

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

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

Matthew 5:15

From The Editor's Desk.

In a recent edition of *"The Eastern Mennonite Testimony"* Brother Mast Stoltzfus wrote an article on memory and following is an excerpt of it. It is hoped to be able to publish the full article at a later date.

As with many things in life we need to exercise our God given abilities, not just for own edification, but for the benefit of others as well. When did you last exercise your memory and make that phone call, or write that letter to a brother or sister to encourage them in their walk with God and the struggles of this world. Do we fail God by not exercising this gift? *JuL.*

The Wonder of Memory

Have you ever thanked the Lord for the gift of memory? Hopefully we need not observe the tragic loss of memory in another or the failure of our own in order to stir our sense of wonder at this gift.

What would life be like without the amazing ability of memory? Consider, for a moment, the imaginary description that follows. You awaken each morning with the knowledge a baby normally has. Again and again, you do things for the "first" time. You do not know how to use a comb, toothbrush, or razor. You eat breakfast with strangers, introductions being impossibility because none can remember his own name. If you find your way to the vehicle to drive to work, you cannot remember how to start or stop it, which side of the road to drive on, or even which route to take to get there. When you somehow arrive at the workplace without injury, you are the "new" man on the job, with no experience or skill to employ. At the close of your "first" workday, you face the disturbing dilemma of having no place to go. Someone kindly directs you to your home, but you have no memory of ever having been there before and again meet a family of strangers.

The Christian life would be impossibility, for God would remain a stranger. We would hear of Jesus and His love, His death on the cross, and His rising from the tomb; but the inspiration would die as the story ended. Without the ability to look into the past, the faithfulness of God would lack meaning.

Without memory, learning would be an impossibility. Experience is a good teacher, but it would be no teacher at all were it not for memory. We rightly say that a child has not learned his lesson until he can remember it. To live without memory is to remain perpetually a mental infant.

Could one survive without memory? Spiritually, no. Physically, only with the complete care of another. Praise God for the marvel of memory!

MINISTER'S CORNER.**The Providence of God**

Bro. Clair R. Weaver, Centerville Mennonite Church.

I want to begin by looking at the message of Psalm 135:5–8. It speaks about the glory of God in His work in behalf of His people and in His care and provision of His people. “For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. (6) Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places. (7) He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; He maketh lightnings for the rain; He bringeth the wind out of His treasures. (8) Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast.”

There is more there about His judgment. I would like to consider this morning for a message, *The Providence of God*. The providence of God refers to God’s guidance and care in His provision. The word “providence” means provision — the provision of God. The thought that is conceived is that God’s power sustains and guides human experience and destiny to a point, whether it is direct or indirect.

What I would like to point out from this passage is that there are areas of God’s providence that are direct in His control and supervision. One of them, or one category, would be God’s control of His creation is direct and free. God’s control of the creation is absolute — the lightning, the storms, the wind, and so on. We recognize that there is a portion of God’s providence and His care and guidance of human affairs that is less direct in the sense that we are left to choose. Therefore, His control of those areas is less direct, but this area of His creation is direct.

I would like to think of a number of illustrations in the first part of the message where God’s providence is direct and absolute. The one mentioned here is the Creation. Another would be God in judgment. Verse 8 says, He “smote the firstborn of Egypt.” And then it goes on “Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan,” (verse 11) and other acts of God that were acts of judgment.

Another one that is good for us to remember as we think of the providence of God, is God’s rulership of the nations. We believe from the Scripture that God’s providence is direct and absolute in His guiding of the nations. Daniel 4:17, I am sure, is a verse that we are familiar with. Sometimes we read in the newspapers of what is developing in the electoral process and

so on, including all the fuss and fuming, and the bragging (if you may call it that) and campaigning.

We can lose sight of the fact that after all God is in control of who will be in authority in this country. Daniel 4:17 says, “This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.”

And that is still true today brethren and sisters. God is still in absolute and direct control. In His providence, His guiding, and His sustaining powers, He is controlling the affairs and the fate of nations in a direct way, and He is absolute in that authority. In times of war and in times of peace, God is in control. Daniel 2:38 is another reference from the same time to King Nebuchadnezzar, “And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all.” God made known to Nebuchadnezzar through the prophet Daniel while he was such an absolute world ruler, that place was given to him by God, and by God alone.

The proverb writer tells us that “The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will” (Proverbs 21:1).

There is a certain amount of trust we should have as we think of the affairs of nations and as we think of the unrest in the world today. We have the confidence and faith that God is still in control and simply to rest there. In the New Testament in Romans 11, I) *I will cite several illustrations of God’s absolute providence.* II) *Then, I would like to look at areas where God’s providence is subject to our response, and His providence is dependent on our response to Him.* Romans 11:28 speaks about the children of Israel who after the coming of Christ, and after the coming of the day of Pentecost, had rejected the message of truth. “As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the Fathers’ sake.”

This is a very precious truth as we think about the providence of God. This verse means that in God’s view of things, He had chosen the children of Israel to be the nation to whom He would give the Law. God had chosen the children of Israel and the nation of Israel to bring Christ to the world.

Then, when they fell in sin and unbelief beyond the point of Christ’s coming, it goes on to say that the “calling,” and the “election of God “are without repentance” (verse 29), That means that in the eyes of God these people (the lost, unbelieving, and indifferent) were beloved in God’s eyes from the van-

tage point that they had been a part of His plan and He wished yet to call them back into the blessings of that arrangement. Therefore, they were blessed and they were beloved in the Father's eyes.

That is a blessed truth. A very precious truth. When we think about the attitude of God toward those who were once faithful and later failed and as we think of God's attitude yet toward the lost Israel, "as touching the election, they are beloved."

Ephesians 1:10-11 is a reference to the Church. We believe that the providence of God related to the final state of the people of Israel is fully in God's hands in light of that Scripture. "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him: (11) In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." I do not know what you see in that but there is something there about the reference to the "fullness of times." That, I think, unlocks the meaning of predestination. God was working since the beginning of time toward an absolute and final outcome.

God was working to bring together both Jew and gentile in Christ into a new union with Him. In the fullness of time, Christ would be prepared as the Saviour. All of this was working according to "the counsel of His own will." It means that there was nothing that would stop Him. This was an absolute, step by step plan. It unfolded as God intended and it was direct arbitration of His will. There was nothing that would stop it. It is the providence of God, and guiding to the end, the salvation of souls through the work of Christ and the Church. The predestination is that the purpose and plan would have an ultimate destiny. It does necessarily speak about the choice that we make related to that.

That is a deep thought, but all of these are ways in which the providence of God is absolute. It is not subject to anyone's response or decision. This is God's work and it will be finished without interference.

II) *Areas where God's providence and the human responsibility for choice and sin enter in.*

I will refer to a number of Old Testament illustrations for this.

The first illustration that I would like to give is that rather obscure story in the book of Genesis where it says that Abraham had gone down to Egypt and he thought, "Surely the fear of God is not in this place" (Genesis 20:11). Therefore, he said that Sarah was his sister, because he was afraid that the

men of the place would kill him to take Sarah his wife. Indeed, she was his half-sister, as the account goes on to explain.

The Scripture says that Abimelech took Sarah to the King's house, but God intervened in a dream and told him, "Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife" (Genesis 20:3), whom he had not touched. God said to Abimelech, "I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against Me" (Genesis 20:6). It mentions there that Abimelech said, "Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation" (Genesis 20:4)? When the men of the place (meaning the servants of Abimelech) realized that Sarah was Abraham's wife, they were sore afraid. It does seem like there was a degree of righteousness and a fear of God that does not even exist in the country that we live in.

I want to point out that the providence of God is related to human responsibility for sin and choice. *The providence of God will protect us from falling into sin if we are worthy, willing to be protected, and desiring to be protected.* That story beautifully illustrates this truth. There is protection in the providence of God for a sincere person who wishes not to fall into sin.

Probably all of us have experienced at one time or another in life that kind of protection. We were spared from falling into sin in a way that we were perhaps not quite conscious of the nature of our environment, the nature of temptation, what we would be exposed to, and God in His providence protected us from sin.

However, in another story in the Old Testament, it tells us of David and his awful sin. We are familiar with that story, how he took another man's wife and later plotted to murder her husband and so on. The Scriptures merely say, "But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD" (2 Samuel 11:27). *God's silence, or His lack of intervention when David proceeded with evil intentions does not indicate approval or a lack of notice on God's part.*

It is sometimes, as the Ecclesiastes writer says, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). We certainly live like that in days like today, do we not?

Nevertheless, God's silence and lack of intervention does not mean that providence is somehow overlooking or condoning what men are doing. Therefore, God's providence is present but God was displeased, and no more was done until later.

In Genesis 50:20 we have the story of Joseph and his brothers.

This is a Scripture that we could puzzle over and seek to try to explain exactly how God works this. We want to come to that verse in the New Testament where ultimately, “we know that all things work together for good” (Romans 8:28), and we believe that. In Genesis 50:20 Joseph is talking to his brothers after they wept and prayed for forgiveness for having sold him into bondage. Joseph said in verse 19–21, “Fear not: for am I in the place of God? (20) But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. (21) Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.” *This story brings into focus that, in the providence of God, He did not interfere with Joseph’s brothers and their decision to do something that was cruel and wrong. And, by God allowing it, it does not mean that God thought it was fair, right, or even that it was not sinful.* God simply permitted the wrongdoing of Joseph’s brothers to cause Joseph to suffer.

Brethren and sisters, we live in a world today where there are many people who are suffering, because of the wrong doing of others which God does not stop or interfere with because He leaves them with the liberty of human choice. Nevertheless, others’ suffer as a consequence of that. Joseph interpreted the understanding of the will of God, that even when that was in process, God was able, in His providence, to superintend those affairs to work things out to save the family and the race. They realized that it was evil (and it was evil and wrong). There was a reaping day for what they did. Nevertheless, God rearranged it for good to save the family and that is almost beyond our comprehension.

Satan, in his devices, does not, and cannot comprehend that truth. He cannot. He thinks only evil will produce evil. The Scripture says, “Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Corinthians 2:8). That means that Satan, in his devices, was thinking that he would destroy Jesus, and in destroying Him, nothing but evil could come of that. God knew that He was simply employing evil men to accomplish His purposes. That was beyond Satan’s comprehension.

Therefore, it gives comfort to me as we think of bad things that happen. We want to talk a little bit later about why bad things happen to good people. Years ago, there was a book written like that. I heard of it, but I never had the opportunity to read it. The title was simply, *Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?* The writer sought to explain this truth from a Scriptural viewpoint. It was not, of course, in our setting, but it was a book with some profound

thoughts about Satan and his work and how God employs the intentions of evil men at times to accomplish His purpose in the end.

The providence of God allows self-willed people to have their own way. We read in the book of Esther, “So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai” (Esther 7:10). That seems like sort of a final note to Haman’s folly. God allows sometimes for self-willed people to have their own way for a time. Haman was privileged to work out his devices against the people of God and it seemed like Haman was allowed some rope. He had the king doing his bidding and he was working wholeheartedly in the process of destroying the people of God. Then, it says that they “hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.”

I think of the story of Samson. Samson said to his parents, “Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well” (Judges 14:3). He wanted his own way. Then, it says something there in the Scripture related to the providence of God. It says, “But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD” (verse 4). The only thing that I can understand from that is that in the foreknowledge of God, God knew that this boy would learn something only if he learned it the hard way.

Sometimes God lets people have their own way who want their own way. We know, as the story follows, that is what happened.

In the story of Rehoboam it says, “Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people.” Then, it says something about the providence of God. “For the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform His saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.” It was concerning dividing the kingdom. (1 Kings 12:15) It implied to me that sometimes God allows a self-willed person to be in authority when it is His purposes to use a self-willed person’s intentions to accomplish His will. This is what happened in Rehoboam’s case. In the final analysis though there are reasons for us to trust the superintending of God in all of these affairs, even though sometimes the purposes of God seem obscure. I would like to just read a few verses from Psalm 81 related to and concluding this thought about human choice and human responsibility for sin related to the providence of God.

The thought that I would like to leave with us is that the Scripture never interprets Divine providence as interfering with human freedom. There are perhaps some references where it seems like it does, but it is not talking about the issue of human freedom, it is talking about the issue of human placement in position and station of life where that seems to conflict. Psalm 81:11-12

says “But My people would not hearken to My voice; and Israel would none of me. (12) So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels.” Then notice verse 13–16, “Oh that My people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in My ways! (14) I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned My hand against their adversaries. (15) The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto Him: but their time should have endured for ever. (16) He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.”

That Psalm is one of many where God says, “if only you would have responded to Me in a favourable way. This and this I would have done for you. But, since you did not, you prevented Me and you prevented My providences from being exercised toward you in a favourable way.”

Beloved, we could be hindering God in His desire to bless us as we are guilty of not responding to Him in a favourable way. Consequently, the greatest blessing and the greatest providences are not our experience because we simply are not qualified. We are not available. We are not eligible, we might say. “Oh that my people would hearken unto me.”

III) *God’s providence in human suffering.* Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” I like this verse. It seems to me to be a summary of what we have been considering here. All things, whether it is the direct control of God in the weather, the direct control of God in the governing of nations, or the indirect supervision of God in our lives, related to our choice — all of those, and even the way that the choices of others affect me can be counted to work together for my welfare, if we love God, and if we are the ones who have responded to the call of His purpose.

That is where we draw the line — If we love God. It is when we carefully commit ourselves to God and choose in our realm of choice and there commit ourselves to God for those areas of life where we do not have a choice. There are those two areas of life. In one area we have a choice and in other areas, we do not have a choice. Therefore, we must commit to God and yield to God in those areas where we have a choice to expect His greatest and richest blessing. I thought of the story as I was thinking about this message, one can hardly imagine the grief that must have been part of that home, where the little maid was taken from her home and captured by the Syrians and she waited on Naaman’s wife. She was probably a girl not even quite school age from what it says from her comments and what she said to her mistress. We

can hardly imagine something that cruel and severe a test in life where a kindergarten aged child would be robbed from her home and taken away.

We ask the question, why do bad things happen to good people? Bad things happen to good people. Some of the suffering in our world is because we live in a world of sin, and suffering is the result of the choices of others.

Some, like in Job's experience, seems to be the direct suggestion of Satan, and that seems to be in a slightly different category. Some suffering in life is simply because God is allowing us to be chastised. Paul prayed and besought the Lord three times that a thorn in his flesh would be removed (2 Corinthians 12:7-9) and the answer of God was, "My grace is sufficient for thee." I suppose that the mother of the maiden who waited on Naaman's wife probably never knew the great deed her daughter did in that foreign land. She probably never knew the great service of God that she did and never knew that her heroic act was recorded in the pages of Scripture. It was to her a suffering and grief, but it was a part of the providence of God. It was what God permitted for them to experience. I am sure it was very painful for them to bear.

Do you believe that God, in His providence cares for you in your health and your sickness? In being injured or not being injured? I believe that He does.

There are many Scriptures that refer to healing as directly from the Lord. I suppose that if all of us would have everything wrong with us that might go wrong with people who are at our stage of life, very few of us would be alive anymore. "And now, behold, the Lord has kept me alive to this day" (Joshua 14:10).

Do you believe that God superintends your privileges in life, whether or not you have found companionship in life or whether you have been denied that privilege?

Do you believe that God superintends that?

Do you believe that God superintends the privileges and opportunities you have had in vocational life and business? I have known people my own age who have tried very hard to get rich. I feel sorry for them because most times a person who is out to get rich is in for a lot of bitter disappointments and some of the people that actually do become wealthy seem to have been blessed by God in a way. It is not that we should not be diligent, but the Scriptures speak explicitly about those who will to be rich [1 Timothy 6:9]. There is a danger and a snare in it, and many of them never get rich.

Do you believe that your privileges in life are God-given and that where you were called to live, your poverty, your wealth, all of these things, God is providing? We do well to accept His provisions for our life. My life is different from yours and yours different from mine. Our privileges and opportunities in life are different. However, when all things work together for good, and when we put God first in the things that we may choose, God will fit together the rest. We are not promised that some of those things will not be painful or hard to bear.

May God bless us and keep us in the coming days and help us to commit our all to Him.

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Family Worship – Article 4. **Tests of Family Worship**

Family worship is the time when family members read the Bible, sing and pray together in worship to God. These moments unite the family around the Word and provide an opportunity for godly parents to teach their children about God and to bring a good moral influence upon them.

The importance of spiritual instruction on the family level is increasingly apparent in our society where religious and moral values are rapidly being lost. Noah was a father who was faithful in leading his family in worship. This must have been a key factor in saving his house.

In Genesis 8, after Noah and his family left the ark following the Flood, we are told that Noah built an altar to the Lord, offering burnt offerings. "And the Lord smelled a sweet savour." A sweet savour is also the result today when we honour God's Word and worship Him on the family level.

Any worthwhile practice takes effort and planning to accomplish it. Family worship is no exception. Some homes have begun the practice only to drop it again because of the conflicts and difficulties encountered. Others never make a start. In the past some individuals have mocked the formal efforts of some fathers to conduct family worship, saying it was too methodical and dry, and calling it "Pappy worship." However, some of

these same individuals have failed to reproduce the faith in their own families, while many of the "Pappys" have raised their children for the Lord.

What are some of the tests or difficulties we face and must overcome to direct the family worship period effectively?

The test of planning is probably the most crucial one. Without purpose and determination family worship likely will not happen. The bedtime schedules of small children, the employment schedules of the maturing family, as well as other parental responsibilities require that a specific time be set aside for the family to gather together for worship. This time will vary with families, but should occur when all family members can be present. There are some definite advantages in gathering in the morning when the mind is fresh and impressionable before the day's activities begin. The "if it suits" and we'll try to fit it in" approach to this important family function only leads to dropping it altogether.

Dealing with distractions is another test when the family is assembled for worship. The baby cries for his bottle, the telephone rings, the doorbell chimes, the clock ticks as to another deadline — to mention a few.

Perhaps the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:6 could be applied to the matter of distractions "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Likely we will not lock our doors, disconnect the doorbell, or stop the clock, but we should have some idea what to do with these challenges when they come. Tending to the physical needs of small children beforehand will be a help. The caller at the door or on the telephone can be told politely that the family is assembled for worship and that you will be available a little later. Or, you may offer to return their call when through. If visitors are present we should proceed as usual and invite them to join us. This has been a source of spiritual enrichment for many homes and a convincing testimony to the visitors.

The test of reverence must not be overlooked. This is a time of worship and should be conducted accordingly. While family worship is usually less formal than a Church service, we nevertheless are in the presence of God. Small children should be taught to sit quietly while the Bible is being read.

Order and attention are essentials even though the children at times would rather be playing. Carefulness and consistency in family worship practices are an excellent means of preparing the children to be reverent during church services.

The test of relevance should be considered. Is the family gleaning something from the Scriptures which are read? Putting forth effort to make comments and applications which can be understood on the children's level will help to keep it relevant. The practice of reading through the Bible is good and should be approached systematically to keep it from becoming too heavy. Alternating between Old and New Testament books is one way to provide some variety. After a portion of scripture is read, discussion of the passage should follow, raising questions which stimulate thinking. We should seek to hold forth truths related to the holiness and sovereignty of God and to explain the distinctive doctrines of the Word, such as non-resistance and nonconformity, on a level that even the little children can grasp. We should also teach our children the moral values set forth in the Scriptures.

We should be alert to the test of balance. Is the Bible central in our worship? Bible story books may have a place, especially when children are small, but should never replace reading directly from the Word of God. Does the entire family participate, with the head of the home in charge? As children grow older they will be able to participate by taking their turns to read. Do we allow sufficient time for praise in song? Singing is one aspect of family worship in which everyone can participate. A fitting song can also aid in impressing the Scripture truths on the minds of even the younger family members.

Audible prayer should also be part of family worship. Here again is a place for the children to participate as the father directs. Prayers should include thanksgiving and praise as well as supplication related to specific needs in the home, church, and community. There is great value in children hearing their parents pray for church leaders, school teachers, family needs, and for the children themselves. Giving a balanced place to these elements will contribute to a family worship experience that will meet the spiritual needs of each member. Finally we may ask the question, is our family wor-

ship meeting the test of divine approval? Is there evidence of God's sacred nearness as we gather around the family altar? When we see convictions being formed in our children, hear their innocent praises ascend to their heavenly Father, and sense their love and appreciation for truth grow, we can know His blessing is upon us. Even though we may realize a need for growth and improvement, we should not waver in our attempt to bring God's blessing into our homes by meeting the tests of family worship.

— *Luke Sensenig, Reinholds, PA*

Gaining Inspiration From Old Testament Worship (Part 4)

Carrying Out the Ashes

One of the priests' duties was to carry the ashes from the brazen altar to a clean place outside the camp (Leviticus 6:8-13). Because the fire of this altar was never to go out, seeing a priest carrying out the ashes must have been a common sight.

The burnt offering was a daily sacrifice. The purpose of this offering was to atone for sin (Leviticus 1:4) and to be a reminder of the need for a continual and full surrender to God. While New Testament saints no longer need a daily offering, spiritual success is dependent on daily surrender to God.

We rightly emphasize presenting our bodies as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1) and being fully consecrated to Him. However, we might forget that a sure proof of a sacrifice is in the ashes. Ashes prove that a sacrifice truly did occur. Flesh and fat remaining from the sacrifice would hardly be described in the Bible as ashes. The term ashes indicates that all needed to be burned, that a complete sacrifice had to be made.

Sometimes we resolve to sacrifice some of our time to write a letter of encouragement. Other times we may determine to sacrifice more of our finances for the work of the church. During a Communion service, when our hearts are especially warmed by Jesus' sacrifice for us, we sincerely commit ourselves and place our hearts on the altar for a more complete burning. Are we satisfied with what is left after such sacrifices? Are there resulting evidences of these commitments?

Might we too often be satisfied with a partially burned sacrifice? Do we

follow up on the zealous resolve motivated by conviction during worship?
Where are the ashes?

Or are we like the sons of Eli, who insisted on keeping too much of the sacrifice? We must give God that which belongs to Him. Otherwise, we might share the label befitting Eli's sons, "sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD" (1 Samuel 2:12).

A scribe asked Jesus, "Which is the first commandment of all?" Jesus said, "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength," and "Love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:28-34).

The scribe commended Jesus' answer, repeated these two commandments, and said that to do so "is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." This scribe understood that the offerings were simply an aid to a more important issue—an atoned heart totally sacrificed and committed to God.

Jesus in turn commended the scribe's answer, for "he answered discreetly." Jesus' analysis of the scribe was, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." Here the record stops.

But our record is only now being written. Remember, the ashes are the sure sign of a complete sacrifice.

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SNAPSHOTS.

From the Writings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers.

Clement of Alexandria (c.150-220)

He was the head of the catechetical school in the church at Alexandria and is sometimes reckoned to be a founder of Christian literature after Justin (c.110-165) and Irenaeus (c.130-200) His most famous pupil was Origen.

On Clothes (brief excerpts)

Wherefore neither are we to provide for ourselves costly clothing any more than variety of food. The Lord Himself, therefore, dividing His pre-

cepts into what relates to the body, the soul, and thirdly, external things, counsels us to provide external things on account of the body; and manages the body by the soul and disciplines the soul, saying, "Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on; for the life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment." And He adds a plain example of instruction: "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them." Are ye not better than the fowls?" Thus far as to food.

Similarly He enjoins with respect to clothing, which belongs to the third division, then of things external, saying, "Consider the lilies, how they spin not, nor weave. But I say unto you, that not even Solomon was arrayed as one of these," And Solomon the King plumed himself exceedingly on his riches.

What, I ask, more graceful, more gaily coloured, than flowers? What, I say, more delightful than the lilies or roses? "And if God so clothes the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O Ye of little faith!"

By no means are women to be allowed to uncover and exhibit any part of their bodies, lest both fall...the men by being incited to look, and the women by attracting to themselves the eyes of men.

I say, then, that man requires clothing for nothing else than the covering of the body, for defence against excessive cold and intensity, lest the inclemency of the air injure us. And if this is the purpose of clothing, see that one kind is not assigned to men and another to women. For it is common to both to be covered, as it is to eat and drink..... and if some accommodation is to be made, women may be permitted to use softer clothes, provided they avoid fabrics that are foolishly thin and of curious texture in weaving. They should also bid farewell to embroidery of gold and Indian silks.

Luxurious clothing that cannot conceal the shape of the body is no more a covering. For such clothing, falling close to the body, takes its form more easily, clinging to the body as though it were the flesh, it receives its shape and outlines the woman's figure. As a result, the whole make of the body is visible to the spectators, although they cannot see the body itself. Neither is it seemingly for the clothes to be above the knees.

Let a woman wear a plain and becoming dress, but softer than what is suitable for a man. Yet, it should not be immodest or entirely steeped in

luxury. And let the garments be suited to age, person, figure, nature, and pursuits.

Women and men are to go to church decently attired, with natural step, embracing silence.... let the woman observe this, further: let her be entirely covered, unless she happens to be at home. For that style of dress is serious and protects from being gazed at. And she will never fall, who puts before her eyes modesty and her veil. Nor will she invite another to fall into sin by uncovering her face. For this is the wish of the Word, since it is becoming for her to pray veiled.

What reason is there in the law's prohibition against a man wearing woman's clothing? Is it not that it would have us to be masculine and not to the effeminate in either person or actions?

Deut. 22:5

The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so *are* abomination unto the LORD thy God.

1 Tim. 2:9-10

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; ¹⁰But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

1 Peter 3:3

Whose adorning let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

And an observation by Tertullian (c.160-240)

“In His Law, it is declared that the man is cursed who wears female garments. So what must His judgement be of the pantomime, who is even trained to act the part of a woman?”

The Snare of the Lustful Look

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The first sin recorded in the Bible is Eve's response when she saw something she desired. It was "good for food, . . . pleasant to the eyes, and . . . desired to make one wise" (Genesis 3:6). But it was forbidden. That is what lust is, an intense, unbridled desire, especially for the forbidden. Paul described lust as "evil concupiscence" (Colossians 3:5). It is nothing to trifle with, for it will overtake a person.

Lust is first an excitement of the mind. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren" (James 1:14-16). These verses teach that lust is of the Adamic nature and is progressive. When a look becomes an evil thought, then sin and death follow. It is no wonder the apostle James says, "Do not err, my beloved brethren"!

The lustful look has ruined many lives. We are in the season when the temptations to lust are many, so it is especially needful to make a covenant with our eyes (Job 31:1). Sinful men enjoy a second look, and many have been destroyed by the result. Even godly men have been taken in this snare; David failed to turn his eyes away and fell into sin. His son, Ammon, yielded to a lustful look which ruined family relationships and cost his life (2 Samuel 11 and 13). However, Christians have the power of God to turn their eyes away from lewdness and temptation.

What are the threats of the lustful look?

It pollutes the mind. When the mind is filled with impure thoughts, thought life degenerates to the lowest possible plane. It dwells on what one would do if given the opportunity; and sin, when premeditated, will usually find an opportunity. The wise man said, 'As he thinketh in his heart, so is he' (Proverbs 23:7). Peter taught that we must "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11).

It makes it impossible to think right about ourselves and others. When the mind is concentrating on the forbidden, logic is disregarded, common sense is rejected, and sound advice is rebuffed. Young unmarried men and women surrender proper reserve when feasting their eyes on that which

feeds the lower nature. Married people cannot relate properly to their companions when they allow their thoughts to run rampant. Subtle influences, such as young married couples holding hands in public, reveal a shallow relationship and create difficulties for others. Paul encouraged Timothy to "flee also youthful lusts" (2 Timothy 2:22).

It causes one to indulge in evil thoughts and imagine unreal situations. This, of course, is the goal of skilled literary authors who utilize suggestive words, vivid descriptions, and picturesque language to create mental images and physical impulses that are hard to shake off. Almost without exception the covers on such books clearly identify them as wrong for a Christian.

It keeps pure love from developing. True love is not based on beauty of face or feature, but rather on character and commitment. Love lasts and lasts; lust does not.

It brings condemnation. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:27, 28). The central themes of these verses are God's hatred for the betrayal of the marriage bond and the terrible consequences of being barred from heaven. The lustful look, illicit and indecent imagination, and the secret desire for the forbidden are clearly condemned.

The context of the above Scripture brings the eye and the hand into focus. The eye and the hand are culprits in adultery. The lustful look and the lustful touch must be cut out of one's life completely. It would be better to live without these two senses than to be lost eternally because of them. Although the lustful look does apply more to men than to women, both must avoid the sin of unsanctified looking as well as enticing others.

How can we guard against these threats?

By repenting of any failure in this area. Asking God for help is applying His resources. He is anxious that we prevail and not perish.

By walking in the Spirit. The flesh and the Spirit work against each

other (Galatians 5:16, 17). Life is a journey. As we walk this journey and seek the help of God's indwelling Spirit, He will guide us into all truth.

By staying away from suggestive talk, places, and people. Some delight in enticing the innocent. But Joseph "fled, and got him out" (Genesis 39:12).

By proper conversation and behavior, we should build reputations of being genuine Christians.

By refusing invitations to functions that we know will not be spiritually uplifting. We should avoid places where immodesty is prevalent. For example, we should be discerning about attending events such as family reunions and business gatherings where we know immodesty will be evident.

By dressing decently. Being modestly attired is a guard against lustful thinking and against tempting others to lustful thinking. Modest apparel is intended to cover and conceal the body, rather than reveal it.

By thinking upon good things. We must not dwell on the impure, not even for a short period of time. Rather, we should visualize and think upon good things. Philippians 4:8 gives a list of good things with which to fill our minds.

By bringing every thought into captivity (2 Corinthians 10:5). When temptation comes, we must purposefully change the thoughts that pass through our minds. Peter expressed it this way: "Gird up the loins of your mind" (I Peter 1:13). This means to gather and bind up the loose thoughts that tear down moral and godly fiber.

With a vengeance intent on destruction, lust draws one away from truth. We must detect it early and deal with it decisively and severely, or it will destroy us. By God's help we can be more than conquerors.

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