

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*FREE OR FETTERED*

The Lord *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, *and* my high tower. Psalm 18:2

Probably the most basic desire of carnal man is to be free. They want to be free from anything that may hinder their happiness or well-being. They long to be free from all restraints, from all pain, from all fears or from any other suffering, I think we can all relate to that. No one likes pain or fear or suffering nor do many like restraints on their perceived personal freedoms, and that includes believers as well as unbelievers. Both God and Satan appeal to this fundamental desire of man – to be free.

Satan promises us freedom to do as one pleases, love without sacrifice, love without responsibility and peace and satisfaction based on the exercise of one's so-called rights. All of Satan's promises are based on the myth or the fallacy or falsehood that freedom lies in man getting his own way.

God however promises precisely the opposite. He promises freedom from our own will and then gives us His will in exchange. God promises to free us from the greatest of all restraints the restraint of sin and its consequences and then he gives us eternal life and the eternal joy. All of God's promises are based on the truth that freedom lies in taking his way. John 8:32 tells us you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free the scriptures also tell us that Jesus is the truth he said I am the way the truth and the life in John 14:6. It is the only way out of bondage to sin and Satan

May the Lord bless each of us as we walk in the light of wonderful grace and let us keep in mind the words of Scripture that if we have come to Jesus the Son of God he shall make you free, and ye shall be free indeed. And then, finally, waver not from your determination to stay free and stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

J.V.L



The Secret Place of the Most High
Daniel Martin

From the Pulpit

There is a safe and secret place beneath the wings divine,
Preserved for all the heirs of grace O be that refuge mine.
The least and feeblest there may bide the uninjured and unawed;
While thousands fall on every side he rests secure in God.
He feeds in pastures large and fair of love and truth divine;
A child of God O glory's heir, how rich a lot is thine!
A hand almighty to defend, and here for every call,
An honoured life, a peaceful end, and heaven to crown it all!
Henry F Lyte

These are the thoughts we would like to look at this morning, you may recognise that song taken from Psalm 91, this song has long been a favourite of mine it has been used in various special occasions through my life already and I would just like to take a closer look at it and share some inspiration that I have gleaned over the years with you this morning.

I have chosen to break Psalm 91 up in three sections.

- 1] The first one is verses 1 to 4 on safety and security in God.
- 2] Then verses 5 to 13 are things that we find shelter from.
- 3] The last one is verses 14 to 16 God's promise to those who come into His secret place.

I would like to read verses one to four:

Psalm 91:1-4

¹ He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. ² I will say of the LORD, *He is* my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. ³ Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, *and* from the noisome pestilence. ⁴ He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler.

Part 1 – Safety and security in God.

First of all we notice it is for those who dwell there, he that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High, it is the ones that live there that dwell there. If I used a mind picture of these verses here I would picture it a small cave way up in the mountains somewhere where one would take shelter during a bad storm, that is the sort of mind picture I got when I read over that but the closer we look at this a more accurate picture would be a secure fort maybe nestled high up in an alpine meadow or a valley hidden away from exposure to the enemy and his forces.

You know we often see these pictures of these castles way up on the edge of a cliff somewhere or in the olden days when warfare was more by hand and on foot they found shelter high up and secluded it was a way that they could guard themselves, if they were up on the mountain there was only one way to get there and that was through the mountain pass up through the valley, those entries could be guarded and a sentry there watching, so it was a safe place away from the exposure to the enemy and his forces where we could find refuge and dwell there in peace and safety.

I think that's a more accurate picture of what this secret place of the most High is. - I would say of the Lord He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in him will I trust.

It is not just a cave to duck into and shiver through the night but rather as secure fort where we can stay as long as we need to.

That is what this is bringing out.

A parallel passage to these thoughts would be Psalm 27 verses one to 5 another familiar passage.

Psalm 27:1-5 The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? ² When the wicked, *even* mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. ³ Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this *will I be* confident. ⁴ One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. ⁵ For in the time of

trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

You see that parallel picture to what we were describing in Psalm 91 how we could be so safe and secure though a host should encamp against me my heart shall not fear, though war should rise against me in this will I be confident.

Where did he get that confidence? Well it was because he had found the secret place of the most High.

The last part of verse five “he shall set me upon a rock” is that picture of that high place that secure place. In the time of trouble shall He hide me in his pavilion in the secret place of his tabernacle.

And that is the second thought here, it is a secret place. It is not a place that everybody knows about, not everyone is found the secret place.

Jesus said in **Matthew 7:14** Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

So not everybody finds this safe and secret place, it is a strait gate, it is a narrow way to come up to this fortress few there be that find it.

It takes conscious effort to find this secret place and to dwell there. Many things in today’s world have replaced mental attention, decisions and effort, we know that, years ago there were a lot more things that we had to give conscious effort to get done, mental attention was a lot more then today.

Today we have so many things that are automated, we have automatic transmissions, automatic dishwashers, automatic washing machines, automatic cruise control, automated cutting and welding devices and fabricating and the list goes on and on.

The danger that we face is that we would like to apply this automatic convenience to our spiritual lives but it does not work that way you cannot just land up in this secret place all of a sudden automatically it takes a conscious effort to get there, we need to find the way, study out the way through God’s word and come to that place with a conscious effort.

To arrive at that secret place we must do our part like Jude says: But you beloved building up yourselves in the most holy faith praying in the Holy

Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. **Jude 1:20-21.**

Those verses bring out that there is a part that we must play, building up yourselves on your most holy faith praying in the Holy Ghost keep yourselves in the love of God.

Those are all action words things that we must do to build up ourselves and pray in the Holy Ghost and keep ourselves in the love of God it takes conscious effort to stay there when we find that place looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Thirdly it is a place that we must make our own.

You notice that in **Psalm 91:2**, it says “I will say of the Lord He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.”

That’s pretty personal and that is what we have to do if we want to find this place we must make it our own it is not just a place there for the church of God where if you are part of the church you will find this secret place. The church is a great aid in finding it but it is still a personal thing that we must find, it is a personal place, my refuge, my fortress, my God in Him will I trust.

The world around us has many places where they look for security and refuge we see them all around us. There are the security alarm systems, insurance policies, large bank accounts, foreign investments or maybe closer to home self-sufficiency, we have it pretty well figured out we can take care of ourselves we do not need any kind of help, that is a different kind of security – it is a false security.

Although there is a lot of value in being self-sufficient we must still say “my God in Him will I trust” because there are still some things that we have no control over. If we want to find ourselves in this secret place we must place our faith and trust in God in every area and circumstance in life no matter what comes our way – my God in Him will I trust.

Verse 2 is talking about my view, verse 3 changes and the writer speaks of what God will do, he says surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence, Psalm 91:3. Talking from personal experience here, the writer had been delivered himself and the Lord

can do the same thing for you too he is saying and points out that there are some things that we need to be delivered from.

He gives the picture of the snare of the fowler, you might not be familiar with that today any more but in those days if they wanted to get fowl they had nets and would set them up in places where the birds would least expect it, they would fly in there and get tangled in that net and that is the way they caught their birds.

We can draw a spiritual parallel for us today, a trap where we least expect it is what this is picturing to us. We may think that we are self-sufficient and make it on our own but beware that is when the devil will set up a trap when we least expect it.

The noisome pestilence he brings out, that word noisome can also be translated fatal, a fatal disease. We all know that when God chooses to touch our health and our bodies we are powerless to change it, it is one thing we do not have control over.

If we want to be in this secret place we need to put our faith and trust in God, He is the only one that has control over our health and our bodies. But the psalmist assures us that there is deliverance for those who come to that secret place: Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler and from the noisome pestilence.

God is able that is what that secret place is there for, for the things that we cannot guard against or control ourselves there is the place to go to.

Fourthly it is a safe place, **Psalm 91:4** He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

It is a safe place; Psalm 31 verses 19 to 21 bears out this thought as well. **Psalm 31:19-21** ¹⁹ Oh how great *is* thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; *which* thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! ²⁰ Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. ²¹ Blessed *be* the LORD: for he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city.

Those verses bear out that it is a safe place, this secret place, the Lord protects us and hides us there as we come to Him.

Verse 4 (Psalm 91) gives a picture of a chicken, back at home when we lived on the farm we used to have lots of bantam chickens running around and I have seen that lots of times when the hen senses danger she gives that special call and all her chickens come running and snuggle in under her wings.

Well just like that we feel the safest when we are close to God when we can feel the warmth of His love and we all draw around Him together with our brothers and sisters. That is a beautiful picture of the security that we find in Christ, we have to be close enough to feel His warmth and close to our brothers and sisters and all of us around God and His word.

Just picture if I can't get along with my brother or my sister and I'm not going to hide under the wing of God, when the call of danger came and I say no, I don't want to get so close to them I'm going to stay out here by myself. Well we know that would be foolish for a chick to do that, by ourselves we are like the little chick helpless, easy prey for the owl or the hawk, the enemy is on the hunt for us.

In the spiritual sense we have the enemy that is flying overhead and he is on the hunt for us if we get out too far by ourselves we are as helpless as those little chickens.

When the mother hen sees danger she sounds the warning call, Jesus calls for us too. He says in **Matthew 23:37** O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!

That was the call of Christ and the call is still going forth today.

I often think of Jerusalem, the people that lived there, as a parallel to the church of God and we can apply this call to us here in our fellowship, when God says to us how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings.

How is it with us, are we willing to come and find shelter under His wings? If we want to be in that safe and secret place we must heed the call just like when the hen calls the chicks, we need to come running, we must heed the call to trust under the shadow of the wings of divine providence just like Ruth did back in that story of Ruth and Boaz when Boaz said: The Lord

recompense thy work and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel under whose wings thou art come to trust. **Ruth 2:2**

That is where we need to find ourselves, trusting under the shadow of the wings of divine providence. “His truth shall be thy shield and buckler” is the last part of verse 4. If we take that illustration of the hen all the way it is not quite fair because it gives the picture you know if a dog would come up to the mother hen those chicks would be as helpless as anything and it is not that way with God, I think that is why he puts this on the end, “His truth shall be thy shield and buckler” it is not just mere feathers covering us and we do not have a false security but it is something that is sure.

The shield and the buckler were defences of warfare, the shield was what they carried out in front of them and the buckler was a small one that they could manoeuvre quickly and fast so there was a double defence system there, we do not have to worry that God is not able because He is, His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

His truth stands from generation to generation, it is always there, it is the same yesterday, today and for ever, something that we can put our confidence and trust in.

Part 2 – The things that we find shelter from.

Psalm 91:5-13 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by day; ⁶ *Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness; *nor* for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday. ⁷ A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; *but* it shall not come nigh thee. ⁸ Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. ⁹ Because thou hast made the LORD, *which is* my refuge, *even* the most High, thy habitation; ¹⁰ There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. ¹¹ For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. ¹² They shall bear thee up in *their* hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. ¹³ Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

The picture that is given here is depicting a battle field, there is a war going on, suspense and terror are all around us. I doubt if any of us have been in that situation but there are many places in the world where they can identi-

fy with this a lot better where there is a war going on right next door, all around us, he says, but thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night.

In the night time it is worse because they do not know what the enemy is doing if he is coming closer or where he is repositioning himself and there is that long night to wait through.

“Nor for the arrow that flieth by day” - and when it finally gets light enough to see then the enemy can see too, many arrows start to fly there is that constant terror and fear.

“Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness” - many times when there is warfare people are hiding and in secret, the shelters are primitive and it is a place where disease can grow rampant fast because they do not have access to clean water and good food so there is always that fear of getting sick.

“Nor for the destruction that wastes at noonday” -, even in the middle of the day when we are together with friends even at that time it is not safe when the enemy is all around, destruction is wasting all around us right in the middle of the day.

Well we can draw a parallel to our lives.

Those in the secret place are not only kept from evil but from the fear of evil, you notice in verse five “thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night” - it was not so much what was happening but the fear of what was going to happen during the night we can be safe from that.

Each of us faces the battle in different ways or areas and I think it is safe to say that we all have fears at some time or other, they affect us in different ways and you can put your own situation in here whether it be young people asking how will my life turn out, will I ever get married and have a family of my own, will I find the place that God has in mind for me or how will it all turn out?

These are fears that are common to young people. We can find the secret place and find shelter there from those fears.

Or maybe we're young parents and ask will we ever have children and when we have them will we know how to care for them, what if they get sick or choke on something or worse they die from something? Well they are fears that are common to young parents and not everybody is at the

same place but some time other they have to deal with some of those fears and we can find shelter in the secret place.

Or maybe we are middle-aged and facing the rigours of raising a family. Will we be able to make it financially or how will we ever get our teenagers through those crucial years of stepping out on their own. The secret place is there for the middle-aged as well we can take our fears and leave them there.

Or maybe we are older, will our children be able to find faithful partners to start their own homes or what about the grandchildren how will they ever be able to make it in today's unregenerate society. You can put your own situation there but many of us, if we are honest, we do not like to call them worries but there is something there that we tend to ponder on and it takes faith to believe that God can take care of it all. We have that secret place that we can come to and find reassurance and leave our fears so that we don't have the worry about that when we are in that secret place.

Verse seven says: A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; *but* it shall not come nigh thee.

When we are in the secret place we are with One who understands.

Let's look at **Hebrews 2:14-18** it says: ¹⁴ Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; ¹⁵ And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ¹⁶ For verily he took not on *him the nature of* angels; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham. ¹⁷ Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

Jesus knows the war that is going on around us, a thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; *but* it shall not come nigh thee it says

Did you notice the deliverance from fear in verse 15, He will deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Jesus came for that very purpose to deliver us from that fear, we have a safe place where we can hide.

Verses 9 to 13 (Psalm 91) show us how we can use our own experience to encourage others just like in Psalm 91 verse 3 where he says surely He shall deliver thee and verses 9 to 13 bring out that same thought, it says because thou has made the Lord which is my refuge. You see he knew that secret place when he was writing it, he says because thou hast made that place, even the most High, thy habitation there shall no evil befall thee neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

We can use our own experience to encourage others, I think God wants us to do that. When we have found security and a place to anchor our faith and trust God we can use our experiences to encourage others, it will be the same for them if they do the same.

What about verse 10 it says there shall no evil before thee neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling, **Psalm 91:10?**

How do we explain that verse?

Sometimes we do experience heartache and loss and ask where is His protection in this?

I would like to quote from Matthew Henry who said: “There shall no evil befall thee even though trouble and affliction befall thee yet there shall be no real evil in it for it shall come from the love of God and it shall be sanctified, it shall come not for thy hurt but for thy good. And though for the present it may not be joyous but grievous it shall yield so well that thou thyself shalt own that no evil befell thee.”

I think sometimes we see these experiences in life as evil things that befall us but as he brings out in these thoughts here there is no real evil in it for it shall come from the love of God, that is scriptural, God says that He doesn't bring anything that is against us, He is always working for us, and in the end when we see the whole picture we can be assured that God was working for us. It shall yield so well that thou thyself shalt own that no evil befell thee.

It takes a lot of faith to accept sometimes but we can rest assured that it is so because God says it in the His word, all things work together for good to those that love God. That is what God is interested in, in our own good.

Spirituality is seldom spawned under ideal circumstances but rather in adversity and so often we find that, it is not in the easy times of life that spirituality is spawned but rather in times of adversity those are the times that draws us near to God and we feel more of the need to get into that secret place and find refuge there.

Verses 11 and 12 (Psalm 91) bring out that God sends His angels to help us to keep thee in all thy ways.

How many times have things come, up like our Brother brought out in the devotional, that things come and how many times that we just say: Was I ever lucky that time! It should have happened but I don't know why it did not.

We've probably all had experiences like that in our life but I think it is good like our brother brought out it was the hand of God watching over him and that's what it says right here in these verses that He is going to send His angels to bear us up. How many times have we been borne up in their hands and we do not give them credit for it.

We should be more willing to thank God for His protection day today.

Verse 13 (Psalm 91) the enemy's fate is already decided it says there "thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet."

I'm not sure what all that is referring to but we do know that those terms are used for Satan and the devil, he is often referred to as a lion and the dragon and the fate of the enemy is already decided.

That is a thing that is fixed, we don't need to worry about it.

Colossians 2:15 says: *And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

Many times we wish that we could bring revenge on something now, we think that it should be dealt with and that it is not fair that it is allowed to go on like this, but the enemy's fate is sealed and we can rest in that it is not going unnoticed by God.

The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.

Part 3 – God’s promise

That brings us to the last place there of God’s promise to those who come unto His secret place in verses 14 to 16. The one that is talking switches over and it is now God talking I believe, He says: **Psalm 91:14-16** ¹⁴ Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. ¹⁵ He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I *will be* with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. ¹⁶ With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

In **Psalm 34:19 and 22** it gives us some more promises and we are looking at God’s promise to those who come into His secret place:

¹⁹ Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. Verse 22 ^{The} LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

These are promises that we can claim. Yes there are times when we face trials and temptations and struggles but he says the Lord redeemeth the soul of his servant and none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate. The reward is sure.

It was Paul’s testimony in **2 Timothy 3:11** where he says you know the persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me.

That was Paul’s testimony and we note that the Apostle Paul went through a lot more than many of us ever went through or likely will go through and he said out of them all the Lord delivered me.

And in **2 Timothy 4:18** he claims the promises and says: And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve *me* unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Paul claims that promise, that is what he was most interested in even though he went through all those things and we could have looked up, the persecutions, the prisons, stripes and shipwreck but he says here that the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom. We can do the same today and claim that promise. In

the end he died the death of a martyr but the Lord had preserved him to His heavenly kingdom, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

In **2 Corinthians 12:9** Paul tells us his strength is made perfect in weakness and that His grace is sufficient for every situation that we face, that's another promise that we have.

Verse 15 (Psalm 91) says I will deliver him and honour him.

In **John 12:25-26** it brings out that thought: He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. 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.

It brings out the thought that God will honour us if we are faithful to Him, I will deliver him and honour him verse 15 says, God will honour those that serve Him.

In the last verse 16 it says: With long life will I satisfy him, it speaks of a full life, that is: With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation, **Psalm 91:16**.

Long life speaks of a full life, He will keep us until we have accomplished all that was His purpose for us, all that was His will for us to do.

Would we want to stay after God has done with us here? How much better to go home to be with Him.

It is not always that all have many days on this earth, sometimes God calls infants or youth or those in the prime of their life but never before His will is accomplished for them. God only calls us home after His will is accomplished and then it's a long life, a full life, it is one that is satisfied because God's will is accomplished.

The last thought in Palm 91:16 is "I will show him my salvation" and if we have found the secret place we can say with Simeon in Luke chapter 2 as he was waiting for the Lord to come: **Luke 2:29-31** ²⁹ Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: ³⁰ For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, ³¹ Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people.

I think this is the secret of finding this safe and secret place when we see the salvation of the Lord. Mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared before the face of all people.

This is the gateway to finding the secret place.

May we be faithful in coming and making use of that place that God has made for us so that He can preserve us until that Day.



HAVE FAITH IN GOD

Recently reading through the gospel account of Matthew I pondered on having faith in God.

In that well known 11th chapter of Hebrews we are told that without faith it is impossible to please Him: For he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him **Hebrews 11:6**

We relate to our physical world by what our five senses can observe or measure, we can see, hear, touch, smell, taste and through those senses we can understand what is happening in the physical realm in which we live, but God has chosen to limit our insight into the spirit realm. Deep down I believe we are all convinced that there is more to life than what we can see. As Christians we do relate to an unseen God because we believe that He is and that there are no limits to Him or to what He can do. That gap between God and man can be spanned only by faith.

By faith truths are revealed that are more reliable than the opinions and conclusions of learned men.

By faith man finds security in a God he cannot see. The person who chooses not to believe God is blind to spiritual values and the operations of God. Here from Matthew's gospel are three examples of faith in people who had a need and came to Jesus and had their needs met because of their faith:

These three accounts are about people who were in desperate need and today there are many who also have needs. They came to Jesus because they could not find help anywhere else. Having a vision of Jesus as a miracle worker, they resolved that to Him and Him alone they would turn. Any serious problem, one which has no answer but in the Lord, is an opportunity for the Lord to do His work.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen. **Hebrews 11:1.** It is what motivated these people we read about in Matthew's gospel.

In the first case, **Matthew 8:5-13**, a centurion's servant was grievously tormented by palsy. Medical help probably was limited. This man believed that his help was in Jesus. Perhaps he had heard that Jesus performed the impossible. Something deep down in his heart inspired him that there was hope and help in the Lord.

That was faith.

Two blind men who came to Jesus had a difficult life, **Matthew 9:27-31**. How does a blind person make a living? Usually the blind are at the mercy of others. But when these men heard of Jesus, they believed their lives could be different. They did not believe that Jesus would turn His back on their plea.

That was faith.

In **Matthew 15:22-28** we read of the Syrophenician woman whose daughter who was plagued with a devil. This mother felt her utter helplessness. Where could she go? Acknowledging her unworthiness, something in her heart settled on Jesus as the solution to her problems and those of her daughter.

That was faith.

Faith in God is not a mysterious process, nor is it something imaginary. It cannot be manufactured by an act of the will. Rather, faith is the result of accepting God and accepting the truth of His power. Such acceptance brings trust and dependence on God into our lives.

In **Mark 11:22**. Jesus tells us to have faith in God, We are also told in **Romans 10:17** that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. **Ephesians 2:8** informs that by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.

We can see from these few examples that faith is important, God wants us to have it, we need to accept the gift of faith and develop it by hearing and reading the Word of God and there are numerous other references also in scripture that bring that out.

Faith is essential to salvation. Without faith in God and the sacrifice of His Son on Calvary we will not have our sins forgiven and be born again.

In our modern society great gains have been made in many fields of human endeavour and has led to raising of living standards, there is much affluence in the society in which we find ourselves however we cannot say that great gains have been made in matters of faith.

What are seen as gains in worldly accomplishments frequently make man feel self-sufficient and less dependent on God.

Is our faith in God growing or is it becoming weaker? Are we more willing to make sacrifices for the invisible things of God? Is there in our hearts a growing personal awareness for lost souls?

The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel through faith. Our faith should continue to grow and develop as our faith desires to know more of the marvellous righteousness of God.

Except for two occurrences in the Old Testament the word faith appears numerous times in the New Testament. It is interesting that when Jesus came, people were admonished to have faith.

I have often thought how wonderful it would have been to have been there when Jesus was walking among the people but would my faith have been like that of the ones we read about in John's gospel? Remember many did not believe Him even though they walked with Him. **John 5:38**

It would seem that with God appearing in a visible form there would be less need for faith, but just the opposite is true. The gospel can be experienced only by faith.

Today we can see God working in the church, in our brethren, in our own lives and I believe there is a need for encouraging not only each other to continue to grow in faith in God but also to call those who have not responded to the call of God in their life.

Hebrews 11:6 teaches that without faith it is impossible to please God. To come to God requires that we believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

2 Corinthians 5:7 also reminds us that in this matter of trusting God "we walk by faith, not by sight" Experiencing self-denial as taught by Jesus can be done only through faith.

We can only be purged of the covetousness of our nature by a deep faith in God, knowing that He will provide for our needs. **Ephesians 3:20** says that

He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.

That is faith.

Our trust or faith in Him enables us to be detached from the affections for possessions.

Witnessing, reproving, and praying all require faith in God.

We need to have faith to labour victoriously for the Lord.

The degree of our faith in God is reflected in the purity of our Christian walk.

A man of faith will understand his failings and be a humble person. It is impossible to really know the Lord and be proud. It is, however, possible to be very religious and yet be proud. The man or woman of faith will not be attracted to the things of the world because God holds the place of highest importance in their life, their eyes are open to the vanity of all the world's promises. Paul writes, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" **Romans 1:17**.

So the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel through faith. Our faith should continue to grow and develop and faith desires to know more of the marvellous righteousness of God.

True faith embraces the belief that the Bible is the divine will of God delivered to man. We believe the Bible means just what it says and that it contains the answers for all our problems.

A deep reverence for the Word causes us to devote ourselves to its study and to order our lives according to the precepts of the Word. Many people are seeking other answers for their lives. The intellectual and humanistic view advises individuals to explore other possibilities such as counsellors, drugs, and other things that money can buy to solve their problems.

The people in the scriptures from Matthew had this settled in their hearts: Christ was the only answer to their need. A delayed response from the Lord did not alter that conviction.

That is faith!

It takes faith to do what we really know we should do.

Faith in the Lord inspires us with the needed courage and conviction to move ahead.

Faith in God puts us on a different course from those around us. Moses, for example, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Personal ease, economic advantage, and social status were sacrificed. Maybe it was a hard choice to make, but it was a clear choice: enjoy Egypt (sin) or enjoy the blessings of God **Hebrews 11:26-27**. "He had respect unto the recompense of the reward ... he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible" He was a man who looked beyond convenience and personal desire and persevered in performing God's will.

That is faith.

And each of will face that test of faith from time to time as Satan tries to draw us away from God.

May we be like the heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 and endure to the end so that we shall be saved.



Justified By Faith

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves;

It is the gift of God: Ephesians 2:8

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” Galatians 2:16

Within all of our hearts is an instinctive yearning for peace with God. The law places a death sentence on sin, and all have sinned. To be justified in the sight of God means to be pardoned from this sentence. Only by faith in the atoning death of Jesus can we obtain pardon and be at peace with God. Righteousness through works and “faith-only” doctrines void of the cross are errors many fall into. Both of these ways permit the carnal man to

yet be in control. Jesus said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” Luke 9:23. Genuine repentance and self-denial are inseparable from true faith.

The seed of faith is a gift from the Father to all men and when exercised results in trust in and full surrender to God. It yields an understanding of one’s own depravity and a clear vision of Calvary. Scriptural works are inspired by the Holy Spirit. They flow freely as a love offering to God from a thankful heart that is already forgiven, and not as a payment for sin.

Romans chapter 4 describes how Abraham’s faith was credited to him for righteousness and why was that? Well verses 18 through 22 tells us: Romans 4:18-22 Who [speaking of Abraham} against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. ¹⁹ And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara’s womb: ²⁰ He staggered not (did not doubt) at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; ²¹ And being fully persuaded that, what he (God) had promised, he was able also to perform. ²² And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. There is the answer to Abraham’s faith being credited to him for righteousness.

Can we say the same for our faith? No doubting God’s promises but giving glory to God in the strength of our faith?

Many descendants of Abraham feel they can claim merit by naming him as their father as some of the Jews did and we have that conversation and response of Jesus in John 8:31-59. The claim of Anabaptist heritage or any other Christian heritage can also be a source of misplaced assurance of being of “Abraham’s seed” and thereby expecting to have the approval of God. It was Abraham’s faith in God that set him apart. The empowerment of his faith came from God, not from Abraham himself. Abraham’s faith was fruitful because of his obedience.

A similar working faith in God is still the identity of an “Israelite indeed.” Abraham was moved by the Spirit of God to undertake a journey into a land that unknown to him. As he obeyed God fulfilled His promise.

Obedience through faith is the “land of blessing” for all Christians.

The Spirit’s direction often leads into previously unknown areas of self—denial, trust, deeper sanctification, and service in the kingdom. Abraham’s faith “staggered not” at God’s promise of a son in his old age and of progeny innumerable as the stars of the heavens. He believed against all natural odds. Isaac, the son of faith, was born over twenty years after the initial promise. God’s promises are immutable, and time is not measured by Him as we measure it. How often do we lose confidence because our own timetable is not met? But later, in the eventual fulfillment of God’s plan, we see that it was right.

Sarah tried to help bring forth the promised son. Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman was born as a result. He was not the son of faith and typifies the dead works of the carnal man being at variance with faith and the workings of the Holy Spirit. To this day his descendants live a life of continual turmoil reminding us that those who live after the flesh shall die (Romans 8:13). Living by the law does not require crucifixion of the flesh, but rather functions through the unregenerate spirit of man.

Endeavouring to satisfy the debt of sin by the law only makes one further accountable to the law leaving the debt of sin unpaid. The law has neither redemptive mercy nor regenerative power. Its purpose is to bring judgment on sin. True righteousness is only by the grace of God. Grace is a gift given to the man who sees his utterly lost condition and in brokenness casts himself into the hands of a just God. In faith he sees the crucified Lord as the only One who can pay his debt. Grace is both the forgiving mercy that sets a sinner free and the enabling power to live a new life in Christ. The Holy Spirit’s presence in one’s life opens the door to this marvellous grace.

God is perfect and cannot condone sin. His law pronounces death on sin, and this law must be satisfied. Jesus came to die for our sin. “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” 1 Peter 2:24. By Christ’s death the judgment of the Law was satisfied. “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied” Isaiah 53:11.

An earlier church father said that we are not saved by faith, but we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ. This faith transcends obstacles, quiets fears,

and embraces salvation as a free gift. Forgiveness must be accepted with a sense of unworthiness and as the grace of God extended to the “broken-hearted.” Sometimes the unsound concept is advanced that faith and works are opposites and that we need the right “balance” of the two. Scriptural faith and works harmonize, and they are not opposed to each other. Living by law puts one outside of this harmony and is bondage. Both faith without the cross and a cross without faith are futile. The works of faith will manifest a spirit of humility, will not draw attention to self, and will glorify the Lord rather than the individual.

Those who serve in places of responsibility in the kingdom will find this standard put to the test. A subtle desire for honour can creep in and defile an otherwise worthy work. Menno Simons writes that one of the six signs of the true church of God is that her people accept the “pressing cross.” A faith that is largely void of the “inconvenient” cross is increasingly popular in our time. Its influences are attacking the church. Is this a factor in the lack of conviction and shallow living that are a concern of our day? A Christian’s spirit and lifestyle will clearly reflect the presence or absence of the cross. The way of the cross is a humble way, and it is the only way that leads to heaven. There are clothes, possessions, and conduct that can be justified by a permissive mindset, but they are not the way of true faith and will result in leanness of soul, loss of spiritual vision, and even spiritual death.

Some believe that a Christian can walk a reasonable distance behind the world, having the same involvements but to a lesser degree. This is a way of accommodation and compromise. True faith walks an entirely different pathway— one chosen by God and at variance with the world. The two ways are profoundly different and bring profoundly different ends. To be a follower of Jesus one must have a Calvary experience where pride, sin, and self-will are slain. By faith a new man with spiritual vision will be born and God will be glorified. Justification by faith brings the abundant life. Without the Spirit of Christ we are none of His.



The Beauty Of Holiness

I love Thy skies and sunny mists,
Thy fields, the high mountains hoar,
Thy wind that bloweth where it lists -
Thy will, I love it more.

I love Thy hidden truth to seek
All around, in sea, on shore;
The arts whereby like gods we speak -
Thy will to me is more.

I love thy men and women, Lord,
The children around thy door;
Calm thoughts that inward strength afford -
Thy will, O Lord, is more.

But when Thy will my life doth hold,
Thine to the very core,
The world, which that same will did mould,
I shall love ten times more.

George McDonald – The Disciple and Other Poems 1868

Compiled & Edited by: J van Loon
E-mail: shimarcourier@gmail.com
Web: www.anabaptistmennonites.net