

# THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

Vol. 16 No. 3 – MARCH 2019



Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,  
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in  
the house.

Matthew 5:15

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

For A Conservative Anabaptist Perspective

**From The Editor's Desk***THE WISE USE OF TIME*

Ephesians 5:1-2 (ESV) ...Be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

The follows a list of sins or inappropriate behaviour not fitting for disciples of Christ followed by: Ephesians 5:15-16 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

I believe God desires each of us to fully develop into living examples of His love for people. Of course we realise that the lessons and discipline of life are crowded into a very brief space of time and are different for each one of us. The psalmist in Psalm 90:12 asks the Lord to teach us to number our days, the reason being as that verse concludes that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. The wise use of time we could say.

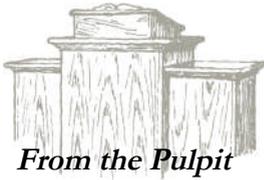
No two people go through the same experiences, and none of us know when we are going to be summoned into eternity. The wise man explains in Ecclesiastes chapter 3 that there is an appointed time when to be born and die, a time to weep and laugh, a time to get or lose, a time of peace or storm cast skies. These times have been fixed for us in God's plan; it is all at the Lord's leisure. In due time He will work it out for our good and for His glory, we can read about that in Romans 8:28.

Times and seasons succeed one another very quickly and doing God's will today that too is a wise use of time. We must be on the alert to meet the demand of every hour.

Each time and season is kept by the Father in His own hand. He opens and none shuts; He shuts and none opens. But in that same hand are the needed supplies of wisdom, grace, and power that each of us can avail ourselves of if we use the time wisely. As the time, so is the strength. No time of sighing, trial, temptation, or bereavement is without its special and God made adapted supplies. Take what is needed from His hand, and go forth to play the part for which the hour calls, Jesus has given us the example, John 13:15 and the reason why we should, Matthew 25:40.

We can with full assurance hand ourselves over to God and say: "All my times are in Thy hand." A very wise use of time indeed as it will bring a heavenly reward.

*J. v. L.*



*Man, A Three-Fold Being*  
*Brother Merle Ruth*  
*Dohner Mennonite Church*

You are about to hear what I would label a non-typical type of Sunday morning sermon. In many respects it will be largely informative in nature it does however have some doctrinal content also.

This sermon title reads as follows Man, A Threefold Being. This obviously means that we will be looking at ourselves in the mirror of God's Word, it will be an attempt to analyse the human make up. I am of the opinion that this can be a spiritually stimulating study.

When I was still in my latter teens or early 20's I had the unforgettable experience of hearing an entire evening sermon devoted to this subject and that exposure ignited in me a never dying spark of interest, but long, long before that in a very thoughtful moment David, that man after God's own heart, raised the question: What is man? *Psalms 144:3.*

There are a variety of possible answers such as the following:

Unlike the animals man is a creature of choice.

Man is the most intelligent of all creatures.

Man is the bearer of the divine image.

Man is the Creator's masterpiece.

Man is nevertheless presently a fallen creature but man is still the object of God's love.

These are all acceptable answers however for right now the focus of our interest is still another aspect of man – namely his make-up.

Of what does he consist?

How is he constituted?

With what components and how many?

Our sermon title does contain a hint to the number of those components, man the threefold being. However that title can be taken into opposite ways: One-way is to view it as a descriptive factual statement - in that case you would say this way: Man, a threefold being.

The other way is to view it is a question, in that case you would say this way: Man, a threefold being?

Well you will soon discover that why we view the sermon title not as a question but as a true reflection of the biblical view of man. However honestly demands that I state right up front that even among Bible scholars the threefold view is not a unanimously held view.

As I already implied this subject is a branch of the Bible doctrine of man. In the academic world there are people called anthropologists who also treat man as an object of study but their approach is purely scientific, the typical college anthropology textbook ignores the Bible. We believe that people who do that are depriving themselves of the most authoritative source of knowledge on this subject.

When an atheistic scientist looks at man about all he sees is a body. One such scientist came up with this analysis of the human body: It contains enough lime to whitewash a small old time henhouse, enough potassium to make a firecracker, enough iron to make one halfpenny nail, enough sugar to fill one sugar shaker, enough phosphorus to make 2000 matches and enough fat to make seven bars of soap.

The only value in all that is that it highlights the fact that material elements are part of the human make up but the biblical view of man insists that you are more than a body, that really your body is only the temporary house in which you presently live. In a host of places the Bible bears witness to the fact that a very important part of you is nonmaterial in nature.

For example: *Matthew 10:28* quotes our Lord as saying: Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul.

Why cannot they kill the soul? Because the soul is of an intangible nature. Underlying that saying of our Lord is the assumption that a human being consists of elements that are both material and nonmaterial in nature. It is on this basis that some Bible students prefer to think of man as a twofold being.

But there is this further question: Are there not indications that the non-material part of man consists of more than one component?

It cannot be denied that in the biblical record when reference is made to the non-material side of man to different terms are sometimes employed namely spirit and soul.

Among Bible students there is a difference of opinion as to how to view those two terms, consequently there arose two main schools of thought known as 1] dichotomy and 2] trichotomy.

The dichotomy school holds that these two terms soul and spirit are altogether interchangeable terms both of which are simply a way of speaking about the intangible part of a person. The dichotomist does not believe that spirit and soul are separate components.

In contrast to that the trichotomy school believes that although these two terms are sometimes used interchangeably they really do represent two different entities.

But why are they sometimes used interchangeably? The typical trichotomist would likely give this reply: Because they have this much in common, they both relate to the intangible part of man, together they constitute the non-material part of man.

The obvious difference between the two views is that dichotomy regards man as a twofold being whilst trichotomy regards him as a threefold being. Why then am I promoting the threefold view? Is it because holding to the other view de-christianises a person? No, it is not that but rather it is because in my opinion there seemingly are biblical grounds upon which the trichotomy view can be substantiated.

Now our next move will be to examine that evidence.

First let's go back in our minds to the creation account. Man is there said to have been created how? In the image of God. In the book *Doctrines of the Bible* Daniel Kauffman implies that since man was created in the image of God and since God is a Trinity it is consistent to also view man as a threefold being.

Right in connection with that I'm going to read Genesis chapter 2 verse seven, this relates the actual creation of man, *Genesis 2:7*: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust off the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul."

Three different entities appear to be in view here:

- First the body made from the dust.
- Secondly that God breathed in spirit, for in the Hebrew breath and spirit are the same.
- Thirdly the human soul.

Now are there other passages that support this deduction, does the Bible elsewhere distinguish between the human soul and the human spirit? Yes, there are New Testament passages that do this.

Turn with me now to Luke, chapter 1, here we are going to listen a portion of the virgin Mary's song, Luke 1 beginning at verse 46: "And Mary said, My soul does magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my saviour." *Luke 1:46-47*.

I am of the opinion that this is more than mere repetition, although she does it in a rather incidental way, Mary definitely does distinguish between her soul and her spirit and divine inspiration records it that way.

Let's go now to first Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 23, here is Paul praying for the believers at Thessalonica, *1 Thessalonians 5:23*: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

There it is! To me it seems as though Paul is giving us the sum total of what man consists of. Furthermore the order in which these three entities are named are significant, the movement is from the inner to the outward, from the highest to the lowest, spirit, soul and body.

There is yet one more passage in this series, *Hebrews 4:12*, we have highlighted here that penetrating power of God's Word, "For the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Again a distinction is drawn between the soul and spirit, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.

Do we not have all this as a scriptural basis for believing that man is indeed a threefold being, consisting of a tangible body plus two intangible components, the spirit and the soul?

I think we do.

The remainder of the message will be an attempt to outline the function of these closely related human components to show how they relate to each other, how they were intended to relate to each other and how they do relate in the victorious Christian.

In this process, and we do need to reckon with the fact that man today is no longer the same as he was in his pre-fallen state, in fact according to the Bible a proper study of man consists of three chapters;

Chapter 1: Man As God Made Him.

Chapter 2: Man As Sin Makes Him.

Chapter 3: Man As God Remakes Him.

With that sequence in view let's begin with: Man As God Made Him.

This is the stage with which we are the least acquainted but we do know that at that point man was in every respect very good for that is the divinely stated verdict recorded in *Genesis 1:31*.

Evidently God created man as He did because he foresaw the need for man to relate to both the natural world and the spiritual world. God made Adam a threefold being so that he would be equipped to do that. More specifically in the creation God equipped us with a spirit showed that we could be God conscience, He could touch with a soul so that we could be self-conscious and He equipped us with a body so that we could be world conscience.

Stating it another way sense dwells in the body, self in the soul and God in the spirit.

The soul, the centre personality relates with the spiritual world through the medium of the spirit, it likewise relates with the material world through the medium of the body.

To the soul was given the freedom and power to choose which of those worlds would dominate. Evidently the spirit cannot act directly upon the

body it needs a medium, that medium is the soul, the intended function of the soul is to keep itself and the body in subjection to the God indwelt human spirit, because of this key role; the soul can be viewed as the real you, you have a body and you have a spirit and you are a soul.

The fact that man is a spirit is above all else the thing that makes him unique for it is that which gives him access to the spiritual world, the spirit can subdue the body through the medium of the soul so that the body will obey God. Likewise the body through the medium of the soul can draw the spirit into loving the world.

And now a little more about the soul.

Man's intellectual, emotional and volitional powers all belong to the soul. The soul is also the seat of those non-bodily traits that distinguish one person from another person. Being very good in their original state we can be sure that there was in Adam and Eve a perfectly harmonious working together of all their constituent parts, body, soul and spirit blended perfectly into one unified personality. For however long they remained in that state Adam and Eve were what we might call well integrated personalities, very likely the frustrations that now arise from internal discord and conflicting loyalties were entirely absent, being neither divine nor carnal pre-fallen Adam was a prime specimen of human nature and his pre-fallen experience amply demonstrates that being human does not in itself necessitate being sinful.

However his being human and therefore a free moral agent made it possible for him to sin, however on the other hand the absence of a sin-prone nature and the blessing of communion with God also made it possible for him to not sin.

Aside from Adam and Eve the Lord Jesus Christ is the only other being who knows what it is to possess the unmarred human nature. As a man Jesus was all that Adam was meant to be, in fact in *1 Corinthians 15* He is viewed as the second Adam, He was both perfectly human and humanly perfect. Christ has been and will remain the only the human to maintain sinless perfection, and mark it down, He did that while living in a body like the one that you and I live in.

That deity could dwell in a human body is a fact of tremendous importance, it served to show that there is no inherent evil in the body itself.

All that was a glance at man as God first made him, man as God meant him to function.

I'm moving now to Chapter 2: Man As Sin Makes Him.

Responding to the enticements of Satan our first parents knowingly disobeyed God. Enormous consequences in followed in the wake of that act. One of the immediate effects of the fall appears to have been the inversion of the relationship between the spiritual and physical.

One expositor puts it this way: In the fall the soul refused the rule of the spirit and became a servant of the body and its appetites. When life forms to God's original plan the spirit is like a mistress, the soul is like a steward and the body is like a servant. The mistress commands matters to the steward who in turn commands the servant to carry them out.

This proper order, spirit, soul and body, was disrupted in the fall, the human spirit, man's highest faculty was the first to suffer damage, it became dead toward God, not dead in the sense that it is totally inactive but in the sense that it is unable to perform its proper function.

So then Adam's predicted death began in his spirit, culminated finally in his body, the death of his body.

Secondly the poison of sin spread to the soul and blighted man's intellectual, emotional and volitional powers.

The mind of fallen man is blinded so much that he may even call evil good, he is so blinded that he can be persuaded to believe a lie.

Man's heart, the seat of his emotional life, is characterised in the Bible as desperately wicked, (*Jeremiah 17:9*) that which should be hated. His love, his will has turned against God, grown stubborn. In areas where its resistance ought to be strong it has grown feeble.

Thirdly the body also is suffering the ravages of sin. With its numerous gates to the surrounding sin saturated environment the body soaks up a lot

of stimulants to sin and channels them into the already perverted mind and sin loving heart thus creating a sin producing chain reaction. By way of summary we could say that the downward course of man has moved from spirit control to soul control, and from soul control to body control.

This then is the ruin that the human race has suffered, the soul now operates independent of the spirit and is in grave danger of becoming a slave to the body. The natural man of *1 Corinthians 2:14*, who cannot receive the spiritual things of God, is literally the soulish man, even though in some cases the power of the soul maybe somewhat disciplined, highly polished and capable of remarkable achievements all this avails nothing for man is like a cake not turned in that his spiritual powers are cold and dormant. (*Hosea 7:8*).

Moving from Chapter 2 to Chapter 3 entitled: Man As God Remakes Him.

Jeremiah 18 relates the account of how that Prophet under God's direction witnessed a potter remaking a vessel that had been marred, the Gospel is the good news, that broken fragments of life and likewise be made new by the Divine Potter, God is looking for pliable, penitent individuals who look to Him in faith and in desperation call upon Him: Lord, mould me and make me after thy will! *Jeremiah 18:2-6*.

By the inspiration of God degenerated sinners are thus regenerated, instead of patching up the old life God makes one a new creature by means of the new birth.

The new birth is a rebirth in this sense that it is a restoration of what was lost in the fall.

In the Bible this operation of God is repeatedly represented as a renewing process.

*Romans 12:2*: Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

*Titus 3:5*: Not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy He has saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

By the Providence of God the human spirit is quickened, reactivated and infused with God's Spirit and this then becomes the means by which God regains His lost control over the individual.

As we have already implied man is like a three story house, the upper level is the spirit level for it is through his spirit that man stands related to the spiritual world, the renewing process begins in that upper story for that is where sin began its deadly work but thankfully the renewing process doesn't stop there.

Recall with me for a moment that prayer of the apostle in *1 Thessalonians 5:23* I pray God your whole soul, your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless.

In God's original plan man was a unified personality and the unifying factor was the spirit, his spirit, the human spirit dominated and directed by the Holy Spirit, was supreme in authority over the soul and the body so that really the Holy Spirit through the channel of the human spirit kept the whole person in tune with God.

In the remaking process this disrupted order is restored, it is restored so completely that Paul could tell the Corinthians that not only their spirit but also their body was the temple of the Holy Ghost.

It remains true however that there does exist a kind of special kinship between the Divine spirit and the human spirit. What does it say in *Romans 8:16*? The Spirit itself, spelt with a capital S, the Spirit itself beareth witness with our soul? No. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Nevertheless is indicated elsewhere in Romans 8 that the redemption of the body is not yet completed even in the wholly sanctified person, he must therefore with the help of God keep his body under the spirit's control. The function of the soul, the real you, chooses to allow the Holy Spirit that dwells in your spirit to control your body. In this respect the remaking process is also both a conditional and a continuing process.

A boy was once addressed in this manner: Sonny boy who made you? His reply went something like this: To tell the truth Mister, I'm not yet made!

We ought to adopt that same attitude. For God can only remake those who become pliable and He can only perfect those who remain pliable.

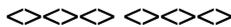
Ideally that perfecting process continues until death. When you die you temporarily cease to be a threefold being for you then move out of your body, that house in which you lived for X number of years, that leaves you in an out of the body condition called the intermediate state, nevertheless for the saint the intermediate state is a blessed condition for a upon his release from the body the saint goes immediately into the presence of his now reigning Lord to await his new body which he will receive when the Lord returns to resurrect the dead.

In one of these visions John saw the souls of them who had been beheaded for the cause of Christ, and what were they doing? They were reigning with Christ and that is in perfect accord with the promise of Christ: To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne. *Revelation 3:21* That promise was initially addressed to first century Saints for whom death by martyrdom was a constant threat, they lived every day with death staring them in the face.

That is however a promise that every saint can still claim; To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne.

And the fulfilment of that promise begins already just on the other side of the door of death but the Christians ultimate hope is not the intermediate state but the eternal state for he will then have received both a new body and a new heaven and earth in which to dwell eternally for you are indeed a never, never dying soul.

Let's pray.



## TRUTH

Pilate asked Jesus, "What is truth?" just before Jesus was crucified. This question is still being asked consciously or unconsciously two thousand years later. What is truth, and do I know it?

God is truth. "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgement: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" Deu-

teronomy 32:4. Hebrews 6:18 tells us it is impossible for God to lie. Jesus said, "Thy word is truth" John 17:17. He also said of Himself, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father, but by me" John 14:6. Of the Holy Spirit it is written, "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; and he will shew you things to come" John 16:1). We see from these scriptures that every part of God is truth.

Truth is found in completion in God. Every word and direction from God is truth. Because God is truth and speaks the truth, He does not need to change His mind or word. The blessings and judgments of God's Word are truth and, therefore, sure. God promises to forgive every repentant sinner. He also has promised punishment to those who reject His will. He has promised to give us grace for every trial. We are also promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to guide us, to teach us right and wrong using the Word of God, and to comfort us when we do right. God has promised to be with His children to the very end (Matthew 28:20). These promises are truth and, therefore, will be fulfilled. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" Psalm 119:89. The Word of God is the only foundation on which we can build our spiritual home.

Satan, on the other hand, is the father of untruth. He seeks to destroy, minimize, distort, or replace truth with falsehood. He comes to us as an angel of light, often with a half-truth. As he mixes untruth with truth only untruth results. Truth is absolute and cannot be changed or altered. If we mix just a small amount of black paint into pure white paint the result is light paint, but not pure white paint. Even so Satan can never produce pure truth, and adulterated truth is untruth. To add or subtract from the truth of God (His Word and Spirit) is to adulterate truth. No God-fearing person wants to accept a mixture. Rather, we desire the sincere milk of the Word. Truth is absolute—it is not dependent on what we think about it. Even if no one believes it, it is still truth. People once believed the earth was flat. Their belief did not change the truth that the earth is round. Our acceptance or refusal of truth does not change truth.

Our lives show what we have accepted as truth. As long as our lives agree with the truth of God's Word, all is well. However, when our lives do not portray the truth of God, there is a problem. Sometimes we try to accept part of the truth but this is impossible.

If I refuse to accept all the truth of God, I am not in the truth.

Truth brings a person true freedom. Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" John 8:32. When someone tells a lie, he must carefully remember what he said. Often he soon needs to tell another lie to support the first lie. Soon he is in a situation where he can no longer remember whom he told what. When we build our spiritual home on something less than complete truth, we find we need to compromise more and more scriptures to keep our foundation "solid." Finally, we find ourselves in direct disobedience to clear scriptures, because they do not fit our interpretation of truth. 2 Peter 1:20-21 says, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

All Scripture, being of one truth, must fit together to make one truth. The truth of God is not divisible and should not be interpreted according to our own desires.

Pilate asked Jesus, "What is truth?" and then proceeded to consign him to death. Although he asked a good question, it appears he did not pursue this question until he had an answer. How strong is our desire for truth? How sincerely are we seeking for truth? Does our search for and love of truth rule our lives? We live in complicated times. Many questions arise that do not have easy, clear answers. Almost every imaginable doctrine is being taught as truth. Do we know truth? Are we strong in the truth?

Many times when someone contracts a serious disease, much effort is put forth to effect a cure. Doctors and specialists are consulted. Personal research is done. Others with similar sicknesses are sought for advice, and there is a strong desire to understand the sickness and to know its cure. Often our search for truth is not so diligent. We rely on what we have been taught or what we have heard. Perhaps it is easy and comfortable to read about others' experiences and opinions and develop our own impression of truth because of what we have read. Do we know what the Word of God says about this or that? I do not want to minimize the sound teaching we receive in our homes. But there comes a time of maturity when we should search the Scripture to establish in our own hearts the teaching of God's Word. A full understanding of truth will guard us against false teaching that minimizes or changes God's Word.

2 Thessalonians 2:10 talks about those who received not the love of the truth. As we are completely obedient to the truth we understand we will begin to love it and desire to know more of it. This will affect our entire life. Instead of looking at those around us, justifying ourselves, we will seek the will of God, knowing that truth and safety are found in His will. We will seek for truth in the small natural questions of this life. The questions, "What is wrong with this?" or, "Why does that matter?" will be replaced with, "What does God want in this?" Proverbs 3:5-7 says, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil."

In much of the world today we have freedom to read God's Word and to know and follow truth. May we be as children who walk in truth.



## PROVING OUR LOYALTY

Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain. 1 Corinthians 15:57-58

The words steadfast and immovable here are synonyms for loyalty.

Our loyalty to Christ cannot be measured by our words. Many times our declarations of loyalty and love issue from our emotions or feelings. When things are going well we may say with Peter, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death" Luke 22:33. Good feelings are not proof of loyalty. Loyalty is proven when we are tested. When Peter's relationship with Jesus was called into question the desire to save himself overrode his loyalty. His former promises were forgotten. It is the same with us today when the storms of life are raging or the deceitfulness of riches blinds our eyes. The temptation is there to take our eyes off Jesus and trust in our own strength.

Jesus puts our loyalty to the test in many different forms by allowing some trails to come our way but remember that as promised He always provides

a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13) so that our loyalty to Him may shine through. We are blessed with the hindsight of the written word and the infilling of the Holy Spirit so that we can more clearly see what is required of us as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Jesus was more direct with Peter to prove the depth of his loyalty and so let us take the opportunity to examine our commitment to our Saviour as we examine how Jesus dealt with Peter to establish his loyalty

John 21:15-22 <sup>15</sup> So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. <sup>16</sup> He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. <sup>17</sup> He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. <sup>18</sup> Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry *thee* whither thou wouldest not. <sup>19</sup> This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. <sup>20</sup> Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? <sup>21</sup> Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what *shall* this man *do*? <sup>22</sup> Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee? follow thou me.

We can see from this conversation of Jesus and Peter that we are to be concerned about our own loyalty not someone else's – Jesus calls you and I to commit to follow Him individually and not base our commitment on what another person may or may not do. Jesus makes it very plain to Peter and to us when He says “You follow me!” Carefully read the above passage again and see the personal call and direction.

The setting here is the third time Jesus appeared to a large group of His disciples after His resurrection. The disciples, apparently not yet clear as to

their future, had decided to go fishing. Even though they toiled all night, they caught nothing. When morning came, they saw someone standing on the shore but did not recognize him as Jesus. When they told this Stranger they had caught no fish, He told them to cast their net again, this time on the right side of the ship. The net was so filled with fish they were not able to draw it in. At this time John recognized who was speaking to them and said to Peter, "It is the Lord." Peter, as impulsive as ever, cast himself out of the boat in his haste to get to shore to see Jesus.

When the rest of the disciples had brought the boat to shore, dragging the net full of fish with them, they found a fire of coals and fish and bread to eat. Jesus invited them to dine with Him.

When the meal was over, Jesus began to examine Peter's love for Him. Surely Jesus knew the answer, yet He wanted Peter to search his own heart. Peter's recent denial of the Lord was still fresh in their minds. Peter had repented of this with bitter tears, and now it appears Jesus wanted a reaffirmation of his love and loyalty.

Jesus repeated the same question three times. This indicates He wanted Peter to think seriously about his answer. Peter had proclaimed his loyalty before and had fallen. Was this time any different? The questions were also surely intended for the others who were listening. They had also promised not to deny their Lord (Matthew 26:35), and then had fallen asleep while He agonized alone in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Apparently Jesus could see that Peter was a changed man because, after each question, He charged him with an important responsibility.

Jesus' admonition to feed His lambs and His sheep was also repeated three times. His tender concern for His flock is so great He desires only those with a pure love to Him to care for them. Any person who would flee when trouble approaches would not be fit for His service.

Perhaps the ultimate test of loyalty is the giving of one's life for a cause. Jesus' prophecy of the manner of death Peter would face did not seem to shake Peter's resolve. History bears out the truth of this prophecy and Peter's faithfulness to the end.

Verses 20-22 present a bit of a puzzle, was Peter genuinely concerned about his fellow disciple or was it idle curiosity that prompted his question? Whichever it was, Jesus gently but firmly settled the matter by appealing to Peter's loyalty once again. If he would follow in full obedience,

he need not be concerned about what role the others would play.

The question Jesus asked Peter, "Lovest thou me?" rings down through the ages and demands an answer of us today. Instead of quickly answering yes, let us examine our hearts more closely.

One definition of loyalty is "unswerving allegiance." Another is "faithfulness that is steadfast in the face of temptation to renounce, desert, or betray." In this lesson we are using the words loyalty and love somewhat interchangeably. Simply professing our love to the Lord with our words is not enough. The real proving is in our obedience. Jesus tells of those who professed His name and even cast out devils, yet He never knew them because their obedience was not complete.

Many times in the course of living our lives, raising our families, going to work, and conducting our business, opportunities present themselves that test our loyalty to Christ. Are we willing to let someone take advantage of us in a business deal so our witness will be more clear?

Are parents willing to deny themselves of some of their own time and spend it with their children? When a work day is called for someone less fortunate can the brethren find time to go? How about the sisters on sewing day? Do youth find as much fulfillment singing at a rest home as they do at a volleyball game? Are they willing to deny themselves the fun of an evening with friends to spend some quiet time at home occasionally? We can use all of these situations, and many more like them, to prove our own hearts.

Another proving ground of loyalty to Christ is in a Christian's relationship with his fellowman. A true follower will see the many needs around him. He will hear the crying lambs. He will notice the broken hearts. His compassion is stirred as he sees the disappointments life has dealt so many people. He will try to follow the example of the Good Samaritan as he pours oil and wine on the wounds, remembering the words of Jesus, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" Matthew 25:40.

Another test of loyalty is the ability to stand firm in the face of temptation. It may seem like only a small thing that surely would not matter very much, but the heart of the Saviour is grieved every time His children take

their own way. Jesus does not expect us to have the strength of ourselves to withstand temptation, but He desires that we ask Him to help us. Our relationship with Jesus should be so precious that we would not dare jeopardize it by entertaining even the thought of sin.

Let us consider what Jesus may have meant when He asked if Peter loved Him "more than these." Possibly He wondered if Peter loved Him more than his earthly friends and family. Even though we hold our loved ones dear, our love for Christ should supersede our love for any person or human relationship. The influence of others should not sway our loyalty to Him. As others look upon us, may they see that Jesus is first in our lives. Perhaps Jesus wondered if Peter loved Him more than earthly things. He had just been fishing, which was his former occupation. Jesus knows we need to make a living and provide for our own but, here again, He comes first and our work comes after.

Because we are of this earth, material things mean a lot to us. Some material goods are necessary for us to survive, but so easily our first love starts to shift from eternal things to earthly things. Along with an increase of our possessions comes the temptation to divide our loyalty to Christ with the desire to protect what we feel we have earned. A heavenly vision is needed to keep all these things in the proper perspective.

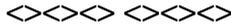
Sometimes Christians may wonder if they would have the fortitude to stand in the face of severe adversity. If pain and sickness, financial difficulties, friends turning against them, even persecutions, were to be their lot, would they remain loyal to Christ? Jesus has the answer: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10). If we are loyal to Christ when things are going well, He will stand by us and strengthen us when times are hard. If, as we examine our hearts, we find our loyalties have been divided, may we humbly repent and seek the Lord's will again. He will restore us again as He did Peter so long ago.

Even though Peter had some failures as he followed Jesus, and who of us have not had some of them as well? Nevertheless may we sincerely and with conviction answer the words of Jesus when after a number of his disciples went back and followed Him no more He asked the twelve: "Do you want to go away as well? And Peter answered Him" Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life and we have believed and have

come to know that you are the Holy One of God.” John 6:69-70.

Have we ever given Jesus cause to wonder if we love Him more than earthly pleasures and a life of self-indulgence and gratification?

To be truthful surely we all have found ourselves in that situation, the way back is clear, repent and commit wholeheartedly to Christ and have the certainty that there is no one else to whom we can go because He is the Holy One of God – Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind.



### **A SIMPLE PEOPLE**

In using the word simple, we are not referring to retardation, impairment, or ignorance. We are rather thinking of one being plain, uncomplicated, modest, unadorned, etc. The word simple then denotes the qualities of thinking and living in a clear and uncomplicated way. These are attributes of the person whose mind and heart are set on the lowly Galilean, Jesus.

In many ways, we are the product of our minds. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" Proverbs 23:7. A simple people would then, firstly, be simpleminded. These people do not think in a complicated and sophisticated manner. They desire to have a humble frame of mind, wanting to be free of that which might confuse or blur. They are able to think clearly and, consequently, their sight remains unclouded. The heart and mind of these simple people will not easily be shadowed with that which discolors and distorts. This simplicity of mind is a blessing given to God's children. It is something more than an art or that which is achieved through self-discipline. This grace should be treasured, and one does well to guard against becoming otherwise minded.

As the Scriptures are read, we are inspired with the simplicity of Christ. His message and answers to the people were simple. He was able to cut through the outer garments of complexity and arguments and touch the heart. His simple parables and responses gave light to the most complicated and difficult questions. His focus and purpose was clear, and no adornment could brighten it further. "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" John 5:30.

Though Jesus was God's own Son, yet He associated with common folk and sinners. He felt for and tended to the needs of the downtrodden. "Let

this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:5-8). His being God did not exclude the virtues of humility and modesty. He was obedient to His Father as a child and servant. He is the supreme example in simplicity of mind and life to us. Now let His children imitate Him!

There is a great need today for parents who think simply. This does not give occasion for uncertain or weak parenthood. Contrariwise, simple-minded parents will see their responsibility clearly and will be diligent in child training and nurture. Their view of the home and their children will not be complicated or distorted by worldly wisdom. Their vision will not be discolored by the influences of psychology, which is the science of mind and behavior. These parents embrace the practical truths in God's Word concerning child training and development. They see themselves as servants, with God-delegated authority, to prepare the child for God's call to salvation and usefulness. These parents are not naive or oblivious concerning the present world and its ills. Their simplicity helps them see clearly the dangers and addresses them in a common, straightforward manner. The pressures of society do not so easily determine these parents' course for the family; the end goal is in clear view.

Simpleminded preachers are needed in the church today. Simple certainly does not imply shallowness or emptiness. Simplicity in the preacher will bring depth and clarity to God's message and work. It is often the simplest truths that are the most profound and enduring. The preacher needs to think clearly without clutter and being distracted by fleshly voices. "Preach the word..." 2 Timothy 4:2. Such a simple instruction! There need be no embellishment to make the message more palatable. It is the Word of God that is effective, and the minister will find it impossible to improve on what

God has said. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" Hebrews 4:12.

The world is clamoring for a message from the pulpit that is pleasing to the flesh and, also, entertaining. Meanwhile, the church of God still needs the simple and sound preaching of the gospel that saves. Out of the pulpit, the preacher needs to be simple in his lifestyle and teaching. He doesn't depend on his understanding or learning when helping and counseling others. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves" 2 Tim. 2:24-25. The minister need not be afraid to think and speak simply. The message and teaching will then be clear, to the point, and easy to understand.

A simple mind is not a narrow mind, but rather one that is focused on the common and real everyday issues of the heart and life. Clear thinking is thereby enabled.

The pressing needs around the globe are requiring the service of simple missionaries and servants. Missionaries who are Christ-like will be blessed in answering to the simple needs of mankind, most importantly that of salvation and rest for the soul. Gospel workers need not be well trained and learned to fulfill their work order. "And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey" Mark 6:7-8. What is needed for the "journey" is God's gift of power, coupled with clear thinking and simplicity to meet the people on their ground and become one with them.

Simple compassion in the heart will bring empathy when rubbing shoulders with those who are poor and sick in body and soul. "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him" Luke 10:33. An honest view of one's own weakness and helplessness will open the door to reach others. Just telling the heartfelt remembrance of having been lifted out of darkness into light becomes a testimony God uses. A simple trust in God is the anchor that holds the missionary while the winds blow and threaten. A simple or single-minded worker will likely find it easier to be committed to God and consecrated (set apart) for His purpose. Simpleminded would-be workers should offer themselves now!

The list of where simple minds are needed could continue. The opportunities for simple, clear speech and life are all about us and beyond. God's people are called to simplicity, where adornment of self and its complications are unnecessary. God wants us to be who we are by His creation and satisfy the purpose of His design. God's will and purpose is not complicated but simple and easy to be understood. "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" Matthew 11:25.

God's way is not discovered by wisdom and research, but He uncovers and reveals the mystery of it to the common people. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" Matthew 5:3). God's people flourish within the simple perimeter of His kingdom. Here we find all that we need and experience fulfillment and blessing. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" Psalm 23:1

God's children enjoy the comforting nearness of their Maker. We treasure the companionship we find in walking with our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. These are not complicated encounters that leave us uncertain. Our relationship with Him is Simple, like that of a father and son. "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" 2 Corinthians 11:3. Along with the world's rush towards advanced learning and technology, there comes a corruption and departing from the age-old and unending value of simplemindedness.

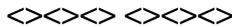
The church of Jesus Christ embraces the beautiful principles of modesty and simplicity. These are to be in our minds and expressed in our lives. There is a common complaint heard today of life being overly busy, full of complexities. Much of this could be beyond our control; yet it heightens the need of emphasizing simplemindedness. While we cannot change the world and its noisiness, God can give us humble minds, keen hearing, and clear focus. Simple minds and clear thinking will bring us a modest lifestyle and an inconspicuous bearing. Seeing things as they really are (simplicity) will influence what we possess and how we view that which we

hold. Food, clothing, shelter, etc., are seen for what they are meant to be when viewed through the lens of simplicity.

The Christian finds satisfaction and contentment in simple blessings, simple foods, simple clothing, and simple homes. This does not suggest an existence on the barest of necessities or the absence of comfort, albeit some circumstances might dictate such meagerness. However, it does suggest a moderate way of living and avoiding the luxury and extravagance that is so highly sought after in our day.

Providing for a family is sometimes a daunting responsibility for the father. There might be a large scope of opportunity available to the differing aptitudes and capacities, but one should not overlook the safety often found in the simpler jobs and ventures. More entanglements and complications will likely follow the highly-esteemed employment and position with its promised benefits. It is hard to improve on the peace of mind that simplicity brings.

Oh, for the clarity and simplicity of the pilgrim! "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" Hebrews 11:16.



*I ask you to consider what is your calling in life, what is it only you can do, what is it about your life, your background, your journey, your calling, the equipping that you already have experienced, what is unique to your time and place that puts you in a position to have an impact in this generation.*

*What is it?*

*God did not randomly drop you here for nothing He put you here for something, do you know what that is?*

*Quote by Steve Byler, Calvary Mennonite Fellowship, VA.*

Compiled & Edited by: J van Loon

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

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