Christ in the obedience of faith then you are slave of righteousness and he says here in verse 17 but thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed and have been set free from sin, you have become slaves of righteousness.

This is how it works, you are the slaves of the one whom you obey, if you continue living in sin and under the power of sin then you demonstrate that you are a sinner that you are slave to sin and you will receive the fruit, you will receive the results of that sin which is death, the wages of sin is death. It is the inevitable consequence of sin.

But the free gift of God if you are slave of righteousness is eternal life.

So if you want to continue living the life of a sinner, namely doing what you want to do, then you will experience the wages of sin, the consequences of sin, you cannot claim to be in Christ and still be alive and serving sin.

Now probably here you are getting concerned, you are starting to wonder okay so what do I do with the sin in my life, I have claimed to believe in Christ to trust in Christ but I know the reality is I still sin so what does that make me, am I in Christ or am I in Adam?

What are we going to do with this dilemma?

Well one clarification I probably ought to make here is that living in sin and living under the domain and power of sin is somewhat different then sinning, not much different but a little different.

Different in this way, when we are controlled, under the power or the dominion of sin, that means that everything we do, everything we want to do is sin, there is no desire to do anything different, there is no regret at the ultimate level when we do sin because we are simply fulfilling our desires.

Now we might be sorry we got caught, we might be sorry about the consequences of our sin but we are living under the power of sin in the domain of sin and everything we do is sin. The book of Romans says later that everything that is not of faith, not done in faith, is sin.

The alternative is to live in Christ to live under his power and under his control, and yes we still may sin and we will still sin but the sin will now cause us to grieve, to repent, we will be saddened, alarmed, frustrated, dis-

couraged by our sin, sin no longer reigns over us, we no longer have to sin we can indeed through the power of God working in us live in righteousness.

That's the difference between living in sin, under sin, and living in Christ in the flesh but here comes the problem you see there are 2 parts of us at least, maybe 3, there is the outer man and there is the inner man in the scriptures, very clearly in Romans 7 and Romans 8, the outer man is still in bondage to some degree he is still enslaved to some degree.

It is the inner man that identifies with Christ, it is the inner man that becomes one with Christ and in whom Christ lives and so it sets us up for this cosmic struggle this battle within us.

It's a problem we all face.

Let's look at how Paul deals with it.

In Romans chapter 7 the apostle Paul continues the argument and now switches to those who are the Jews who know the law, who think okay I'm not going to be a slave to sin, I'm going to do the right thing myself, I'm going to follow the law going to pull myself up by my own bootstraps I'm going to do what has to be done, I'm going to be holy.

And Paul says, brothers, and he is speaking to his fellow Jews here, the ones he says who know the law, don't you know that when you are born to Christ you have to die to the law? Don't you know that if you are still trying to satisfy God by the law that you haven't yet lived to Christ? Evidently the Judaizers had infiltrated the church, probably even the church at Rome, they were those who called themselves Christian but still wanted to keep the law as a way to be extra holy to get special favour with God.

And Paul asks the question are you still trying to be righteous through the law, to the keeping of the law? You need to understand something death frees you from the law when you died with Christ you died to the law you can't have it both ways, if you are still living under the law if you are still trying to justify yourself then you cannot live in Christ.

And he uses the example of marriage as an illustration, just as a married person cannot remarry rightfully while their spouse is still living so we cannot be joined to Christ while we are still married to the law, you can only be married to one person at a time and death is what provides the separation necessary for a change of relationship.

And then again the apostle anticipates the objection, verse 7 of chapter 7, What then shall we say?

What do we do with this, what do you mean then is the law sin? If we are supposed to die to the law in order to be raised in Christ does that mean that the law is sin too? Does that mean that the law is a bad thing? And Paul once again says no, by no means, the law is a good thing, the law is a good thing because it shows us our sinfulness, how else would we know we are sinners except that the law says this is sin? And so the law is holy and righteous and good even though it reveals sin.

And then the objection comes again and once again Paul is ready for it, So it is the law's fault than that I'm a sinner? Ah, so if sin is only known by the law then the law is to blame, that's why I'm a sinner, I wouldn't be a sinner except for the law.

No, no, by no means he says again, he says it was sin in me that makes me a sinner all the law does it shows me how much of a sinner I really am, the law does not have any power to change who I am, all the law can do is reveal who I am and show me who I am. The law has no power to change me into a non-sinner.

Remember how sin happens and why we are sinners, it is because we are in Adam and the law has no power to change that all law can do is say, see, look there you are a sinner, you're a big sinner.

But the law has no power to change me or you or anyone else into a non-sinner and this is the primary argument of the rest of chapter 7.

This is the chapter in Romans that causes so much consternation, we are going to have to leave a detailed discussion of it for a later time, but just to be clear on it the apostle has this debate here with himself and this is a description of how we relate to the law, so the law says not to do something, but remember it has no power and so we do it anyway and the law says see, you are a sinner.

And we have to agree that the law is right and the law is good.

If it is up to me I have no way of living right even if I would want to obey the law, like the Jews they still couldn't get it done. And this is all because of the sin that lives in us, that dwells in us.

So what is going to be the solution to this problem?

We cannot live rightly according to law. we have no power in ourselves, the law has no power to change us, what we need then is something else to dwell inside of us, we need that sin to die and we need Christ to live within and that's what it says here in Romans chapter 7, the last few verses, wretched man that I am! As we evaluate our condition unable to do what the law demands yet condemned by the law, the law with no power to change us and we evaluate ourselves and say, oh, this is terrible, I'm a terrible person, I am wretched person! Yes, yes. Who will deliver me from this body of death? How am I going to escape this impossible dilemma? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! That is how we are going to be delivered, that is the good news of the Gospel. So then I myself serve the Lord God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

So Paul sets up again this idea that there are 2 parts of us, at least 2 parts of us that are at war, and with our mind and will we identify with Christ and we say, I have died to Adam and sin, I have surrendered to you God. But in this life our flesh is still with us and our flesh is still subject to the curse and we still wrestle with this sin in us.

Then we come to chapter 8, There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

You see the answer is to be in Christ, to be identified with Christ, that is the way we are going to overcome. Not only has Christ everything necessary for our salvation outside of us but now He comes to indwell us to live within us by the person of the Holy Spirit. Colossians 1:27 says God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

That's how God works, He kills and He raises to life.

And so while our assurance of salvation while our justification is rooted in this work of Christ outside of us it is also true that we know that we live in him and He in us because He has given us of his Spirit.

Too many times we miss this, we think of Christianity, we think of salvation as something that happens outside of us, yes it does, in history Christ dying being raised again accomplishing for us what we cannot do for ourselves but that is not where it stops, God by his power through his grace

comes and dwells within us and lives within us and creates in us this glory of the resurrection and so God has done what the law could not do. The law couldn't change the state of my heart, the law couldn't change what was dwelling and living in me. God can and will.

And this is the way He will deal also with our body of flesh with this temporal body still subject to the curse, it isn't without hope either, it says here in Romans 8 if the Spirit of him who has raised Jesus from the dead lives in you then what? Then He will also give life to your mortal body through his Spirit.

So even though we live in a body that is subject to sin and death and decay when Christ dwells within us it begins the process of restoration and glorification, we will not finally be like Christ until we see him as He is when we join him in his heaven, but we can in this life here and now belong to Christ, we in him and He in us.

It says here his Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, children of God not children of Adam. We belong to a new family we have a new identity, we are now in Christ.

This union in Christ we find it all through Scripture, we don't have time to go to all the places where the Scripture references this, in John Jesus talks about himself being the vine and we are the branches, there is this union with Christ, this life-giving union.

The apostle Paul appeals that union of Christ throughout all his Epistles. In Adam we possess union with Adam first, we possess sin and judgement and condemnation and fear and alienation but in Christ we possess righteousness and holiness and eternal life and justification and adoption as sons.

And Paul declares in Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me. Crucified with Christ, dead to self, raised to newness of life.

And so this indwelling Spirit of God brings suffering, brings death to us, we don't like that very much, we don't like suffering, we don't like death but we must continually face it we must continually face the death of self day by day in order to live in Christ. The glory of it is here in Romans 8 that we do have the first fruits, verse 23, where you have the first fruits of

the Spirit, that is a down payment or deposit of the Spirit, we wait with groaning for the day when we will be released from this bondage, the redemption of our bodies. It is the already and not yet, we are not yet there but yet we already can experience something of the glory of God even in our bodies. 1 Corinthians 15:22, for as in Adam all die so in Christ shall all be made alive.

This is the great exchange the apostle Paul is talking to us about here in Romans 5 through 8.

And as Jesus said to Martha the sister of Lazarus who had died, I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me though he were dead, that's us, yet shall he live.

And so we are dead men walking, we are in Christ even though our body is dying.

So this all comes down to a question about where your allegiance is.

John Piper says this, "A Christian is not a person who believes in his head the teachings of the Bible, Satan believes in his head the teachings of the Bible, a Christian is a person who has died with Christ, whose stiff neck has been broken, whose brazen forehead has been shattered, whose stony heart has been crushed, whose pride has been slain and whose life is now mastered by Jesus Christ."

This brings us to the end of Romans chapter 8.

All these great blessings, all these great promises that we so enjoy that we so like at the end of chapter 8 all of them are contingent on whether or not we are in fact in Adam or in Christ.

For those who are in Christ, for those who Christ is in everything that happens to them is good.

Now this doesn't mean we won't suffer, it doesn't mean that we won't experience hardship, bad things, even death, Christ did, and it means that in those things we are being more completely transformed into the likeness of Christ, we are becoming more alive in Christ even as we are dying in the flesh.

If we are in Christ and Christ is in us then what happens to us is by God's design but can we trust Him, can we trust God if we surrender to him and say, God, I'll let you do whatever you think is best in me.

Can we trust him, is He a good God, is He good enough?

We'll think about this Romans 8:32, He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all.

We have a God like that, a God who gives his own Son for us how will He not also with his Son graciously give us all things?

Can we trust him? Yes, we can trust him completely because He has demonstrated in his own sacrifice and suffering that He is after our well-being, that He is after our eternal joy and life.

And so if we are in Christ and Christ is in us then who shall bring any charge against us, how shall we suffer? It is written for your sake we are being killed all the day long, we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered but in all of these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

And he closes with these great words, this conquering benediction, "For I'm sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rules, nor things present of things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So are you in him? Is He in you? Or are you still trying to have it both ways and follow your own desires to make yourself good enough?

That isn't how God works, God works through suffering through the death of self. And so I plead with you, surrender, give up, it is not going to happen by trying harder to be good, it is not going to happen by more vigorously obeying the law, the law has no power to change you from the inside out only God can do that and he does that by indwelling you but you must surrender to God.



## THE CHRISTIAN IN THE WORLD

Jesus was keenly aware of the world. One of the clearest records of His intimate communication with the Father is in John 17 where He uses the word "world" nineteen times. He spoke of Himself and His disciples as be-

ing in the world. He said that He and His followers were not “of the world” (vv. 14, 16), and that the Father had given them to Him “out of the world” (v. 6). And yet He asked the Father not to take them out of the world but to keep them from it (v. 15).

Being in the world but not of the world, rather to be using it but not abusing it (1 Corinthians 7:31), is a tremendous challenge to the individual believer and to the church as a whole. Jesus wants us here for now. The world is where we prove whom and what we love above anything else. It pleases God to show the dark legions those good triumphs over evil when we live faithfully in the world. Furthermore, this is the only place we can labor for the salvation of souls. To discern the peril the world holds for us requires more than indoctrination and natural understanding. God must anoint us with His Spirit and give us a new mind and heart before we can see it in its true colors. One difficulty is that the old sinful man does not want to discern sin and the world. He would rather justify and give himself liberty.

Probably the most frequently quoted verse on the topic is Romans 12:2, “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” This verse states the problem, conformity to the world; the solution, a renewed mind; and the fruit, the grace to prove God’s perfect will. Nonconformity is a grace that God gives which covers the entire spectrum of life. If we try to apply it selectively, we miss the point. Some Christians exercise great care in various dimensions of their lives, but in others they are quite unrestrained. Such believers are at peril of deception. They tend to justify themselves by their carefulness in a few matters while missing the core of the matter. Selective non-conformity is actually legalism.

What does it take to attain godly nonconformity? First, we must honestly face and deal with the love for the world in our hearts. Each of us is different. Some must acknowledge their materialistic love of affluence and possessions. Others struggle to be willing to face their love affair with their vehicles or their homes, or their farms and equipment. Worldliness is manifested in many by their self-willed independent spirit. The “world” is not only clothing, although it involves that as well. Currently, many are be-

coming entangled with a worldly infatuation with the Internet and electronic gadgetry. No aspect of our lives is exempt from temptation. To be delivered requires thorough repentance and renewal of first love toward God. Nonconformity is a fruit rather than a root. The person who has surrendered all to God is no longer conformed to the world but, like Saul of Tarsus, the scales fall from his eyes. He sees life in a new way. God gives him a sense of purpose. No longer is self-denial an oppressive burden; his love for God, His will, and the precious souls of men enliven his soul. Nonconformity is the essential result of the two distinct spiritual kingdoms that have existed since Satan's rebellion in heaven.

The spiritual universe is divided into right and wrong, light and dark. The wrong and the dark govern this world and caused John to write, "The whole world lieth in wickedness" 1 John 5:19. But Jesus said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" John 8:12. These two kingdoms will always be bidding for our souls. To face the reality of two distinct kingdoms and that we can be members of only one of them is difficult. The constant temptation is to seek a middle ground that is less demanding. Jesus made it amply clear that this is not possible. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other" Matthew 6:24. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" Matthew 12:30.

Faithful Christians are like Moses who "endured, as seeing him who is invisible" Hebrews 11:27. They live in a visible, palpable world that is apparently neither light nor dark. We work, dress, buy, sell, and use this world as the days roll by. But the Christian sees what the world does not see. The worldling sees the world as his to enjoy. He lives for here and now. But he whose eyes have been healed by divine eye salve sees it as a perilous environment he must traverse to arrive at home. We know we have lost the grace of nonconformity when we feel at home with the world.

The normal Christian will struggle against the contrary currents of the world. Its speech does not appeal to us. Their jokes make us uncomfortable with their impurity, exaggeration, and outright lies. Their pleasures are unsatisfying; because we have meat to eat they know not of. Although the flesh is enticed, the spirit is repulsed. Romans 12:2 promises that we will

be able to discern God's good and perfect will if are separated from the world. What could be more valuable in our day? With all the subtle offerings the world makes, personal discernment is essential. Unless we are willing to be separate from the world, our spiritual vision will be impaired, and if correction is not made, it will become increasingly blurry.

The kingdom of darkness will continue. Jesus promised that the kingdom of truth and light will never be extinguished. The world will continually try to encroach upon the church. So will it be until the Lord returns to deliver us. Until then, we Christians must be discerning. That is why Jesus said over and over, "Watch, watch and pray." We must watch, labor, and pray lest worldly wisdom replace the wisdom of the just that has always identified the people of God. Should that happen, the candlestick will be taken from us "The appealing things today include style, model, size, color, physique, beauty, costly array, jewelry, and much more. All these things and many more can be desired simply for selfish reasons and are conducive to pride and vanity."

May we follow Christ and renew our mind to be like His.



### **The Power of the Cross**

To understand the power of the cross of Christ we must view it carefully. We had no way to atone for our sins. Jesus became our substitute, and by His death He removed our guilt. The cross offers us a new life that is not hindered by the grip of self. Even though we may reap for our sinful living, we are no longer guilty because the price has been paid. Because of forgiveness Christian life is a life that is free and at peace. Have we come to the place where we can claim the words of Galatians 6:14 "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

The cross of Christ is the answer to carnality, division, and selfish living. In 1 Corinthians 1 Paul addresses division in the church at Corinth. The answer was not found in a negotiated compromise with each side yielding in a few areas. The true and lasting remedy was the cross of Christ which brings death to self. That simple, yet costly, solution is difficult for the un-

regenerate man to understand. Pride whispers that to surrender his own way will result in the loss of everything important to him.

There is a real need to preach the cross today. Preaching which does not include that ingredient may seem logical, but it lacks the power to transform lives. As a substitute for the lack of power the evil one offers emotional experiences, speaking in tongues, or an undue emphasis on good works. There is no substitute for the power that is found in the crucified Lord. There is no room on the Christian way for an inflated opinion of one's self. Experience, though useful in life, is not a replacement for a daily walk with God. Man's wisdom is no match for the complexities of our day. Both the new Christian and the seasoned warrior of the cross must continually learn that answers are found in surrender to God.

A true Christian should resist the temptation to make a name for himself. To be known for a certain personal way or theological leaning is not an advantage to the Christian. We are to seek to become less and to reflect Christ in our life and actions. John the Baptist, speaking of Jesus and himself said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" John 3:30. Through Christ we receive the wisdom to walk the Christian way. That wisdom will lead us into a life that is acceptable to God. Sins and human weaknesses are cleansed on a daily basis, and through Him we have a new life. The honour for this new way of peace and freedom belongs to our Saviour.

The death of Jesus on the cross of Calvary and His resurrection are well known historical facts. The power that the cross gives for a new life is not as well known. God desires to make that power known by the faithful example of His people today. No one can have that new life without a Calvary experience. Christian life is maintained only as we continue to follow Christ in newness of life. The cross divides between the old life and the new. We daily face the temptation to revert to the old way of pleasing ourselves. That life takes so much less diligence, and it appeals to the carnal man. But that way leads eventually to shackled hearts and darkened minds. The way of freedom brings us daily to the cross to find forgiveness for and deliverance from sin. If the Christian finds himself in conflict with this humble way, it is time to stop and reexamine his life. He should ask himself, "Am I still on the way of the cross? Is there an area of self that I have

allowed to grow in my life? Has Satan come into my thoughts unawares and injected questions and doubts?"

Sometimes it is helpful to step back and see where our present course would take us if it is followed to the end. If the path we are on brings us a feeling of darkness and bondage, it is time to turn to the Lord and accept His plan for our lives. The power of the cross is shown in our lives in several ways. The first way is the freedom that comes when we, as sinners, lay down our will in complete surrender to the call of God. The rest that comes to our soul assures us of our salvation. The heart and its desires are made new again. Our conscience is renewed and made tender. Our struggle against God is over. This is the new birth.

The power of the cross is not intended to stop there. The new birth brings a new life. Self is nailed to the cross, and the Holy Spirit becomes our guide. The impulses of our nature and our natural responses to life are tempered by the Holy Spirit. The evil one will try to make us believe that the way of the cross is too difficult and that another way would be easier. Counseling and human reasoning are offered. Looking around at what others are doing is a common trap. In all this the quiet voice of the Holy Spirit is ignored. If we are persistent in our willful way and in spurning the Holy Spirit's prompting, we lose our peace. Our salvation finally comes into question, and we need the special renewal that comes from another trip to the cross.

A young sister told how in the beginning she lived her Christian life with carefulness. When she failed she came to God with remorse, and He freely forgave her. As time went on and she continued to fail, she acknowledged her sins to God, but the remorse was gone. She hardly thought of her sinfulness and just requested forgiveness. She no longer felt peace. At revival time she again saw her sinfulness, and a deep regret came over her. As she came to the cross and poured out her heart to her heavenly Father, the sweet peace that comes with His forgiveness again filled her heart.

We may go through the motions of Christian living but forget to go to the cross. We try to live a Christian life with our own strength but do not have the power that God would like to give to us. Another power of the cross is

the freedom from guilt. Satan will often cause a heavy feeling of guilt to come over our hearts. We may regret an unkind comment made during the day or a thought that was not spoken. Sometimes our feelings of guilt are more complex. When children leave the faith, parents are devastated. They wonder where they have failed. The guilt feelings from a broken marriage cannot easily be laid aside. We may feel responsible for a tragic accident in which we were involved. At times the devil makes us feel guilty for no real reason at all.

A Christian who labours under a load of guilt will find it difficult to live a Christian life. In these times, let us turn to the incredible power of the cross. The one who comes to the cross as a sinner can claim the promises of forgiveness and freedom from personal guilt. The price has been paid with the death of the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” John 1:29.

Can we keep the vision of the cross alive in our hearts, or must others remind us?



## FEAR NOT – GOD IS ON YOUR SIDE

Isaiah 41:9-10 <sup>(ESV)</sup> “.....I have chosen you and not cast you off, fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Isn't it so easy, like Peter, to take our eyes off the Master and Saviour, who is the one and only reason of our existence and our every hope, and look at the angry, dashing sea of waves below us? It seems like it is one of the devil's vicious tactics to get us to take our eyes off our heavenly Father, if only for a brief moment but long enough so that we will begin to sink and actually drown in impossibilities, the utter disparities around us, hopelessness, and the defeating darkness of this life. All we have to do, over and over again, is to cry out to God like Peter did and beg Him to rescue us. Jesus never fails.

As we view our life, the past, the present, and the unknown future stretching out before us—this day, tomorrow, this year, the next—how is it? Is there hope? Is there courage? Are we free from fear? Fear of the unknown, fear of failure—spiritually, socially, materially, or whatever? God

promises over and over again that He will be with us, no matter what. Remember Deuteronomy 31:8 <sup>(ESV)</sup> It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”

Following are several beautiful verses I wish to share which have often inspired me and lifted me up when I was down.

“Hebrews 13:5 <sup>ESV</sup> “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Isaiah 43:1-2 <sup>ESV</sup> “But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. <sup>2</sup> When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.”

Psalms 91:4-5 <sup>ESV</sup> He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. <sup>5</sup> You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day,

Jeremiah 29:11 <sup>ESV</sup> For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

These verses are so rich and full! I am so thankful that there is a way, with a complete and full surrender, to simply fall into His arms of protection and lean upon His promises in the midst of all our struggles. God will be with us. Our heavenly Father has given us everything we need, and so much more than enough, to be victors in this battle and to be free from fear. May we be courageous and keep our eyes on the Saviour. Let us give God everything and serve Him gladly with all of our hearts so that one day we can praise Him in perfection for all that He has done for us. *A Sister.*



Compiled & Edited by: J van Loon

E-mail: [shimaracourier@gmail.com](mailto:shimaracourier@gmail.com)

Web: [www.anabaptistmennonites.net](http://www.anabaptistmennonites.net)