

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

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

Matthew 5:15

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For A Conservative Anabaptist Perspective

From The Editor's Desk **A Monumental Choice**

*I call heaven and earth to record [witness] this day against you,
 That I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing:
 Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.*
 Deuteronomy 30:19

God planned for humanity to walk with Him and experience fulfilment and meaning. He intended that we enjoy peace of mind, purity of heart, and innocence of conscience. But God also created us with the ability to exercise our free will and choose our own way. Humanity has the option to live in cooperation with God or try to live independently of God. The Lord has spoken, and we have His law within our conscience and in the Bible. God has always been clear with His instructions; man has never been left in the dark. The deciding factor is our desire to do right or wrong. If we earnestly want to do right, God will give us strength to do right. If we want to do wrong, He will allow us to do as we please.

God created us with a void that can be filled only as we walk with Him and do His will. If we pursue what we think will bring us happiness, we will not succeed in filling the empty place, because only God fits that void. After Adam and Eve fell from grace, they probably never forgot the glory they had experienced in Eden nor the terrible emptiness they felt after disobeying God's instructions. Peace and paradise were replaced with guilt and suffering.

We all have the same choice before us today. Will we choose to experience God and His fulfilment, or will we choose the way that seems right to man and live an empty, meaningless life? This monumental choice has results that affect the present and will extend into eternity. What is our choice Jesus or the world?
 Harold Troyer - Belleville, PA

One's philosophy of life consists of what one chooses to do with God in this life. We have no choice in the next.

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. John 14:15

Extract from Beside the Still Waters published by Still Waters Ministries.



From the Pulpit

Scriptural Concepts of Counseling – Part 2 of 2
Brother Luke Sensenig

Our August issue Part 1 finished with the statement that “We know that it is important that we think right about ourselves but never mind the fact they would say that the matter of self-esteem is foreign to the Bible and that according to the Bible man's biggest problem is pride and I think we understand that there is a lot more said about pride and nothing about self-esteem, and if we get that straight and in that order we are more likely to get to the root of the problem.”

And now to conclude the message:

Too often the Gospel by those types of persons is gift wrapped to make them believe that what they need is what they like to hear, that is much of the unsound counsel today.

We also need to be discerning of the type of need that is being shared, we need to be sensitive as we listen.

I think we must determine, or attempt to determine at least, if the need is physical and possibly in need of medical help or treatment or is it spiritual and moral in nature?

There are some indicators that there may be some physical or medical aid that a person could benefit from, a person cannot eat, cannot sleep, cannot work may receive benefit from help in this way and I think there needs to be discernment. We are not talking about medical treatment but unconfessed sin and a guilty troubled conscience so the important part is to discern the type of need. There needs to be caring and sharing and encouragement along with very careful discernment.

I think that situations like this remind us of how fearfully and wonderfully we are made (Psalm 139:14) and sometimes it can get very fearful, our bodies are complex, and the mind, where the physiological and the psychological part of us meet, are subject to disorder and ailments just like any other organ of the body and it can affect the way we think, the way we act, there are many situations that are different and yet we all share the same Creator, that is the blessed part of this.

We also want to guard against a developing in others the dependency on others to do their thinking. Now just as the Bible calls us to move from milk to strong meat our goal needs to be to lead individuals that need counsel or help to the true source of lasting counsel and to think through issues rationally.

It would appear today that many modern counsellors have a pretty secure job that keeps people coming back, I'm not saying that there are some times that we cannot help, but we should be careful and remember that is not the solution of someone telling us how to think but rather to learn how to think and that is important.

We also need to be aware of the rapidly building emphasis today of counselling that is almost of unbalanced proportions, especially in professed Christian circles, in these circles there seems to be a lot of emphasis and teaching that has been borrowed from modern psychology and you can find all shades and degrees of this.

One example of this in professed Christendom, and I don't know if you ever get them, I've recently received a flyer from Christian book distributors, this one was especially for pastors, but they were presenting a lot of the publications by Rick Warren who is the engineer behind the Saddleback Valley Community Church in California, he is the pastor, but it was his brainchild where they have a 10,000 plus membership today, he has written books like "The Purpose Driven Life, The Purpose Driven Church," very catchy titles, very catchy front-page covers they've been bestsellers you can find in bookstores right in the front of the store and Warren says that: "Like a research and development center we have experimented with all kinds of approaches to preaching, teaching, training and sending out God's people." Their motto: "Find a Hurt and Heal It, Find a Need and Meet It."

Their emphasis is on a horizontal relationship between people rather than the vertical relationship with the Lord and that it is people that provide the answer to people.

Well it is all right for people to provide the answer if they are leading them to the right fountain but their approach has been a strong emphasis on

evangelism and spiritual ministries and not on discipleship and cross bearing and it is not very hard to see and to read where this thing is leading.

In their approach to adding members and meeting the so-called felt needs as they call them. How do you feel? You don't feel good about this or that, you get beside them and try to help and it is a kind of catchphrase that they have adopted, in their efforts and in their training there is a lot of new age terminology, a lot of new age terms and techniques.

S.H.A.P.E. is one of their acronyms. **S**piritual gifts, **H**eart abilities, **P**ersonality **E**xperience. It is a companion following up, a companion book to "The Purpose Driven Life" and the danger, one of the inherent dangers is borrowing techniques and methods from a mega organization, the so-called Christian Counselling Organisation, some of them are borrowing from them and they are not sound.

If you want to read a book that exposes some of these, there are books that are written purposely to expose some of those errors.

One of the hidden dangers of the current Christian Counselling movement is the ecumenical overtone as they reach out to help needy souls and you know in many instances people who are reaching for help are warmed by one who cares and shares. and we don't want to negate all of that. but I'm saying to the group that is here tonight there is a warning that we should heed. We should not be intimidated as a brotherhood as we are confronted by hurting and needing souls.

Again our counselling manual is here. And you say: Well how do we get it done? Well I think by applying the principles of the Word we can help each other in many ways.

We should reject, and this is another warning, as unsound any of the modern techniques that are not consistent with the New Testament.

And here, this is right alongside some of the erroneous teaching, erroneous ideas, one is visualisation where you need to experience the closeness of God, it is a physical experience, you visualise the preciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ and allow that to become a physical reality, you get close to God so you can feel him like as one book says; a warm oil pouring over you. That is visualisation; it is a new-age concept and mark it down the new age concepts that have bled through are dangerous.

Theophostic Counselling (*See footnote*) where the counsellor lays hands on a counselee. In Lancaster County there is a counsellor, an Old Order Amish Bishop told me of some of their members who were going there and windows rattled and the doors shook and out of those same visits people were challenged to think back and to think of things that they didn't remember, that they didn't know, repressed memories they are called, and he shared a little bit of that and he said we had one of our members that came saying I did this and this and this to different people and he said there were about 10 or 12 of them and he said in confessing to those people when I got to the third one and they didn't know a thing of what I was talking about, I stopped, I didn't go any further.

I'm just saying there is error and there are things that make people attracted to some of those efforts.

Another questionable emphasis is the idea that in order to deal with past hurts, injustices or abuse by others that the counselee needs to pray and seek for every instance of abuse, every instance of difficulty one at a time. There may be a time where we need to deal with some specific issues but I sense an overemphasis that some have taken and that the idea is that release comes by recalling the age when the abuse occurred or the difficulty and by forgiving each encounter one at a time. What if you miss something? And somehow, and again I am not very wise, but I question whether this rings clear with the New Testament teaching. Consider the words of Jesus in Luke 23: 34 when He said: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

In that forgiveness Jesus expressed something that released him from feeling obligated to the sins of others and it is in that attitude of forgiveness that I believe that God can give us the release. If you, like me, have needed to exercise forgiveness and decided to do it, it is an act of the will, you may have decided that you are forgiving and you didn't feel a bit different but you keep on believing and forgiving and you will feel different, it does come. It is just like a lot of other things we must decide on and again I'm not saying that we never go back and release someone from that specific act but to make that the emphasis I question the scripturalness of that process.

Guard against the feelings that only the trained and the educated are professional and have the answer for people in these difficult places, maybe it is marital, or someone that has experienced some unfortunate treatment by another. We may feel that we do not have the answer and we are small and the issues are complex and at times we do seek help from others but also we need to be men and women of faith that know the Bible and acknowledge that there are answers if we can grip them, grip the promises.

We should also avoid the desire to be distinguished as a counsellor.

I give it is a caution, give it as a warning, seeking help from a trained individual or organisation in this matter of counselling should grow out of a sense of need in helping someone rather than a desire to be called a trained counsellor.

Now we do acknowledge the varied gifts among us, some are more caring, some have the gift of communicating, but I think we must guard against the subtle feelings of self accomplishment that have sometimes accompanied this type of ministry and it can be a danger for any brother or sister and their companion as well.

But I think of false testimony in second Corinthians 12 he says: Lest I should be exalted above measure to the abundance of the revelation there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me lest I should be exalted above measure, 2 Corinthians 12:7. That is the Bible speaking.

We must also refer to the modern method of labelling sin in more acceptable terms. There are all kinds and all types of this where addictions may be called diseases and another subtle modern approach is to blame someone in the past for the present difficulty, maybe in relating to a spouse, this and this happened to me I lived and grew up under this. Well we are affected by what we grow up under and the idea goes that the solution to the problem will only be found when the abuse of someone else can be recalled and you can think that thing through.

That is what I was talking about some of those memories where that individual is affecting others but more important is the importance of exercising forgiveness and relating properly to the past. You know we all have some things in the past that weren't the best and again the Bible teaches

forgiveness and let's not forget that, if we get a hold of that concept it will solve a lot of other problems and I think that this is again a modern idea, a modern method to excuse behaviour that is not condoned by the Scripture. We should also remember that every human problem has its root somehow in our departure from God and that every solution must have its root in our return to God. If we understand that and believe that it can help our problems.

One individual when reflecting on a sinful past said: "I was looking for victory to come in the form of an outpouring, that is really what I wanted." Wouldn't it be nice if we just somehow this thing that is plaguing us this outpouring from God would deliver us. But we are in a warfare, let's not forget it and we must battle valiantly against the flesh. We also should remember that every generation has had its peculiar challenges.

I think of the book of Hebrews, just read it sometime soon, saints of whom it says the world was not worthy. You think of all the things that they went through, they were slain by the sword, sawn asunder, driven from their homes and these all having obtained a good report through faith received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us that they without us should not be made perfect. Hebrews 11:39-40.

We are going to join them some day and they are the faithful ones that had all kinds of difficulties and they had what God had given to them at that time, they had each other and I doubt if there was a lot of professionalism for those people in Hebrews 11.

To all who need the counsels of God's Word we have the promise of Malachi 4:2: But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

Every person with a struggle would like to be like that. It doesn't say the calf of the field, it is the calf of the stall that is well fleshed and a picture of health and he says: To you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.

Praise God.

Footnote:

Theophostic Counseling was developed in the United States during the mid-1990s by Ed Smith, a Baptist minister. After concerns about legal liabilities associated with offering counseling services, Smith later changed the name to Theophostic Prayer Ministry. Its name comes from the Greek theo and quasi-Greek phostic, and it is often associated with the Christian Inner Healing Movement.

**BLESSING ZION FROM EVERY PERSPECTIVE**

"Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following" Psalm 48:12-13.

Walking about or completely around Zion affords one a view from every perspective. Jerusalem or Zion, as compared with Nineveh (Jonah 3:3-4) or Babylon (Daniel 4:30) was not a large city. It was "builded as a city that is compact together" Psalm 122:3. One could walk around her in a relatively short time. No navigable river flowed by the city Jerusalem; nor did it have a seaport to distinguish it. But its setting on a plateau bounded by valleys and hills, her walls, towers, and notable structures within apparently captured people's gaze. She was "beautiful for situation" Psalm 48:2.

However, "Zion" brings to mind more than geographical or architectural features. It carries the connotation of God's dwelling place, and symbolizes the strength and hope of "Israel." A walk about spiritual Zion may not take long for some. On the other hand, when her peculiar beauty captivates the heart, one's tour around the city might take a lot of time; indeed, one may never come to the end thereof. There are so many perspectives from which to view her.

Some people have a limited concept of the church of God, spiritual Zion. To others, "church" is only a place to attend religious services. In these cases there is little relevancy between Zion and everyday life. These people quickly walk by with scarcely a glance her way, with no strong feelings of

loyalty or appreciation being evoked in their hearts. They have viewed Zion from only one perspective, and that is a restricted one.

Others behold Zion's beautiful setting as the grace of God lightens their eyes. They note her walls, towers, and bulwarks with reverence, and they praise God for her (Psalm 48:1-3). They look at her from every angle and perceive that here is a refuge for their souls. Their hearts say, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy" Psalm 137:5-6. God and His dwelling place, Zion, is the center of their lives. From every viewpoint, they see the blessing of God upon His people and bless the God who lives in her (2 Chronicles 9:6-8).

What is our vision of Zion, and what blessing do our hearts and lives pronounce upon Him and His people?

Numbers 22 through 24 contain a most interesting account. It is of Balaam blessing Israel against the wishes of Balak, king of Moab. Granted, there are some mysteries regarding Balaam and his connection with God but one thing is outstanding, and from that we should take a lesson: From every vantage point from which Balaam beheld the Israelite camp, he saw the beauty of the people of God. Seeing the tents of Jacob all in order moved him. He couldn't help but bless the children of Jacob. One must conclude that despite Balaam's perversity, the Holy Ghost used him to bless, and not curse, Israel. Concluding his first blessing, he said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Numbers 23:10.

Balaam's first perspective was of the "utmost part of the people" Numbers 22:41. Standing on a high point, he had a view of the entire camp. Awestruck, he asked, "How shall I curse [disagree with or resist], whom God hath not cursed? or shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?" Numbers 23:8. It almost seems as though the fear of God (as contrasted with the fear of man) took hold of his heart. The "clean" (Psalm 19:9) fear of the Lord is waning in our day.

Then Balaam spoke of a principle that carries into the gospel age. "For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (v.

9). He perceived that this was a people separated by God unto Himself for His purpose—dwelling "alone" and not "reckoned" among the nations. This status of God's people is confirmed in the New Testament (John 17:14-16; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9).

Many in Christendom have not seen the organized camp of the saints from this point of view. Consequently they have a limited concept of the pure church of Jesus Christ. As a result, the world has come into the churches of the lands, and in one sense, the church is the world. In bygone times, this spirit of error allied itself with "Balak" and said, "Come, let us curse this people and defy them." Whenever this has occurred, a grievous persecution of the defenseless people of God has resulted.

There may be those who do catch a glimpse of God's purpose for His children, and the vision of a separated people pricks their hearts. What was it that David referred to when he said, "For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away" Psalm 48:4-5? If people would "walk about Zion" and see her from every perspective, they might have a change of mind about her. A heart that is like God's sees the beauty of Zion.

The homes of Christian families in this present world can be likened to the tents of Jacob. They are "pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan" Numbers 22:1. The children of Jacob were not at home in Moab; they were on the way "home." Neither are we at home—but we mean to be going that way. Now if each father and mother would take their family to that high place and view the "utmost part of the people," what courage it might impart! Would to God that every family would see the blessing of God upon His people and understand the purpose! Surely the Holy Ghost would move hearts to conviction and feelings of loyalty. Spiritual perception of a people dwelling alone, not reckoned among the nations, is needed today. Jesus said that it was not for Him to bear testimony of Himself (John 5:31-32). The Father bore witness of Him and in that Christ was content. Likewise the people of God so live that the Holy Ghost can bear witness of the truth. In that witness true believers are at rest. It is not needful for a child of God to press the point. However, when one has a "vision" of the true

people of God, he or she has a sense of duty to be faithful. He will bless Zion from every perspective.

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Serve The Lord.

Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Psalm 2:11

In our text verse we are told to serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling and I was reminded of the apostle Paul's words to the Philippian church that they were to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling and he goes on to say that it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure, we are to do all things without grumbling or disputing and he makes the reason for that clear in the following verse that you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation among whom you shine as lights in the world and who of us would deny that it is indeed a crooked and twisted generation or world if you wish in which we live today.

Does Scripture have any direction for us as to how we go about serving the Lord with fear and rejoicing with trembling and working out our own salvation also with fear and trembling?

Indeed it does, all of Scripture is given by inspiration of God in this profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works, 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Isaiah asks the question in Isaiah chapter 50 verse 10: "Who among you that fears the Lord and obeys the voice of his servant?" We take that servant to be Jesus Christ of course, and Isaiah goes on and says: "let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God." I see in that statement a declaration of faith because that is what trusting in the name of the Lord and relying on God is.

We would like to look now at a few Scripture verses that will give us some basic thoughts and directions on how to proceed in working out our own salvation, yes, I acknowledge salvation is a personal issue, our relationship with Jesus is a personal relationship but out of that flow relationship ties with those around us and I believe it to be one of the motivating factors of Jesus command to love our neighbour.

To quote from John Donne's Devotions written in 1624 "no man is an island unto himself." Each of us is involved in mankind, we are all dependent on other people and we need them we cannot thrive just by being alone, our actions will always affect someone else.

I would like to look at just 3 Old Testament directions to show that even before the coming of Jesus Christ God the Father already had instructions in place for his people both then and those who would follow his Son Jesus, they are some ways by which we can build that rich and eternally rewarding relationship with our Saviour. So as we look at them may they be a help to us as we consider how they apply to you and I today not only individually but as a brotherhood of believers.

First stop the book of Job chapter 34 and verses 1 through 4 we have words of wisdom from Elihu, Job 34:1-4 ¹ Furthermore Elihu answered and said, ² Hear my words, O ye wise *men*; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge. ³ For the ear tries words, as the mouth tastes meat. ⁴ Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what *is* good.

Matthew Henry comments that Elihu calls upon those present to decide with him upon Job's words. The plainest Christian, whose mind is enlightened, whose heart is sanctified by the Spirit of God, and who is versed in the Scriptures, can say how far matters, words, or actions, agree with true religion, better than any that lean to their own understandings, Proverbs 3:5 admonishes us to trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding.

We see here a direction to act together in choosing the right and the good and I believe it is just one of the reasons that we come together as believers it is to discuss and examine God's word, both Old Testament and New Testament, how it applies to us individually but also as a people acting together in and for the love of God.

Our second stop is Psalm 34, David, to whom this Psalm is attributed, like Job had many trials and tribulations and like us some of them were self-inflicted nevertheless God who knows all about all of us before we were even formed in the womb (Jeremiah 1:5 and Psalm 139:14-16) also knew all about David, including his faults and failings, but in first Samuel chapter 13 verse 14 the Lord called him a man after his own heart and commanded him to be a captain over his people.

These are some instructions that David left for the people of his day and us today as well,

Psalm 34, Verse 1: I will bless Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

Verse 2: My soul shall make her boast in the Lord.

Verse 3: O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together.

Verse 4: I sought the Lord and he heard me and delivered me from all my fears.

Verse 8: O taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man that trusts in him.

And then David asks a question and gives us some instructions to follow:

Verse 12: What man is there who desires life and loves days that he may see good?

And follows with the instructions in Verses 13 and 14: Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

I think that is pretty plain speaking and does not need any explanation.

Our third and final stop is in Micah chapter 6 verse 8, I'm sure many of us could recite this verse off by heart and it tells us what God's requirements are: He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.

Again there is no wriggle room for us to go our own way in some fashion or other and yet claim to do justice, to love kindness and walk humbly with our God because the justice, kindness and humble attitude that we need to have and indeed are called to have is to be the same as Jesus Christ calls us to and exemplified for us in his walk on earth as He brought the good news of salvation.

And just in case we get a bit laid back in our following of Christ these warnings from Scripture, and there are others, but these will help us to see the dangers of ignoring or discounting the word of God.

Titus 1 verse 16 Paul paints a word picture of those who do not heed the instructions from Scripture we have just looked at and says, They profess that they know God; but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

May that never be any of us.

May we heed the words of our Lord in Matthew 10:33 “that whosoever shall deny him before men him He will also deny before his Father which is in heaven.” That sentiment is reinforced in Paul’s letter to Timothy, If we suffer we shall also reign with Him, if we deny him, He will also deny us.

Let us therefore take to heart the words of Jesus in John 12:26: If any man serve me let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour and Lord I pray that each one here will continue to serve you, follow you, and be honoured by the Father and be invited in to the marriage supper of the Lamb as spoken of in Revelation 19 verses 7 through 9.

J.v.L



Some say “Believe on Jesus and you are saved”
 But what did Jesus say when He began His ministry?
 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying,
 “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Matthew 4:17

SANCTIFICATION

Be it known unto us that sanctification addresses the born-again children of God. It should not be confused with sinners coming to the Lord or the

prodigals coming back to God. If we as children of God would give this subject the due attention it deserves, we would realize what we are and what we ought to be for the Lord.

Forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ our Saviour is a foundational experience in one's relationship with God. It is the beginning and not the whole, or end, of one's relationship with the Lord.

Through the new birth, one is born of God and brought into a personal relationship with Him. This brings us into an entirely new realm of spiritual life. It is this newfound spiritual realm that calls for sanctification in order to grow and mature. Thereby one understands more and more what is all entailed in being born again and in sustaining spiritual life. It is in sanctification that one realizes the responsibilities and commitments of being a faithful child of God. This spiritual responsibility is subject to our willingness.

Sanctification is a continual working of grace, bringing cleansing and renewals in our spiritual lives. We cannot argue the fact that a spiritual Christian still has need to be renewed, refreshed, and strengthened in the inner man. "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" Ephesians 3:16. It is updating oneself spiritually in order to remain spiritually current and walk in newness of life. This should be a sincere desire of every true child of God. If one has no desire for sanctification, it is doubtful that he is living in the fullness of the Holy Spirit and usefulness to God.

Sanctification can be compared to the human body's processes of cleansing and changing for growth and sustenance of life. This is an unconscious process that the body undergoes in order to remain vital and functional. Once one is born, carefulness in maintaining and sustaining existence becomes paramount. This is also true of the spiritual birth.

The essence of sanctification is to remain and maintain what we ought to be for the Lord. In 2 Chronicles 29:5, it is written, "Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place." In this account, the house of the Lord was already on ground, but the people had abused it. Hence it had to be updated and freed from the abuses caused by their fathers. Similarly, sanctification is a spiritual cleansing which safeguards and

keeps us from the fleshly and carnal abuses that confront our Christian lives. This is where cross bearing comes into focus in order to check such excesses and abuses.

Sanctification is a washing (not a birth) for those already born in the Spirit. As children of God, we have reasons to be yielded unto the cleansing effect of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God dwelling in us. The more we desire to live a Spirit-filled life, the more we will be yielded to spiritual cleansing. Jesus indicated such cleansing when He taught about the vine and the husbandman. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" John 15:2. That the vine would be more productive, the husbandman had to purge it. Is it not also true that all those who are spiritually productive or desire to be more productive undergo purging from time to time as they come across the challenges of Christian living? One has reason to ask how useful to the Lord such people are who resist this experience in their Christian life?

In sanctification one must be ready to deal with him or herself in his or her relationship with the Lord. One does not have to rely only on what the church permits or doesn't permit to measure the state of his or her relationship with God. It is true that we were not approved for baptism and membership in the church of God until we were in conformance to its standard. But thereafter, one's heart-conviction becomes the measure of spirituality that determines his level of sanctification. Do you desire more, or even less?

As one faces the reality of sanctification, he must be willing to deal with where he gives himself a passing mark. This enables us to deal with excusing our failures because of what we see others doing or not doing. There are laxities one allows in his or her life because of what he sees others doing. Some may excuse themselves because of their circumstances.

There is no excuse that will be tenable before God. "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" 2 Corinthians 10:12.

Let us cite the rich young ruler's account to buttress this thought. According to him, he had the keeping of the commandments to his credit. He may have wondered if that was everything he needed, or he may have desired the confirmation and approval of Jesus Christ for his obedience to the generally accepted rules of life. To his greatest surprise and disappointment, Jesus pointed out the personal challenge of following Him, which was more than the dictates of the commandments. It meant self-denied living. This story we all know. The rich young ruler could not continue with Jesus beyond this point. The Lord came too close to, or infringed on, his personal interests in life, which he was not willing to give up. Hence he departed from Christ sorrowfully. Therefore, the level of sanctification, so to speak, which he could have obtained was forestalled.

This is where many Christians hit the "rock" today when it comes to making a personal commitment and self-denial to serve the Lord. Then the Holy Spirit and the church become too demanding, and they begin to turn sorrowfully the other way in complaint against the church and the leaders, only to count on their personally-set standards and grade marks for consolation. And then sanctification is not obtained. What happens then is that they begin to mix carnal and spiritual living, with carnality becoming the easier alternative form of Christian living. The result is a breakdown of relationship with God and breakdown of confidence in the church and the leaders.

Sanctification has its agents and means of accomplishment. The Bible gives us the following explanations on the agents and means of sanctification (John 17:17; Ephesians 5:25-26; Hebrews 10:10; 13:12). The Word, the blood of Jesus Christ, and Christ Himself are the agents of sanctification. Sanctification is accomplished through the dwelling of the life of Jesus in our soul. A state of sanctification is a natural consequence of our faithful loyalty to Christ in our daily Christian walk.

Sanctification has a painful effect on self, which we still carry along with us despite our conversion. As all forms of ungodliness and filthiness of the flesh are dealt with in our lives, the old man is bound to feel and suffer the consequences. This is unavoidable (Malachi 3:1-4).

Where one has made an unconditional surrender to God, there will be grace to live in a state of sanctification. The dictionary explains sanctification as "a state of growing in divine grace as a result of Christian commit-

ment after baptism or conversion; to sanctify and set apart to a sacred purpose or religious use." Such is the end result of a sanctified state of Christian living.

The apostle Paul prayed for the sanctification of our whole being. "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" 1 Thessalonians 5:23. All these aspects of our lives must be brought under the authority of the Spirit of God. By this there will be conscious and unconscious dealing with all that is unbecoming of a child of God, both outwardly and inwardly. This would be dealing with the filthiness of the flesh and spirit. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" 2 Corinthians 7:1. When all the excesses of self are constantly brought under check by the Spirit, we would have an unhindered relationship with God. And then we are useful to Him. Living in a state of sanctification, we realize our spiritual status as children of God, which we cannot afford to abuse. When we lack sanctification, we lack a sense of spiritual worth and usefulness to God and others.

In a state of sanctification, we display a sense of consecration and being set apart for God's purpose in our lives. Our priorities are spiritual things and the will of God for our lives. To this end the apostle Paul wrote and said, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" 2 Corinthians 6:17. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" Romans 8:1. According to our sanctification, we are committed to God and His service without complaint. We are willing to cooperate with the church in the spiritual standard and spirituality the members are to attain. Then we are no longer a problem member and burden on the church.



OBEDIENCE

Obedience has a very simple definition. It means to be submissive to the restraint or command of authority (Webster). Obedience is vital for a Christian who has become a follower of Jesus. If He is Master of our lives, as He wants to be, and we are consecrated to Him, obedience is not an option, nor should it be a question.

The law given to Moses required obedience in total. One Sabbath day a man was found picking up sticks. When this was reported to Moses and Aaron, they didn't know what to do. When inquiry was made of the Lord, the command was that he should be stoned (Num. 15:32-36). The Old Testament records various other incidents where what seemed a small disobedience incurred God's wrath. Later Peter stated that neither they nor their fathers were able to keep the Law in perfection (Acts 15:10). Nevertheless, the Old Testament saints were required to keep this law to be saved. The Law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ by causing us to see our lost and hopeless condition. This, in turn, causes us to seek Christ, who alone can take us out from under the curse of the Law. As we receive Christ, we are privileged to look into the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25).

Paul also writes of liberty, saying that we must not use it to please ourselves (Gal. 5:13). Some questions need to be asked. Do Christians have rules to follow? Are there commandments to obey? Is our liberty such that the Bible is only a book of guidelines that are good to follow, but not compulsory?

Since contemporary Christendom has cast off the "shackles" of doctrine, she is reluctant to have rules. The specifics of doctrine as laid out in the Waldensian confessions of faith and "The Thirty-three Articles of Faith" would be distasteful to much of Christendom today, should they be acquainted with them. This fear of rules, preferring only general guidelines, wants to influence the practice of the true faith in our day.

A rule is a prescribed guide of conduct or action; a regulation or bylaw governing procedure or controlling conduct (Webster). Most certainly today's Christians need to understand that their conduct must be controlled, and, therefore, does have rules to follow. Jesus is the gospel rule maker. As we read the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6, and 7, we find detailed

rules of conduct on numerous issues. There are specific instructions relating to divorce, nonresistance, giving, praying, and forgiveness, to name a few. Christ teaches in Matthew 18 how to reach out to a brother who is being unfaithful, instructing the church how to carry out further discipline when necessary. If excommunication becomes necessary, He instructs how the faithful are to avoid such apostates.

Jesus also gave clear instructions about the communion service. He did not give a rule as to how often it should be practiced, but He did say that a common cup should be used, commanding the twelve to all drink of it. He also broke the bread and gave to each one a portion, telling them what the symbols of bread and wine meant. In the book of John, chapter 13, the Lord taught by word and example how the church was to practice feet washing. This was not given as only a guideline one could choose to follow, but it was a command to be obeyed. A blessing of happiness would follow obedience.

Before Jesus left, He commissioned the apostles to carry on the work. They were inspired by the Holy Ghost to write many more detailed instructions as rules to follow in establishing the churches. From them we have received a clear rule of practice for the Christian woman to wear a veil or head covering to indicate her acceptance of a position of submission in the home and church. There are also clear rules on how a Christian woman should dress to please the Lord and bear witness to her feminine purity. The apostles taught us by the example of the Jerusalem council, recorded in Acts 15, how the church is to make further decisions.

Willing submission and obedience to the Master has a wonderful way of uniting His followers. The more detailed instructions make it possible that churches throughout the world are able to "walk by the same rule" and mind the same thing (Phil 3:16). In 1 Corinthians 1:10, Paul uses this thought: "that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment."

Guidelines, compared with rules, are only an indication or outline of policy or conduct (Webster). Within this framework, the flesh would be able to pick and choose, somewhat like a spiritual smorgasbord. This would not

work toward unity but would rather promote the pietistic spirit of each doing what seems right in his own eyes and being independent.

Our congregations and their schools need rules of conduct. We do not want to, or should not, make more rules than needed for order and security. When they are made, we need to embrace them as our own and teach them to our children and the young Christians following us. Paul writes in Romans 13 that if we resist the civil rules of our land, we resist God. How much more so if we resist the rules and authority of the church and her leaders? We should periodically read Numbers 12 and 16 to get a better understanding of how God looks at such resistance.

A consecrated, Spirit-led Christian will seldom bump into the rules of the church. The law of the Spirit is in harmony with the body of Christ. Conversely, one who has lost the keen touch of the Spirit is likely to find comfort in more rules, which could become his righteousness. The more diligent his keeping of the rules, the more righteous he would feel. His inclination would be to live by the letter and hold his brethren to his standard of righteousness.

Obedience has always had the blessing of God. The heroes of faith of Bible times and past centuries were men and women who were obedient. We will be today's heroes of faith as we live our everyday lives by the rule of the Word of God. Jesus said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:21, 23). John states it in another way in his First Epistle: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3).

Many of the scriptural commands are made plain today in the preaching of the Word as well as the general instructions in members' meetings. Ezra did this for the children of Israel, first reading the Law distinctly and then the "sense" was explained (Neh. 8:1-9). Willing obedience to God and the church has a great blessing, with an eternal reward awaiting the faithful. *(NOTE, Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th Edition, was used) Used by permission Messenger of Truth Gospel Publishers Moundridge Kansas*



RESPONSIBLE GIVING

Proverbs 11:24-26 ^(ESV) states: One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. ²⁵ Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered. ²⁶ The people curse him who holds back grain, but a blessing is on the head of him who sells it.

These verses tell us that if we are liberal with our giving, God will bless us, but if we hold onto our money, the blessing will be withheld. God has allowed this money to run through our hands, and we are the ones who should rejoice in the opportunity to give it back to Him. There are many places or situations where we can give our money. In the Old Testament, they were instructed to tithe. We wonder sometimes if we have done our part. Have we given enough? Where should we give? If we have little and it barely goes around, should we give little to keep up with the bills? Or if the Lord has blessed us with much, should we give more than 10 percent?

When we wonder where to give, we can trust the Holy Spirit to guide our thoughts if we have a relationship with God. When we were in the mission, my prayer every morning was, “Whom shall I give to today?” There were many beggars on the streets and they all looked worthy of a handout. Some of them were worthy, and some were not. I trusted my feelings at the moment to know what to do. So it is with our giving here.

A request letter is read in church, a brochure comes in the mail, or we hear of a need over there. What should I respond to, and what should I not? They may be good causes, but we probably cannot give to them all and still support our churches and schools. Let us have the attitude that we are giving to the Bride of Christ. When we have given, it is the Lord's. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” Galatians 6:10. Who is of the household of faith? We have our church outreach programs and our schools and church buildings to maintain. Would these not be of the “household” more than that brochure that comes in the mail or the community project that we like? What if we do not support a congregational project? Maybe the young parents want to upgrade the school building, and we do not think it is necessary. What is our motive in these things?

When the majority has carried a vote, we all need to support it. Maybe we would not give as much as we do to our favourite projects, but we still want to do our part. Those of us who are promoting the upgrade should

expect to carry our share of the load. We need to carefully check our attitude if we are expecting those who have the most means to pay for our wants in the matter. So either way, we need to humbly pray for God's plan in it all. If everyone would give to the places I give and the same amount that I give, would the Bride of Christ and her programs be able to keep going? What about the brother sitting beside me in the pew? If he knew the amount of my income and the amount of my giving, would he be encouraged to give more, or would he be shocked at how little I give?

Exodus 22:29 says, "Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits." Are we tempted to hold it in our bank accounts for a while, or do we have the spirit of giving of our first fruits without delay? If we hold it, it may get away from us in our personal needs. If we give it as first fruits, the Lord will take care of our needs as we do our part. What are some things that would hinder our giving? Lack of teaching might be one. So how can we teach our children if we do not let our right hand know what our left hand gives? Children in a home notice if parents respond generously to a need.

Sometimes we are hesitant to give because we think we may need that money in the future. We know that when we are old, we will not be able to work, and we will need money to live. Our security should be in God and not in "filthy lucre." Generously committing money to God's treasury is the safest investment we can make. Faithful giving in our lifetime will have its own rewards. Could we find a more sure retirement plan than with our own Creator? What God has allowed to come to us becomes our own responsibility. We should not leave it for others to distribute. We will be held accountable. A large gift of money to the children can sometimes do more harm than good. We should also consider what good it can do for those ignorant of the gospel. Ask God where it belongs and be open to counsel. Having money in our control can give us a feeling of power. This is a false power, because it is God who is in control. He can give, and He can take away.

Let us give God the glory and let the Holy Spirit guide our giving.
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