

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.

This month's issue concludes the condensed sermon on Preserving the Faith. Whilst some of the issues spoken to reflect the doctrinal standards and applications to Church regulations and standards held by many Conservative Mennonite Churches in North America, and even they vary amongst each other in application, there are applications that we can make to our own situations even though we may not live in North America or have established fellowships. Let us do what we can and as the Lord leads us to *Preserve the Faith* that He has led us and called us to within the context of our individual situations.

Time and tide wait for no man and certainly the time has continued to go by at it's God ordained pace and once again we face the Old Testament period of the Jewish Passover with it's sacrifice of unblemished lambs and the painting of the doorpost with the blood thereof to signify to the Avenging Angel of God that those within were under the protection of the blood of the lamb in metaphoric terms, a people obedient to God and ready to move out to the Promised Land.

Once again I am blessed with the picture of that Old Testament foreshadowing the New Testament Passover, the sacrifice of the unblemished Lamb of God and the shedding of His blood with which we can be cleansed (marked) so that when death comes to visit us, as it inevitable will, we will not be afraid but indeed welcome the opportunity to go out and make that journey into the Promised Land as the people of Israel did although ours is a heavenly dwelling not made with hands (2 Corinthians 5:1).

Are you prepared for the journey brothers and sisters, do you have your feet sandal shod with the gospel of peace, do you have your rod and staff to comfort you and lean upon – the Holy Spirit. Are you ready to be led by the pillar of fire and pillar of cloud by day, representing the Word of God which is our Lamp and Guide. Are you following God's chosen one Jesus Christ as He leads us to the Promised Land?

This issue contains a sermon transcript entitled Power of the Resurrection. Do you believe it? Do you live in it? I shall leave you to answer for yourself. May the Word of God continue to be that sharp two edged sword in all our lives. Hebrews 4:12.

J.v.L.

MINISTER'S CORNER.

Preserving the Faith – Letter of Jude.

Concluded from previous issue.

Part 2) *The doctrine of the authority of the Church.*

Part 3) *Separation or distinctiveness.*

Are these matters of conscience?

2) *The doctrine of the authority of the Church.* Is this a matter of conscience? Can I knowingly or carelessly violate the requirements and the established practices of the church? As long as I am not caught it is okay? Does this thing become a matter of conscience to me? Have I imbibed that doctrine of the authority of the church? If I cannot see the principle behind the rule, therefore I have no qualms. I can violate it as long as no one objects and I am okay?

Sometimes we do not see everything through the same eyes. We may think that the church, in this area, its focus is wrong and we are alright. What is the Scriptural statement? Jesus said we, “strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.” (Matthew 23:24) Sometimes we feel a little bit that way maybe. We would not draw the lines quite in the same place. However, in spite of that, it is still a matter of conscience to me, because I understand the doctrine of the authority of the church that God has given.

Where do we go to establish that doctrine? There is more than one Scripture, but perhaps not as many as for some subjects. We would like to look at this doctrine of the authority of the Church briefly. It is one of those means that God has given to the Church to preserve the faith. It is important that we are clear on that doctrine.

Matthew 18:15–20,

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be

loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

We notice that these verses address a brother to brother trespass. It is perhaps simply a fault (not a major thing) not a gross sin that a brother has fallen into. After the two that are involved, got together it seems like the problem cannot be resolved. Then the instruction is to take one or two more. When that is followed, and if the problem still cannot be resolved, then take it to the church. If the problem still cannot be resolved, then it says, "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Again, we are not talking about a gross sin or a gross violation, but finally it boils down to a lack of submission to the church. Then, He makes that statement immediately after, of how to relate to this situation. This person is supposed to be excommunicated.

Jesus says in verse 18, "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." This stood out to me in a little different way, or a little clearer. It is simply saying that when the church works in relation to God's plan, and follows God's plan, God honours that decision. If the person is barred on earth, he is barred in heaven. I think the message is very clear. God has given the Church authority to make those decisions. It continues in verse 19, "That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." The fact that two agreed on something makes a difference with God. That is what I deduct from this verse.

Then it says, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (verse 20) It is on the basis of being gathered together in Jesus' name, having brethren who are filled with the Spirit and who are fellowshiping and sharing together on the issues of life. That is the basis for the authority. It is not because we are a descendant of the apostle Peter, but it is the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

Again we can go over to Matthew 16:17–19 for another passage that speaks to this end. This is the account where it does involve the apostle Peter. This is after Peter made his great confession. "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood

hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Jesus gives Peter the keys, and whatsoever he would bind would be bound and whatsoever he loosed would be loosed in heaven.

It seems to me that Jesus was referring to the calling that He knew that Peter would have to be a leader of the Church of Jesus Christ. However, we need to understand it within the context of the Church of Jesus Christ. Jesus talks about Peter and says, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.” It is not talking about building the Church on Peter. Peter was a little rock. The rock that Jesus was referring to was a massive Rock and is in reference to Jesus Christ. The Church is built on Jesus Christ. Peter was a part of building and Jesus wanted to use him. Leaders are responsible to lead out in making those decisions. God has given leaders authority to do that, in the sense they are handling the authority of the Church. They receive their authority through the Church from God. It is imperative that leaders work with the Church. That is the only Scriptural way.

God has given the Church authority to make judgments on issues that are not exactly spelled out in the Scriptures. We find that for every issue we might face, the Scriptures speak to that issue, but it is not always clear. This is where sometimes we need Spirit filled brethren to sit together and to work through these issues. God honours those decisions and they become binding in heaven — whatsoever is bound on earth is bound in heaven. This brings us to the point where if we violate those agreements (those conclusions) then it becomes necessary for me to clear it with the church. I should not be able to rest unless I clear it with the church because I have not wronged not only God but the brotherhood. That must be our belief.

The authority of the church is established by doctrine, but then it is determined finally by discipline. Finally, if the Church fails to exercise discipline like we see in Matthew 18, then she relinquishes her authority. She finally has no authority because sin and worldliness can run rampant if discipline is not exercised in the church. Finally, the church loses her ability to keep herself pure when the authority of the church is not properly exer-

cised. If the church simply winks at things, she loses her ability to stand against the tide of worldliness and to effectively convey to the church the seriousness of sin, worldliness and drift. Maybe we speak to the issue but we do not address and work with it. Finally, what dictates the authority that the church really has, is where the discipline is exercised.

First of all, perhaps it is the responsibility of the ministry to lead out in that. However, the support and encouragement of the congregation is so important as well. The congregation has a very important part to play in that as well. Have we adopted this doctrine? Has it become a matter of conscience to us, or can we easily run against the authority of the church. It will have a direct bearing on preserving our faith, as well as preserving the faith of our children and church. We have seen it even in settings where the church has been faithful, where parents did not have that conviction, and it was not a matter of conscience to them to violate the church standard. It showed up in their children. Their children lost their way and the faith was lost to them. Sometimes we face situations where we are afraid if we work like we should in this area of Church discipline, perhaps they will leave.

We are afraid sometimes we will lose people because we take a stand.

3) *Separation or distinctiveness.* When it comes to separation it has been fairly common knowledge that probably for the last twenty years when we meet each other (especially the younger set of the brethren) during the week there is not much separation. We almost cannot tell some of them from society. However, in other groups, as I understand it, it is either mandatory or required for brethren to wear the church designated attire including a plain black hat (or at least strongly emphasized) when they go out into society. I am sure there are probably some young people who struggle with being marked like that. Yet, we see that group maintaining their youth, and we see the other group losing their youth. This is one of the effects of casual Christianity and casual attire.

We need to especially think of this thing of separation (I am thinking particularly of the brethren). Our sisters, with their veilings and their dresses are marked. However, I think the place where separation is lax is usually on the brethren. History would tell us that when the sisters are forced to bear the brunt, or carry the burden of separation, that church often does not last too long. We as brethren need to be willing to be identified as the people of God and as soldiers of the cross. We talked about the plain black

hat. We have not made it mandatory to wear it. In fact, I must admit I am part of that generation that did not pick it up. Therefore, I am not necessarily preaching the “black hat” but I have a burden still in relation to maintaining our identity as we think of our brethren. I do not mean to be derogatory or critical. It is one thing not to wear the plain hat, but it is another thing to wear something that is casual in its place. That is my burden and my concern. Casual attire does not fit with the plain hat. It can serve as a safeguard.

If we wear something, it should be for practical use and as a weather garb, not something that stamps upon us the mark of an ungodly society. Casualness and casual dress (especially on the part of the brethren) sounds the death knoll to the plain evangelical church. Let us say that these brethren who wear the plain hat (because of conscience or if required) it does not make a lot of sense to put on a casual top and pants and throw on top a plain black hat. It would not really fit. They would look like the two are at war with each other. Thus, for them, probably there is not as much a tendency in that direction.

If there is not enough separation on the part of our brethren, conviction is apt to be lost in time.

In Numbers 15:38 we see the ribband of blue principle, (*See the Ribband of Blue article in the May 2007 issue of The Australian Anabaptist*) where we see that the children of Israel were required to wear the border on their garments. We say we are in the New Testament, are we required to do that? Our all wise God saw that there was a benefit in being a marked people so that they would remember the commandments of God and who they were. I believe that the plain hat and other nonconformed, regulated, plain attire serves that purpose as well, if we are a marked people, separated from an ungodly society, not only in the way that we think and act, but in the way that we dress. The way we dress affects how we think and act, and the places that we feel comfortable in going and that sort of thing.

I remember my father-in-law, talked about the fact that once we become the consumer rather than the industry, that there is stress when it comes to our nonconformity. We tend to lose out in nonconformity. I am thinking especially in the area of brethren’s pants. There was a time when our sisters made nearly all the brethren’s pants. Now we buy most of our pants (and I am not saying that is wrong) However, it seems that as time goes

on, we tend to drift more into the lighter pants, the pants with all kinds of pockets, more casual looking stuff and pleated — the kind of pants that have the stamp of the world on them. I am wondering if it would not be better to go back to making our own pants or maybe going back to plain work pants. This is a concern and something for us to think about.

A person can buy a casual top, a sweat top, a pullover, which is a sweat top that actually looks like a tee shirt. We almost cannot tell that the brother is not wearing a tee shirt. He has a shirt on underneath. When we “line that up” with casual looking pants, perhaps a casual looking hairstyle, and as we have heard it said, “a million dollar beard,” separation is mostly gone. There ought to be more that we let stand than what we cut off. I appreciated that as a challenge for us to consider.

One young brother recently mentioned that he does not want to look like a thirty-year-old man. I would like to leave a challenge for those of you who are in that age group. Maybe it is time that we gave a new definition or a new concept of how a thirty-year-old man looks. Finally, we as older brethren need to catch the challenge. We must be an example, if we want the faith preserved. This will require something of every one of us. If we cut off more than what we leave stand, it leaves in question, “Do I really have the doctrine? Do I really have the conviction? Is this really a creation principle to me if I cut off more than what I let stand?”

Finally, most conservative groups which we can relate to do not require the beard, and the Amish Mennonite church has traditionally required the beard. However, we need to think of these issues that we have been talking about, separation, the authority of the church, indoctrination and so forth. I am not suggesting that we go to these other conservative groups, but we must adopt their conviction where ours is weaker.

Another issue is that the Amish Mennonite church has been quite free when it comes to recreational activities. However, the Eastern church on the other hand, I understand has been quite rigid in their requirements and there are very few recreational activities. In spite of this fact the one has grown and kept their young people. How are we as ministers, parents, and as a church supposed to feel about opening the door and allowing more liberties and allowing more casual wear and that sort of thing? It was a challenge to me and that is the challenge I would like to leave all of us.

If we want to preserve the faith, then we must earnestly contend for it. Being a part of the kingdom of the church of Jesus Christ, and being with the King of kings, being on His side, and being on the winning side is something that is worth contending for. In Revelation we see the panorama of Jesus Christ riding on a white horse and the armies of heaven are following Him to victory. (Revelation 19:11–14) We can be a part of that victory. Those armies of heaven, are the Church of Jesus Christ that is following on to victory. It is the greatest organism that we I can be a part of, and it is worth fighting for. Let us earnestly contend for the faith.



SATAN BOUND AND LOOSED

In the gospel era, the Christian in particular and mankind in general has enjoyed a great advantage in the warfare between evil and right. This is because the enemy of man's soul has been bound by the victory Christ Jesus won on Calvary. The devil was bound in the sense of the light of the gospel restricting his compelling influence (Rev. 20:2-3). When Christ quieted the Law by His cross, thus nullifying the devil's malicious misuse of divine precept in order to keep men in bondage and fear (Rom. 7:5-13), Satan was restrained by a "great chain" (Rev. 20:1).

Satan is still powerful. He is a "strong man" who exerts strict control over his domain. But Jesus, the son of God, is greater. "Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house" (Matt. 12:29).

Christ came to the "strong man's house," which is the sin-darkened world. He entered Satan's stronghold with the mission of liberating the souls of men held captive by the devil "at his will" (2 Tim. 2:26). However, Jesus said it was first necessary to "bind the strong man." One does well to consider the nature of this binding.

The works of evil are often referred to as the works of darkness. They are the "goods" of the "strong man's house." "Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19; Eph. 5:11). Darkness of the heart and mind are essential for evil. Regardless of Satan's great power,

his effectiveness is dependent upon darkness. One aspect of this is ignorance. Speaking in a spiritual sense, ignorance is the lack of knowledge of the truth, willingly so (2 Pet. 3:5), or having been deprived thereof, which renders one incapable of exercising judgment between right and wrong.

In such darkness, a man comes to the place where Israel was when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). The inability or reluctance on man's part to exercise keen judgment between right and wrong is essential in Satan's scheme. The apostle Paul describes this condition as follows: "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. 4:18)

Christ came as a shining light into this world of darkness. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:4,-5). The darkness by which Satan held sway over humanity could not resist or constrain the truth that men now saw. In Jesus and by Jesus, men could now see clearly the heart difference between right and wrong. The Lord brought true knowledge and light, and by this knowledge and light, He bound Satan. John says, "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). What a victory was won when the Savior, by His life and atoning death, bound man's mortal enemy and gave to mankind a basis for spiritual judgment

Though Satan was bound, it does not necessarily follow that men avail themselves of this advantage. It does make every knowledgeable person completely responsible and without excuse. Once man can see and understand eternal truth, he needs to make a decision regarding his life. He is free to do so, and the grace is present to do so. While the true believer rejoices in the blessings of the true reign of Christ, many proud and self-willed unbelievers have chosen to stay in the regions of darkness.

During the Dark Ages, the light shone brightly, albeit through the few. As men beheld the light that the martyrs reflected, many repented. But others hardened their hearts and rejected the truth. In spite of the great wrath of Satan and his flood of subtle and cunningly devised means, many times ending in torture and death, he was not able to deceive the hearts of the sincere believers. He truly was bound.

This nation America (as well as Canada) (*and Australia Ed.*) has been known as a Christian nation. It has been a nation where the typical person recognized basic Christian principles as being essential to the well-being of society. No doubt, many have been nominal professors of Christ, yet in general, honesty, morality, and respect for one's fellowman were honored and heeded. There appears to have been a light illuminating the mind and conscience of the common people, which God honored and blessed. In this respect, Satan has been limited in his effectiveness. For the blessing of living in such a land, the pilgrim Christian is certainly grateful.

This era of time in which Satan is bound is said in the Revelation to endure for a "thousand years" (Rev. 20:2-3). During this period of the world's history, there has been grace for spiritual discernment and judgment (Rev. 20:4). In this, the saints have reigned with Christ over sin and evil for a long, indefinite period of time.

Sad to say, the Scriptures indicate that before the end of this world, discernment and judgment regarding right and wrong shall diminish. When men's consciences are seared and hearts revert back to darkness, "Satan shall be loosed out of his prison" (Rev. 20:7). Who looses Satan? It is impossible to believe that Christ, once having bound Satan, would then, in the end, unleash him. Rather, as men regard darkness as light and light as darkness, what greater loosening can Satan enjoy? It is the degenerate hearts of men that loose Satan from restraint.

The "new morality," materialistic thinking, and a general loss of faith is again providing sufficient cover under which Satan can freely work his evil designs. He is thus now loosed, or being loosed. What shall restrain the devil when people lose the grace of judgment and gross immorality is tolerated and even sanctioned? When an enemy comes bidding entrance and the inhabitants prefer to believe that "times have changed" or "we see it differently now," what shall the consequences be?

Perhaps herein lies the real peril of our day. In times gone by, Christians saw a clearer line than today between spirituality and carnality. There were clearly understood standards that divided between pilgrim and worldling. Pride was something that was greatly feared and judged. This is not to say

that there is no judgment today, but it is a concern that the line of demarcation has become a broader gray area. Due to the many propositions and suggestions that the present-day Christian meets, he needs the inward binding power upon Satan to see the "plumbline" (Amos 7:7-8).

If the Christian fails to take advantage of the light that sets the devil in his true character, what will be the outcome? "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

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SNAPSHOTS.

Brief excerpts from a historical perspective.

ANABAPTIST MENNONITE VIEWS OF THE CROSS, SUFFERING AND DISCIPLESHIP.

The **Anabaptist** churches were suffering churches, especially in their formative years. The experience of intense suffering seems to have forced this aspect of the biblical view of God's people to the forefront. The real physical and spiritual suffering served as a theological integrator, prompting the rediscovery of the early church's view of Christ's suffering continuing in his members.

Old themes from the church's life reemerge. Again and again it is affirmed that suffering is the true sign of being a Christian and of being a member of the true church. Suffering for Christ's sake is identified as the nearest, most direct way of gaining eternal life. This is a view that developed out of the martyr experience of early Christianity and had been preserved especially in the ascetic tradition in monasticism.

The suffering of the disciple is seen as the suffering of the cross of Christ in a very direct and immediate sense. It is therefore not accidental or haphazard but is part of the movement of history by which God will eventually be victorious. The cross with its humiliation, obedience, patience, and forgiveness stretches from its point in history both backward—all the elect of God have suffered from the beginning of the world—and forward. It is one great redeeming and liberating movement of God.

Hans Denck, "Recantation," circa 1527.

The suffering of Christ is sufficient for the sins of all men even if no man were ever saved. For no one can comprehend (the suffering) except he who has the spirit of Christ. The spirit equips and arms the elect with the mind and thoughts of Christ. But whoever depends upon the merits of Christ and nevertheless continues in a carnal, beastly way of life, he thinks of Christ as in ancient time the pagans thought of their gods. It is as though he did not esteem the merits of Christ. That is a blasphemy of which the world is full. For whoever believes that Christ has liberated him from sin can no longer be the slave of sin. But if we continue in the old life we do not truly believe....

"The Contention that Scripture Says," circa 1526.

Since love was perfect in him, and since love hates or envies no one but rather receives everyone, even though we were all his enemies, he would not exclude anyone. Had he excluded someone his love would have been unsound and a respecter of persons. That cannot be. Is it odd that we rejected him even as before we rejected the Father? Should it not be true that he died for all simply because not all are saved? Is it untrue that the Father created all men good because they did not remain good? God forbid! Indeed, Christ was so fully surrendered (although he loved everyone without measure) that he would have suffered for nothing had that pleased the Father. That is why this sacrifice was so pleasing to God that it would have been sufficient for all guilt even if there had been a thousand times as many worlds. But when the Scripture says he died for many and then again he died for all, is not a contradiction, but is written because not all accepted the light, although it shone for all. Many deny the Lord, even though he purchased them as the Scriptures richly testify.

Jacob Hutter, "Letter to the Prisoners at the Hohenwart," 1535.

Therefore be comforted and be of good courage, for Godgives death and also life, and after the storm he restores the sun. Therefore be long-suffering and wait patiently for the redemption of your bodies. Do not become slack or tired in the race and do not look behind you. Beware that the love in your hearts does not grow cold or be totally extinguished. Do not be ashamed of the bonds and suffering of Christ, but rejoice greatly in your hearts, for you know that nothing else has been promised you for your life on earth except suffering and death, tribulation, anxiety, distress and great

persecution, pain, torture, insult and shame at the hands of godless men. That is the true sign and seal of all the pious children of God, the sign of Christ or the Son of Man and all his members which must appear at the last time according to the word of the Lord. Yes, cross and tribulation truly adorns all the children of God. It is a beautiful honour in the sight of God and all the saints; a deserved glory and wreath of joy from them. For this was the way of the holy prophets and patriarchs and of Christ the holy Lord and all his disciples, in fact of all the elect from the beginning of time. When therefore we endure for the sake of truth we must remember that it does not mean that we are the enemies of God but his friends and dear children....

Dirk Philips, "A Loving Admonition

Be diligent therefore, my most beloved, by the grace of God, to bear the cross of Jesus Christ with patience, and look with the eye of faith to the joy and glory which is prepared for you. Walk continually worthy of the gospel and of your calling, according to the rule of apostolic teaching, in one Spirit and mind. Beware of the false prophets, which preach to you smooth things and lead you into all manner of carnal license by which the offence of the cross is removed, and observe what is true Christian liberty, namely, as Jesus says in the Gospel: "If you continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and you shall testify to the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John. 8:31-32).

Menno Simons "The New Birth," ca. 1537, CWMS.

By this counsel we are all taught that we must hear Christ, believe in Christ, follow his footsteps, repent, be born from above; become as little children, not in understanding, but in malice; be of the same mind as Christ, walk as he did, deny ourselves, take up his cross and follow him; and that if we love father, mother, children, or life more than him, we are not worthy of him, nor are we his disciples.

"Foundation," 1539, CWMS.

I confess my Saviour openly; I confess him and dissemble not. If you repent not, and are not born of God, and become not one with Christ in Spirit, faith, life, and worship, then is the sentence of your condemnation on your poor souls already finished and prepared.

All who teach you otherwise than we have here taught and confessed from the Scriptures deceive you. This is the narrow way through which we all must walk and must enter the strait gate, if we would be saved. Neither

emperor nor king, duke nor count, knight nor nobleman, doctor nor licentiate, rich nor poor, man nor woman, is excepted. Whosoever boasts that he is a Christian, the same must walk as Christ walked. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.

Jörg Wagner, circa 1527, Ausbund.

He who would follow Christ in life must scorn the world's insult and strife,
And bear His cross each day.

For this alone leads to the throne; Christ is the only way.

Christ's servants follow Him to death and give their body life and breath
On cross and rack and pyre.

As gold is tried and purified they stand the test of fire.

Renouncing all, they choose the cross,

And claiming it, count all as loss e'en home and child and wife.

Forsaking gain, forgetting pain,

They enter into life.

Michael Sattler, 1527, Ausbund.

When Christ with His true teaching came

And gathered up His flock so fair, He taught them all to follow Him
And patiently His cross to bear.

He said, You my disciples true must watch and be alert each day,

Love nothing more upon this earth

Than Me and all My words always.

The world will seek to do you harm

With mocking and with hate and shame.

They'll scatter you and slander you And brand you with the devil's name.

And when for My sake and the Word

They persecute, revile, and kill, Rejoice! for your reward is great

Before God's throne on Zion's hill.

O Christ be pleased to aid your own who dare to follow and confess,

That through Your lowly bitter death

They may be saved from all distress.

Menno Simons, "Hymn of Discipleship," ca. 1540, CWMS.

I'd rather choose the sorrow sore,
And suffer as of God the child,
Than have from Pharaoh all his store,
To revel in for one brief while;

The realm of Pharaoh cannot last
Christ keeps His kingdom sure and fast;
Around His child His arm He casts.
In the world, ye saints, you'll be defamed,
Let this be cause for pious glee;

Christ Jesus too was much disdained;
Whereby He wrought to set us free;
He took away of sin the bill held by the foe.
Now if you will you too may enter heaven still!

If you in fires are tested, tried,
Begin to walk life's narrow way,
Then let God's praise be magnified,
Stand firm on all He has to say;

If you stand strong and constant then,
Confess His Word in the sight of men,
With joy He extends the diadem!



POWER OF THE RESURRECTION.

Bro. David. E. Sensenig.

Greetings in the precious name of Jesus, the risen one. We are looking to the Lord for a message from His word, something to inspire us, something to edify us as we live here in this flesh.

For a message we would like to think of the power of the resurrection. In Acts 17 as Paul spoke there at Mars Hill he mentioned the rising of the dead it says that some mocked and others that we will hear thee again on this matter [Acts 17:32] I am satisfied that the audience here today one that believes in the resurrection but I think we all need reminders of its power and I believe it's true that at times its power is not as evident in our lives as it should be.

We are looking at this subject in three parts;

- 1] Firstly: the Physical Resurrection,
- 2] Secondly: the Spiritual Resurrection and
- 3] Thirdly: the General Resurrection.

There are various responses as people are faced with the idea of a resurrection, many try to shake it off. Next to our Church house is a cemetery, quite a large cemetery, it has been there for many years. Some years ago we had a work day, we as the brethren had gathered together to repair some of the stones that have fallen into decay, broken down, and while we were working I noticed a stranger standing off to the side, he looked about as much like a corpse as I ever saw a person, old man, grey complexion, oxygen tank and I went over to see what he had in mind. He had come to see about a burial plot and in a brief exchange there I took upon myself to ask him about what he believes as far as the hereafter. He let me know pretty soon he is not a religious man and it became evident in our communication there that he was more interested in the things of this life then the hereafter and the resurrection.

But the heathen they do have some ideas about what comes after this life. There is the doctrine of the reincarnation that some have that feel like after they die they will return as an animal or some enlightened being, we see there that even the heathen realise that we will experience good for liv-

ing with a good and righteous life, on the other hand those who live wickedly will have something else coming but they fail to realise the power of the resurrection as we do in Jesus Christ.

1] The Physical Resurrection.

For the first part of the message we would like to notice a number of scriptural accounts of resurrection, of individuals who were resurrected, some of them quite briefly. As we think of resurrecting a body it seems like that would take great power, I don't think we would even attempt to resurrect someone because we know it is not our ability but to God who created life in the first place it shouldn't be any sweat to Him to raise somebody from the dead. In second King's chapter four we have the account of the son of the Shunammite who had died and Elisha restored to life again:

2 Kings 4:32-36

“And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. ³³He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD. ³⁴And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. ³⁵Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. ³⁶And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son. Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.”

We are satisfied that this was indeed a miracle, that this child was dead, it wasn't in a near coma, and that this was a supernatural happening. At times people will try to reason away these miracles as if there really was nothing to it.

In Mark chapter 5 we have the account of the rising of Jairus' daughter:

Mark 5:22-23

“And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, ²³And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: *I pray thee*, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.”

And then moving on to verse 35:

Mark 5:35-43

“While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's *house certain* which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? ³⁶As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, **Be not afraid, only believe.** ³⁷And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. ³⁸And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. ³⁹And when he was come in, he saith unto them, **Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.** ⁴⁰And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. ⁴¹And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, **Talitha cumi;** which is, being interpreted, **Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.** ⁴²And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was *of the age* of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. ⁴³And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.”

Jesus referred to this child here as asleep, we would take it more serious than that. Some years ago when my grandmother passed away one of my aunts mentioned about death how final death is, and we think of death in that way too and one of our acquaintances passes away we think of that as final, they are buried, we will see them no more, we will not talk with them any more. But for Jesus death is like a sleep, death is only a little inset in time until the final resurrection.

In Acts chapter 9 we have the account of a woman who was resurrected in verse 36:

Acts 9:36-43

“Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and alms deeds which she did. ³⁷And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid *her* in an upper chamber. ³⁸And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not delay to come to them. ³⁹Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which

Dorcas made, while she was with them. ⁴⁰But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning *him* to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. ⁴¹And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. ⁴²And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. ⁴³And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.”

We see here that this was a woman and a good woman noted for her alms deeds.

Do we have any biblical accounts of wicked people being resurrected? A question I leave with you here.

As we think of death, death is no respecter of persons we notice that also in Luke chapter 7 how that Jesus came upon men carrying a bier, here the son of a widow died and Jesus touched the bier and the man sat up and spoke and was restored to life. [Luke 7:12-15] Yes, death comes to people of all ages. I like to take notice when I read the obituaries in The Budget and notice the various ages of people that have passed away, we notice that people die at all ages, 12, 26, 53, 97. As soon as a person is born he is a candidate to die. But we want to notice how that the resurrection is even more sure than death itself, sometimes people pass away through accident, some very freak accident takes place, there wasn't much to it, the person is gone. In Acts 20:9-10 we have the account of Eutychus how he was listening to the message by Paul from the third loft and he fell asleep, fell down and was taken up as dead and how that Paul went down to him and he was restored to life again, indeed a miracle, a miracle of the resurrection power.

In the first Samuel chapter 28 we have the account of how Saul had messed up with the Lord and he was desperate for someone to help him to know what he was supposed to do in this situation so he went to the witch at Endor, and wanted to speak to Samuel. I guess I've often thought of this situation here as Samuel rising from the dead but is that really what took place? Does Satan have the power to resurrect the body? Notice in verse fourteen that the witch said she saw an old man coming up and that Saul perceived that this was Samuel. I don't believe that Satan has power to resurrect a body. He can show great signs and wonders but he cannot do any

lasting good and Saul here was not working with the power of resurrection but rather with the powers of darkness, the powers of death. [1 Samuel 28]

In Matthew 27 in the account of the crucifixion, I would like to read some verses here that speak of individuals who were resurrected:

[Matthew 27:50-54](#)

“Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. ⁵¹And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; ⁵²And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, ⁵³And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. ⁵⁴Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.”

This was not a mere happenstance, this was something supernatural, and all these individuals that were resurrected before Christ we believe needed to die again, needed to experience a second death as it were, because in first Corinthians 15:23 we note that Christ is the first fruits of the resurrection, of the final resurrection. [1Cor.15:23]

Now notice in the resurrection of Jesus Christ in:

[Luke 24:1](#)

“Now upon the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with them.”

What did the women here want with spices? They were setting about to prepare Christ's body for decay. Apparently they did not realise the scriptures, the scripture in:

[Psalm 16:10](#)

“For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

Christ, he came as far as the gate of death, he tasted death but he did not experience the effects of death even in his physical body.

I wanted to notice also [John 11] the account of Lazarus there, Jesus resurrected Lazarus from the dead, we notice how Martha expressed her belief in the resurrection and at the same time it seemed like she was rather doubtful that Jesus could raise her brother being as that he had been dead

four days already. Man seems to think that the resurrection is more likely if a person hasn't been dead too long and in this account it mentions how Jesus wept, why was that? Was that because He was lonely for Lazarus? Was it because He was feeling sorry for the family? I believe it was rather because He realised the lack of faith in these individuals that they did not recognise the power of the resurrection and that He was that power. The Pharisees were noted to believe in the resurrection but they did not recognise Jesus for whom He was, therefore what did they really believe as far as the resurrection? Many times people believe what they want to believe.

As we think of the doctrine of the resurrection, it is a very basic doctrine as we think of the Christian faith:

1 Cor. 15:1-12

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; ²By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. ³For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; ⁴And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: ⁵And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: ⁶After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. ⁷After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. ⁸And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace *which was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. ¹¹Therefore whether *it were* I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed. ¹²Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?”

Christ's resurrection guarantees our own the resurrection.

2] The Spiritual Resurrection.

Man is just more than just body, he is soul and he is also a spirit. He has a spirit with which he can communicate with God and God recognises us as either spiritually alive in Him or spiritually dead.

In Ezekiel 37 we have a prophetic scripture:

Ezekiel 37:1-10

“The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which *was* full of bones, ²And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, *there were* very many in the open valley; and, lo, *they were* very dry. ³And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. ⁴Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: ⁶And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. ⁷So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. ⁸And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but *there was* no breath in them. ⁹Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. ¹⁰So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.”

I believe people are doing this, they are trying to bring Christ down from above at times, at other times trying to bring him up from the deep. As we think of bringing Christ down from above, people try to bring Christ down to their level, a lot of emphasis on church activities, Easter egg hunts and Easter wrapping, what are they doing? They are trying to bring Christ out of that Easter egg and wrap it as their saviour. As we think of bringing Christ up from the dead, this is what people are doing when they live a defeated Christian life, if there is any such thing. There are times that we have been defeated, there are times, there are individuals and churches that have experienced defeat, what is the answer? I'm thinking about a situation right now, an individual who came in from the outside, became a part of the church seemed to be doing real well, suddenly realised that all is not well. It is like the whitened sepulchre; within dead men's bones. What is the answer to situations like this? We know we can encourage, trying to do better, counselling, some rehab, we have many rehabs seeming to spring up in different parts of the country, one of these counsellors said recently:

“We perform no miracles.” Is that news to us? I think not, we realise that we don't have the power to resurrect individuals but there is resurrection power available. Praise God for that.

How does this power come about?

[Romans 10:8-13](#)

“But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; ⁹That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. ¹²For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. ¹³For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

That sounds simple enough. I believe to be in defeat is sometimes simply an unwillingness to open up. There is an old saying that everybody has some skeletons hidden in their closet, that may be true of unconverted carnal people but that is not true of those who have experienced resurrection power. Yes, we need that resurrection power to live the Christian life, to do the difficult things but not only the difficult things, some things that should be fairly easy, I think it takes resurrection power to get up in the morning, to face life with a leap and a bound, to face each task which we would naturally tend to moan and groan about, it takes resurrection power.

Back to first Corinthians 15 again: [1 Cor. 15:13-24](#):

“But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: ¹⁴And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain. ¹⁵Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. ¹⁶For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: ¹⁷And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins. ¹⁸Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. ¹⁹If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. ²⁰But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the first fruits of them that slept. ²¹For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

²³But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. ²⁴Then *cometh* the end,"

I shall stop there. We see that Adam is unable to provide spiritual life for us, we need the resurrection power of Jesus Christ, that gives purpose to life, that gives power to our preaching. Then *cometh* the end.

3] The General Resurrection:

The resurrection of both the body and spirit. We notice that this resurrection includes all people of all times and places:

John 5:28-29

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, ²⁹And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

Yes it is not going to be any problem for God to bring back to life those that have been dead for four days or more or even for thousands of years:

Rev. 20:11-15

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. ¹³And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. ¹⁴And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Now as we think of this final resurrection there is going to be a resurrection of life and we noticed that in first Corinthians 15:

1 Cor. 15:35-44

“But some *man* will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? ³⁶*Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: ³⁷And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other *grain*: ³⁸But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his

own body. ³⁹All flesh *is* not the same flesh: but *there is* one *kind of* flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, *and* another of birds. ⁴⁰*There are* also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another. ⁴¹*There is* one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for *one* star differeth from *another* star in glory. ⁴²So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: ⁴³It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: ⁴⁴It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”

We have a little demonstration of the resurrection every time we plant the garden, plant the peas and the lettuce and the carrots, but the resurrection that it is talking about here is going to be more certain than any garden that we have ever planted. One of the things that we experience when we plant a garden is that sometimes we have bad seed that doesn't come up or there are plants that die and not produce, whereas this resurrection is going to be for eternal life, it is going to be for an eternal existence for the better or for the worse. We notice here it talks about the heavenly bodies, God's creation, how that everything is beautiful but it says that there is the terrestrial and the celestial, there is the earthly and the heavenly and we could notice the same among men how that there is something to be admired in all people, but some of them are spiritually interested and others are very carnal.

How is it with us? Are we those who are earthly minded or are we like those it speaks of in:

[Daniel 12:3](#)

“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”

Yes let us do all we can do to generate our own spiritual life but our daily choices will have a definite effect where we will appear or how we will appear on the resurrection morning.

There is also as we mentioned the resurrection of damnation in:

[1 Cor. 15:45-58](#)

“And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit. ⁴⁶Howbeit that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man *is* of the earth, earthy: the second man *is* the Lord from

heaven. ⁴⁸As *is* the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy: and as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly. ⁴⁹And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. ⁵⁰Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵²In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. ⁵⁴So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? ⁵⁶The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. ⁵⁷But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

In our unconverted state we bear the image of Adam and as we are converted we in turn can have the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, the resurrection will reveal just what we are, not who we are but what we are.

Rev. 22:11

“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”

Certainly the resurrection is going to be a happy or a sad time, it is going to be a time of rejoicing for those who have experienced the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in their lives, but it is going to be a time of eternal regret for those who have not experienced that resurrection. Those who realise they could have been transformed, they could have been born in the image of Christ of the heavenly, they could have gotten the victory. As we think of the resurrection, the power of the resurrection, it is going to be unending, the resurrection is going to bring a change that cannot be changed.

In conclusion I'd like to notice some verses

[Psalm 17:15](#)

“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.” and

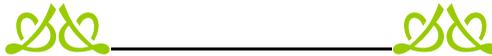
[1 John 3:2](#)

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” and

[Job 19:25-26](#)

“For I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: ²⁶And *though* after my skin worms destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God:”

The power of the resurrection gives hope to the believer, the hope of a blessed eternity with the Saviour.



Gleaned from a recently transcribed sermon.

Someone has said that the enemies of separation and nonconformity are basically four S's. I think it is noteworthy and they are; Satan, Sin, Self and Society. I think we could spend all evening taking those words apart but I think that is true, Satan, Sin, Self and Society are the worldly atmosphere about us, they are an enemy of separation, they call us to fit in to blend into the world and whether it is outright ungodly involvement or whether it is under the guise of religion, I don't think the enemy cares that much as long as we are mixed up with the world.

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