

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 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

No Love – No Mercy – No Forgiveness – No Salvation = No Heaven

God's character has many facets that we do well to observe and imitate, it is what we are instructed to do

Scripture tells us that mercy belongs to God and his mercy endures forever, we read this in the Psalms a number of times, if it were not so the above equation would be inevitable.

But reflect with me on the following words of Shakespeare and see how he also acknowledges that it is an attribute of God himself and how we should likewise show that character trait if we profess to be God's people.

The quality of Mercy is not strain'd.
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest:
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown.
His scepter shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But Mercy is above this scepter'd sway;
It is enthroned in the heart of kings;
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show like God's
When Mercy seasons justice.
William Shakespeare "The Merchant of Venice"

In 2nd Corinthians 1 Paul also reminds us that mercy is part of God's character and His exercise of it toward us must be an incentive and example to us to also be merciful, God's mercies bring us comfort and we as followers of Christ having the mind of Christ must do the same.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. May we be living examples of God's mercy to others. *J.v.L*



From the Pulpit

The Righteous Judgement of God

Linford Berry

Calvary Mennonite Fellowship 2012

Please turn with me to 2nd Thessalonians chapter 1, today we want to focus on verses 5 to 10 of this first chapter in the 2nd letter to the Thessalonians and I will read the entire chapter for context.

2 Thessalonians 1:1-12 (ESV)

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. ⁴ Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring. ⁵ This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— ⁶ since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰ when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. ¹¹ To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, ¹² so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the holy word of God may He write his eternal truths on our hearts.

Let's bow our heads in prayer.

Father God I come before you today as one of your unworthy servants, this is a weighty and a terrible passage to preach, it is also a joyful thing to proclaim your gospel and so I pray for wisdom to speak your word and that you would open these people's ears and hearts to hear and understand.

I ask that you would work through your word and the Holy Spirit to dig this word deep into our hearts in the glorious name of Jesus Christ I pray.

Amen.

Now it is popular in our world and in Christian circles to minimise or deny the teaching of our Lord and the teaching of this passage regarding the judgement of God and the reality of the place we call hell. Many books have been written purporting to show or explain how this teaching is not necessary how this place that we call hell is not real.

Many people say, Well let's just focus on Jesus, Jesus the man of love and the man of mercy and compassion.

Well we have to inform you that Jesus talked more about hell than He talked about heaven and Jesus talked more about hell than any other writer or author of the Bible so we must reckon with this, we must reckon with this passage and others that teach us about the nature of God's of wrath and the surety of His judgement.

The Bible says so much about this that we can in no way address all the questions and all the implications but today I want to answer 3 questions from this passage and each of these 3 questions will have 3 answers.

The 1st question is: How can a good and loving God send people to Hell?

The 2nd question, What exactly is this hell and

The 3rd question, What do you need to do in order to avoid this place?

So Number one, how can a good and loving God send people to Hell?

And we find the answer to this in verses 5 through 8 and the first answer I would give to you from this passage is from verse 6, since indeed God considers it just.

All of us every one of us is born with an internal desire for justice, we want justice, we want fairness, we even demand it, we have rights, we think, and when our rights are trampled on we are not happy but how do we know

what is right and wrong? Well how do you know how long a foot is, how do you tell? A foot is 12 inches.

How long do you know that is? You have a ruler, you have a standard by which to judge the length of anything.

And so somebody, somewhere must set the standard for what is right and good and just and you know we want to set that standard ourselves, the problem with that is we are selfish, we're biased and we don't know all the facts but God does know all the facts, God is the only one who can set this standard rightly.

[1 Samuel 2:3](#) says: ³ Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.

The Lord knows and so the Lord can judge, justly.

And further more God is the only one who is completely impartial, [Romans 2:9-11](#) ⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹ For God shows no partiality.

Even in matters of race, even in matters of family tribal connections, even in matters of culture we have our preferences, we have our biases as much as we would like to deny it, God shows no partiality, God is no respecter of persons, God is the only one who is ultimately just.

So how can a good and loving God send people to Hell?

Because God is perfectly just, God is the one who sets the standard of what is right and what is wrong.

Secondly if God really loves us He will judge those who afflict and persecute us.

Look at verses 5 through 7 the apostle Paul is telling the Thessalonians that their persecution and their holding up and their enduring under suffering is the evidence that God is just in his judgements.

You see we long for justice, we're born with this and it frustrates us when people get away with crimes, especially crimes against us, it offends us, in

fact if God truly loves us it would be wrong, it would be sinful, it would be evil for him to overlook the sins of others against us.

Paul writes to the Thessalonians that the very fact that they are growing in faith and in love for each other in the face of this persecution testifies to the just judgement of God.

How else can we endure, how else can we endure injustice and persecution and affliction if not for the confidence that God will judge and that God will set things to rights again and that God will punish those who commit injustice against us.

God says in [Romans 12:19](#) Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

Would you want to serve a God, would you want to serve a God who allows unrepentant rapists and murderers the same blessings as He has promised you, would that God seem very loving?

Absolutely not!

This passage reminds us that in the day of judgement God will inflict vengeance on those who have wronged us and rejected Him, faith in this God who will perfectly execute justice is what enables us to endure, to endure the worst kind of suffering and affliction.

This righteous vengeance of God thus demonstrates the love of God.

And number 3, how can a good and loving God send people to Hell?

Well if God has offered us a place and a part in the Kingdom of God then there must be somewhere else for those who are not worthy to be a part of that kingdom otherwise our sacrifice and suffering is useless.

Verse 5, this is evidence of the righteous judgement of God that you may be considered worthy of the Kingdom of God.

This point flows out of the previous one and is similar to it that God has prepared a place in the kingdom for those who are worthy as it says here in verse 5 and then there must also be a place for those who are not worthy.

Furthermore God has established qualifications for those who would be worthy, remember this is the only God, the only standard by which true justice and righteousness can be measured, and if He just let anybody into his kingdom that would not be loving, that would not be good.

God has said repeatedly in both the old and new Testaments that the penalty for sin is death, the soul who sins shall die, [Ezekiel 18:4](#). Furthermore we are reminded time and time and again that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [Romans 3:23](#).

So if we are to have a place in this kingdom, if we are to be worthy to be in this Kingdom of God we must renounce sin, we must surrender to Christ. The book of Mark records in [Mark 1:15](#) what Jesus first message was as He began his ministry and it says that He said this: The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel.

That is the message that must be heard and obeyed if we are going to be worthy of the Kingdom of God.

And so if the penalty for sin is death and if we all have sinned as the Bible says we have and if the requirements for entering the Kingdom of God are repentance and trusting in Christ then for God not to have somewhere else prepared for those who reject that message would mean that He is not a good God.

After all He has been incredibly loving and even providing a means of escape for us, [John 3:16](#), probably the most well-known verse in all of the Bible, for God so loved the world, He loved the world so much that He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, not die, but have everlasting eternal life.

We all deserve death, we all deserve death because we all have sinned and God would be right and God would be just to send us all to hell. That is what we deserve.

You want fairness, you want justice? That is the definition of fairness and justice.

But God loves us, the fact that He out of his love provides himself, God himself coming to earth to bear the punishment that we deserve for our sin, this makes it even more critical that there be a place of wrath for those who reject his love.

What could be more of an insult, what could be a more infinite crime against a holy God then to reject his love and to reject the solution that God provides a great cost to himself, the solution that God provides in or-

der to save us from ourselves and to save us from his wrath and his judgement. Then when we turn our nose up and reject that we have just insulted a holy, infinite God.

If God is good and God is loving there simply must be no room for sin and sinners in his kingdom in his heaven and for him to not judge those who refuse his gift of salvation would be a terrible travesty of justice.

So number 2 what exactly is this hell that we're talking about?

Verses 9 and 10 give us some clues, this passage tells us that the day of the Lord is coming, it is coming when He will be revealed in flaming fire with his mighty angels and what a terrible and glorious day that will be! And when He is revealed everything that we are, everything that we have done will be perfectly shown for what it is and the fire of the Lord will expose and reveal the things it will burn up that which is unworthy and only that which is worthy will remain.

The day of the Lord is referred to many times throughout the Scriptures, it is referred to as the day of judgement, the day when every thing will be set to rights once and for all, justice, genuine justice will finally prevail.

And what about those who have rejected Him? What will happen to them where will they go?

We have already seen that there will be no place for them in the Kingdom of God and they will receive their just reward so what do we know about this judgement?

Well first of all we see in verse 9 that this punishment is eternal destruction, this is a state of eternal death, eternal punishment and it corresponds to the Christian's hope of eternal life, you cannot have hope of eternal life without there also being the reality of eternal death.

All the passages that talk about this talk about them together if you are going to deny the eternity of hell, if you are going to deny the eternity of justice and judgement of God then you must also be prepared to deny eternity of life eternal.

You cannot have it both ways!

In Matthew 25 Jesus says that at the judgement those on his left will go into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life.

He will say to the unrighteous depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, [Matthew 25:41](#).

And probably one of the most graphic descriptions of this is found in Revelation 14 where it says that those who do not fear God and do not give him glory will drink the wine of God's wrath poured full strength into the cup of his anger.....

You don't want to be there, you don't want to be drinking that.

And he will be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb, and the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever and they have no rest day or night. ([Revelation 14:10-11](#)).

It's a terrible thing, it's a terrible thing to think about, it's a terrible thing to contemplate, tortured by fire for ever, suffering the incredible pain and agony with no hope, absolutely no hope of relief or of rest.

And if you go to this place, if you go to this place the reality is that when you have been there a hundred years even after the worst possible sufferings you will be no closer to the end than when you first came.

Eternal death.

Dying once is bad enough but the 2nd death is eternal, for ever. [Hebrews 10:31](#), it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

What else do we know about this place this destruction, this punishment?

We see here that it is not only eternal destruction but we see that it is eternal destruction away from the presence of God.

It isn't just the fire and the sulphur that will torment you, this passage tells us that we will be separated from the presence of God.

Do you know what that means?

Do you know how that might be? No you don't!

Not only will there be the absence of anything good but there will be the unrestrained evil because God is not there, there will be absolutely no power to change any of this.

Do you realise that God is the source of all things that are good and without his presence there will be nothing left but evil.

You will be subject to a world where there is nothing that is any good at all, nothing! Because all good comes from God.

And following close on the heels of that we see that we will also be separated from the glory of his might, not only will there be the absence of anything good and the unrestrained horrors of evil but there will be no way to change it because God is the only one who can change it and God is not going to be there.

We are so dependent on the goodness of God that we cannot even imagine what this might be like.

In this world God sends rain on the just and on the unjust ([Matthew 5:45](#)) God restrains evil through the use of law by governments, God protects us even those who are sinners he gives the benefit of common grace but in hell there will be no restraint of evil whatsoever.

So the 3rd point what do you need to do in order to not go there?

Three things this passage tells us, verse 8 tells us that this vengeance will be inflicted on those who do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And furthermore in verse 10 we are told that the saved will be those who have believed the testimony of the Apostles regarding the gospel.

So if we want to avoid this terrible fate it seems obvious that we must know God, that we must believe the Testament of the apostles and that we must obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

So what does it mean to know God?

Well it must mean more than a simple understanding of the facts about God because James says in his epistle that even the demons believe and tremble ([James 2:19](#)) the demons know more about God than we do perhaps.

If a test were given in theology the demons would pass, they know.

Romans 1 says that sinful men they knew God, but they did not honour him as God neither did they give thanks to him and so they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened, [Romans 1:21](#).

[Jeremiah 4:22](#) says for my people are foolish; they know me not; they are stupid children; they have no understanding, they are 'wise' in doing evil but how to do good they know not.

So this knowledge, this knowing God must be something more than mere knowledge or belief it has something to do with honouring God as God, it is recognising his rightful place in authority over you and I.

This knowledge has something to do with gratitude for what God is, for who He is, for what He has done.

This knowing of God must be experienced.

Secondly we must believe the testimony of the Apostles and the Scriptures. The Apostles through the writing of Scripture have revealed to us the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, they have taught us the truth, the truth who He is, the truth about what He has done to provide for our redemption but we must believe their report, we must believe their witness, we must believe that Jesus is who said they said He is and if you don't trust Peter and Paul and John and James then you cannot trust God, God who has sent his message of the good news through their testimony.

Finally we must obey the gospel of Jesus Christ.

You could, at least theoretically, know about God, theoretically you could believe the testimony of the apostles and still not be saved. I believe the demons know about God, I believe that they believe the apostles but what more is there to do?

Obey the gospel of Jesus Christ!

What? I thought the gospel was all about believing, what is this talk about obedience?

Well to understand this you must understand what the message of the gospel really is, the reality of the gospel is that because of his great love for us God himself in the person of Jesus Christ came to this earth became a man and has taken on himself the punishment that we rightly deserved.

He did this because we have no hope in ourselves, no hope, without God we're hopeless there is no way we could ever repay the debt that we owe, an infinite debt, and God would have been just to leave us there.

In that state we didn't even desire to please God.

Romans 3 says no there is none righteous, no not one, no one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. [Romans 3:10-11](#).

That's you, that's me. Apart from Jesus Christ we are worthless, hopeless. But God, two of the most beautiful words in all of the Bible, but God, He didn't just leave us there but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which He loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses

and sins, He didn't wait till we got to be something before He loves us, no, He loved us when we were his enemies and made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved through faith in this is not your own doing it is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:5, 8-9).

The promise of God is that if we trust in what He has done for us through his Son Jesus Christ we shall be saved.

But this trust, this trust is more than just believing with our heads, this trust is surrendering, we can no longer go our own way and do our own thing we must surrender to his way, we must do what He requires, He must be the Lord, He must be the master of our lives otherwise what are our options? We will continue in our rebellion and our sin and we will continue to be subjected to his wrath.

This is the obedience of the Gospel.

God commands us to repent that is to turn away from our own desires and turn to him in faith, this is a command, repent!

Even the ability to do this however is the gift of God.

Jesus said in [John 6:40](#) that the will of God the Father is that everyone who looks on the Son of God and believes in him should have eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day.

It's what God wants for all of us, for each of you.

Furthermore He says later in John 6 no one comes to Christ unless the Father draws him ([John 6:44](#)) we are dependent on him.

We are dependent on him for a solution, for an escape, we are dependent on him for faith and repentance without him we're hopeless, we are dependent on the goodness and mercy of God to rescue us from his own wrath and judgement.

But if we reject this gift, if we reject this we have an awesome and terrible responsibility, [Romans 3:4](#) says, Do you presume on the riches of his kindness and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Are you going to presume on that?

But because of your heart, your impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgement will be

revealed. He will render to each one according to his works to those who by patience and well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality He will give eternal life but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness there will be wrath and fury.

So the question is not are you going to obey the question is who are you going to obey. You will obey someone.

You will either obey the Gospel or you will obey unrighteousness and you will suffer the wrath and fury of God.

This gospel of Jesus Christ is not just something to be believed but something to be obeyed and if you reject this offer, you reject this provision, the solution, this grace, this mercy, this love of God if you reject that there is no hope left, there is no other way, Jesus says I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life.

You are not going to find it anywhere else and if you reject this offer you will be even more liable to the fullest wrath and fury of God.

What an insult, what an insult to the love of God if you would reject his offer of salvation.

Friends I don't know how to say this anymore gently;

If you refuse the solution that God has provided for your sin you have just signed your own death warrant.

So how are you going to respond to God's love, who are you going to obey?

If you do nothing, if you do nothing you will go on to destruction, that is the default setting, if you continue to reject God long enough at some point, and we don't know when that point is, but at some point the Scriptures say that He will send a strong delusion so that you will believe what is false,

2nd Thessalonians chapter 2 we didn't read that yet but it is there.

If you resist long enough there comes a point at which God will give you over to your desires, He will basically say okay have it your way.

And when that happens the righteous judgement of God will come down on you with all its fury and with all its wrath and you will get what you deserve, God will say to you, Depart from me I never knew you.

And at that point the Scriptures tell us it would be better if you had never been born.

Well maybe you say, Yes, yes eventually I will trust in Christ, I will surrender to him, but first I want to have some fun I want to live life a little bit. My friend that is it infinitely terrible mistake to make. How can you do that? You are basically thumbing your nose at God who designed and created you and you are saying, I think I know better than you!

How arrogant!

I think I know better than you what is good for me and what I will enjoy most in life.

You are despising the gift of God in Jesus Christ who has shed his blood for your sins, who has shed his blood to purchase your life, you want to trade that in for some momentary pleasure, some fleeting pleasure of life?

What an awful trade to make.

Furthermore the Bible teaches that to whom much is given much will be required. You cannot plead ignorance on this one at least not after this morning; you my friend have been given much.

Perhaps you are here today and have made a profession of knowing God, a profession of believing God, believing the gospel of Jesus Christ but perhaps you have never obeyed. Maybe somebody promised you along the way that if you just walked the aisle or said a certain prayer that was your ticket to escape from hell but your life is still a life of selfish ambition you have not yet surrendered to God as the Lord and Master of your life, your first concern is not with God's glory but with your own well-being and you still live in sinful ways and the Bible is very clear that those who live in sin without repentance cannot see God.

It is not an option!

You still live in sinful ways and that sin does not grieve you, today you sit here and squirm nervously inside because you fear the terrible wrath of God and in your heart there is no gratitude for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Friend today is the day of salvation, regardless of what you were told or were taught about your previous experiences make your calling and election sure today. Today is the day of salvation! Not yesterday.

Today you have an opportunity, for some of you, I hope for many of you this truth about the righteous love and judgement and justice of God causes you to love him even more, God will keep those who are his.

Your continued growth in love and righteousness is proof that He is just and that He will judge sin, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus ([Roman 8:1](#)) and brothers and sisters worship God, adore him, thank him, praise him, live for him, obey him, commit afresh to serving him with all you've got, all the chips go in, every one of them.

Continue steadfast in the faith that He has given so that as it says here in 2nd Thessalonians chapter 1 so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified, not our name but his name, He is the only one that has any name that is worth glorifying and that He may be glorified in you and you in him according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ, ([2 Thessalonians 2:12](#)).

What are you going to do, how are you going to respond?

After we pray I'm going to sit down and we're going to sing a song and I want you to do business with God.

I'm not going to prescribe what that means or how that looks what formula to follow to make sure that you get it done because I do not want you to have any confidence in the flesh, your confidence needs to be in Jesus Christ and him alone.

I don't want you to have a false confidence that just because you did something like walk down the aisle or stand to your feet or whatever that you have now known God and obeyed his gospel.

No, this requires surrender of heart, this requires repentance, commitment to follow Jesus no matter what and if you truly do surrender to Christ other people will know, they must know.

So tell someone and ask for help if you don't understand, ask for help if you're not sure where you're standing with God is, if you feel uncertain about how to know whether or not you are saved.

Many of us have put our confidence in something else other than Jesus Christ and our hope rests on an experience that we had when we were a

child and it may very well have been a very good and legitimate experience, I'm not calling it into question at all, I'm just saying that if your hope and your confidence is in anything or anyone other than Jesus Christ you are not one of his.

Many of us here will be happy to pray with you, pray for you but you must take the initiative, you must respond to the call of God in your life.

I cannot read your heart, none of us can read your heart only God can do that and only God can do the work of changing your heart.

Let's pray.

Our loving and just heavenly Father we come before you now in silence, in humility, we come before you in gratitude but also with reverence and fear and awe, for you O God are a great God, a just God, we ask that you would come through the presence of your Holy Spirit that you would work in each of our hearts, bring conviction of sin, bring repentance that leads to salvation, work in us to do both your will and good pleasure.

We thank you for the gift of the good news, the Gospel, the good news in the person of Jesus Christ.

We thank you, we praise you, we thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ who has purchased our salvation with his own blood and it is in his name that we pray. Amen.



RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH

In the last two hundred years, various expositors have divided the Law of Moses into three parts: Ceremonial, Judicial or Civil, and Moral. It is not known to this writer that any of the earlier historic church writers promoted this, though Dirk Phillips wrote an article explaining how the figurative parts of the Law are fulfilled in the new dispensation. Charles Buck, in *A Theological Dictionary* (1851), taught that the moral part of the Law is yet to be kept. Others take the position that it is all to be kept except the ceremonial part and that which Jesus changed in His teaching.

The Law of Moses is a unique combination of secular, civil, and spiritual government, all under the headship of God (a theocracy), with strict justice to be enforced (the man who was caught picking up sticks on the Sabbath was stoned—Numbers 15:32-36). Interwoven are shadows and types that point to the New Covenant. Problems arise in determining what is part of the moral law and is yet to be kept. Some say [keep] the Ten Commandments, while others include more. Some of the Old Testament commandments are a mixture of the civil and moral; some seem to be mainly figurative, pointing to the new and abiding truth of the gospel.

The fourth commandment, pertaining to the keeping of the Sabbath, is a primary example that has been the basis of much controversy. We believe it is good for man to use one day per week for special rejuvenation. And we have scriptural evidence that the early Gentile Christians gathered on the first day of the week. However, we do not keep the Sabbath, and it is not known to this writer that any of the church forefathers taught that it should be kept. The Lord did not transfer the Old Testament Sabbath to Sunday. We believe, and the forefathers gave testimony to this, that the Sabbath was a shadow of the eternal rest. It is also a type of the rest a Christian has when he ceases from his own works and surrenders all to his Lord and Master (Hebrews 4:1 -11).

In the old dispensation there were many special holy times and objects. The temple was a special holy dwelling place of God; the New Covenant temple is now the heart of a Christian. Holiness is no longer held to be in special times, places, and things but in the dedicated saints who live for their Master seven days a week. Paul wrote to the Colossians: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days" Colossians 2:16.

Note that in the King James Version days is italicized, indicating that the translators inserted this word. Most other versions do not have this word at the end of the verse. The New American version, for instance, reads thus: "Let no one, then, pass judgment on you in matters of food and drink or with regard to a festival or new moon or Sabbath." And going on to verse 17: "These are shadows of things to come, the reality belongs to Christ." In the Martyrs Mirror, pages 435 and 436, is related the interrogation of four brethren and four sisters who gave their testimony on the keeping of Sun-

day and holidays. The reader is encouraged to read their testimony.

The moral principles of the Law certainly still stand and are fulfilled in the Spirit-led Christian. "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever" (Psalm 93:). But this holiness is not fulfilled from the basis of keeping the commandments but from the basis of love, which is a fruit of spirituality (the inner presence of the Holy Spirit). By focusing on the legal commandment rather than our devotion to God, we bring ourselves under the works of the Law and put the cart before the horse.

Part of the burden of this article is that we would not "frustrate the grace of God" (Galatians 2:21) with well-intentioned efforts to bring about good works with precepts from the Law. When we fail to maintain spirituality, there is a tendency that we substitute the crutch of statutes to bring about the needed righteousness. Although the many Old Testament precepts were a burden to keep, in a way it is still more desirable to the carnal man to keep commandments than to surrender to God. It provides a humanistic way to pacify one's self-righteous tendencies. There is simply no acceptable substitute for the Spirit-led life.

It is remarkable how the Old and New Testaments support each other. They mesh in a beautiful manner if correctly used. No other religion in the world has this wonderful basis. The New Testament should not give way to the Old, for the New Testament is now in authority. The apostle Paul, when dealing with carnality and sin in the church (such as the man that had his father's wife - 1 Corinthians 5), did not refer the Christians to the Old Testament precept where the particular sin was forbidden. But he always emphasized spiritual living. However, he repeatedly quoted the Old Testament scriptures and taught how they are fulfilled in the new covenant, and in one or more places, he wrote in support of a gospel teaching, "as also saith the law." Many things in the Old Testament can be used as an enhancement of the New, but we should not base doctrine on Old Testament precepts.

There are many commandments in the Law that would fit under the umbrella of the two great commandments: loving God above all, and loving our neighbour as ourselves. Deuteronomy 22:8 is one example: "When

thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring no blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence." This is an illustration of the concern we should have for our fellowman, but we do not base it on literally keeping that specific commandment. There are many commandments that help plant conviction against sin, such as the commandments against various immoral acts and the practice of necromancy. A person who is "born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him [with enlightenment and power]: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9). We have life in Him, we love Him, and we want to please Him. Even when one has only the fear of God, there is already recognition of sin. And when we are possessed of the Holy Spirit, we know that immorality in its various forms is wrong. We possess a childlike, trusting faith and cannot put confidence in someone who communicates with the dead or a fortune-teller, because it is against the gospel principle of trusting in the Lord and casting our cares upon Him.

When we notice that there is a lack of grace in our lives and only the prohibitions are keeping us from sin, it should alarm us. We are not where we ought to be. However, the standards of God's righteousness, however presented, have this benefit for us: when we are not spiritual, they show us our transgressions so that we can again draw near to God as sinners in need. Such people He came to save and deliver.

In Deuteronomy 22:28-29, it was commanded that if a man defiled a virgin, he should marry her and could never put her away. This is an example of a statute that is a mixture of civil and moral direction. In this case, as in many others, we must conclude that the Old Testament precepts teach moral and responsible living. But we believe this order is subordinate to New Testament principles of forgiveness and no coercion, also proper church order, including excommunication and marrying in the Lord. In the same discourse (Deuteronomy. 23:2), we have the statute that illegitimate children were barred from the congregation of the Lord until the tenth generation. While this teaches moral living and God's hatred for sin, it is far removed from the principles of the New Covenant. The New Testament is a redemptive gospel of healing and restoration, which would overshadow the Old Testament's "ministration of condemnation" (2 Corinthians 3:9).

In Acts 15, we find a record of what is sometimes called the first conference. In this meeting, the church leaders adopted this direction for the believers: "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear ... For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well."

Jacob the Chandler wrote on this passage from prison (Martyrs Mirror, p. 816): "For the apostles always had a godly care for the simple, and sought to prevent division, as far as was possible for them, hence they tried every means to allay strife, as can clearly be seen in the Acts of the Apostles. For when the Jewish brethren came to trouble the believers among the Gentiles, saying: "Except ye be circumcised according to the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved;" so that there was a great uproar among the people, there rose up also at Jerusalem certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses, which was certainly great injudiciousness. Yet the elders and the apostles did not persist in charging them with their unwise course, for fear of division, but met the Jewish brethren, to avoid division, and adopted certain articles from the law, which were not contrary to the evangelical truth, and determined that those who had been converted from among the Gentiles should not be troubled, and that no burden should be laid upon them, than that they should abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication ... By this the Jews were pacified, for they might easily think that they were right in a measure at least, because some articles from the law were imposed upon the Gentiles."

We note that in Acts 15:29, the church leaders asked the Gentiles to keep only a few articles out of the Law. They did not refer them to all the "moral law." It appears this was guidance for an immediate need of that time, given as a peace-making measure. Paul makes it clear in his writings that it is not wrong to eat meat offered to idols. He taught that, aside from being careful not to offend the weak, we should not be concerned whether the food we eat passes the standards of the Law or not.

The question arises why fornication was included here. Was there any question as to whether fornication was sin or not? When this scripture is studied in various translations, we find that some give it as "illicit marriages," some as "unlawful marriages." This would include relationships cited in Leviticus 18 and 20. No doubt they would have a certain tolerance for people who did not know better and would engage in such marriages (as Abraham, who married his half-sister Sarah). However, in this there is a violation of a natural principle, which in time would have its adverse consequences.

Our practice of sisters not wearing pants would be a similar application as the apostles' direction in Acts 15. It seems good to the Holy Ghost and to us, in today's setting, that we uphold this prohibition. However, our basis is not in literally keeping the commandment found in Deuteronomy 22:5. The church is "the pillar and ground of the truth" and it behoves us to have sound doctrine.

However, as our Lord has much patience with us, may we also have forbearance with one another. Paul wrote, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" Romans 10:4. While there may be some variation in understanding, as there was in the apostolic period, it is imperative that we possess the true righteousness of Christ.

May we abide in His love, so we can be kept on the holy pathway to a blessed end.



WHAT IS PEACE WORTH TO YOU?

Peace: "Inward serenity; calmness; quiet." Mankind has the capacity to feel fear, anxiety, pain, anger, offense, unrest, disgust, etc. We all relate to these emotions. Even though we don't like these feelings, we have all had them at some time or another. We all enjoy feelings of peace and security but what is it worth to me? What am I willing to sacrifice for it? How valuable is it to me? Anything of value comes at a price. The Scripture tells us of a merchant wanting to buy a pearl of great price. The merchant sold all that he had to buy the pearl (Matthew 13:45-46). Is peace in my heart and with my fellowman worth enough that I am willing to sell out for it?

Our God is a God of peace. Man is created by God and has a soul that longs to go back to Him. God places in every soul of man a desire for peace. Satan, on the contrary, is the father of discord and strife; he was cast out of heaven because of the discord he caused. If we find ourselves with a lack of peace, we may excuse ourselves by the fact that Satan is at the root of it. But the only path to peace will be to the cross of Christ and a recognition of our dependency on His saving blood.

When God calls us from the path of sin to a new walk in Christ, we recognize a certain unrest in our hearts. Sometimes this unrest manifests itself in fear of the future or in small irritations with circumstances of our lives. This unrest is the forces of good and evil wanting to have the allegiance of our hearts. We are being asked to make a choice of which way our lives will take. The one choice will lead to a home in heaven, which is a place of perfect peace, and the other to everlasting torment in hell, which is a place of total lack of peace. As the battle rages in our souls, Satan offers enticing promises of pleasure and the good life; Jesus offers peace in our hearts. The question at this point is, "What is peace worth?" When we come to the cross with our burden and surrender our whole life—no strings attached—God gives us peace that is matchless to anything this world has to offer. If we are unwilling for the cost we are accepting the consequences of a life of unrest for the cost, we are accepting the consequences of a life of unrest.

There is probably nothing that tests our peace as much as our interaction with other people. God has given each one of us a unique personality. Each personality is influenced by the environment of our lives, including the training of our parents, associations with other people, and challenges that we meet in life. When these unique personalities meet, sometimes they mesh like well-oiled gears, but other times they dash. We will not always agree with everyone we meet. This is inevitable, but it is possible to be at peace with them. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" Romans 12:18.

The Christian has a distinct advantage over the ungodly, because God's grace in our lives and the direction of the Holy Spirit "helpeth our infirmities" (Romans 8:26). If we are to be in the grace of God and have direction for our lives, we must be at peace with those around us. "He that saith he is

in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes" 1 John 2:9-11.

Without peace in our hearts and love for our fellowman, we do not have clear direction for our lives and are in danger of being deceived by the tactics of the evil one. In these last days, we must have clear vision to discern between right and wrong. The devil would want our vision to be grey and cloudy, causing us to lack direction. We must overcome our selfish natures and find God's way in our relationships. Toleration is not an option; it leaves room for clouding of our vision and is not the true answer. Toleration gives opportunity for the devil to begin driving a small wedge, and then larger ones, until the gap is hard to repair. Ignorance is not the answer either. To hope that the situation will just go away is hardly reasonable, because the devil will not allow that to happen. "Evil surmising" and suppositions begin to grow, and soon the situation takes on a hue of truth but, in fact, is far from it. The longer it is allowed to fester, the worse it gets.

Perhaps one of the greatest tests is when someone touches our pocket-book. Money is needful but is, also, a trap that is easy to fall into if we place too much importance on it. Many relationships have been destroyed because of disagreements over money. Let us not let the things of earth and time have such a hold on us that they rob us of peace in our hearts. First Corinthians 6:7 asks the question, "Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" If we will honestly answer this question in our hearts, we will find that selfishness and pride are at the root of our disagreements. Let us remember that everything we have is only on loan to us from God, the creator of all things. We are not owners, but we are to be faithful stewards.

Let's go back to the time when we gave our hearts to God and He forgave us our sins. What was the key condition upon which God gave us peace as we knelt at the foot of the cross and realized that we had nowhere else to turn and our only hope was Jesus' blood, shed for our sins? Upon a full surrender of everything dear to us, God forgave us of our sins and flooded our

souls with peace. The same recipe will work in every situation in which we may find ourselves. In the journey of life, we must go back and visit the cross as we did that first time. There, everything is brought into a clear light, and direction for our lives is given.

God has made every person "in his own image" (Genesis 1:27). When we can recognize that God made each person with his own unique personality because He wanted them that way, and likewise ourselves, it puts us on the same level. God loves each one of us equally; so He will give grace for me to love my fellowman equally. Sometimes we encounter situations that are difficult to understand, and the other party is set in his or her view of things. Remember that God knows all about the situation. We can pray humbly for them that they can know God's love in a personal way.

Humility is a great tool in relationships; it is difficult for anyone to resist true humility. Humility draws like the positive side of a magnet; pride resists like the negative part of a magnet. Sometimes we need to go to our neighbour and humbly confess that we stepped out of the way of peace and ask for forgiveness. "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him" Matthew 5:25. If we can reconcile differences quickly, it is so much easier than waiting until it grows into a difficult situation. The solution is really very simple, maybe a bit difficult at times, but with God's grace in our lives, it is very possible.

What is heaven worth to you? There will be no strife in heaven; so if I find a lack of peace in my heart, heaven will be worth it to find out why. What is peace worth to you?

May God give us the courage to be faithful to the end.

Brother Decker



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