

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

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For A Conservative Mennonite Perspective

From The Editor's Desk.*The Resurrection*

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know, what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places. Ephesians 1:18-20

As Jesus was placed upon the cross, it looked like defeat. It seemed to be the greatest wrong that man could ever do. Yet, God was working out His sovereign purposes. "*Him, being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken by wicked hands, have crucified, and slain*" Acts 2:23. At times, we are placed in situations that seem certain to lead to a deadly defeat. Yet, the Lord is unfolding His sovereign plan for us. In taking us through such impossibilities and turning apparent defeat into victory, the Lord is allowing us to become more acquainted with Him and His ways.

When Jesus was dying, He hung helpless upon the tree. He entrusted Himself into the hands of His Father. "*Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit*" Luke 23:46. The Father would have to prove faithful, if Jesus were to come forth from the grave. "*Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father*" Romans 6:4. At times, we are in circumstances that are personally crucifying. We are in situations where everything so obviously requires a mighty work of God. If He does not prove faithful on our behalf, there will be no way out of the agonizing dilemma. When our Lord is so clearly our only hope and then He comes through faithfully, we again grow in a deeper knowledge of Him and His ways.

That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformable unto His death, if, by any means, I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead. Philippians 3:10-11

The overall teaching of the scriptures would lead to this conclusion that one's place in the final resurrection is determined by one's relationship to God. That issue is settled through exercising saving faith in Jesus Christ. Those who trust in Jesus as Lord and Saviour have a part in the last resurrection, unto eternal life.

Lord, I praise Thee for providing for me a place in the final resurrection. Now, I pray, help me to get to know Thee better, that I might live a resurrected life day by day, in Thy mighty name, Amen.



Across the Pulpit.

Witnesses of the Resurrection

Brother Merle Ruth

White Oak Mennonite Church

What I ought to be, although it does involve what I ought to do, speaks most directly to what we ought to be and that is that we ought to be Witnesses of the Resurrection.

With God being comes before doing. He knows that if we are what we ought to be we will likely do what we ought to do.

Now there is nothing new or novel or doctrinal about the centrality of this calling.

From the very beginning of the Christian Church this matter of being a witness of the Resurrection has been viewed as a very essential qualification.

This fact is thoroughly substantiated in the Book of Acts and begins to emerge already in the very first chapter. About midway through that chapter we hear Peter introduced the subject of the replacement of Judas, the conclusion of his speech is recorded in verses 21 and 22.

[Acts 1:21-22](#)

"Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²²Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."

The action here proposed by Peter was the selecting of another witness of the Resurrection, one to replace Judas. Essentially that is what they are here and about to do, they are about to select one of their number who like the other 11 Apostles had been acquainted very well with Jesus and had first hand knowledge, first-hand evidence that He had indeed arisen from the tomb.

Now when they spoke of being a witness of the Resurrection were they claiming that they had actually seen their Lord emerge from the tomb in His new body? Were they? No. No such claim is on record.

The miracle of our Lord's Resurrection evidently is not visible to the human eye, nevertheless that He did indeed come forth in a new body was amply proven by His numerous posts resurrection appearances wherein He did appear in a bodily form that was visible to the human eye, He showed himself to be alive by many infallible proofs and was seen of them for 40 days. ([Acts 1:3](#)).

And so they were indeed witnesses of the Resurrection by virtue of the fact that they had seen the living Christ after He had passed through suffering and death.

In those early days of the new covenant era why was it that so much importance was attached to being a witness of the Resurrection?

I suppose the most obvious reason was the simple fact that this credential was badly needed to convince people to believe something so new as the Resurrection, nothing comparable to it had ever occurred before.

When you ask people to believe the seemingly incredible you had better be ready to document what you are asking them to believe. Had we been living then we might have been as hard to convince as Thomas was. In that inner circle there were others who refused to believe until they saw the resurrected One with their own eyes.

That is one reason I believe for attaching so much importance to being a witness of the Resurrection.

Secondly being a witness of the Resurrection was in those days viewed as a highly essential credential because as those early witnesses went out on their mission they faced not only unbelief but also prejudice, an unjust stigma had been cast upon Jesus and His company. The religious leaders especially had painted Jesus very black, in fact so black that it had become a dangerous thing to even be known as a follower of Jesus. In many minds there had arisen a hard to penetrate wall of prejudice against Jesus, because they were falsely informed many concluded that Jesus had died as either a liar or a lunatic!

To convince such people that this Jesus rose from the dead was very near to being impossible. It required a lot more than hearsay to convince the average person of that day that this supposedly bad man had experienced a Resurrection.

And really it is still pretty much that way by many people, believers in the Resurrection are still considered rather naive by a pretty high percentage of people.

Now all this constituted an important reason for being or for having the qualifications of being a witness of the Resurrection, there existed a hard to penetrate wall of bad feelings against Jesus.

Thirdly, from the very beginning qualifications of being a witness of the Resurrection was insisted upon because it is universally recognised that the personal testimony of a witness carries a great deal of weight.

After a crime has been committed, after an accident has occurred witnesses are in demand.

Likewise whenever the seemingly incredible has occurred people begin searching to discover if there were any witnesses of what actually happened, they want to hear from the mouth of a witness what actually happened.

And so whether in the courtroom or outside the courtroom the testimony of the witness forms the basis on which decisions are made.

This replacement for Judas therefore needed to be another man who could speak from experience.

Fourthly qualification of being a witness of the Resurrection was insisted upon because they perceived how imperative it was to establish and defend the factuality of the Resurrection. It was recognised from the very beginning that the doors of the Christian Church may as well be closed if the Resurrection of our Lord cannot be substantiated.

The words of Paul recorded in first Corinthians 15 are familiar to all, "And 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." [1 Cor. 15:17-18.](#)

They perceived that the whole structure of Christian faith either stands or falls with the resurrection of our Lord.

They too knew about that damaging lie that had been circulated by those soldiers who had been bribed to tell a lie about what occurred at the tomb, Matthew 28:11-15. But the disciples being themselves firmly convinced that Jesus had indeed arisen they wanted the world to hear about Him from

the most authentic source that they could possibly supply, namely first-hand witnesses.

Well that was an attempt to list four of the probable reasons for the guideline that was followed when they selected a replacement for Judas; they were restricted to feel so as to include only witnesses to the Resurrection.

Why?

In the first place because in their reaching out they would be asking for a belief in the seemingly incredible.

Secondly they would be asking for believe in One against whom a great deal of prejudice had been built.

Thirdly they were operating on the valid assumption that more than anything else the testimony of a witness would be convincing.

And fourthly they perceived how imperative it was to establish the fact that the Resurrection had in fact occurred.

I am introducing now another line of thought.

During their lifetime these same men had witnessed many miracles, why did they pick out this one thing and why did they talk and preach about it so much?

Why did they identify themselves the way they did as witnesses of the Resurrection?

In reading the book of Acts why do we come upon reports such as this: With great power gave the Apostles witness of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Why did they make so much of this one thing?

Reduced to simple terms the answer to all these questions could be stated thus: They made so much of the Resurrection because it means so much! And upon the outpouring of the Holy Spirit they were awakening to that glorious meaning. [Acts 2:1-4](#).

To begin with they had begun to perceive that the Resurrection was the fulfilment of the greatest promise ever made.

Back in the beginning of Jewish history God had entered into a covenant with Abraham and along with that He began to make promises, exceeding great and precious promises.

Promises such as: In thee and thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed! [Genesis 17:7](#)

As time went on God renewed and expand that those promises for example to David he promised to raise up a son to sit on his throne for ever! [1 Chronicles 17:12](#)

Many centuries after those promises were made about midway through the first century A.D. a little company of Jews had gathered one Sabbath in a city outside their ancient homeland, they were still waiting for God to fulfil those ancient promises but the flame of hope had grown very dim.

On that memorable Sabbath day there were a couple of visitors in their synagogue. When he was invited to one of them stood up and this is what he said, and I am reading from Acts 13 verses 32 and 33

[Acts 13:32-33.](#)

"And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, ³³God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again;"

I imagined that announcement left his audience bewildered, somewhat astonished because it was so different from the Jewish fables that their rabbis had been telling them.

Here were these people still waiting for the fulfilment of what God had promised Israel, along comes this witness of the Resurrection and tells them the startling news that it had already been fulfilled!

Perhaps this can help us to better understand those words of the Apostle Peter: Blessed be the God and the father of our Lord Jesus Christ which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. [1 Peter 1:3.](#)

Hopes that had almost died began to revive as they began to comprehend the meaning of the Resurrection. They came to see that in the Resurrection an exaltation of His Son, God had made him King of kings and Lord of Lords.

They had begun to realise that God was fulfilling His word on a far larger scale than they had ever imagined. That is one reason for their being so enthused about the Resurrection.

Secondly as the Holy Spirit unfolded to them the meaning of the resurrection they came to perceive that really the Resurrection was also God's way of announcing to the world the best news the world had yet heard. In that announcement God was saying; Satisfaction for sin has now been made, I have accepted the infinitely high redemption price that was paid, the atonement has been made, the sin cleansing fountain is open, the Lamb of God by his death has in a provisional way taken away the sin of the world. That the time has now come that whosoever will may call upon the Lord and be saved. That restricting veil has been removed.

By means of the Resurrection God was announcing to all His prodigal sons and daughters the way is now open for you to be reconciled to Me! As you come to Me in faith and repentance I can now forgive you, I can now accept you, I can now make you new creatures, I can do for you now what I previously could not do, I can now give you My gift of the Holy Spirit and through Him, I and my resurrected Son will come to you and make our abode with you.

All this is bound up in the meaning of the Resurrection.

Thirdly they perceived that the Resurrection was likewise God's way of announcing the greatest victory ever won.

Heaven had defeated hell. All the evil forces that had arrayed themselves against man had suffered a crushing defeat, the decisive battle with the devil had been fought and won! The seed of the woman had bruised the serpent's head. [Genesis 3:15](#).

David's greatest son had met and conquered a Goliath far worse than the Goliath from Gath.

The captivating one was taken captive, the strongman was bound, the spoiling of his goods had begun, a great rescue mission had now begun.

Enslaved men and women were being translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. [Colossians 1:13](#)

For really the Resurrection paves the way for invasion into the kingdom of darkness. In the wake of the Resurrection spirit empowered messengers went out into all the world with a gospel so powerful that it can save who-soever believeth, ([John 3:15-16](#)) and the devil was put under such restraint that he could not stop what was happening.

And so I ask again: Why did those early witnesses make so much of the Resurrection?

Because they recognised that it was the fulfilment of the greatest promise ever made, because they recognised too that it was an announcement of the best news that the world had ever heard and because they recognised that it was an announcement of a victory the like of which had never before been one.

Well we have by no means exhausted the meaning of the Resurrection, many areas have not even been touched upon but I must move on.

Time wise we are far removed from that memorable Resurrection morn and therefore none of us would qualify as a replacement for Judas.

Does that mean that we cannot be witnesses of the Resurrection?

What about Paul? Does Paul stand on a par with the other Apostles?

The answer is both yes and no, he evidently was not on the scene at any of those post-resurrection appearances of our Lord, in spite of that, in spite of his not being there he still claimed to be a witness of the Resurrection.

And I am not ready to dispute the validity of that claim because he nevertheless had this testimony: Last of all He was seen of me. [1 Corinthians 15:8](#).

I suppose he was alluding to this experience outside the walls of the city of Damascus.

Now although our experience cannot compare with that of either Paul or the 12 Apostles we too, in order to be true to our calling, must be witnesses of the Resurrection for Christ has called us to be His witnesses and to fail to represent Him as the living Saviour tears the heart out of the gospel.

We dare not omit that all-important detail concerning the factuality of our Lord that is the Resurrection, we can be and we ought to be every bit as convinced as they were.

If you are asked: How can that be?
I reply: On the basis of your faith.

What did our Lord tell Thomas? Blessed are they which have not seen and yet have believed. [John 20:29](#).

We can be just as blessed as those who looked upon the living Christ with their own physical eyes. Blessed are they which have not seen and yet have believed.

When does our life of witnessing to the Resurrection begin?

It begins as soon as we take our stand on the Lord's side.

To find acceptance with God we must believe in our heart that God raised His Son from death to life and we must confess Him publicly with our mouth. [Romans 10:9](#).

One of the seldom thought of ways in which we bear witness to the Resurrection is a weekly practice of meeting for worship not on the Sabbath but on the day of the week on which our Lord rose from the dead, the first day.

Whether or not that is understood that does in a sense make us witnesses of the Resurrection because originally that practice, the choice of meeting on the first day of the week was a means of commemorating the Resurrection.

However going to a church service, inviting others to join you there, is not enough. A great deal more than that is involved in being a witness of the Resurrection.

Turn with me now to Matthew chapter 28 and let's listen to the words of this heaven sent Angel.

Matthew 28 beginning at verse five,

"And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. ⁶He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. ⁷And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you." [Matthew 28:5-7](#).

You have just listened to a very instructive sequence. Come – See – Go – Tell.

They were to come and see.

What were they to see?

The empty tomb, the evidence of the Lord's the Resurrection.

That gave them message that they were to go and tell.

Being witnesses of the Resurrection demands that we go and tell!

The commission that these women received from that Angel was followed very quickly by another commission issued by the resurrected One Himself and in a greatly expanded form:

Go ye into all the world and go in preach the Gospel to every creature.
[Mark 16:15.](#)

It is of great significance that the followers of Jesus received their marching orders right in the wake of the Resurrection and as they went forth witnessing and preaching the one loud note around which their entire message was based; See the Resurrection of our Lord.

Clearly they understood that they had been commissioned to be above all else witnesses of the Resurrection.

Since then many generations have come and gone but the torch they carried has never gone out, it is burning yet today and we today are the carriers of that torch.

What a challenge!

Witnesses of the Resurrection need a great deal of perseverance.

They generally do not have a highly receptive audience.

Typical of many responses would be this: You say He arose. So what! What difference does that make?

This is why it is so important that we witness to the Resurrection not only by lip but also by life.

They ought to be able, as they look upon us, to see that it has indeed made a great difference!

If they can see us walking in newness of life they will be far more ready to believe our message.

We can preach all we want about the risen life but if people can sense that our affections are still set on earthly things, if they can see that we are nearly as materialistic as they are our words will fall to the ground.

To be an effective witness of the Resurrection we must by faith reckon ourselves to be dead unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

As we do that the Resurrection power that raised Jesus from the dead will raise our quality and level of life to the highlands of Holiness and companionship with the living Christ.

I know of no better way to be a witness of the Resurrection then to so live that men will see in us the Resurrected One - JESUS!

There is no better way to be a witness of the Resurrection.



WHAT IS A SOCIAL GOSPEL?

I believe that a Christian living by a socially influenced gospel has once known the true way of Christian life. He wants to be saved but has allowed self to rule. Therefore, he becomes permissive and inconsistent. His love isn't wholly centered on God, so he uses many activities to cover the unrest in his heart. He or she lacks the warmth and light of the Holy Spirit and yet wants to be pleasant and accepted by others. Holding strongly to his opinions makes it hard for him to work with others. A social Christian has a lukewarm and divided heart, trying to serve God and yet retaining some selfish pride. The Bible teaches us that we cannot serve two masters.

The opposite of a socially orientated gospel is true spiritual life with our love set on God. Let each of us humbly follow Jesus, our perfect example. In Mark 12:30, we read, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength A Sister in the Lord.



Blest they who seek
While in their youth
With spirit meek
The way of truth.
To them the sacred Scriptures now display
Christ as the only true and living way,
His precious blood on Calvary was given
To make them heirs of bliss in heaven.
And e'en on earth the child of God can trace
The blessings of His Saviour's grace.
For them He bore
His Father's frown
For them He wore
The thorny crown;
Nailed to the cross
Endured its pain
That His life's loss
Might be their gain.
Then haste to choose
That better part
Nor e'en refuse
The Lord thy heart.
Lest He declare
"I know ye not"
And deep despair
Should be your lot.
Now look on Jesus who on Calvary died
And trust on Him who there was crucified.
Anonymous Author

Being Genuine

"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" Matthew 3:7-10.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" Matthew 23:27.

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" Hebrews 13:8.

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" 2 Corinthians 13:5.

As I consider and ponder the above verses, I look at myself and ask some questions: To whom was John the Baptist and Jesus speaking? To the church or to the world? To the professing followers of God or to the heathen and "gentiles"? To me or to my brothers and sisters, the preacher, deacon, Sunday school superintendent or teacher? Were the sacred writers speaking to the bench warmer or that struggling one? They were speaking to the Pharisees and Sadducees, the church of their day—to me! I must first recognize the evil in my own heart.

Vipers! Am I just slithering along, complaining of the things I am asked to do, biting my brother or sister when they get too close or perhaps step on me? When I think I am threatened, I may hiss out a grumble of how they ought to crawl a mile in my shoes. Then they would know how neglected or mistreated I really am. All the while I try to blend with my surroundings so I'll slip by without being asked to do more and hoping my spirit isn't noticed (you know what a ruckus it would cause if I were noticed). If I were detected, the old man of self would have to die.

Whited sepulchres! Why didn't Jesus just say, "Indeed, they appear beautiful outwardly"? Can't we just overlook the insides? After all, those dead bones were once alive.

Let's ponder some more, who were those once lively bones? There is Mr. Enthusiasm. He died a short time after that good experience he had. Mrs.

Willing Worker died after the job turned into more than she expected or from having to pull one too many shirker's load. Minister and Mrs. Zeal for the Lord and His kingdom were overcome by the burden left when Mr. Enthusiasm and Mrs. Willing Worker died.

Then there were Brother Want to Help and Sis. Love for the Brotherhood with youthful Peace and Joy. And let's not forget Grandfather Commitment and Grandma Renewed Vows. All these were once alive and well. Where are they now?

Going on to "all uncleanness," where does that come in? Well, of course, when all those good intentions and resolves to do better begin to decay, they aren't so pleasant to behold. Is my neglect and self-righteousness so noticeable? After all, I come from good stock. My parents and grandparents have all been faithful church members and well thought of in the community. I can trace my ancestry clear back to my great-great-grandfather. That ought to stand for something! But, no, I can only beg forgiveness and pray God that I may be washed in Jesus' blood and be made clean. I pray that He would renew a right spirit within me, that those dead bones may have His Spirit upon them and life restored, as in Ezekiel 37.

Let us be careful to not judge ourselves by our good intentions, but rather let God show us what we really are. When we shall stand before God's throne and judgment bar, unless we have Jesus Christ as our advocate, we will stand alone. May we "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" Hebrews 12:12-13.

May we pray one for another.

Brother Chris.



What Does The Lord Require?

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Micah 6:8

Micah's question comes to us many times in life, perhaps every day. If we are on the altar and want to please God, we want to faithfully fulfill His requirements, and there is a special blessing as we do so. Oh, how different the history of God's people would be if they had always been faithful in doing this!

In the prophet Micah's time, Israel and Judah had failed to obey the Lord and had fallen into sin and idolatry. Micah came to them with a strong warning for their sins and pointed them back to the God of heaven who had done so much for them. But they failed to repent, and so they went into captivity under wicked rulers and nations for many years. It was a bitter reaping, and only a remnant returned.

Many years earlier God had delivered the Israelites from Egypt, but now they still had too much Egypt in their hearts. Idolatry was strongly condemned by the prophets, and under King Josiah, it was outwardly destroyed. But when his son became king, they again went back into idolatry. We think it very foolish to worship idols, but isn't idolatry the worship of earthly things? Can our hearts be right with God and yet have a strong attachment to material things?

The worship of self, which is pride, can be so very deceiving. No wonder that Jesus said we must deny self, Matthew 16:24. The Scriptures teach us that covetousness is idolatry, Colossians 3:5. The command against covetousness is a far-reaching one—it goes into every area of our lives. If I harbor evil desires, covetousness reveals what is in my heart. God is so worthy that we love Him with all our heart, and this is a requirement of His Word, Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:36. What a great challenge it is to keep God first in our lives and to be sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

There is a very strong teaching in our time in so-called Christianity that all that is required is to believe on Jesus and the other doctrines and teachings are not important. But the Scriptures teach us that we cannot disregard any part of His Word. Jesus was very clear that just to say "Lord, Lord" and not obey His Word will not pass the Judgment, Matthew 7:21-24; John

12:48. We believe that all of God's Word is authentic and must be adhered to and that the apostles' writings are authentic as well, Ephesians 2:20; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21. The apostles were with Jesus for three years, and Christ's teachings were remembered and brought back to them later by the Holy Spirit, John 14:25-26.

In 2 Chronicles 7:14, God gave to Solomon a very clear outline of what was required to find mercy with God. Also in the New Testament, it is clearly taught that true repentance, faith, confession of sin, and restitution are required to find salvation, and that obedience must follow if we are to keep that which He has committed to us, Matthew 3:2; 4:17; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; Revelation 2:16. As to obedience, read John 14:15, 21; and 15:10. All through the Scriptures we see that God's blessings and His abiding presence were based on obedience.

The New Testament has clear teaching on the requirements of each area of responsibility in this present life, Colossians 3:18-22. Requirements for ministers and deacons are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-13; 4:11-16; and Titus 1:6-9. By emphasizing these clear teachings, we do not weaken the basic teaching that only by the blood of Christ are our sins blotted out. It is very clear that God has given us a very important part to fulfill if we would have the blood applied. The power of choice is given to us, and God will force no one to accept His great plan. But if we choose to reject His wonderful plan, we must pay the penalty. Oh, the great wisdom of choosing rightly and the blessings that follow now and in eternity!

When our country's government was established in the beginning and the Constitution formed, there were many laws involved. These laws were to be for direction in all areas of life and are binding on all citizens and those dwelling in this country. These laws were formed with much discussion, concern, and, even perhaps prayer. It has proven to be a very wise set of laws. An article of the Constitution can only be amended by a referendum of the people.

Sadly however we are living in a time when many laws and rules are being challenged. This is not boding well for our country. When we have a country of law-abiding citizens, it goes well, but if not, it becomes a great problem.

In God's kingdom, the Holy Bible is our constitution. Through the ages men of God have faithfully endeavored to interpret it correctly. We believe that today the church of God has endeavored to teach, follow, and obey this

true faith delivered to us, Ephesians 2:20; Jude 3; John 17:17. Members of this body have a very precious privilege to be partakers of this true faith, but they also have a great responsibility to be faithful to it. The ministry has a very important place to fill in the body of Christ by being examples to the flock. They are to be sound in faith, teaching, preaching, warning, and admonishing faithfully.

For some years there has been a deep concern that we need to be more faithful in keeping a right standard in the church. We are living in a world of many enticements, and Satan has many ways to lure us away from a true, Spirit-led life. Satan seems to be loosed and has many tactics, which he is using. There are so many things to buy that accommodate this present life. The carnal man is drawn to these things. Money is much more plentiful than in earlier times, which places more temptation before our children and youth. Then along comes modern technology with its many temptations, making available awful ungodliness. Will we be able to stem the tide of worldliness in these perilous times?

In the past years, we have witnessed a great falling away in Christendom. The Apostle Paul told Timothy, and it is for us today too, this would come to pass before the end of time, 2 Timothy 3:1-7. And the Apostle Peter's exhortation in 2 Peter 3 has a similar thought and he tells us about God's patience with people giving them an opportunity to repent and exhorts us to holiness of life without which no man shall see the Lord. It speaks of the danger of drifting away from Spirit-led living and the power to deal with this situation.

In Psalm 48:11, the daughters of Zion were glad when they saw the righteous judgments of God being carried out. They were the ones to whom the future generations would be born, and if Israel failed, how could they rejoice?

May we all press on with new determination, faith, and courage to keep and maintain the true faith until the end of time. May we be willing to pay the price of loving obedience to God's will so that we can have the precious leading of the Holy Spirit to deal with the spirits that lead astray, even in the smaller areas of life so that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all *men* have not faith. 2 Thessalonians 3:2.

May we value the true faith very highly.

CONCERNING THE INCARNATION OF JESUS CHRIST

The doctrine of the incarnation of Jesus Christ is based on many portions of Scripture. The primary focus is on the deity of Christ, He being "the Word [that] was made flesh" John 1:14. This has led to the expression that Jesus was conceived in Mary, but His flesh was not of her. Jesus had a special human body, prepared by God for His divine mission. As to the Virgin Mary, she indeed continues to be called blessed, Luke 1:28.

Scriptures foundational for the teaching that the Son of God became flesh are:

"But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" Matthew 1:20-23.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" John 1:1, 14.

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world ... This is that bread which came down from heaven" John 6:51, 58.

"Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me" Hebrews 10:5.

Other passages referring to this are:

"God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" Romans 8:3.

"But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" Philippians. 2:7-8.

The above passages are considered primary to this doctrine, to which other portions of Scripture can be added or reconciled.

The brethren of martyr times, that is, of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, clearly stated their understanding of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, inasmuch as related to where the body of Christ came from. Menno Simons wrote, concerning the body of Jesus, "We say and teach according to the plain testimony of John, that the Word was made flesh, not of Mary, but in Mary."

Dietrich Philips wrote, "In all these words we see and note clearly that Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the living God, John 1:18; 3:16, became man in Mary, not by human seed which is corruptible, 1 Peter 1:23, but by the eternal incorruptible seed of God, the heavenly Father (1 John 3:9), through the power and operation of the Holy Ghost."

The Thirty-three Articles of Faith, drawn up in 1600 when the church was under heavy persecution, states: "His flesh or body became flesh, not of Mary or of any created substance, but only of the Word of life which had come down from heaven" (Art. 14, p. 47).

The inquisitors, in their investigations of the martyr brethren during the sixteenth century, often raised the matter of the incarnation of Christ. The answers the brethren gave were always consistent with the preceding testimonies. Jelis Strings, who was imprisoned and put to death for the faith in 1562, referred to the craftiness of the inquisitor who questioned him. This interrogator referred to Hebrews 2:16, claiming that Jesus took on him the seed of Abraham. Jelis answered, "This also is changed; it ought to read: He receiveth not angels; but he receiveth the seed of Abraham as his children." His testimony agrees with most versions of Scripture. One respectable translation reads, "For he succored not the angels, but he succored the descendents of Abraham."

Galatians 4:4 is in a similar vein. This passage, in the King James Version, reads, "made of a woman, made under the law." Other versions say, "born of a woman, born under the law."

The point that the sixteenth century brethren make so powerfully is that redemption could only be brought about in the deity of Christ. For the atonement to take place, one of the Godhead needed to die. Sinful flesh would have served no purpose.

The Scriptures, however, amply witness to Jesus' humanity. He is called the last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45). He was truly God and truly man. He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Only in one point was His humanity excepted from ours: He was not

tempted from within.

This understanding of the incarnation as explained so far was the general explanation of the Mennonite Church in Holland during the sixteenth century. The Mennonite Encyclopedia states that during the seventeenth century the more liberal groups began giving up this doctrine, but the more conservative Mennonites continued to adhere to it.

Someone has suggested that this interpretation is, or is related to, an ancient heresy called Docetism, an early Christian doctrine that the body and sufferings of Christ were only apparent, and not real, and that after the resurrection He appeared in a spiritual body." Such a teaching is contrary to the obvious fact that Christ had a real, physical body. The apostle John says Christ was He whom "was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life" (1 John 1:1).

There is no Docetism in the old Anabaptist interpretation of Christ's deity and humanity.

We come yet to another aspect of church doctrine. The apostle Paul wrote, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14). To maintain consistency and stability of doctrine, we find it helpful and necessary to take into account that great "cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1) and the testimony they have left us. We have learned to especially respect the testimony of the Anabaptist-Mennonite church of the sixteenth century. The light of the gospel shone very brightly in the brethren of that time. They witnessed faithfully to the truth through fire and sword, and often at the cost of their lives.

We have not been blessed and will not be when we have begun to override the doctrinal declarations of the church in those times.

May we continue to uphold the truth of God's Word



BEING A LIGHT UNTO THE WORLD

"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" Proverbs. 4:18.

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." Matthew 5:14.

What comes to mind as one thinks about the power of God? A daffodil springing forth from the cold earth, a violent storm, or the delicate features of a newborn child? Or do our thoughts go back two thousand years to the days when Jesus performed many miracles among the people?

One can picture Jesus and His followers as they traveled, walking along those, perhaps, hot and dusty roads. As they approached the villages, we can see the people thronging about, bringing sick and diseased relatives and friends just to touch the hem of His garment, or to allow His shadow to pass over them. Or we can envision a large crowd, five thousand or more, following, hungry and tired, and Jesus feeds them all miraculously with just a few loaves and fishes.

We can travel farther on down the road to where Martha is running to meet Mary and her friend, Jesus. We see her as she meets Him, crying, "If only Thou hadst been here." And we see Him, Jesus, weeping with her. We travel with them together to the grave and hear Jesus cry out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth."

We solemnly pass on to the garden of Gethsemane and view the agony of our Saviour and Friend. We walk the path Jesus trod, battered and bloody, faltering under a heavy load. It is a dreadful scene as we see Him hanging there. We hear Him cry out, "My God, My God ..." As we stand beside His mother and the other women, we behold Him afar off, and we feel with the disciples the utter despair. No miracle seems near.

Then a scene so vivid in one's mind—Mary Magdalene, early in the morning, hastening down the path with a few spices in hand. We see her surprised to see the stone rolled back. We see her running back to tell Peter and the others. A spark of hope pierces their darkened world. Could it be?

We can walk the road to Emmaus with the two men and see another join them. They urge Him to stay and eat. The "Stranger" breaks bread, and their eyes are opened. It is Jesus! Hope turns to pure joy. Again we see the power of God—Jesus has risen!

After Jesus' ascension, we travel back to Jerusalem where a bustling city is housing Jews from every nation and where the apostles are waiting for,

yes, another miracle. Cloven tongues of fire appear upon them. We see Peter as he stands up with the eleven and lifts up his voice, preaching of his risen Lord.

We journey on, on the many paths the chosen apostles traveled, also performing miracles in Christ's name. We think of Stephen, his face as that of an angel as he stood before the council. And when they were cut to the heart, furious, the Word says of Stephen, "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God."

We can walk with Saul a short distance on his way to Damascus and see the light from heaven and hear a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" We see Saul change directions, walking a new path as a changed man. Another miracle.

We continue on our journey through time to the early church and the persecutions, where evil rulers commanded their soldiers to kill and destroy those faithful followers of Jesus. Faithful men, women, and youth stepped toward the stake, trusting God. God-fearing mothers and fathers encouraged each other to not recant. We see a bloody path, but yes, only traveled because of the power of God.

As we continue in time, we think of our ancestors and the path they took to maintain their Christian beliefs: nonresistance and other principles of faith. It was a path that brought them across the waters to a new land, which brings us to today. What path are we on? What miracles are we beholding? "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" Hebrews 12:1.

In Philippians 3, we are encouraged to press toward the mark, toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. In yet another verse, we read that we should be comforted, knowing that brethren in other places are suffering also. This is an encouragement given as we travel along this same road. No, it is not an easy road. A certain song says, "I saw a way-worn traveler, in tattered garments clad: and struggling up the mountain, it seemed that he was sad."

Can we see the miracles, the power of God today? Maybe a sincere prayer uttered by a mother and answered when a child comes and acknowledges his wrong, or maybe a softening of our own hearts when kneeling humbly we confess to God our wretchedness?

Can we also see others healed as they reach out in faith, believing, and can we also see our need of healing as we fall into wrong attitudes, maybe not forgiving, envy, or other maladies? Then we, too, can hear Jesus say, "Be of good cheer, thy faith hath made thee whole."

Can we, too, have our hunger satisfied, as did the five thousand? Jesus says in John, "I am the bread from heaven. He that believeth on me shall never hunger." Is our thirst satisfied as we also drink of the water gushing forth from the rock, Christ Jesus? Can we, together with Mary and Martha, experience the resurrection power in our lives, as well as in others, as we simply obey and believe? Can we, too, along with Mary Magdalene, hasten to the garden early in the morning, after hopes are dashed, and hear the Master ask, "Why weepest thou?" Can we, too, walk the road to Emmaus, feeling forsaken, perhaps in a deep struggle, and yet trust that Jesus is near, walking beside us? Jesus promises, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Do we also experience Pentecost in our everyday lives—a humble prayer spoken and the resulting peace, a song in our hearts as we work?

Are we, too, trusting God and not recanting when spiritual persecution wields its ugly sword? Jesus says, "Fear not those that kill the body, but fear him that can destroy both body and soul in hell."

Oh, let us join this great crowd of witnesses in this walk of simple faith, so that we, too, can behold the miracles. Yes, 'tis true, it is a road fraught with peril, hardships, bleeding feet, and disappointments. But as we read in Hebrews, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame ..."

So let us press on, because this road will take us to the Promised Land, where together with all those traveling before us, we will sing the song of the redeemed.

A Sister from Kansas



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