

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.

“I am thankful for the church and for how it functions in the midst of an evil world we find ourselves in. I am thankful that the prayer of Jesus is still being met as we, as a people of God, endeavour to maintain sound principles that are based upon God's word and that we can be in the world and yet not of the world.” *Edited extract from a message by Bro. Larry Weber 1992.*

These words spoken by Brother Larry Weber in 1992 resonated in my heart as his message was being transcribed. They fit very well the expression of our hearts; even though we do not have an established scriptural fellowship in our midst nevertheless we do consider ourselves as a people of God and do endeavour to maintain sound principles that are based on God's Word.

It is a daily challenge and at times a struggle to keep ourselves grounded in the faith but it seems that as we seek the Lord's face that His grace is indeed sufficient for our needs and that includes providing fellowship of likeminded brethren just when we feel ourselves slipping or being tempted to wonder: Why are we doing this? What is the point of it all? Why has the Lord not yet provided for those that are so much desiring a larger gathering of people to walk with in this journey of faith?

Then we also need to ask ourselves questions; What are we doing or not doing that is perhaps blocking the work of God in this area?

We have never been promised an easy road to victory, the road to victory is through fighting the good fight that Brother Paul speaks about in 1 Timothy 6:12 when he says to Timothy, and I believe to us, that we are to: Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called. Any fighting takes effort, dedication, stamina and the right weapons so that we can defeat the enemy of our souls. We find all those provisions in the Word of God and we firmly believe that the Lord gives extra strength to those who are facing the battle alone in the sense of a lack of likeminded brethren to stand shoulder to shoulder with us in our daily strife, their prayers are appreciated and we could say nice but standing on the sidelines is not the same as being in the game to use a worldly cliché.

Let us take heed therefore of Brother Paul's words, to Timothy again, in 2 Timothy 2:3-7: “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this

life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. ⁷Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.”

Brother Larry Weber further said this in his message:

“As a people of God we may not be responsible for the conditions that we find ourselves in today, they are perilous times and we may not be responsible for that, but we are responsible how we relate to the conditions that we find ourselves in today, and that is where the challenge comes to us.

God is looking to the Church, to us as a church today, to face the challenges of our changing world with a reverential fear of God

We look back in our society and we see wickedness prevailing on every hand. But on the other hand the affluence in our day, the modernism that we find ourselves in has provided many advantages and yet has not brought a people closer to the Lord. What persecution could not do prosperity is doing and that is causing men to become cold and complacent and indifferent to the things of God.

And so the modern affluence in which we live brings to us the temptation to be covetous, boasters, proud, unthankful, despisers. (2 Timothy 3:2-5)

Think of the times we live in and the tremendous challenges for the people of God to produce a generation that has a fear of God and then to influence a generation around us that have not been taught that fear. O to jealously labour in their behalf, to invite them to the water of Life that is freely offered to those that will receive it.

As a people of God let us maintain our loyalty to God. We need to maintain our integrity and identity as the people of God. We need to have proven guidelines and safeguards that will help us to find a safe course in the perilous times in which we live. Let's be sure that our Fellowship is with those who fear God.

Brethren and sisters let us redeem the time for the days are evil. Let us rise to the challenge of our end time responsibility, let us be people with an excellent spirit with knowledge and understanding that can face the challenges of our time that we are in, that there won't be doubts and fears in our hearts but rather it will bring a rest that God promises to His people as they faithfully adhere to the commandments of God.”

Brethren and Sisters may our final words and witness be that we have fought a good fight, we have finished our course, we have kept the faith. (1 Tim.4:7) JvL.

MINISTER'S CORNER.

An Easter Meditation.

“Behold the Lamb of God”

Part 1 of 2 from a message by Nevin S. Weaver.

I invite your attention to the Gospel of John from where our text is taken. “Behold the Lamb of God” was John the Baptist’s testimony introducing Christ. Where was he when he exclaimed this? He was by the river Jordan preaching to the people, calling men to repent and turn from their sin and baptizing those who brought forth the fruits of repentance.

Read John 1:19–41. Behold carries the thought “to fix the eyes upon, to look at, to observe with care.” Secondly, it means, “to direct or fix the mind upon.” We want to do that. We want to behold this Lamb of God. We want to observe Him. John exclaimed, “Behold the Lamb of God.”

To whom was this exclamation directed? In verse 29 John addresses his audience as Jesus came to be baptized. John was by the river Jordan preaching, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). He saw Jesus coming and he said, “Behold the Lamb of God.” “Here is the one that I am talking to you about. Here is the one who is coming after me.”

Why was this exclamation given? It was directed to the audience. Verse 31 gives the thought, “that he should be made manifest to Israel.” He was introducing the Messiah to Israel, who Jesus was — the Lamb of God. In verse 29 he points out His mission, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Not only did John manifest who He was, but he also manifests His mission, who this individual was and why he was here at this time.

The second exclamation in verses 35-36 was directed to John’s disciples. “John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!” What was he doing? He was directing, his disciples to Jesus. In verse 37 “The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.” In verse 38 Jesus saw them following Him and said, “What seek ye? They said unto him . . . where dwellest thou?” They went. They followed Him and went to His abode and abode with Him that day.

What did they observe while they abode with Him? Notice what it says in verse 41, “He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias.” We have found the Messiah. How did they identify this Messiah? I believe part of it was John’s sending them to Him, but that was not all. It says that “They . . . abode with him” (verse 39). It does not tell us what was discussed that day. Most likely, we know how it is when we go and visit someone, we learn something about the other individual. These two disciples as they abode with Jesus that day they were observing His character. They were listening to His speech. They were observing His conduct. What they saw convinced them that here was the Messiah.

1) *Why did John describe Jesus as a Lamb?* John says, “Behold the Lamb of God.” Why did he describe Him as a Lamb? 1) *To illustrate character. What does the lamb symbolize? It symbolizes the Old Testament sacrificial system.* The sacrificial lamb was to be perfect and without blemish. It was to be the choice and the best that they had. You know as well as I that lambs are used for sacrifice from the earliest times in human history. In Genesis 4:3-4 the first sacrifice, the first offering that is listed is the one where Abel brought a sacrifice. We have Cain and Abel, “in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering.” It says he brought the best. He brought the fat. He brought the choicest portion.

The lamb symbolizes sacrifice. The blood of the Lamb was the substitute that God accepted to make atonement for man’s sin. The blood of the lamb did not take away man’s sin. It only covered man’s sin pointing forward to the perfect sacrifice of the Lamb that John mentions would take “away the sin of the world.” It was a substitute until Christ shed His blood, the perfect sacrifice.

2) *What does the lamb symbolize? It symbolizes submission.* Sheep are models of submission. Isaiah 53:7 describes Jesus, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” John described Jesus as a lamb to illustrate His character. He was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). Yet, He was the Lord of heaven.

Since Jesus demonstrated the purity and trustful obedience to the Father, He was called the “Lamb of God.”

I am not well acquainted with sheep, but from what I read and what I am told, you can hardly chase a sheep, but you can lead them. It speaks of a one who was willing to follow. It speaks of submission.

3) *What does the Lamb symbolize? It symbolizes nourishment.* The lamb was the staple meat in the Israelites’ diet. Yes, they had their other vegetables but the lamb was the staple of their meat. Jesus said in John 6:35, “I am the bread of life.” He invites all men to take of Him and live. I would like to read a few verses in John 6:53. Notice how John applies and describes Jesus as the Lamb of nourishment. Jesus fulfilled that. John 6:52–58 says, “The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” This follows where Jesus say, “I am the bread of life.”

John 6:53-58 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.”

Notice the nourishment Jesus provides that of eternal life. He says, “he that eateth . . . shall live.” It speaks of nourishment, does it not?

4) *John described Jesus as a lamb because of His defencelessness.* We know that sheep have no weapon of natural defence. A horse will kick, many other animals will kick in self-defence. We have nothing in the sheep to defend himself. Jesus in His earthly life did not defend Himself. He allowed His enemies to take Him captive. He voluntarily offered Himself. When they came to the garden, He said, “Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus response was, “I am he” (John 18:4- 5). He willingly gave Himself. Peter was one who was ready to defend his Lord. However, Jesus said, “Put up thy sword” (John 18:11). He allowed His enemies to take Him captive.

Further, He allowed His enemies to mistreat Him. What did they do? They “mocked him” (Matthew 27:29). They placed a crown of thorns on

His head. “They bowed the knee” in mockery and said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” — mockery. Finally, “they crucified him” (Matthew 27:35). In all this what did Jesus do? He was as the lamb is “before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). He willingly gave Himself. No man took His life from Him. (To be concluded next issue.)



ANOTHER LOOK TO CALVARY.

A look to Calvary will change a person's life and attitude. It is good and necessary for sinners and saints, traveling on the road to the long eternity, to occasionally take another look to Calvary.

The true meaning of Calvary has far-reaching effects for the troubled soul that longs and seeks for peace and rest. There is no substitute for what took place on the old rugged cross. The plan of salvation for man was completed on the cross at the place called Golgotha. At times we hear what took place at Calvary described as God doing His very best and man his worst. It is possible that those men who crucified Christ did not know, in reality, what they were doing. Crucifixion was considered one of the cruellest ways to put someone to death. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief" Isaiah 53:10.

In chapter 53, the prophet Isaiah tells about the sufferings of Christ. He described what kind of person Jesus was. Indeed, he told what Jesus' death would mean to all mankind in the generations to come, as well as to those who lived in the past. Words seem to be inadequate to tell how Christ needed to suffer for the sins of the world, which included your sins and mine. We think of the walk through the garden of Gethsemane, the time when His spirit and soul became exceedingly sorrowful, and of Christ trying to carry the cross after being smitten so unmercifully. Yet He continued on.

Those in Christ's time could, and we today can, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). There are many hymns that remind us of Calvary. One of them says, "There is life for a look at the crucified One." Another writer, Milton Dodson, penned an impressive hymn: "Let me take another look at Calvary, Let me see the place where Jesus died for me." It continues on with the words, "Let me see the

rusty nails through His hands and His feet." That was the time when He purchased my salvation. You and I possibly find ourselves singing that beautiful hymn from time to time. How refreshing to the soul!

This look of faith became a reality already during the time of the Old Testament. In Numbers 21:8, we read about Moses lifting up a brazen serpent for those who had been bitten by fiery serpents. If they looked, they lived. In John 3:14, we are reminded that as the people were healed because Moses lifted up the brazen serpent, so the Son of Man needed to be lifted up for the healing of the world. Oh, how we seem to fail at times to lift Jesus up!

Another reason for the need to take another look at Calvary is our corrupt nature, which produces failings and besetting sins. It is good to look to Calvary at revival time, but that is not enough. Asaph tells us, in Psalm 73, about the depravity of man and about those who live a wicked life. Then he makes the assertion about his own divine awakening and how he needs divine counseling, like we do. He ends with saying that it was good for him to draw near to God. All Christians should draw near to God and think about the great sacrifice our Savior made on Calvary.

It has been a problem for man throughout ages to accept Christ as Lord of their lives. To accept Christ as Lord means a continual practice of self-denial and cross bearing. Looking to Calvary and seeing the bleeding Savior moves us to accept Him also as our Lord and Master.

The meaning of Calvary becomes an assurance to those who have lost a loved one, and for all those who are heaven-bound. The promise is made in John 3:16 that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." So when the heart is bleeding and broken, the look to Calvary puts one in touch with a caring, compassionate, and loving Savior. Jesus' words, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" John 14:27, are soothing words.

Another look to Calvary is a consoling thought for those who might have become discouraged. There are those who wait until they are close to leaving this earth life. When they take a serious look to Calvary, they find their way to forgiveness and true peace with God and man. This is a miracle of grace.

Before the Calvary scene, Christ instituted the Lord's Supper after eating the last Passover before His death on the cross. The Israelites kept the Passover in commemoration of the time when in Egypt the Lord passed

over the houses where door-posts had been sprinkled with blood. This was considered as redemption by the Israelites. The lamb that was slain was to be without blemish. Likewise, the crucified Christ was without sin and blemish.

Today we go through a time of revival at least once a year. This is a time of searching and examination of the inner man. Should there be any sin found, upon repentance the blood of Christ that was spilled on Calvary washes away our sins, making us whole again. We are made free indeed. Then we can sing, "There is pow'r in the blood." This is what another look to Calvary means.

We are often reminded of Calvary through the preaching of the Word and by articles in the Messenger of Truth. When another look to Calvary becomes a personal matter, we then worship God in spirit and truth. Our Christian walk of life must be more than just getting by the ministry, who are the under shepherds of Jesus, or other people. We can do like the poet writes, "With my eyes fixed on Jesus, I can face another day. With my hand in my Savior's, I don't need to go astray." What a blessed life in Christ!

An edited extract from The Messenger of Truth Used by permission.



Power Confirmed Part 3.

And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen. Mark 16:20.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost had put the entire city of Jerusalem in a stir, creating a vast audience to which Peter could declare the first gospel message. This teaching of Jesus' resurrection and of repentance toward God created great wonderment and controversy. Some people discounted it, but many believed. Days passed and things quieted somewhat. Then the lame man which lay at the temple gate and who was known by all, was miraculously healed. This miracle could only confirm the power of the risen Christ, and many believed on Him and were added to the church.

Great deliverance and healing yet remain for those in this generation who choose to believe and obey the gospel message. God's power is not limited, and His hand is not shortened that it cannot save to the uttermost.

Acts 3:1-20

“Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. ²And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; ³Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. ⁴And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. ⁵And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. ⁶Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. ⁷And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. ⁸And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. ⁹And all the people saw him walking and praising God: ¹⁰And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. ¹¹And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. ¹²And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? ¹³The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. ¹⁴But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; ¹⁵And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. ¹⁶And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. ¹⁷And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. ¹⁹Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; ²⁰And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you.”

Many wonders and signs were done by the apostles following the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Each one added a dimension of credibility to the apostles' testimony of Christ's resurrection. The freshness and reach of this newfound power could only confirm the truth that nothing is too hard for God. Perhaps no other miracle of that day carried the impact brought by the healing of the lame man. He was such a social burden, being brought by others daily to lie at the temple gate, begging alms. Surely he lay equally heavy on the public conscience as people attempted to bypass him on their way to worship in the temple. His only means of sustenance was through gaining public sympathy. Undoubtedly, many people wished that something meaningful could be done to help the lame man.

When Peter and John went to the temple to pray, they encountered this helpless man, lame since his birth. What opportunities the Holy Spirit reveals to us—opportunities often at our fingertips through which we may prove His love for the souls of men! When Peter and John asked the cripple to look on them, he gave heed. To give heed to God is the key to unleashing the power of Heaven in our lives. Peter and John gave heed to the gentle promptings of the Spirit of God to minister to the lame man's needs. The lame man gave heed to their request, and the result was that he leaped, walked, and praised God. Truth and grace will not be established in our lives unless we give heed to God's message.

The powerful witness left by the lame man walking and praising God moved the people. They could not help but notice the great difference in him as he held Peter and John in gratitude. The great change in this man demanded an explanation. Boldly and humbly the apostles gave all honor and glory to the name of Jesus.

We live in a world where all manner of ungodliness is boldly flaunted. Sin, Satan, and the world exert untold influence and power. Unregenerate people seem doomed to follow their depraved natures and suffer the eternal consequences of hell fire with hardly a blip of warning on the mind or conscience as to what lies ahead. The devil's lies, coupled with men's passions, create an evil heart of unbelief in much of society today and leave an atmosphere of prevailing hopelessness.

But as a hopeless end is a choice, so is an endless hope. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Psalm 19:7). This truth has enough power, if properly understood, to change the spiritual landscape. And now

the perfection of the Law has been improved upon. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Rom. 8:3-4). The apostle Paul is telling us that the perfection of the Law is now improved upon through Christ Jesus, so that believers in Him find the righteousness of the law fulfilled in them. And, almost beyond understanding, Jesus Himself says this power and perfection is improved upon yet again: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). Jesus' physical departure opened the way for His abiding spiritual presence to be a constant in the believer's life, leading him into all truth. What promise this abundant power brings to the Christian! We do well to ask ourselves if this power is evidenced in our own lives.

From the earliest recorded Bible history, godliness has been connected with blessings, power, and deliverance in the individual believer's life. The Lord told Cain he would be accepted if he did well. That is true for us today. Power is given to those who are molded by God's Word and keen to His Spirit. This power is not a power over other people's lives, but a power in our own lives to subdue the flesh and to conform to God's will.

One confirmation of power in personal Christian living today is the grace to love and lend, "hoping for nothing again" (Luke 6:35). To love those who love us is not a sign of power, but to love our enemies and to do good to them makes us "children of the Highest." Some signal proofs of Heaven's power are to overcome evil with good, to live in forgiveness, to exercise a conscience void of offense toward God and man, to bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, and to make heaven our treasure. A particular test, in these last times, is to keep love from waxing cold (Matthew 24:12). Both love for God and love for our brethren are under real test. This love is the very essence of gospel doctrine and is scriptural proof of true discipleship. Therefore, to forbid indifference or criticalness to take root in our hearts is a sign of gospel grace.

One of the great confirmations of God's shepherding of His children is for each to come to a personal understanding of doctrine that unites him with his brethren. To attend services in the same church building is not

doctrinal unity. Unity is the result of actually believing alike by the revelation of God's will through His Holy Spirit. The early church conferences, as well as general conferences held today, reveal this power and grace to unite men's hearts doctrinally. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Some questions to ponder: 1. What signs confirm the presence and power of God in a believer's life? and 2. What are the signs of a lack of spiritual power in a Christian's life? What are the causes?

From a series of 6 lessons by Gospel Publishers Moundridge Kansas.



COMFORT

In this world ye shall have tribulation. (John 16:33) Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4)

Many of us, probably all, have experienced opposition and I'm thinking especially of opposition maybe in the family where it is family members that don't see the same values as we do, relatives opposition, that can become a valley in our experience.

As we think of going through a valley I have often thought of it as a Christian going along and going through one valley and then going along and going through another valley and so on. I changed my mental picture of that when studying for this sermon and in thinking more of the valleys, that the Christian life as a upward climb, it is not a down and up and then down and then up, but it is a upward climb and the valleys may be more accurately described as we go up we are going through valleys, the mountain ranges, there are circumstances come in upon us and then we go through these dark experiences but we are still climbing. But there is times of course that we, in the valley experiences, we do maybe go down spiritually but if we can face these valleys properly in our Christian life really they are part of the upward climb, it is just that the circumstance surround-

ing us are dark and we need God's special grace and light on those experiences to bring us through, but valleys can be upward climbs.

One thought in relation to the valleys here, the sheep going through the valleys to the pasture above, that was the logical place for them to be because that is where the water in the pasture was, as they went up through these valleys they were surrounded with the sustenance and we can think of that in relation to Christian life too, we are going to a higher plateau in the Christian experience and God knows we need these valleys, there is no other way through them, the only way is through the valley and that is where the sustenance is. So God gives the grace, the strength we need as we go through these experiences, as we go through these valleys.

He says: I will fear no evil for thou art with me. That is the supreme comfort for the saint. Now it doesn't matter what the circumstance in our experience is we will always have the assurance that I, the Lord, will be with us, I will be with thee, Thou wilt be with me.

Have you ever been discouraged or depressed by a certain circumstance or situation and as you drew near to the Shepherd some of the sting of that just wasn't there and it was a comfort, and so the valleys will bring us closer to the Shepherd, if we allow them to.

Also the valleys will help us develop strong moral fiber and Job said this in Job 23:10: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. And we can allow the valleys to do that for us, that is a beautiful picture, we can either allow these valleys to grind us down or to polish us as we sometimes say.

So I think we have grounds by saying tonight that the rod here would have reference to the word of God, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me in the midst of these experiences. Isn't it a consolation that as we go through valleys we have truth on our side, we have truth with us and we can wield the sword of truth and there is a plan and a purpose for the valleys. It brings comfort as we think of valleys, and sometimes we wonder why, but to think that there is a plan and a purpose we can have out of the word of God, God has a purpose in this and there is a rhyme and reason for what happens. We can be comforted and consoled, we can read about God's power, we can read about the promises of God, we can read about God's love, we could read how others faced severe troubles, we can read about the hand of the Lord in the experiences that Job faced and how God was very merciful, we can read about a place of no trouble, we can read

about solutions to our problems, and we can see and receive direction, we can read about surrender, we can read to be fascinated, and the list could go on and on.

We have the Word, we can face these experiences. The Word of God searches our hearts, comforts our hearts and it gives us security.

An extract from a message on Psalm 23 by Brother Abram Guenter.



The Purpose and Value of Church Discipline.

Edited from a message by David G. Burkholder

The term church discipline may be used in two ways,

A] We use it as a noun as a representation of the rules and standards of our church.

B] The verb sense is the administration of Church discipline or its exercise.

It is this second, the verb sense, which I am hoping to keep clear as we move through our discussion.

The word church discipline raises various feelings in people's minds, for some people church discipline is a very ugly term it is a very undesirable part of church life, and I think as we consider that our response and our evaluation of Church discipline can be quite revealing.

You know it can have something to say about how much we care about coming out right and it can have a lot to do with how we feel about what we hope the church to be in the future.

Now that is implying that church discipline is a very necessary part of our personal spiritual survival and also the survival of the church body. You see that implied in Hebrews 12:5-6 which say: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

And so we don't want to be chafing at the matter of Church discipline because that indicates another problem, it indicates that we do not understand its value and its purposes and so we hope that as we think about this subject that it will help us to have a healthy attitude toward church discipline.

I would like to first of all list some purposes for church discipline and secondly notice a number of scriptures that speak to this subject and see how they apply to our setting.

1] The first purpose of a church discipline is that it is intended to set up the perimeters of acceptable conduct.

When we sense that the church discipline is intended to establish the perimeters of acceptable conduct and see the need then the verb sense is the administration of that. It is somewhat traffic speed signs on the highway, the signs are the law and the police are the ones that administrate it.

And so church discipline is intended to set up perimeters and then to help people to live within those perimeters and I would like to add to that, that the purpose of that is to help the Christian to have freedom in his life.

Now there is a paradox.

For some people the very establishment of perimeters or limitations to them means bondage but to the Christian who understands the intent of church discipline he realises that it is to provide freedom.

I think we all recognise that if the highways would have no regulations, if there would be no police on the highway, it probably wouldn't be very safe to travel them and we would likely be among the worst because we would always be in a hurry.

So you see we need the restraint of the very things that then give us freedom and that is what we are trying to help us to understand today.

2] Another purpose of church discipline is to guide those who do not understand.

The scriptures tell us in first Timothy one that the law is for the lawless. I think that is in a sense what a church discipline is, it is law for the lawless, now that ignorance can be out of ignorance or innocence but it can also be out of pure neglect and so a church discipline is finally intended to guide those who do not understand or who do not have the right judgement that they need.

I am sure that all of us would admit that there have been times that we have not been as quick to understand as we ought to have been and even if we understood we were not as quick to discipline ourselves and here is another purpose now of church discipline, and that is to establish a discipline to help those who do not discipline themselves.

It is to help us to do what we have not been doing for ourselves and that is what the scriptures mean when they say that the law is given for the lawless, those who refuse to heed the law internally and from within, for them the outward law is given.

3] Another matter we want to keep clear about church discipline and that is that its main intent is not punishment.

Sometimes people get the idea that church discipline is pure punishment but whether it carries punishment or not the purpose is for correction of error, it is for the salvaging of the erring, for redemption, it is education for the unlearned, it is discipline for the undisciplined and so it is intended for correction. I think we do well to keep that in mind.

4[Another purpose is that church discipline is necessary for the preservation of the biblical church.

Now we could perhaps idealise around with the idea that everybody ought to be that spiritual and that understanding that we don't need any discipline, but I think the scriptures and also observation would also prove that this is not really how it would work.

I would like to refer to a number of scriptures now that point us to the necessity of and some of the involvements of church discipline. Why it is necessary. I'm giving these scripture references in order of where they are in the scriptures rather than trying to decide which were the most important.

In Acts 20:28-31, this is Paul's parting message to the leaders at Ephesus as he was about to depart and he says to them:

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. ²⁹For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. ³¹Therefore watch, and remember.

Now this Scripture indicates that there will be those who will be threatening, attacking the church and this will be from without and even from within, but he counsels them to watch and to remember.

In 1 Corinthians 5:4-7 this deals with a grave irregularity in the church of Corinth and Paul gives direction to this from verse four and on and he says

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

There are two things that stand out in these verses.

First is that he says in verse five: To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh.

We understand this as to removing that person physically from the church membership (excommunication) but then he says that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

The intent is that such a person be put on the outside of brotherhood.

He says later in the same chapter that they are to be put away and not to eat with such a one, but the intent it is for that person then to realise where he has placed himself so that he might repent and be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. And so the purpose of it is for the personal salvation of the erring.

And then in verse seven Paul warns what it will do to the church if that leaven is not removed. And so we see here that the intent and purpose of church discipline is for the purifying and the maintenance of the purity of the body. Those are the two main purposes that are given that help us to understand the need of church discipline.

Paul then in Philippians 3:15-17, after he lays out his desires for himself to be among those experiencing and attaining unto the resurrection of the dead he says in verse 15

“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.” Here he is showing the need for unity he says we are to be minding the same things and we are to be walking by the same rule and he says there to mark them those who are walking properly for an example, but the intent as I see it in these verses is to establish unity in the brotherhood and he indicates in verse 15

that if people are perfect in their attitudes and in their desires that God is going to be working, he said if in any thing you be otherwise minded God shall reveal even this unto you.

I believe that God is ever ready to do that for us if we are willing to listen, that He is ready to work to bring us into a unity in the brotherhood and that we can then be blessed by that.

2 Thessalonians 3:6, we are just noticing these scriptures because they become what I call the Bible place for the administration of church discipline it says:

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.”

Here he is telling us that there is a time and place that people who walk disorderly and refuse to respect that which has come to be believed, which Paul calls a tradition, he says that they are to withdraw themselves from such.

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”

Again we see that even when people need to be withdrawn from you can feel the burden for the salvaging of that individual in verses 14 and 15. Whilst the relationship has changed the purpose still is and remains that such person would come to himself and find his way back into a right relationship with God and the church.

1 Timothy 5:20. “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.”

You see the exercise of church discipline on one individual ought to affect the whole brotherhood in the sense that we know that it is within our power to fail also and when sin is rebuked its intent is that it sharpens all of us that we are not found or caught in the same situation, so here it called for rebuke so that others might fear.

You see God is not only interested in correcting situations but He is interested in preventing situations and that is why Paul says that when sin is rebuked it will cause others to fear and consequently keep them from sin.

Titus 3:9-10. The verse before this talks about foolish questions and contentions and strivings but then in verse 10 it indicates again that the church is called to take action under various circumstances it says:

“A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;”
 Again it is simply calling to help the church to be delivered from questions and contentions and strivings that will have the potential of tearing her apart.

1 Peter 5:2-3: “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock.”

Now we simply bring that in as one of the scriptures where the Lord indicates that He expects people to administrate church discipline.

Revelation 2:2-5.

We want to accept these this afternoon as a solemn warning in relation to the administration of church discipline.

In verse two God points out the many right things that they do, they labour, they have patience, they cannot bear with evil and they try those calling themselves apostles but are not and found them liars then (v.3) hast born and had patience but then in (v.4) He criticises and says: Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. (v.5) Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

The startling truth of verse five here is that I hear Him saying is that if the church does not discipline itself to repentance and faithfulness the Lord will do it, and the Lord will do it by removing the candlestick, and can you think of anything more terrible that could happen to a group of believers then that the Lord would come and remove the candlestick.

Earlier on in the end of chapter 1 it shows how He is in the midst of the churches and He holds them in His hand but if the church does not discipline itself then He will.

So I think we could turn this around and say that the purpose of church discipline is to help the church to keep herself under the blessing of God and if she refuses to do that or fails to do that, then the Lord takes the next step. (To be concluded in next issue)



"How Readest Thou?"

"It is one thing to read the Bible through,
Another thing to read, to learn and do,
Some read it with design to learn to read,
But to this subject pay but little heed.
Some read it as their duty once a week,
But no instruction from the Bible seek;
While others read it with but little care,
With no regard to how they read, nor where.
Some read to bring themselves into repute,
By showing others how they can dispute;
While others read because their neighbours do
To see how long it will take to read it through.
Some read it for the wonders that are there,
How David killed a lion and a bear;
While others read it with uncommon care.
Some read as if it did not speak to them,
But to the people at Jerusalem.
One reads with father's specs upon his head,
And sees the thing just as his father said.
Some read to prove a pre-adopted Creed,
Hence understand but little that they read;
For every passage in the Word they bend
To make its suit that all important end.
Some people read, as I have often thought,
To teach the Book instead of being taught;
And some there are who read it out of spite.
I fear there are but few who read it right.
Read it very prayerfully, and you'll see,
Although men contradict, God's words agree;
For what the early Bible Prophets wrote,
We find that Christ and His Apostles quote.
So trust no creed that trembles to recall
What has been penned by one and verified by all."

Resisting the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is sometimes a misunderstood part of the Trinity, yet one of the greatest forces in the life of the believer. His presence was obvious at Creation as well as during the time of the Old Testament, when the Spirit of God came upon individuals whenever there was a special task to be done. However, now that Jesus has come and given His life for the sins of the world and then ascended back to heaven, the New Testament saints have the promise that “the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive . . . dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:17). The Holy Spirit draws, convicts, guides, reproves, teaches, and comforts individuals, and also glorifies Christ.

The Holy Spirit is powerful, yet He can be resisted. Man was created with the power to choose the course he will take. God’s desire is that all men would be saved and have fellowship with Him, but He will not force anyone. When the Holy Spirit brings unsaved individuals to the knowledge of the truth and convicts them of sin, they can either follow the course they are set on, away from God, or choose to heed the call of God and be saved from sin.

When Stephen answered his accusers just prior to his death, he very boldly stated that they in their unbelief were resisting the Holy Ghost. All people resist the Holy Spirit while yet in the unconverted state, like those who persecuted Stephen. However, at conversion this resistance is overcome, and the sinner, saved by grace, allows Christ to reign in his heart. He is then submitting to the Spirit rather than resisting Him. For example, Saul (later Paul) resisted the Spirit by persecuting the Christians, but later he prayed, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” His resistance was now something of the past. He saw things from a completely different perspective. He experienced what we call the New Birth.

When Nicodemus came to Jesus one night, he stated how he understood that God must be with Him to be able to do the miracles which He did. Jesus then simply explained the phenomenon of the Spirit residing in a man and the change that occurs. It is a spiritual change that affects every area of life whether physical, emotional, intellectual, inside, outside, actions, reactions, speech, conduct, and suchlike.

People give evidence of resisting the Spirit when they, like Stephen's accusers, refuse to follow the Scriptures and do differently than their fathers did. Sometimes they express an antagonism toward whoever stands for right and even become a persecutor. The Spirit's role is to help us rise above the will of the flesh rather than excuse our wrongdoing because of our ancestral weakness. Also when the Name of God is taken in vain, the Spirit is being resisted. Men cannot speak derogatorily about spiritual things and remain innocent before God. Though man may resist the Spirit, he will not be able to resist the call to stand before God to give account.

Men resist the Spirit by staying away from places where the truth is being discussed and preached. They may voice resentment against a friend who speaks a word of testimony and challenge to them. They may even resort to listening to loud music to stifle the voice of the Spirit speaking during quiet moments.

Paul warned the saints at Ephesus about another way of resisting the Holy Spirit. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). The Spirit is a personality; He can experience pain, sorrow, or distress. The prophet Isaiah also spoke of those who rebelled and how it vexed the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 63:10). This means it tormented or pained Him to the point that He became their enemy and fought against them rather than for them.

When Asaph wrote Psalm 78, giving a brief history of God's people, he recalled how they provoked the Spirit in the wilderness and grieved Him in the desert. Is this possible today? Can people who know the Lord be guilty of causing pain to the Holy Spirit of God? If so, how? And how can we guard against such transgression?

First of all, we grieve the Spirit if we have minimal interest in spiritual things. Jesus sent the Spirit to fill and empower us. If our interest level is so low that we seldom engage in spiritual discussion, spasmodically read the Bible, and rarely study or contribute to the Sunday school class, we are grieving the Spirit. We ought to be alive: "You hath he quickened." Secondly, we grieve the Spirit if we become careless and begin to follow the course of this world. Living after the flesh grieves the Spirit of God and feeds the wrong desires in us. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

We also grieve the Spirit if we hesitate to do what we know we should do because we cannot see where the exercise of our faith will lead us. God's

plan for us is always for our good, never to hurt us. May God help us to trust Him more completely.

The Bible refers to yet another means of resisting the Holy Spirit. Apostle Paul placed the warning “Quench not the Spirit” between the encouragement to be always in a prayerful attitude and the exhortation to continue to hear the truth taught and remain faithful to it (1 Thessalonians 5:16-23). This would seem to indicate that if our response to the work of the Spirit is not favourable, we finally get to the place where we actually extinguish this powerful source of help and comfort that was intended for our good. What a disaster for that to happen, for we desperately need all the divine guidance that is available to us without cutting off this provision for our victory.

The time just prior to the Flood was characterized by violence and evil imaginations continually. The Lord said that because of this His Spirit would “not always strive with man,” indicating that the conscience was no longer active. God will eventually let man do what he wants if he persists. “God gave them over to a reprobate mind” (Romans 1:28). Let us not quench the Spirit.

Resisting, grieving, and quenching the Spirit will finally lead to something even worse — sinning against the Spirit. This is referred to in the letter to the Hebrews as doing despite to the Spirit of grace.

We can guard against doing injustice to the Holy Spirit by listening as He speaks and doing accordingly. We need not fear to follow the Spirit; for the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost agree, and these three are one (1 John 5:7).

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