

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***Resurrection from Death – Fact, Fiction or Delusion?***

Jesus spoke about the resurrection, He raised/resurrected some who had died, we know the events. He spoke of His own resurrection in the gospels. The disciples witnessed people being raised from the dead but also saw Jesus die and alive three days later. They came across this problem of doubters and scoffers in their day and left us a testimony of having been witnesses of Christ's resurrection, Acts 1. First Corinthians 15:1-8 states unequivocally that there were many others also who saw Christ after His resurrection. So what better testimony can we have then their eye-witness testimony?

Paul gives the people of his day and us today through his letter to the believers at Corinth this very pertinent advice: "Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." 1 Corinthians 15:12-14

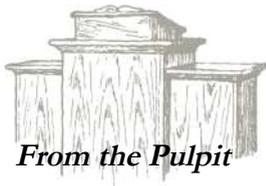
Today in our increasingly secular world and a seemingly increasing onslaught against anything or anyone holding to faith in Christ Jesus this is one of many contentious issues, many reject the idea of a person coming to life after three days or in fact any life after the death of our physical body.

Many people have sought to either prove or disprove the resurrection but Scripture is clear – it is real – whether people believe it or not it does not change the facts. The choice to believe is ours but like all choices it must be an informed choice so that we may live our life according to the truth that we have found and that truth, all truth in fact, ultimately rests in the person of Jesus Christ and our acceptance of that is a step of faith.

Jesus calls us to have faith in God, Mark 11:22, faith Scripture tells us comes to us as a gift from God, (1Corinthians 12:9) but the exercise or use of it is up to us individually.

So resurrection – Fact or fiction? Are we convinced from the Scripture that it is real and not delusional?

Only the exercise of God's gift of faith can lead you to the truth of the matter, faith comes not only by hearing but by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17) including reading the Scriptures for ourselves so that we can discover the truth not only about the resurrection of Christ which is central to our faith in Him, but the resurrection that is yet to come to all that ever died followed by the final judgement – Hebrews 10:27. Let us exercise faith and believe now – after death will be too late! J.v.L.



From the Pulpit

What is the Whole Counsel of God?

Linford Berry

Part 2 of 2

In Part 1 Brother Linford talked about the (Bible) stories how they instruct us and give us this divine witness, he continues: You know I would say to you that the authority of the Word of God primarily boils down to a matter of worldview and God-view, so we will get here in a little bit as we go through some of these other titles of the word of God, but so much of the Bible isn't instructional or delineated in terms of law or things to do but it is authoritative in the fact that it describes to us what God is like, it describes to us what our world really is like, it describes to us how we really are so that we can act accordingly, act in accordance with the way things really are and that is powerful and it is only this Book that gives us that. The testimony of the Lord is sure. [Psalm 19:7](#)

Now we see here that this testimony of the Lord that is sure is a benefit to us, the benefit is that it makes wise the simple. It makes wise the simple. Now the word simple really has the idea of an open door, an open door. What is the problem with an open door? Well with an open door things can come in and out as they please. Some people say well I have an open mind, well some people's minds are so open that their brains fall out, they are simple, they don't know when to close the door.

That's what a simple person is, a person who is not very discerning they don't know when to shut the door, they don't know what to keep out and what to let in, they just let it all in, they let it all out, we all know people like this don't we, people that are unlearned, maybe they're inexperienced, maybe they're ignorant, most often they are naïve but they are simple and we all start out life simple don't we.

That's how we are born, that's where we start from.

So there is nothing inherently wrong with being simple but there is something inherently wrong with staying simple and it says the word of God, the testimony of God is such a sure thing that it can make simple people wise, it can take naïve, inexperienced, undiscerning, uninformed people and bring them to wisdom and discernment.

And by the way in Scripture God is always seen as the ultimate source of wisdom, and the book of James again calls this wisdom from above, the book of first Corinthians talks about this wisdom of God as not being like the wisdom of men.

And wisdom is this; this is how I would say the Scripture defines wisdom: "Wisdom is the ability to make right choices about right things at the right moments in time."

If you had all the information, if you knew everything about everything could you make the right decision about the right things at the right time, if you knew everything about everything? Yeah I believe you could, you can make the right decisions about everything and who knows everything about everything? God, right.

So when we listen to the whole counsel of God what do we get? We get wisdom, when we obey it, when we live by it, we become wise.

The testimony of God is a sure thing it makes the simple person wise.

And the third thing we see here in verse eight is that the precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. [Psalm 19:8](#)

The precepts of the Lord, the term used here, or title used for the Scripture is the word precept or statute. Now this is another kind of aspect of God's word it doesn't directly mean the divine instruction or teaching like Torah or the Law, it doesn't necessarily mean divine witness or testimony although it includes both of those things; this has more the idea of divine principles, divine guidelines, precepts.

The Scripture is full of guidelines for living.

Now as I said before the Bible is not just a rulebook, it doesn't just have this list of things to do and not to do, sometimes we wish it was, sometimes you see we treat the Bible like an owner's manual.

How many of you when you buy a new car the first thing you do is sit down for an evening with the owners' manual? Anybody?

No, you don't, most of you don't even know what the owners' manual is and people like myself who sell cars have to point it out to you and show you how to use it, all right, and then you are driving down the road and some light comes on on your dash and you go "What is that?" Never saw that before what does that mean? Honey, get the owners' manual out! And

you get the owners' manual out and you turn to page such and such to see what in the world this light is all about!

So many times we treat the Bible that way, we don't even pay any attention to it at all until all of a sudden we have a problem and then it's like where do we find the answer to this problem?

Well the Bible does have a few places you can go to about a few things and it will give you pretty direct instruction but it generally does not work that way, generally what God has given us are divine principles, guidelines, ways to live, how to think, and then we have to make some sense of it.

Now you say why did God do it that way?

Well think about it this way, there is only one book that down through history is always relevant it is never out of style and out of date it always has something to say and that is this Book.

This Book does not say anything about the Internet, it doesn't say anything about hydrogen cars, it doesn't say anything about lots of stuff, if it did it would not have been relevant a hundred years ago, people would have been, "What's that?"

But it is full of divine principles and guidelines that do impact us that are relevant today and this is what the word of God does and it says that these precepts, these statutes, these guidelines, these principles are right, they are right, they show us the true path, they give us right guidance, they guide us in proper understanding.

It is kind of like a chart and a compass, no one knows what that is anymore either do they? how about a GPS? No that's too easy, the word of God is not like a GPS it does not give turn by turn instructions. Sorry to disappoint you but the word of God is like a chart and compass if you know how to use a chart and a compass you can find your way without a GPS but it requires you to work a little at it, all right.

God is not just going to sit here on your shoulder and give you turn by turn directions but He has given you a guiding light for your path, He has given you a chart and a compass, we have a true word to follow and we can walk the right path because of it.

Now notice what the benefit of this is, the benefit is that it gives joy to the heart, joy to the heart.

I believe the testimony of Scripture is that our true pleasure, our true delight comes from following the path laid out by the word of God, a path that is dependent on God's direction, on God's principles and precepts and statutes, it is not a path of selfishly seeking for self-esteem or self-fulfilment or indulging in our own pursuits.

In fact I fear that people, some people, many people, most people, or people who run from the word of God and run to whatever the world has to offer in terms advice and counsel and wisdom they run away from joy not into joy and they find less than they thought they would find and they find themselves further from the source of truth than before they left and further from joy.

The testimony of Scripture itself is that it is the source of the believers joy, the Scripture, the law, the testimony, the precepts of the Lord are perfect enough to convert the soul, wise enough to make the simple profound and able to make the sad heart joyful.

The fourth thing we see here in verse eight is that the commandment of the Lord is clear, giving clarity or light to our eyes. [Psalm 19:8](#)

Now we see here that the word of God is described as commandment, commandment, yes, Scripture is precepts and principles, yes it is testimony or witness, yes it is instruction but it is also divine decrees or commands.

And here we find the emphasis on the authority of God and his word, it is the non-optional character of the word of God.

You see the Bible is not a book of suggestions it is a book of commandments, it is binding, it is authoritative, it is what God requires and for those who respond there is blessing, for those who do not follow these commandments there is judgement.

The word of God comes to us as a commandment from God, He says that this commandment is clear, that is to say it is plainly visible, it is not mystifying, it is not confusing, it is not puzzling, oh yeah there are some obscure elements to the word of God, there are some things that we wrestle with, stuff we kind of scratch our heads about, huh, I wonder what that's about? But if you study it long enough you will find that it becomes increasingly clear. Part of the problem I believe is that we are actually looking for it not to be very clear, we actually hope that it isn't very clear be-

cause it is clear then it means that we might have to adjust our thinking and our lives.

I think it was Mark Twain who said “It is not the part of the Bible that he doesn’t understand that gave him so much grief it is the parts that he does understand.”

And this is our problem; it is one of our problems.

But the Bible is clear, God did not go to all the bother to reveal himself to us and then to try to make it somehow mystifying, no, He gave it to us clearly, so don’t be looking for all these hidden meanings and all this kind of mystical stuff just go to the word of God and look at what it says and take it at what it says. It’s really not that hard.

It gives clear direction, it enlightens the darkness.

You know when there is darkness you can’t really see where you are going, right? You have to have a light.

The word of God makes things clear it turns the light on and we need the word of God to be able to see the truth in this dark world.

And so I ask the questions: Is the Bible so insufficient, so powerless, so unclear that we have to depend on worldly wisdom?

Do we have to go to men to ask them to explain what is happening?

Do we need further revelation?

Do we need psychoanalysis for our spiritual problems?

Is the Bible so incomplete that we have to turn to science to explain the origins of life?

Do we need to turn to philosophy to understand and explain life?

Do we need to turn to sociology to explain sin?

No! The commandment of God is clear on these matters.

I invite you to consider [Psalm 119:105](#), Your word, Thy word is a lamp to my feet, it is a light to my path.

[Psalm 119:130](#) The unfolding of your words give light; it imparts understanding to the simple.

The word of God is sufficient to give us light, to lighten our dark path, to give us understanding.

The fifth thing we see in verse nine is that the fear of the Lord is clean, it endures for ever, [Psalm 19:9](#).

Here the psalmist uses the term fear to describe the word of God as a synonym for the whole counsel of God, why does he do that? And we see that also in Psalm 119 which was already read for us, fear, this word fear tends to convey the awesomeness of God, reverence for God, awe of God, and this word fear brings us into worship and since the habit of the human soul is to worship something the Scripture instructs us about who we are to worship and how and it is this word of God, this counsel of God, which instructs us in the worship of God and he says that this fear of God is clean, it is pure, there is no filthiness here, there is no defilement, there is no ugliness, it is not tarnished with sin, it has not been corrupted by evil.

And this again is in contrast to the evil imaginations of men.

The word of God, the fear of God is clean and pure, you can go to it and you can know what it tells you, what is says to you, how it teaches you is pure.

And yet you will see because it is pure it endures forever, you know there are not very many things in our world that are pure, very few things in our world that are pure, but if you have a metal that is pure or close to pure it lasts for a very very long time, that is why people refine things like gold because the more impurities you can get out of it the longer it will last, the longer it will stay shiny, but everything in this world, except for the word of God, has some impurities in it so it does not last forever.

If you could build a car, I like cars I talk about cars, if you could build a car that was absolutely pristine in every way and had no impurities in it, no impurities in the metals, no impurities in the plastics, no impurities anywhere it was absolutely perfect, pristine with no impurities the car would last a long, long time but it would also cost an awful lot, okay.

The word of God is pure and it lasts forever it endures forever it is trustworthy all the time it never changes – it is the word of God and God cannot lie.

And when you hear people say well the Bible is not sophisticated enough for our high-tech society! You see they don't understand, the Bible is absolutely pure, it is without flaws, it is without error and without sin and therefore it needs no updating, it needs no editing, it needs no refining it is already pure.

Are we to believe that all a sudden after all these many thousands of years all of a sudden it's got some impurity to it, some deficiency and people have to go somewhere else to figure out how to get rid of their sin or how to have inner healing or how to have joy in their heart?

Do we no longer believe in the power of the word of God to purify a people?

To purifying a nation even? And so we must turn to politics to overcome the perceived weakness of the eternal word of God?

God forbid that we should believe that for a moment!

The word of God is adequate and sufficient as a clean and pure word and it directs us to the one who must be worshipped.

[Psalm 119:9](#), How can a young man keep his way pure?

How do you go about purifying your life? How do you do that?

Well it says by guarding it, by guarding our lives according to his word.

[Psalm 119:11](#) I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

The word of God is sufficient, it is powerful, it is authoritative, it is pure.

The sixth thing we see in verse nine is that the rules of the Lord are true, altogether righteous. [Psalm 19:9](#)

The rules of the Lord, the judgements of the Lord. What we are talking about here are divine verdicts.

You know we have seen in verse seven divine instruction or law, we've seen divine testimony or witness, we've seen divine principles or guidelines, we've seen divine commands and divine worship and now we see divine judgement.

The Bible is God's judicial decree, God is the eternally supreme Judge, He will evaluate everything in light of this word.

You know how hard it is for people in our society to find truth; you know what a battle it seems to be for people to discover what is really true? And yet we have a word that is true, the rules of the Lord, the judgements of the Lord are true and it is always true, it is always relevant, it is always appli-

cable in contrast to the lies of men who are followers of their father the devil, the lying devil himself.

Listen, if the word of God is sufficient for salvation, if it is sufficient and powerful enough to perfectly transform the soul of a person, if it is enough to make the simple wise, to bring joy to the heart, to bring understanding to the dark things, to purify sin, if it is all of this and it is always true then it's got to be everything we need.

And so because it is true it is also trustworthy.

Verse nine, it is righteous altogether, [Psalm 19:9](#), it is totally right, it is comprehensive, it is altogether righteous, it is a sufficient source of truth it needs nothing added to it, [Deuteronomy 4:2](#), You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you.

You had better not add anything; you had better not take anything away.

Why?

Because it is all together righteous, it is all together righteous, you start taking it apart, you start taking pieces away it is not righteous any more it is not all together righteous.

[Revelation 22:18-19](#), If you add anything to it, it will be added to you, the plagues written in it.

Don't take anything away. Don't add anything to it.

It is all together right!

Are we to believe that we need more revelation?

Are we to believe that we need some more visions and words of prophecy?

That we need somehow to discover some new thing?

You know what is old is true and what is new might be true but it won't be known to be true until it gets to be old.

It is only after it endures that we can know for sure but so many people today are looking for what is new and they hold up what is new as somehow superior to what is old.

Let me tell you this Book is an old Book, it is a very old Book and it's very true.

The Word of God is the most valuable possession that we can have.

It says here in Psalm 19 that the Word of God after describing it in these three verses, seven through nine, that more to be desired are all these things that he has talked about, all these descriptions of the Word of God, more to be desired are they than gold, but not just any gold, more to be desired than much fine gold, gold that has been refined that is pure, the Word of God is more valuable than all the precious metals in the world.

If we could only make people in our society realise that!

Actually if we can only make people in our churches realise that! Then we wouldn't have to promise them all these material things, if you follow God you will get this and this and God will bless you in this way.

No, the Word of God is our greatest possession, it is supremely valuable for it leads to the path of joy, it converts the soul, it makes wise the simple, it gives understanding to a dark path, it endures forever.

And then he goes on in verse 10 not only is the Word of God the most valuable possession but it is also the most delightful and satisfying thing that we can experience, the Word of God is sweeter than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb and then it says the Word of God is the safest source of wisdom and warning, more over by them is your servant warned and in keeping them there is great reward.

The Word of God is the most rewarding to obey.

This is not speaking of a temporal blessing this is speaking of a spiritual blessing, it is speaking about that settled joy, the rest and the peace that comes when we follow this word that is clear and clean and pure and all together righteous.

Now in conclusion there is no substitute for submission to the authority of God and his word.

Your spiritual health depends on it, your spiritual health depends on placing the utmost value on the whole counsel of God on obeying it with an eager heart.

If you think you can find the answers to your spiritual problems somewhere else you are going to be severely disappointed.

If you think you can find the answers through human counsel or worldly wisdom then you are going to be forfeiting the most valuable and the only ultimately reliable source of answers and of truth.

Do not, you must not, relinquish the sweet satisfying riches of God's Word for the bitter aftertaste of this world's wisdom.

David ended this psalm by praying: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer. [Psalm 19:14](#)

And how can we be assured of having such acceptable thoughts and meditations?

[Joshua 1:8](#) I believe gives us an answer it says this Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it for then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have good success.

Message brought at the Fellowship of Concerned Mennonites Conference April 2016. Used by permission.



THE INCARNATION

There are two distinctly different views of the deity or the incarnation of Christ. One holds that Jesus did not take on any of the flesh and blood of Mary, and the other holds that He did. The latter holds that for Jesus to experience the temptations that we do, He needed to have flesh that was received from Mary. In this view, the spirit of Jesus was God and His flesh was that of the flesh of Adam. Is this consistent with the laws and nature of God? In this writing, we want to give consideration to this subject.

First, God is not limited in His capabilities by human understanding or reason. The Scripture clearly states that God knows our frame, that we are dust (Psalm 103:14). God has no lack of experience in observing man and his depravity. He states in another place that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Jeremiah 17:9. The Creator knows us better than we know ourselves.

Another attribute of God is that He is not constrained by the laws of nature and creation as we understand them. Paul writes in Romans 4:17, "As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations, in the presence of God in whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." This would also align with Hebrews 11:3, "So that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." The fact that God can call those things which be not as though they were has far-reaching implications. This enters into the ability of Jesus to understand and relate to every aspect of man without having received flesh and blood from Mary.

Why would we diminish the power of God with our finite thinking? Man has always had the tendency to disbelieve that which he cannot understand intellectually. The things of God do not appeal to human reasoning or intellect. In contrast, Abraham, our father in faith, was called upon to be obedient to that which was unbelievable to the human mind. The Scripture gives this testimony of him that he "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" Romans 4:20.

Let us consider several points about Jesus.

First, when man fell, not only did he acquire the fallen nature from Satan but the earth itself was cursed (Genesis 3:17). The whole earth is reserved for destruction. The earthly material that man was made from is now cursed, and therefore this flesh is not acceptable for a sinless offering. In Romans 7:17-18, Paul states that sin dwelt in him and that in his flesh was no good thing. The Scripture abounds with statements verifying man's sinfulness. The very nature and the lusts of our body are not for but against the things of God. The Scripture states that death passed upon all men for all have sinned (Romans 5:12). Do we believe that if a man could live a sinless life, he would not need to be redeemed?

The Bible is clear that man has no eternal life in him without the life of God abiding in him and that there is no redemption in man's works. Life comes from God and Christ alone (John 5:24). So then, how can the humanity of the fallen race have a place in the plan of redemption?

Secondly, the mixing of different elements together was expressly forbidden in the Old Testament. They were not to let diverse cattle mingle together, nor were they to sow their fields with mingled seed or sew garments with mingled fibres (Leviticus 19:19; also Deuteronomy 22:9-11).

Thus, a Scriptural principle was established of keeping that which is unclean from that which is clean. This separation is maintained throughout the entire Bible. Jesus taught this about the heart in that it could be only good or bad, not both at the same time. James also said that both salt water and fresh water could not come from the same fountain.

For God to have mixed corrupt flesh with that which is holy would have violated His own principles. Luke 1:35 states that the "holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." The writer to the Hebrews says that Jesus was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" Hebrews 7:26.

The Scripture refers to the first and the second Adam. Adam was a figure of Christ who was to come (Romans 5:14). We know that the first Adam was made sinless; he was made from earth that was not yet cursed and he had no inclination to sin until he partook of the forbidden fruit. With the fall came the curse of sin upon all that was created. Previous to the fall Adam was not subject to death but with sin the sentence of death came upon Adam and Eve. The Scripture tells us that "death passed upon all men ... even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" Romans 5:12-14. If Jesus received His humanity from Mary, did He have the sentence of death on His flesh, and if He did, could the sacrifice of His body redeem anyone? Jesus said that men could not take His life from Him but that He gave His life.

Some struggle with the concept of Jesus, the second Adam, being made like the first Adam (before the fall), a new creation of heavenly origin. They suggest that He could not have experienced life as we experience it without the flesh of fallen man. And, yet, it would be a very small thing for God, who made man in His own image the first time, to do it again. Reading some of the earlier writers, they questioned the efficacy of the body of Jesus as a sin offering if He had received His humanity from Mary because it would then have been tainted by the sin nature. They suggest that God somehow removed the taint of sin by Jesus being born of a sinless virgin; so that He was virginally pure and thus a fit sacrifice. This removing of the sin nature and the curse of sin would put Jesus back to the original state of the first Adam before sin, thus satisfying the righteousness of God in that no blemish could be found in the perfect and sinless sacrifice of the Son of God.

This discussion turns on the point of how Jesus arrived at His sinless per-

fection. Both views, as set out above, require a miracle of God to accomplish this end. The Scripture states that "the first [Adam] is of the earth, earthy: the second [Adam] is the Lord from heaven" (1 Corinthians 15:47). Following are scriptures that establish this fact: Colossians 1:13-19; 2:9,10; Philippians 2:5-10; Hebrews 1:2-14; 7:26; Revelation 1:8-11.)

Jesus was given a body like Adam (before the fall), but it was an unproved body, a body that needed to be proved, perfected, and in complete subjection to the will of God (Hebrews 10:5-9; 5:7-9). The first Adam was tempted from without, and he failed miserably. We can only imagine the many times that Jesus was tempted, beginning with His temptation in the wilderness, throughout His life, and finally in the Garden of Gethsemane. Not once did Jesus ever succumb to the forces of evil, though they were arrayed against Him. He was tried and proved again and again, thus learning obedience and was made perfect and now is the author of eternal salvation.

Question: How could Jesus, if He did not have the flesh of depraved Adam, experience the temptations we experience?

Answer: Let us not diminish the power of God by our finite thinking. And, yet, maybe we can imagine how this might be. Jesus, being one with God and the Word of power that brought the creation into existence (John 1:1-3), could also voluntarily let Himself into every aspect of the human experience. In that condescending to our low estate He felt the temptations just as we do. Thus He became our nearest of kin.

We also err in believing that God does not know our makeup and cannot understand our problems, for He created us. Psalm 103:14 states, "For he knoweth our frame ... that we are dust." We read in Psalm 139 that the Lord has searched us and knows us, He knows our uprising and our down sitting, and He understands our thoughts afar off. Verse 3 says that He is acquainted with all our ways. Verse 4 states that there is not a word in our tongues that He does not know. God has had millenniums of acquaintance with man and his temptations. There is no reason to believe that Christ does not thoroughly understand and know us beyond our most vivid imaginations (Hebrews 4:15). To believe anything less than this is to disbelieve God and His omniscience. We read in Hebrews, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13). May God give us faith to believe His unsearchable riches.

We read in the book of James that every man is tempted when he is

drawn away of his own lust (James 1:14). This lust is that Adamic nature received from Satan through the fall in the Garden of Eden. The epitome of the fallen nature is self-love, self-will, and pride. Nowhere in the Scripture do we find any evidence that Christ had any other motivation than to do His Father's will. He was not motivated by self-will, self-love, and pride. Having voluntarily let Himself into our condition, He felt what we feel, but His temptation was like that of Adam and Eve in the Garden in that it was from without.

The Scripture states that He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Let us consider these points. 1 John 2:15 mentions the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. These three points were evidenced in the original sin. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food (lust of the flesh) and that it was pleasant to the eyes (lust of the eye) and a tree to be desired to make one wise (the pride of life), she took of the fruit thereof and did eat. Thus we see the three elements of all sin.

In His temptations in the wilderness, Jesus was tempted in much the same manner. The needs of His body as it related to His hunger and personal protection were presented as temptations of the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye. The greatest temptation that was presented Him was to fall down and worship the devil. If He did so, He would be given all the power and glory of the earthly kingdoms. This also appealed to the lust of the eye but mostly to the pride of life. We can see that the temptations Satan presented to Jesus appealed to his own (Satan's) base nature and the very things that caused his own fall.

These temptations, though real, would seem to pale in comparison to His trial in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus, by choice, faced the sin of the whole world and its penalty because of the will of God. He had at His disposal more than twelve legions of angels to protect and keep Him from this hour. The holy, undefiled, sinless Creator died for His depraved creation by choice because of the will of His Father. We do not understand all that entered into God's reason for doing what He did, only that it satisfied His righteous judgment and justice.

The means by which it was accomplished was His mercy and grace. Would any of us withstand this ultimate test? Could any of us say that we have been tested to a greater measure than Jesus was? Jesus was not only tempted and tested in all points as we are, but He was tested beyond our

comprehension. This was not because He had to but because He wanted to—for the joy that was set before Him, the plan of redemption. May God be praised.

All this was done so that the body of flesh that was given Jesus might be tried and proved. Thus He was made perfect and became the author of eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:7-9). This perfecting was two-fold in that it proved Him to be without spot and blemish, which was a requirement for a sacrificial lamb under the old Law. And His sinless life also proved Him to be the infallible, immutable Son of God. In His earthly ministry Jesus testified very clearly that He and the Father were one and that He was in the Father and that the Father was in Him. He also stated that if they had seen Him, they had seen the Father. It is sacrilegious to believe that God Himself indwelt sinful flesh. The Holy Spirit indwells us, but it is only because of the sinless sacrifice of the Son of God. We have become joint heirs with Christ, but we have not become God as Jesus was and is (John 14:9-12).

In summary, several things become apparent: The first Adam was made of the earth, holy and undefiled.

The earth was cursed because of sin.

The second Adam was of heavenly material, holy and undefiled, like unto the first.

The second Adam was tempted, proved, and perfected by the things He suffered.

The first Adam needed a redeemer.

The second Adam is the redeemer.

The first Adam was a miracle of creation.

The second is the miracle of salvation and grace.

Let us leave Jesus as the Scripture says, "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" Hebrews 7:26.

Brother Floyd



The Freedom of Truth

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:2

"What is truth?" These words were spoken by a cynical Roman official

nearly two thousand years ago. It is a question that penetrates to the heart of man, and it is on the lips of many today. Truth can make man uncomfortable, and sometimes, like Pontius Pilate, we would like to ignore it or sidestep it. What is freedom? Freedom is a universal desire of man, but does fallen man really understand that desire? This discussion links freedom and truth, one we desire, and one we sometimes fear, but in the eyes of God we cannot have one without the other. May this study increase our understanding and appreciation of truth and of the freedom it brings.

As the basis for our discussion read John 8:30-47 where we see this episode took place in the temple at Jerusalem. Jesus had gone there for the Feast of Tabernacles, a Jewish holy day, and, while there, He preached to the people.

Our Lord's public ministry lasted only three years. Toward the end of that short time, in spite of all the wondrous works which Jesus had performed, a resistance to Him and His teachings grew and became more open. Many of those listening to Him began to believe. Jesus encouraged them to be faithful, and He offered to lead them into freedom. If His disciples would live in freedom they must continue in His Word. This is more than a one-time acceptance of the Word; it means a daily walk, an abiding, and a continuing. This brings truth, and truth brings freedom.

It seems evident that the Jews who began to answer Jesus were not believers, but rather opposed Him. They were not really trying to understand Him better. Their statements were a challenge, a rejection of what Jesus was trying to teach. They were telling Jesus that He was wrong. Their opposition was rooted in an unwillingness to acknowledge their need. Their heritage, their way of life, was their bedrock.

Their confidence was in themselves, in their own spirituality, their own understanding, in town religiousness. The truth about the real condition of their souls was something they were not willing to face.

As Jesus spoke to them, He revealed to them true freedom. The ones questioning Him were not truly free, but they did not know it. That is bondage of the mind as well as bondage of the soul! Jesus finally had to speak quite bluntly to the doubters and sometimes we need to do the same.

This was because their hearts were so hardened. He had to tell them they were the exact opposite of what they thought they were. They presented themselves as followers of God. In fact, they were followers of the devil and did his work.

Although Jesus' enemies hardened their hearts even more when they heard His words yet we today benefit from His teaching. His words help us to a better understanding of the devil, the foe of our soul. Jesus' words also help us to discern true godliness.

The world offers several kinds of freedom to us. The flesh would ask for unfettered indulgence of our appetites. All we want, when we want it; no restraints, no limits. If it feels good, do it. That's the desire of the flesh, but that road leads to ruin. It leads to extreme selfishness and finally debauchery. It can lead to alcoholism, drug addiction, gluttony, or other excesses which finally destroy the flesh itself. In short, it leads to bondage.

The rebellious heart of fallen man desires freedom of the will. It defines freedom as being able to do what I want and go wherever I want. No one is going to tell me what to do. I am the boss, and I am in control of my own life. This is a self-centered view of life. This self-centeredness leads to difficulty in relationships, loneliness because of selfishness, broken marriages, broken homes, broken hearts. In short, this road leads to bondage.

The mind of man may desire intellectual freedom, deciding for myself what truth is. I will decide for myself what is right, and what is wrong. I will choose my own morality.

This is the so-called freedom that was first offered by Satan in the Garden of Eden: "And ye shall be as gods" (Genesis 3:5). This desire often refuses to take into account that eternity is coming, an eternity that is created by and filled with an all-knowing, all-powerful God. This God created us, we are accountable to Him, and He will measure us by His standards and not ours. This so-called freedom will also end in bondage, the eternal bondage of hell.

What is that freedom that Christ is offering? John 8:30-47 states "Who-soever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall

make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Christ offers freedom from sin and its eternal consequences. The servant of sin will have no place with God in eternity, but those who possess the Spirit of the Son will abide with God forever. That is the truth, recorded in the Word of God.

The mystery of godliness is hidden to the carnal mind. The freedoms that the world dangles in front of us lead into bondage. The gospel leads in the opposite direction. It teaches us to deny our fleshly lusts. We then become masters over our appetites and desires, instead of slaves to them. That is real freedom. The gospel teaches us to surrender our wills to the will of God and to become His servants. We receive the salvation of our souls and eternal life instead of eternal death. That is real freedom. The gospel in our heart causes us to give up our ideas and accept God's judgments and His church's proving of the issues in our lives. Our loving Father then makes us His sons through adoption, and we become "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Colossians 1:12). That is real freedom.

The way to obtain real freedom, freedom in Christ, is to face the truth. In order to be able to face God, we must accept the truth about ourselves and others. God is truth and cannot abide where untruth is. This is not only the way to find God but it is also the way to walk with Him.

We say that the truth hurts. It does. It hurts our pride and our self-exaltation.

We prefer to blame others for the troubles in our lives. Perhaps I struggle with bad feelings because of what my brother said or did. If my neighbors would do differently, then I could truly love them. I have a hard time being a successful Christian because of my parents' failures. What do people expect from someone who was raised like I was? People do not really understand me. If they did, they'd know I'm not so bad. The ministers didn't treat me right.....or whatever, and the list could go on.

Thoughts like these lead into a very real bondage, even for those who want to live a Christian life. By blaming others for our troubles, we become bound to those people's actions. We cannot be free in our spirit until others acknowledge their wrongs and make confession to us. We make

ourselves to be victims, and we cannot be delivered from our hurt feelings and habitual failings because we think they are not really our fault. We like to think that we are innocent and others are guilty.

What is truth?

The truth is that we are responsible for our actions, our thoughts, words, and feelings. Accepting this responsibility brings freedom. Repentance and self-denial are necessary. Is true freedom worth it?

It is true that unwanted thoughts and feelings come to us unbidden.

It is true that there are real hurts in life where we have been treated wrongly.

It is true that some of the circumstances of life are beyond our control.

But, by the grace of God, with the indwelling Spirit, we can control how we react to the circumstances. We can, like Jesus, refuse the tempting thoughts and resist them, or we can harbor them. We can label our unwholesome feelings as sinful and deny them, or we can nurse our hurts and our grudges. We can feed them or starve them.

These are some of the truths that are difficult for us to accept. We choose self-pity. We choose to continue in pride. We choose to be offended. We choose to be self-righteous.

In spite of all our best intentions and efforts, we may fail. We may stumble or be overtaken in a fault. However, with God's help we can repent and rise again. Both Samson and Peter did so. When we quit justifying ourselves and accept our responsibility, we call these things our besetting sins and come to Christ for deliverance. This is the freedom that Jesus offers. The servant of sin will not abide in God's house forever, but the Son will and all those who have the Son in their hearts.

The freedom to choose rightly is one of God's oldest gifts to man, first given in the Garden. "Adam, you have a choice. You can stand tall, or you can fall. You are free." Perhaps we could put our own name in place of Adam



BEYOND FACE VALUE

Face value is the apparent value of an object or idea. It is the acceptance of something because of how it first looks or seems without thinking about what else it could mean. When we assess the face value of something, we do it in a split second as a natural response to the way we have cultivated our minds to think. Once we are convinced of the worth, or worthlessness, of certain products or people, our minds do not consider it necessary to take the time to reflect in depth but deftly places that something firmly into its perceived category.

We all have a gauge against which all things and people are measured. This gauge is powered, in part, by our preconceptions. A preconception is too often an idea or opinion based on little information or experience and is a profound testament to what is found in our hearts. Preconceptions are usually formed through the assimilation of the ideology of our parents or friends. Ideology is usually considered a good thing. It is a system of beliefs and values which we absorb by default through contact with others who share these perspectives. The ideology of good morals and Christian conduct are invaluable to our society, even among nonbelievers. Nevertheless, ideology can also be harmful as exemplified by the millions who embraced the nonsensical Nazi philosophy in the years surrounding World War II. The danger with embracing some ideology is that the ideas we come to fervently believe in may not be based on our knowledge or life experiences. They may be based largely on the opinions of others whom we respect or who dazzle us with their charisma and their passionate arguments. An ideologue, a person who is convinced by certain ideology, is swayed to believe the ideas held by the people he looks up to and will defend those ideas valiantly without bothering to check his opinions against the facts.

At an early age, we absorb our parent's ideas as to what constitutes a person of solid moral character. The biases, to which our parents hold, even the unspoken ones, are picked up by our sensitive observations and integrated into our way of thinking. If father and mother feel that a person who has a certain appearance is disreputable we usually find that also when we see someone who fits this stereotype, it is all the evidence we need to evaluate his character. We build a case against him in our minds and pass subconscious judgment without questioning the rationale behind our thought process. Often, though, if we take the time to get to know the individual we

have thus apprised, we will find that our initial assessment was incorrect and there is more depth to them than what we observed on the surface. This does not necessarily mean that the biased beliefs to which we have long subscribed have suffered a setback. Too often, our conclusion is that, while this person is an exception to the rule, our basic conclusion about this type of character is still correct. Even when faced with evidence to the contrary, our mind will continue to lump people into distinct categories, whether it be according to ethnicity, economic class, or political affiliation. This would directly contrast with the example of Jesus who seemed to give those He met the benefit of the doubt. He who knew all things refused to treat the vilest of sinners in a way that was inconsistent with His overlying message of love. The habit of passing quick judgment may be nothing more than a vein of cleverly disguised pride in our lives. By belittling others, even if it's only in our minds, we are nurturing our flesh's desire to be superior to those around us.

As Christians, we have a responsibility to share the truth with those we meet. This goes much deeper than spreading the gospel to those we contact; it must be a part of what we offer in the way of conversation and conduct. While sharing truth, we should never forget that the way we see something may not be the way it really is.

We must exercise special caution when speaking about matters that pertain to the world around us. As the people of God, we are to be separate from the world as much as possible. The policies and politics of America – or wherever we live – are out of our control and belong to another realm. But too often we have vigorous opinions on these matters and are more than willing to share them with others. One problem with this is our lack of real-world experience in secular matters. How can our opinions, which are formed on the outer fringes looking in, be anything more than a shallow estimation of the face value of the matter? What do we have to go on besides the notions that have been proclaimed by other people of varying credibility?

I become concerned with the boldness with which some brethren respond to the outcome of elections. Much of what I have read and heard before and after elections has left me with disquiet over our susceptibility to believe political misinformation. Yes, some of the arguments the political pundits come up with against the viability of a particular candidate may be convincing but let us examine carefully their origins. Much of what is

passed around and forwarded to us about the state of our government seems to be written by political operatives promoting a specific party or ideology.

We believe that God maintains ultimate control of governments and world affairs. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Romans 13:1). As Christians, we cannot forget that the people who are elected to be our civil servants receive a certain authority from God. God's intervention in, and control over, the affairs of nations and governments are, at best, dimly understood by men. Who are we to question His judgment? The reason for the things He appoints or allows is often beyond our understanding. Could part of His purpose be to reveal to us our need to look past the superficial—past face value—beyond the petty biases we may harbor? Do we realize that, behind everything we see, there is a depth which does not meet the eye?

Let us all endeavor to examine our perceptions and opinions that they may have a foundation in truth and in Christian charity. Let us give those we meet the benefit of the doubt as to the content of their character. And may it give us pause to think that if we are merciless in our judgment of others we meet along our journey, the Lord will judge us by the same standard we have used.



Creation reveals itself in secrets, but as secrets that are outer cloaks for truths waiting to be discovered. All around in leaf and grass and cloud and rain and flower the world whispers into our hearts. It says that life could be a good thing, and that somehow God is in it all.

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