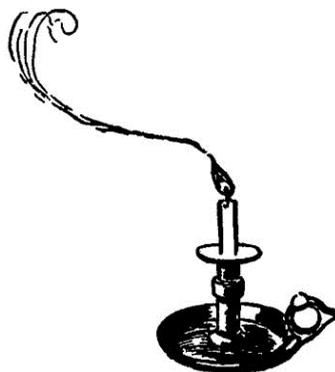


THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

In our world today as in centuries past people have always been prone to raise barriers of separation between themselves and “others” and whilst it is very evident in the world of non-believers it is also to be found among those who profess to be followers of Christ who Himself said that He came not to destroy men's lives but to save them. (Luke 9:56)

Say not of those that come in your midst to worship: “They are not of us because they don't follow our rules! Or they are not of our class! Or they are a different colour!” Or whatever difference you may perceive in a mind not fully surrendered to Christ!

But rather ask yourself the question: “Am I, are they disciples of Christ?” And if your answer is in the affirmative then who are you O, man – or woman – to deny them assembling together with you? Is not God able to deal with them better than you ever will?

Colossians 3:1-11: If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; **But Christ is all, and in all.**

Christmas and New Year often bring to our remembrance those who have gone before us, especially those loved ones and friends who have left this life in the past year or two and we grieve over our loss and the companionship we may have once enjoyed with them.

With that in mind we have included the testimony of a family who felt the Lord's leading to share their experiences of grief and God's hand in their lives during that time. Pray it may be a help to those who are also grieving.



From the Pulpit

JESUS – *The Light of the World*

By a brother in Christ

Courtesy "The Messenger of Truth"

John 8:12 Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Darkness can be described as the absence of light. Many references are made in writing and speaking as to the darkness of the world at the time of the advent of our Saviour Jesus Christ two thousand years ago. For now we want to consider the difference between darkness and light in the spiritual sense. The sun provides the light and the necessary energy to sustain human life on this earth. Life, as we know it, would not be possible without the sun's contribution of life-giving energy. As the sun is to physical life on this earth so is Jesus Christ to spiritual life. Without Christ there would be no spiritual life possible among God's children. Darkness would prevail. This is some of what Scripture has to say about that Light that is Christ

John 1:1-17 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the Light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the Light. ⁹ The true Light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before

me, because he was before me.”¹⁶ For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John the Baptist also under God’s inspiration proclaimed Jesus to be the Lamb of God, ([John 1:29, 36](#)) and in the Book of Revelation we have this final confirmation that Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God, is the eternal light in the heavenly Jerusalem, [Revelation 21:23-25](#): And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.²⁴ By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it,²⁵ and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.

Jesus Christ is God's expression of Himself to the human race. In his Gospel, the Apostle John refers to Christ as the Word. Words are powerful tools in communication. As people we use words, expressed in writing or in speech, to communicate with each other. A word properly placed can speak volumes. Our text reads very plainly when we substitute Jesus Christ for the Word. Jesus Christ is God's Word to us.

Christ was born during a time of great darkness in the history of the people of God. God allowed the Jews to return to their own country after seventy years of captivity in Babylon, and the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt under the direction of Ezra and Nehemiah. During the life of Nehemiah, Malachi, the last of the prophets, brought God's word to the people. There is no biblical record of the history of God's people from the four hundred year span between Malachi and the birth of Christ.

From reading the gospels, we can get a fair picture of what the religious state of the nation was like at the time of Christ's birth. The religious leaders are described by Jesus as hypocrites. The priests were corrupt.

They allowed the temple to be desecrated by animals that the traders sold for sacrifices while cheating the people. The Pharisees were self-righteous, legalistic zealots who demanded compliance to man-made rules that they themselves were unwilling to observe ([Luke 11:46](#)). Against such a backdrop of corruption and evil, the arrival in this world of the Saviour and Redeemer for all mankind evokes John's words, "The light shineth in darkness." And the darkness was not able to overcome it.

The people of God had been informed by the prophets throughout Old Testament times of the coming into this world of a promised Redeemer. Even the most enlightened individuals in Old Testament times seemed to have had but a vague perception of the glory to come with the fulfillment of this promise. However, there were those who were waiting for the Messiah who recognized Him as the awaited fulfillment of the promise when He came. Among the devout believers were the prophetess Anna and the old man Simeon in the temple, and John the Baptist, who introduced Him as the Lamb of God. The apostle John leaves the telling of the details surrounding the birth of Christ to the other gospel writers. John simply states, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" ([John 1:14](#)).

John the Baptist had no illusions about his own importance. He freely confessed that he was not the Christ. He did not claim the position of Elias (Elijah) nor of any prophet. He was careful not to detract from the recognition due to Jesus by claiming any honour for himself. When some of his disciples left him to follow Jesus, he gave them his blessing.

Although John the Baptist saw himself as a mere instrument in introducing the kingdom of Christ—he called himself a voice in the wilderness—many in his day acknowledged his message as God-inspired, and many became his disciples. He was justifiably concerned about being mistaken for the one whose ministry he was heralding. An evidence of the importance of his role is the ignominious death he suffered at the hands of Herod.

We have all experienced what it is like to try to perform some task when there is not enough light to do so. We mobilize our other senses and perhaps can manage to do what we plan to do but not without some frustration. When, by throwing a switch, we can illuminate the area of our activity, the same task becomes simple. This is one example of what natural light means to us.

Christian literature teems with references to darkness and light. To list just a few from some hymns we commonly sing, we have: "Darkness and Jesus, the Light of the World, error shall fall"; "eternal day"; "darkness shrouds them"; "the darkness deepens"; "earth's vain shadows flee"; "His love shineth bright"; "the hills of light"; "all ye saints of light." The list could go on. Such words inspire us because of our awareness of the difference between darkness and light.

The world around us is still dark, although Jesus Christ was born into this world to dispel the darkness. The darkness is turned to light only for those

who personally and individually receive Christ into their lives by faith and consecrate their lives in service to Him. People of the world can only be saved when they "come out" of the world. All true believers have experienced this. The world is dark, but Christ offers to move us from the darkness into His light. The Word teaches us that conditions in the world will get worse and worse until God thrusts in the sickle ([Revelation 14:15](#)) at the last judgment. God's children are instructed to be a light to the world as a force to attract the people of the world to Christ ([Matthew 5:16](#)).

If we have been saved, we know what it is like to be under condemnation. We also know what it is like to be freed from this condemnation. The contrast between the former and the latter state is as profound as the contrast between darkness and light. In one way or another, God allows us to see some light in order for us to recognize the darkness we are in. It is through His "amazing grace" that we sing of Him having taught our hearts to fear and then of having our fears relieved.

When the apostle Paul was struck down by a dazzling light, his natural vision was lost but the condition and the needs of his heart were exposed. He found relief and restored vision among the believers with whom he now identified. If one's experience of being translated from a life in the darkness of the world to life in the light of Jesus Christ is less dramatic than was that of Paul, it is no less miraculous.

The light of Jesus Christ radiates from its source with a soft warm glow. We enjoy its warmth and comfort together with others with whom we share an appreciation for this light. It illuminates the path upon which we travel to our eternal destination. It is reflected by those who live in its glow. It is God's greatest gift to the human race.

The question we need to ask ourselves is: What conditions are required for Christ's light to shine forth? Apostle Paul s gives some insight into this in [2 Corinthians 4:6](#) For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And the Apostle John's instructions show us also how we are to proceed in our walk with Jesus Christ and how it will be of benefit to us and others [1 John 1:7](#), But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin so let us walk whilst we have the Light lest darkness overtakes us and while we have the Light believe in the Light so that we may become sons (and daughters) of light. ([John 12:35-36](#))

The Divided Heart

The Scripture speaks of a double minded man as being unstable in all his ways, James 1:8, in other words we have not made up our mind to follow one particular way or the other, it shows we have a divided heart, and we may well allow worldly-mindedness or seeking after the treasures of this world to become our goal in life and that is something we have to be on guard against in all of our Christian walk all of our life.

Matthew 6:19-24 warns us in this manner: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.²² “The eye is the lamp of the body, so, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light,²³ but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!²⁴ “No one can serve two masters for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (possessions not just money)

Isaiah 55:2 asks us why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

Christ warns us against coveting the praise of men, that is worldliness because people of the world seek after that. He warns us against coveting the wealth of the world; in this also we must take heed, lest we become hypocrites, professing to be followers of Christ but having a divided heart and doing as they do seeking after worldly treasures: they that do that have chosen the world for their reward.

We must guard against and shun worldly-mindedness in all forms and we can do that in the choices we make of what our treasures are because they will become our masters and lead us to an end that Christ has not called us to if we choose the wrong ones. We cannot serve two masters - it is either Christ or worldly treasures.

Christ's disciples had left all to follow Him and we must chose to do no less if we want to attain to that robe and crown promised to those that endure to the end. We must not say to worldly treasures "Thou art my hope" we reserve that for God.

The Psalmist speaks a number of times about God being his hope, No divided heart there!

Jeremiah pleads for the Lord not to be a terror to him and says to God: Thou art my hope in the day of evil. Jeremiah17:17 No divided heart there!

Job acknowledged that hope in God also when he says in Job 31:2-28: If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; ²⁵ If I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much; ²⁶ If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; ²⁷ And my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand: ²⁸ This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above. No divided heart there!

Today Christ desires to direct us in the choice of the treasure we ought to seek and that will benefit us, remember His words of warning and advise to us in Matthew 6:19-20 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

James says that those earthly treasures shall be a witness against us if we store them up rather than storing up treasure in heaven, James 5:1-5 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. ² Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. ³ Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. ⁴ Behold, the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. ⁵ You

have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

Proverbs 18:10-11 says “The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe. ¹¹A rich man’s wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his imagination.”

Where our treasure is, there our cares and fears are, our hope and trust is them, our joys and delights will be there as will be our thoughts. Our first thought and could we say our most frequent thought should be Christ and Christ alone. When we are born again our heart belongs to God so that He may have it, our treasure must be laid up with Him, and then our souls will be lifted up to Him. Remember those words of Jesus: Where your treasure is there will your heart be also.

Our treasure in light of the Scriptures is alms giving, prayers, and fastings and such like but if we have done these only to gain the applause of men, we have laid up treasure on earth not in heaven.

Jesus commended the widow who put in two mites, all she had, but had very strong words of condemnation for the Pharisees that did things to be seen of men. The widow was laying up treasure in heaven, the Pharisees were getting the benefit now in this life.

Treasures on earth lay up nothing in heaven the gain of them is gone, when the soul is called for.

Jesus speaks a number of times as to how doing things to be seen of men may give a reward here and now implying that there will be none hereafter. But if we have prayed and fasted and given alms in truth and uprightness, with an eye to God and to his acceptance, and have approved ourselves to him then we have laid up treasure in heaven. Acceptance with God is treasure in heaven, which can neither be corrupted nor stolen. His words of “well-done” shall stand for ever; and if we have thus laid up our treasure with him, that is where our hearts will be; and what better place is there than that?

If God be the treasure of our souls, our hearts, then our affections and desires will be placed on things above. An earthly minded man proves that his treasure is below; a heavenly minded man shows that his treasure is above. In heaven nothing corrupts; nothing terminates; no enemies plunder or destroy. To have treasure in heaven is to possess evidence that we are

heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, 1 Peter 1:4

Our heart, or affections, will of course be fixed on a treasure, either that which is esteemed in the world or that treasure which will be rewarded by God in heaven, To make sure that our heart is not set on the wrong treasure it is therefore important that the treasure, or object of attachment, should be right and if we have a divided heart then we are unstable just like the person spoken of in James 1:8 - a double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

A divided heart lacks the element of strength--it is unstable.

To choose the right treasure to lay up we must have a determination to commit ourselves to all of God's ways, we need to yield ourselves to God in such a complete way that we indeed take to heart the words of 1 Peter 5:7 Casting all your care upon him; for He careth for you.

Our heart will not be divided if we do that and it will allow us to concentrate in laying up treasures in heaven rather than concerning ourselves with earthly treasures and those things that we seek to have over and above our needs.

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GRIEVING

Dear Readers,

For some time I have wondered if an article on grieving would be appropriate for the Messenger. As time went on, different thoughts came to mind, and I jotted them down. It has not been my purpose to focus on our experience with grieving, rather to try and understand what readers might experience in various ways and circumstances that have come upon us.

As a family we are submitting this article on grieving based on our experiences, impressions, and what is helping us through this valley of grief. We have really appreciated all the prayers, cards, and other acts of love extended to us. May God bless you for them.

"In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not" Matthew 2:18.

It is impossible for us to comprehend the depth of grief the mothers in Bethlehem experienced that dreadful day when the soldiers, under the order of Herod, slew all the children two years of age and younger. While this action was the result of the wicked king's directive, there are many people who experience grief for reasons that do not have any wicked implications. Whatever the reason for grief may be, a grieving person has a valley to cross, which may bring with it circumstances that are difficult to cope with.

We miss the aged who were already longing for the release death brings, or those who have suffered much and their quality of life is low. We do not wish them back. These dear ones leave empty spots in our lives, but we are comforted that their sufferings are over, and they are at rest under the altar of God.

However, there are those whom we feel leave us prematurely. Wives and husbands are separated by death, leaving one to face life alone. Children need to go on without the benefit of their parents. Brothers and sisters feel the loss of the close ties with their siblings, parents and grandparents are faced with the loss of a child or grandchild, and youth feel the devastating effects of the loss of one of their peers. Grief is a common denominator in all these situations.

Each individual responds to grief in one's own way. There is no program to follow to overcome grief. Therefore it is imperative that we allow each individual to go through the process of grief as it helps them the most.

A very common question in the process of dealing with grief is, "Why?" We can see so many reasons for life to be otherwise. Life without a spouse is so empty, and one is not able to be both father and mother to the children. Socially, a person feels so much like a misfit; there are awkward situations to deal with, even though friends are very kind and considerate. But maybe worst of all is that every night when it is time to retire, the grieving spouse closes the bedroom door and is alone. There is nobody to talk to, nobody to share some pleasant experience of the day or a disappointment that came their way. They may be determined not to fall prey to self-pity and make concentrated efforts to appear as if they are on top of things. Yet the fact strikes home time and again that they are alone.

Is this a little foretaste of what Jesus experienced when He cried out, "My God, my God, why halt thou forsaken me?" Matthew 27:46. Just a few days prior to this, He comforted His disciples with the statement, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13). These promises of God are a very real comfort, but that does not change the fact that today we are alone. From experience, a person wrote that a month-old grief was unbearable, a year-old grief was raw, and after a number of years the worst of the pain lessens, but the memory of it never leaves.

Death brings with it membership into a club nobody wants to join, and there is no way of deleting membership; you are in it for life. The anniversaries, especially the first, the birthdays, the family gatherings, special occasions, such as weddings, all remind us of what might have been. In Jeremiah 8:22, the prophet asks the question, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" There are those times when answers elude us. No matter how hard we try, we cannot understand. God's ways are simply beyond us. The only way to come to a measure of peace is to accept, and that is not easy. However, in acceptance there is peace, and we can experience quietness and calmness in our spirits. It is imperative that we exercise a certain discipline upon ourselves and endeavour to move back into the world and the society as we knew it before the loss. This is where the grace of God will be invaluable, for He empowers us for restoration. However, do not expect it to be the same as it was before; it never will be.

The recovery from grief is a process which every affected individual goes through in his or her unique way. For some there is a time of deep hurt, questioning, "Why did it happen to me?" For others this hurt comes out in feelings of resentment toward God. Why did He allow it to happen? In Hebrews 4:15, we read, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Jesus experienced the intense "loneliness" death brings with it. The following verse says, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Our feelings may not be right, but Jesus understands why they come our way. He will patiently bear with us and help us

overcome them. The loving invitation of Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," is such a deep expression of love to the grief-stricken person. This verse will help us overcome in those times when anger at God or at circumstances grips us. This is quite normal, but we cannot afford to give in to these feelings. With God's help, we are able to overcome them.

Grief can bring out feelings in us we did not know existed. Relationships can be strained because friends may feel they do not know how to relate. They want to be supportive in any way possible, but the grieving person may be unsure of himself and does not really know how to act. The Apostle gives us clear direction in Ephesians 4:2, "With all lowliness and meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another in love." This is a bridge that can be used effectively to reach out to the one who is hurting so intensely. It may not come easily, but quiet and gentle perseverance will eventually bring it about.

There are a few points to remember as we relate to grieving ones. It does not lessen their grief to tell them we understand, especially if we have not gone that way ourselves. Rather, it is easier for them if we admit we do not understand, but we want to be there for them. Their hurt is only deepened if we relate our successes, or tell them that in a certain length of time they will be over it all. We may have the best of intentions, but we need to be discreet and considerate of the loss they have suffered and the grief they are enduring.

An effect of grief is sensitivity that does not necessarily affect a person in more normal circumstances. We must avoid any kind of judgmental attitude toward the hurting ones. The teaching in Galatians 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering [patience], gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law," is very applicable when dealing with grieving individuals. Jesus left us a good example in His approach to Mary and Martha as they grieved for their brother. He wept with them but He also left the reassuring words that they would meet again at the resurrection of the dead.

After the initial shock has subsided, the funeral held, and the guests who

came to share the grief have left, life must be faced as it is. There is a certain solace in routine. One must go back to the job or whatever one does for a living; the meals need to be prepared; the housework must be done; the children have to be cared for, and the list is endless. Really, this is a blessing in disguise. Yet in all of this, there is a nagging question. Where do we go from here? There is an emptiness that goes with us everywhere, and how can it be filled? In His infinite love for man, God inspired the Psalmist to give us direction. Psalm 144:2 states, "My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust." In verse 7, we read, "Send thine hand from above, rid me, and deliver me out of great waters." Further direction is given in Psalm 63:1-3, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee." As God delivered David in his times of deep distress, He will help us. He may not take away the pain, but He will help us bear it. As time is an element in the natural healing process, similarly it is an ingredient in the healing of the spirit.

The circumstances relating to the above verses were not those of grief, but they are applicable to it. By example David shows us how he dealt with grief, and we can use it to help us deal with it. The first child born to David and Bathsheba took sick and died. During the time of the illness, David grieved deeply and prayed earnestly that the child would recover and live. After David's servants reluctantly told David that the child was dead, he said, "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" 2 Samuel 12:22-23.

To recognize and accept this truth may not be easy. However, in acceptance there will be peace. The apostle Paul encourages us in his first letter to the Thessalonica church "that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" 1 Thessalonians 4:13. In verses 16-18 he writes, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with

them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Grief is very real, and to try to evade it makes the process more difficult. Grief is a part of God's order in the healing of mind, body, and spirit of those who have suffered a devastating loss. Therefore it is necessary that we allow it to run its course. The valley of grief holds many pitfalls, to which the evil one would like to have us succumb, but by the grace of God, we can be conquerors.

Let us not try to overcome by sheer grit and will power. Sooner or later we will have to face ourselves and deal with it, but with God's help and also that of true friends, we can come to the place where there will be a brighter tomorrow.

A grieving family. Courtesy Messenger of Truth Gospel Publishers Kansas



Don't Give Up!

"But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"

Matthew 24:13.

Dear and beloved brothers and sisters in Christ and to all who have once known the mercy, grace, and love of God: with tears and great concern and desire I write these words. I desire that we, with all saints, could comprehend the breadth and length and depth and height and know the love of Christ, Ephesians 3:18-19.

I have been saddened by what seems to me a great falling away from our own steadfastness in Christ. Some are leaving the grace of God, choosing to live according to their own reasoning, despite warnings and reproof from the bride of Christ. They are seemingly oblivious to the coming judgment. Many friends, acquaintances, neighbours, and school pals, once brothers and sisters in Christ, have laid their Christian armour down. Having become tired and wounded, they gave up the great fight.

Oh, brethren, don't lay your armour down! That is surely what must happen before we would consider denying the "faith which was once delivered un-

to the saints" (Jude 3), the faith of Jesus Christ. The fiery darts begin to hit their mark as we neglect some of our Armor, which has begun to feel cumbersome. Spiritual sickness and death are sure to follow unless we come to the Great Physician and, being restored, pick up the whole armour of God.

Let us take to heart Ephesians 6:10-18, "Finally, MY brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

Let us, through prayer and earnest desire, have our hearts renewed and our vision cleared, that the Lord would light our candles (Psalm 18:28) and the vision and spirit of our Anabaptist brothers and sisters would return fully to our hearts. May we realize that things of earth and time are not worthy to be compared to spiritual riches.

Oh! What can be done for those who are weak and struggling and for those who already have left the faith, considering our own weakness and temptations? "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" 2 Corinthians 5:11. Don't look back! Look toward the finish line of the great race, where Jesus stands holding our crowns in His nail-scarred hands. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" Hebrews 12:1-2.

For those struggling ones, let us "throw out the lifeline" by love, hope,

prayer, and self-denial. I am looking forward by faith to meeting you when we're safe at last.
A fellow pilgrim.



THE UNITED NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

I would say in the beginning that I am not a Bible expert. I am an unworthy lay brother in the Church of God. The Scriptures are quite clear for a Bible student, providing he lets the Scriptures talk. After committing my life to Jesus at twenty-five years of age, I began to study the Bible and seek fellowship and instruction from other Christians. Soon I became aware of the "true church" doctrine. I set out to search for Scriptures to disprove this teaching. After a serious study I came to the startling realization that it is what the Bible says. To this day, I believe it is clearly and openly portrayed in the Holy Writ. As one studies history, it is soon apparent that the "true church" torch has been embraced and handed down to our day by groups known by different names in different times. The burden of this writing is not to identify those peoples. It is an effort to reignite this doctrine in the hearts of Christians and wayfaring mankind today.

The true church does not have the monopoly on salvation, nor can one be saved only by membership in it. In fact, she will be careful to establish that applicants have been born again into the greater kingdom of God outside of the Church before they can come into the fellowship of the saints. She is not "the best" church among churches. She is not superior to other churches, save in that she is true and faithful in keeping the commandments of Jesus.

The true church has never been the perfect church, any more than were the children of Israel, God's obviously chosen people. The Church is not perfect except by the blood through which Jesus purchased her. She is true (meaning faithful). A wife who is true to her husband is no more perfect than another woman, but she has vowed her allegiance and fidelity to one man. If she lives that vow to the best of her understanding and ability, she is his "one true wife." So is the Church. She is the Church who holds to true, unadulterated Bible doctrines. If two different churches would meet and both fulfill these criteria, they would be in unity.

The Scriptures that follow teach the unity of the saints.

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" John 10:16.

"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" John 17:11; see also vv. 21,23).

"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" Romans 12:4-5

"For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" 1 Corinthians 10:17.

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ ... Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" 1 Corinthians 12:12,27.

"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him" Ephesians 1:10.

"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints and of the household of God" Ephesians 4:14-19.

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" Ephesians 2:4-6.

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

The "Dortrecht Confession of Faith" is a statement of religious beliefs adopted by Dutch Mennonite leaders at a meeting in Dortrecht, the Netherlands, on April 21, 1632.

Following is Article VIII, "Of the Church of Christ" taken from that confession.

"We believe in, and confess a visible church of God, namely, those who, as has been said before, truly repent and believe, and are rightly baptized; who are one with God in heaven, and rightly incorporated into the communion of the saints here on earth. These we confess to be the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, who are declared to be the bride and wife of Christ, yea, children and heirs of everlasting life, a tent, tabernacle, and habitation of God in the Spirit, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, of which Jesus Christ Himself is declared to be the cornerstone (upon which His church is built). This church of the living God, which He has acquired, purchased, and redeemed with His own precious blood; with which, according to His promise, He will be and remain always, even unto the end of the world, for consolation and protection, yea, will dwell and walk among them, and preserve them, so that no floods or tempests, nay, not even the gates of hell, shall move or prevail against them—this church, we say, may be known by her scriptural faith, doctrine, love, and godly conversation, as, also, by the fruitful observance, practice, and maintenance of the true ordinances of Christ, which He so highly enjoined upon His disciples. 1 Corinthians 12; 1, Peter 2:9, John 3:29, Revelation 19:7, Titus 3:6-7, Ephesians 2:19-21, Matthew 16:18, 1 Peter 1:18-19, Matthew 28:20, 2 Corinthians 6:16, Matthew 7:25."

In our day, across the U.S.A. and other countries there are diverse groups of Anabaptist origin who have done an amazing job of preserving these articles of faith for over 350 years. Alas, in the past 150 years, there has been a tremendous decay and wholesale departure from the oneness, or unity, of the confession of this article. Today's widespread acceptance of the teaching that the true Church consists of scattered true children of God is neither historically held nor supported by the Scriptures as a whole.

As the modern world about the Christian has digressed into immorality and progressiveness, many believers have followed the world into Christian extinction. Others refrained from following "that which is highly esteemed" and that which was immoral. As new inventions, fashions, and trends pressed in, concerned Christians drew up a "Dortrecht Confession" of their own era, declaring the rejection of certain "worldly" possessions, dress, and activities. The ensuing generations placed a freeze on different points by different groups at different times.

As the world progressed, these dissidents fell out of sync with society. Early American lifestyle and principles were locked into place. From that came the teaching that we must not be conformed to the world in our physical appearance and activities. The rapid advancement of the world's economics and industrialization was regarded as evil. In just a few generations, this belief separated them so far from general society that they became "a gazing stock" for the world about. Adherence to church rules, unquestioning obedience to leadership, and denying oneself of worldly conveniences replaced the born-again requirement among many groups.

Church rules now governed admittance and expelling of members. These rules are not to be confused with Bible doctrines clearly established in the Scriptures. Bible doctrines are not rules. "Doctrine (from Latin: doctrina) is a codification of beliefs or a body of teachings or instructions, taught principles or positions, as the body of teachings in a branch of knowledge or belief system."

When some in a given group felt there was too much drift in the group, they "divorced" themselves from that group and started their own constituency based on their convictions. This resulted in a "bill of divorcement" among groups, where neither one would expel the other, but they endeavored to part in peace from each other. This well-intentioned ambition at an amicable split was seldom realized. The result was multiple groups with the exact same confession of faith but widely and firmly separated by "the commandments of men" from communing together as full brethren.

Individuals could now move from one group to another, normally by excommunication as a heretic or rebel from one group to acceptance as "a member in good standing" in another "cousin" church. Nothing has been more responsible for these church splits than men's opinions concerning earthly goods and social practices. In a given community, there may be many groups that all hold the "Eighteen Articles of Faith" as their own confession, yet they do not commune together. True unity has been lost among them.

The true Church is purely an assisted living center for the saved person. Every Christian needs this infirmary. Still, every person is solely responsible for personal salvation. No congregation repents as a body. If a revival rolls through a congregation and a percentage of the membership does not respond, they are not spontaneously saved by the larger group's repentance. No church in any age has had the ability to save souls solely by virtue of

membership. Alas, many churches have led souls astray by erroneous doctrines, pharisaic teaching, or overlooking some Bible doctrines.

No amount of good works, self-denial, or religious devotion can make passing grades on our spiritual report card. Jesus is the only way. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Adam Weaver. PA



RELIGIOUS PACIFISTS?

There is a danger that we might become religious pacifists.

"Let's not ruffle anyone's feathers. Let's steer clear of a confrontation and avoid it if possible. We don't want anyone to be upset or offended at us; so don't say anything that they would not appreciate. We want our neighbours to think well of us; so don't do anything that would cause them to dislike us. Don't reflect on their lifestyle; that is their business."

Are we being tempted with this outlook or mindset today? The world's philosophy is "Live and let live. Don't meddle with my affairs, and I won't meddle with yours. You believe what you want to believe, and I'll believe what I want to believe."

So we sit restfully in our spiritual La-Z-Boy recliners and let our neighbours and the world go by without presenting the truth to them because of this modern diplomacy. Are we, in a sense, sitting smugly and watching our neighbours and the masses going headlong to a Christless grave? Jesus said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." As thyself.

We know how often we think of our future home and how important it is to us that we will not spend eternity in that place of torment. We would be willing to do anything if we knew it would guarantee us not going there. Do we really, really care if our neighbour goes there? Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11). Are we willing to use our natural gifts and talents to the best of our abilities to persuade men, or are we intimidated by fear of rejection or persecution?

Today we are not experiencing persecution, but perhaps we should open the door of our minds a little to the thought that we have become passive

and self-loving. Jesus said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you ... If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:18-20). Should we entertain a question whether Jesus' unqualified, clear statement is true for us today?

As we try to evaluate whether our relating to our neighbours and ungodly men is as the Bible would teach or if possibly we have succumbed to the fear of suffering, let us consider the following: could it evidence a love of self more than love for our neighbour? How do we come to an evaluation? Could we, for a moment, put aside our modern-day diplomacy and see how we measure up with those who should be our examples?

Peter said, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). Their obedience caused them to be beaten. Then they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' name. Do we desire to suffer shame for Him and then rejoice to be counted worthy? In the city of Corinth, Paul reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded the Jews. In Ephesus, he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading men of the things concerning the kingdom of God. Because of resistance, Paul later moved his adherents into the schoolhouse and there disputed daily to persuade the people. Are we willing to use our faculties in disputing and reasoning to persuade men?

Our martyr brethren were bold, also, in speaking out concerning the false doctrine and ungodliness of their contemporaries. By so doing, they reaped the wrath of ungodly men. Because they loved the truth, they were willing to face the cross of suffering.

The fear of the cross may have caused us to become spiritual pacifists. We want no conflict. We want the goodwill of our neighbours. But a woe is placed upon us when all men speak well of us, for so did they of the false prophets (Luke 6:26).

In the natural or physical sense, we would be uninhibited and much more willing to warn our fellowman of impending destruction. An example would be the recent situation where a tugboat and barge knocked a bridge down on busy Interstate 40 in Oklahoma, thereby causing people to face certain disaster if they drove on unknowingly. If we had been there, knowing of the danger, would we have simply pulled over and parked on the side of the road? We would not have let others drive by, thinking they should see our example and pull over. We would get out and wave our

arms excitedly to warn and stop the people. Christians have become calloused and perhaps overwhelmed by the world and iniquity that is abounding.

Does Ezekiel 3:18 speak to us today? "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand."

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and be trodden under foot of men" (Matthew 5:13). Are we willing to be the salt and share in God's judgment on sin today?

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Life's Clock

The clock of life is wound but once,
And no man has the power
To tell just where the hands will stop—
At late or early hour.

To lose one's wealth is sad indeed,
To lose one's health is more,
To lose one's soul is such a loss
As no man can restore.

The present only is our own,
Live for Christ with a will;
Place no faith in tomorrow,
For the clock may then be still.

Anonymous

For your edification.

Psalm 37:3-5

TRUST	AND	SHALL	THE
IN	VERILY	GIVE	LORD;
THE	THOU	THEE	TRUST
LORD,	SHALT	THE	ALSO
AND DO	BE FED.	DESIRES	IN HIM;
GOOD;	DELIGHT	OF THINE	AND HE
SO SHALT	THYSELF	HEART.	SHALL
THOU	ALSO	COMMIT	BRING
DWELL	IN THE	THY	IT TO
IN THE	LORD;	WAY	PASS.
LAND,	AND HE	UNTO	

D E L I G H T R U S T H E
 E N V O S L A I V Q S E H
 S T A I A U X V M P Y A T
 I X R H G N I R B M L R P
 R M S U J T I N Q R O T E
 E O I O S O V T T F R C O
 S W N H Y T E S T H D I S
 H J A T N H R H H O E N L
 A L N Y T I I A Y D R T A
 L T D H B N L L S D T H E
 L H H T E I Y T E N R E G
 K O E E F D R O L A J O Q
 L U D W E L L R F Y O C L
 V Q A N D H E V Z D N A L

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