

# 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 Anabaptist Perspective

**From The Editor's Desk***THE RESURRECTION.*

Remembrance, Recollection, Reminiscence, these are words that we can apply to the Easter period that we are entering.

We need to remember that if Christ had not been sent by God the Father, John 3:16, we could still be awaiting that sacrificial atoning death of Jesus Christ when He shed His blood for the atonement of sin, His resurrection from the dead was the final proof of His victory over sin and we too have been given access to that victory, 1 Corinthians 15:57.

We should consider that God has provided us with the means to remember and recollect past events either in our own lifetime or in ages past and yes there are events that in our own personal experience we would rather forget but they form part of our experience and can be used to mould our character and also assist others in using those experiences to avoid the pitfalls of life. Whilst remembrance and recollection often are our own personal choice the idea of reminiscence is more of a collective or interpersonal nature through the recollection of past events or experiences in speech or writing or other visible external means by others and also ourselves.

Reflecting on these words remembrance, recollection and reminiscence we can look at Scripture as the perfect vehicle when it comes to understanding faith in Christ Jesus, His atoning sacrifice and resurrection. We believe the whole of Scripture is how God through the Holy Spirit inspired the writers to put down for all ages and all peoples those things which God wants us to remember, recollect and reminisce on.

We can all acknowledge that there are special events in our life or in history that we do remember and reminisce on, it is good to think on those special occasions how they have shaped our lives. In our Christian life there are many things that we can receive from God's Word that will put us in remembrance not only of the important events which have offered us the hope of salvation but will bring us to the place of taking up that offer of salvation and ultimately worship the King of Kings and Lord of lords, 1 Timothy 6:11-16.

*J.v.L*



*From the Pulpit*

## ***Strive to Enter In***

*From a message by David G Burkholder  
Danskin Mennonite Church*

We are certainly privileged this morning to be gathered in the name of the Lord and to worship Him.

It is certainly our desire that the Lord would continue to call us as He has been through the Sunday school and the devotional meditation to a life of yieldedness a life of faithfulness to Him.

You may turn with me to Luke 13 for a basis for the message this morning we are going to especially be centering our thoughts around the phrase in verse 24 where He says: Strive to enter in.

Strive to enter in, that is what I have titled the message this morning because I believe it helps us to see the reality of the Christian life, the fact that the Christian life is not just an easy street or that it is just the kind of situation that people will sort of float their way into heaven and somehow end up there and not know how they got there but rather that there is a striving side to the Christian life.

Sometimes when we need to strive in the Christian life we might wonder what is wrong. Well it is true that there are things that God wants us to put away and deal with that we do not need to strife with you know there is a sense in which sometimes we might strive with our carnal nature and with our flesh far more than God wants us to because He wants us to crucify and to deny it in that sense but there is a real sense in which the Christian life is a life of striving and the reason that Jesus made this statement here in verse 24 was because of a question that was asked in verse 23 and I would like to consider that question a bit at the out start.

It says: Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? **Luke 13:23.** Somebody asked that question: Lord are there few?

Now we could do a little supposition here and suppose why did this man ask this question: Why are there few that be saved?

No doubt he was hearing and seeing what Jesus had done, Jesus was giving parables about the Kingdom of God in verse 18 and on and I wonder whether this man may not have been asking the question somewhat in reverse in the sense that he was trying to find out how easy it would be to get to heaven. I think he was calculating a bit are there going to be many saved or are there going to be few saved?

And I think from that deduction he was going to determine the severity with which he would have to deal with his own life in order to be saved and I think there is too much of that can go on in our own minds if we are not careful.

You see this man was asking are there few going to be saved or are there many going to be saved? And I think if Jesus would have said there are many going to be saved he would have cut himself a little more slack and thought well then there is a good chance that I will be among them.

But Jesus did not answer the question as He did many other times when people asked, He did not answer this question by way of numbers but rather He gave to this man a personal challenge instead but I think what He was saying to the man was instead of you trying to figure out the percentage or the calculation by which you might get into heaven He gave him a personal challenge and said: Strive to enter in.

And that is where we want to allow the Lord to speak to us this morning because He was showing that it is not going to be based on numbers and percentages but rather when Jesus said strive to enter in He was making it clear that people will not be surprised if they enter heaven, they are not going to somehow end up there by way of a casual approach or being indifferent but that people are going to get into heaven because of conscious effort and as Brother John said by choice.

The word strive is quite an interesting word it means such things as to labour fervently, it means to suffer, it means to fight and the interesting thing to me was the fact that the Greek word, I looked it up in a word study book, the Greek word just looking at it quickly looks very near to the word agonise (*agōnizomai* Strong's Greek & Hebrew Dictionary) and I think that is a fair definition of the word strive when people agonise about entering in.

You know when we agonise over something we are concerned, we are careful, we struggle with that in our own souls and we are concerned about it, it (strive to enter in) gives that picture.

I would like to compare just a few other scriptures that are similar to this verse in chapter 16 of this same book and in verse 16 Jesus said it like this: The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. **Luke 16:16.**

People get thereby pressing into it not by slipping and sliding, not by just moving along casually but they get there because they press.

Matthew 11 also gives a similar picture in verse 12: And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. **Matthew 11:12.**

Again you have that picture of strenuous effort not just taking it easy and so this morning as we come to counsel in light of those scriptures I would like to approach the message from the basis of not asking ourselves the question whether we are surviving as Christians, am I merely surviving but rather am I still striving?

Am I still striving in all sincerity and in all honesty to enter into the kingdom of God? Because if we are not striving it certainly is going to be that we are on dangerous ground.

There are three thoughts that we would like to pursue from this phrase this morning strive to enter in.

We first want to consider the goal that we are striving for, unless we have a clear picture of what we are striving for we are not going to be near as concerned.

But now we want to begin with the idea of strive to enter in at the strait gate. We are called to strive to enter the gate. You see the gate suggests conditional entry, it suggests limitation.

You know when you come to a gate unless that gate opens or you have the facility to open it, and let's not think we'll take a chance and pick the lock or ram it or something, this gate certainly suggests limitation, and it suggests condition it means that unless we have the code or the access key.

Recently we went to visit a man who had his place guarded with a gate and he had a code he had buttons to press at the gate and if you knew the code you could get in and if you did not know the code you could not get in and so on. His son was with me and I pressed the code and he said well that one didn't work, then he said try this one and then the gate opened.

Well you see a gate means that there is guarded access and so we are called here to strive to enter in at the strait gate, it is a place that is guarded.

The word strait also means that it is narrow; it means that we cannot enter at our own terms it means that we will enter at the terms of the one who is in charge of the gate and so He says we are to strive to enter in at the gate.

Well as I suggested a bit ago one of the reasons that we want to get past the gate is because of what is beyond the gate and I would just like for us to think about that a bit this morning that in our striving to enter in at the strait gate we need to have a clear vision of what is beyond the gate because if we decide what is beyond the gate is not important and it is not worth any effort that is how we will act but you see the question in verse 23 surrounded the question of being saved.

He asked the question: "Well are there few going to be saved?" and so the place that is beyond the gate is the place where those go who are saved in a right relationship with God.

Now I would just like to turn to Revelation 21 and make a few observations here in this chapter that give us a picture of at least a measure of what to expect beyond the gate.

Now there are many things we could point out here but I thought the last verse arises it so well it says: <sup>27</sup>And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. **Revelation 21:27**

Now here he is telling us that beyond the gate that is a place where there is no sin which tells us obviously that no sin will go through the gate. He also tells us in this chapter and especially in verses such as verse four that there is no sadness beyond the gate it says God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

**Revelation 21:4.**

There will be no sickness, there will be no separation, there will be no sorrow, there will be no funerals, there will be no pain because all those things he says are taken away and so this morning if we are going to be interested in going through the gate we need to be focusing our attention on the experiences beyond the gate and there is a measure in which the Communion is especially intended to help us to understand that there is much more beyond if we are willing and ready to lay eyes and hands and our hearts upon it.

But we must realise that we have an enemy and we can simply summarise that this morning in what Jesus told Peter in **Luke 22:31** He said Satan has desired to have you.

And therein lies the battle dear ones that there is a city, there is a place, there is a place for us to be if we entered through the gate but let us remember this morning that those do not enter through that gate are going to enter through a gate as well but it will be to their eternal destruction and eternal separation from God but this morning God wants us to enter in through that strait gate.

And so coming back to our verse in Luke 13 I would like next to discuss what I call some goads, reasons to strive, there are positive and there are negative reasons and it choses that word for several reasons but in Ecclesiastes 12 it will give you the understanding of the word.

**Ecclesiastes 12:11** says: The words of the wise *are* as goads, Goads as they used them in the days of the scriptures were long pointed sticks which they used to prod their animals and I am using the word goads here this morning, goads for us to strive for reasons for us to strive and you see here he says in Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of the wise *are* as goads, they give us proddings, they give us reasons to do something and reasons to move.

Go back here now to the passage in Luke 13 and from the context draw a number of things that I think are going to help us to become serious about entering in. In verse 24 He says: Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able, **Luke 13:24**.

You see He makes a difference here, He says there will be strivers and there will be seekers. And you do not need to go very far to find seekers you go and ask people well would you like to go to heaven? Well of course I would like to go to heaven. And He says here there are people that are going to be seeking to enter in and so I think this morning the first goal that we ought to have in our matter of striving is that there is a possibility of entering heaven which is the positive side and then on the negative side there is a possibility of not being able to enter. That ought to strike a deep concern in our souls should it not because obviously He says that the seekers will be many and they will not be allowed and so He indicates here that while the possibility is here for us to enter heaven the reality is that it is not going to be easy, it is not going to be handed to people on a platter in fact Jesus said it is like going through the eye of a needle.

Now He was referring to the rich man but the truth of that statement was that Jesus said you cannot, it is like going through the eye of a needle I believe He meant is that we cannot do it without Christ, we cannot go through the gate without Christ and the opposite side of that is that we cannot do it with the flesh.

You see if we hope to enter heaven we cannot do it without Christ and we cannot do it with the flesh.

You see the problem with the rich man in that setting was the man was not ready to put aside his riches, he clung to his riches, he chose his riches instead of Christ and because of that he could not enter in.

And so we cannot do it without Christ and we cannot do it with our flesh and so there are going to be many He says who seek but shall not be able.

In verse 25 there is another solemn truth that ought to goad us on He says: When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: **Luke 13:25**

And that is the solemn fact that there is a cut-off time, there is a time in which opportunity is passed, we can procrastinate now, we can spend our time comparing ourselves with other people, we can spend our time justifying ourselves, we can spend our time criticising ourselves, we can do what

we want as long as we wish but there is a time to when He says the master of the house rises up and he shuts the door.

And so this morning as we think of striving to enter in we must recognise that we do not know when He is going to close the door at the level of humanity or whether He is going to close it individually through death but there is a cut-off time.

And so in essence we finally conclude we could say well when should we strive? Well the only safe answer to that is right now is it not?

Right now is the time for us to be striving, not some other time, not saying well if other people do this and other people do that than I'll do this but now is the time for us to be striving to enter in at the strait gate and so there is a cut-off time.

In verse 26 He comes back again to the same thought at the end of verse 24 he says: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. **Luke 13:26**

They are going to say we've been around you, we have known you, we know the language. But the fact is that there will be disappointed people. Here were people that thought when the gate is closed they are going to be on the inside and now they are on the outside.

Should that not concern us this morning the fact that there will be disappointed people. People who thought that they knew the Lord, people who thought that when the time comes they would surely be accepted but He says that He is going to say: I don't know you.

But these were people that knew Jesus didn't they, they knew the language, they knew about Him, they knew Him with their heads but evidently not with their hearts.

You see they had spent time with Jesus and in fact according to Matthew seven the last part of the sermon on the Mount Jesus says: Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?<sup>23</sup> And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. **Matthew 7:22-23**

You know the fact that there are going to be people who were doing things for the Lord, who were doing wonderful things, miracles but He says they

are going to be disappointed and that certainly is a very sobering matter is it not the fact that there are going to be people who are deceived, who are spending their lives thinking that they are on the right side but at that moment discover that they were left on the outside.

That is why Jesus is saying strive to enter in at the gate because there will be those who will be disappointed.

In **Luke 13:27** He gives that awful word of utter rejection I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

You know there is going to be utter rejection of many people from what He says here and you know the thought of the possibility of that should strike hard in our hearts should it not. You know the fact that there will be people who will be thinking they are on the right side but when they get there are rejected.

In **Luke 13:28**, another goad to striving He says: There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, [now notice] when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out.

It seems to me it is going to add to the pain of the whole thing when He says that you are going to see, these people He was talking to, you're going to see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the others go in and you're on the outside.

It is not that people's consciousness is going to be blanked out and they won't know anything but He says you will see and then you yourself will be thrust out.

Then in verse 29 I think another wonderful goad is, this is a positive one now he says: <sup>29</sup> And they shall come from the east, and *from* the west, and from the north, and *from* the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. **Luke 13:29**

You know there is going to be a host of people who will be from all over who will have the privilege of entering in and the challenge for us is for us to have it determined in our hearts that we will be a part of that host that comes from the east and the west and north and the south and sits down in the kingdom of God.

Well this morning obviously since people will be disappointed, since people will have a form of godliness it raises the question well how can I know that I am among those who indeed will be not only seekers but those who are accepted when the gate is closed?

We are going to lastly consider the fact of grace to strive.

You know it is only by the grace of God that we can enter in to the gate, we know that this morning, we know that it is not by human effort, it is not by works but it is based on a relationship with Jesus Christ and while I was thinking about that where is the answer to the situation in this context? You know Jesus usually gave the answers to the problems that He poses and I found the answer to my own heart in verse 34 and here we find that Jesus promises grace to strive, **Luke 13:34**<sup>34</sup> O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen *doth gather* her brood under *her* wings, and ye would not!

The word picture that I see in this verse is the fact that Jesus is picturing Himself as a hen gathering her brood under her wings.

Now the grace for us to strive lies in us being like faithful chicks under the protection of the hen. That is what Jesus said He wants to do, He said what He would like to do is that He wants to gather all the children; He is speaking here to Jerusalem and gather them together and keep them under His wing. And so this morning the grace to strive lies in us being faithful under His wings.

I like that picture and I know you have heard the stories of hens that were found in fires charred to death with their brood under them alive, well our Lord is much greater much better than that.

In John 15 Jesus and He uses various word pictures like that, in John 15 He gives the picture of the vine and the branches He says without me you can do nothing, but in reverse in essence He says that with me you can do everything.

So you see the grace to strive that we can rest that we are among those who are striving and will be and are acceptable to Him is as we are in Christ.

We need the grace to strive In **Luke 14:26-27** Jesus says: If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

Grace to strive comes if we love the Lord Jesus Christ more than anything or anybody else. He says any who hate not his father and mother, what I understand that word hate to mean is to love less, unless we love our father and mother, wife, husband, children, brethren and sisters, unless we love them less than the Lord Jesus Christ we are not worthy to be His disciples and so the grace to strive comes by loving the Lord above all else and I think we have all tried it often enough to know that if we put anything ahead of the Lord it does not work because we lose His power and His grace working in us.

Well the grace to strive then comes by truly knowing Him in our hearts and in our spirit and I do not know how to describe this, you know words fail a person when you try to verbalise the working of the Holy Spirit within us but what I was thinking here was that if we are going to strive to enter the gate it can only be done as God is striving with us.

In Genesis God said my spirit shall not always strive with men (**Genesis 6:3**) and we know what happened but He has given us the Holy Spirit to strive with us and to strive within us and I'm thinking in just three areas that first of all the Holy Spirit strives with us in convicting us.

I'm sure we know what that's like, the work of the conscience, the Holy Spirit is striving with us you know we've done something, we have an attitude, we've spoken something and the Holy Spirit pricks us and says you know He raises questions and says you have done wrong and we might argue and we might justify, we might dispute but the Holy Spirit is there to convict us.

Given the fact that we do what we ought to He will also then correct us. The Holy Spirit's work like the conscience is not only just to punish us when we are wrong but it is also to correct us and I believe like **Psalms 32:8** says I will guide you with mine eye, that God would much rather guide us with His eye rather than punish us for having done wrong.

Another Scripture says that it's like the maid who has her eye on her mistress' hand because that is where she gets her signals. Well the Holy Spirit is going to strive with us to let us know what He wants us to do and He will comfort us whatever the needs are but if we are going to strive to enter in at the strait gate we need to know what it is to let the Holy Spirit strive with us and within us, not just to make us miserable but the fact that we have a relationship with God through the Holy Spirit that is going to be helping us to strive.

And there are basic parts, you know we must know Him in the sense that when we read the Scriptures, when we pray, when we fellowship that we are not just going through actions but that it is God's opportunity to touch us and for us to touch God. If we are going to be striving to enter in at the strait gate we are going to need to have the kind of devotional life that puts us in touch with God, that provides strength and it needs to not only be a time of devotion but it must translate into a devoted life.

You know unless our devotional life's produces a devoted life is it going to have done us any amount of good?

Well beyond the personal aspect of striving to enter in at the strait gate it has a lot to do with our relationship with other people and with the brotherhood.

You know it is impossible for us to really care about ourselves without caring for our brothers and sisters.

I had to think about chicks under a hen, I don't know how all that could go but you know unless there would be a fair amount of unity under that hen there is going to be trouble and I'm sure there is a whole lot more chicks can get underneath a hen if they are peaceful.

My mother used to say you can get a lot of patient sheep into a small pen. And I think she was trying to put her boys there when she said that but you see unless there is a patience and the right kind of relationship within the brotherhood it is going to affect our inspiration to really strive to enter into the gate ourselves.

I think we all know what it is like to have frustrated relationships, we can get so involved in thinking about what the other person ought to have done, what the other person did to us and we get so involved in what that person

is doing that we forget what we ought to be doing and I think that is one of the problems.

In this relationship within the brotherhood we need to care enough about ourselves that we want to help of the brotherhood and I agree that sometimes some people try to help us they are not very wise in the way they go about it. You know somebody said to me once it is really hard for me to say it right so that you are ready to accept it. And I say that to my rebuke. But you know we can be that way that we make it very hard for somebody else to help us if they don't do it right or if they are not quite consistent or whatever we can get our back up and we can get defensive and we can become counter-attacking but you know if we really care about ourselves are we going to be so concerned about whether the help given is just right? And so you know it takes that and then I think you know we need to be ready to accept and appreciate the help that the brotherhood is trying to give us without comparing and criticising everybody else to death in the process because there is a grave danger that we will become victims.

You know what James said but if you bite and devour one take heed that ye be not consumed one of another, **Galatians 5:15**, we will be devoured and that's how it works.

But you know if we are truly concerned about entering the strait gate I think it is going to make us a lot more appreciative of the help that the brotherhood is trying to give us rather than to compare it to criticise the situation until we are frustrated and there is very, very little possibility of us really wanting to be held in it.

But you see it depends on how concerned we are about entering in.

You know we can so easily spend out more energy on thinking what others ought to be doing then what we ought to be doing ourselves and Jesus dealt with that in the first verses of Matthew seven in the sermon on the Mount. In **Matthew 7:1-5** Jesus said this: Judge not, that ye be not judged. <sup>2</sup>For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. <sup>3</sup>And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? <sup>4</sup>Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam *is* in thine own eye? <sup>5</sup>Thou

hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

You see what I understand Him to be saying here is that we are to be helping each other surely but in the meantime we have our first responsibility to ourselves and I think we all have enough of our own nature to understand how that can work but you see all these things Satan tries to get them to divert our attention away from me striving to enter the gate and putting attention on other things.

I believe if we can put our interests and our focus and our burden on entering in at the strait gate that then we are going to want each other's help and we are going to not only want to survive ourselves but we want to help each other to get there.

**Galatians 6** tells us how we are to help each other and so this morning when He says strive to enter in at the strait gate we need to strive first of all for our own sake and then for the sake of our brethren and sisters and then for all mankind.

This morning it raises the question you know are we seriously striving to enter the gate?

That is the burden on my heart for myself as much as for anybody else. You know are we really as urgent about this as we ought to be or are we more concerned about just being a survivor?

This morning my burden is that we are concerned that we are not merely survivors but that we are strivers, that we are taking the issues of life seriously and uppermost in that is the matter of being in Christ, in our relationship with Him personally allowing His grace and power to enable us to strive to enter in at the strait gate.

That is what I believe the Lord would have for us.



## O JOYFUL DAY, HE LIVES!

*Then went in also that other disciple,  
which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.  
John 20:8.*

God, who is rich in mercy, has provided salvation to a lost and dying world through His Son Jesus Christ. Our burden of sin caused us to repent and by faith to come to Jesus for forgiveness. Upon being set free from our heavy burdens, joy filled our hearts. A pleasure arises within our hearts that comes from being a true partaker in the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus, our personal Saviour.

His resurrection foretold in Scripture:

Psalm 68:10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

His death and resurrection confirmed.

Mark 15:42-47 And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, <sup>43</sup>Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. <sup>44</sup>And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling *unto him* the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. <sup>45</sup>And when he knew *it* of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. <sup>46</sup>And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. <sup>47</sup>And Mary Magdalene and Mary *the mother* of Joses beheld where he was laid.

Mark 16:1-6 And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary *the mother* of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. <sup>2</sup>And very early in the morning the first *day* of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. <sup>3</sup>And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? <sup>4</sup>And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. <sup>5</sup>And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. <sup>6</sup>And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek

Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

It was God's will that His Son would die for the sins of the world and also arise from the grave. This is the pure love of God and perhaps the greatest miracle ever. The scripture in Psalm 16:10 is clear on the only two eternal destinations for our souls.

God knew of our utter helplessness and inability to be redeemed of our own selves. He also knew we would perish in hell forever were it not for His mercy. God in His love has provided for our salvation through the death and resurrection of His Son.

Jesus spoke of the power of the resurrection. He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (John 5:25). He also said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25). "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12).

Joseph of Arimathaea showed courage and affection at a time when others became discouraged. The disciples of Christ fell into despair, and there seemed to be a cloud over them at the time of Jesus' death. Today there is too much discouragement and despondency when our hearts should be filled with "a lively hope" (1 Peter 1:3). "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:19-20).

In the book of Job it is asked, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). This question was answered by the resurrection of Jesus. "Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10).

Comforting words came to Mary the mother of James and Mary Magdalene as they approached the tomb. The angel of God said, "Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here" (Mark 16:6). After some time the resurrected Son of God also sought to comfort His disciples and others. The words that He spoke to them be-

fore His death now seemed to become clear to them. After the ascension of the Lord they received the Holy Ghost, which empowered them for His work. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). Joy was restored, and these men began to proclaim to the world the life-saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our hearts are touched when we listen to young people tell their experiences of finding forgiveness from the Lord. A young man who had an experience of re-consecration commented on how happy he was. You could see this on his face and in his smile. When prodigals find their way back home after many years, we marvel at the power of God's convicting Spirit. The power of the Spirit still endeavors to convict people and lead them to Calvary. Only at the foot of the cross can burdens be lifted.

There are other reasons to rejoice. The Spirit of God who brought us to Calvary will lead the regenerated believer until the end of life. In our regeneration we were transformed by the renewing of our minds. This sets us free from the service of sin. Although we still carry the inclinations of evil and many temptations come our way, we need not yield to them. We need to practice self-denial. Jesus says "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

As servants of Christ may we have joy in obeying our Master. God's will is made known to us by the Holy Ghost. Even though we live in the world, we are not to be a part of it. The world holds attractions that appeal to the flesh. Many types of entertainment are available today. Technology is on the rise and ever-changing. Sports, among many other things, is winning the hearts of many people. When our hearts are given to the things of the world, we tend to lose our joy in the Lord. The Word of God teaches us, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1-2).

Though lives may differ in some ways, all sincere believers' hearts and affections are set wholly on Christ. After our regeneration these fruits should come forth: a desire to know the will of God, humility, a teachable spirit, a desire to fellowship with the people of God, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Just before Jesus' death Pilate asked, "What is truth?" The inner cry of God's people is to follow that which is true. Young parents are concerned with proper child nurture, youth wonder about the road that lies ahead and want to make the right decisions, middle-aged parents want to give sound counsel to their youth, and older people are concerned for the bride of Christ and want to know the will of God for our time.

As we travel toward our eternal goal, may we exercise faith. "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Romans 12:3). With this ability to believe and with the power the resurrection brings to our hearts, let us obey the Holy Spirit's leading. Jesus says "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come" (John 16:13).

Through faith and willing obedience we can experience what the psalmist expresses in Psalm 16:11, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right there are pleasures for evermore." Questions to ask ourselves and act upon: How can we maintain our spiritual joy? And how does the power of the resurrection (Philippians 3:10) apply to our everyday walk of life?  
 May the Lord bless



## THE MIRROR OF TRUTH

James 1:23-24: For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: <sup>24</sup> For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

I don't know if you have ever seen mirrors that are shaped in such a way as to give distorted views of their reflections short and fat, long/skinny, the variations are almost endless depending on the curvature of the mirror.

There are glasses/mirrors that will flatter people; or perhaps we should use the word deceive but that which is truly the Word of God is no flattering glass, it will show you as you are and there will be no deception.

If you flatter yourselves, it is your own fault; the truth as it is in Jesus, flatters no man. If we carefully attended to the Word of truth it will set before us the corruption of our nature, the disorders of our hearts and lives; it will tell us plainly what we are – and what we ought to do about it.

Paul described himself as insensible of the corruption of his nature till he saw himself in the glass of the law (Romans 7:9): “I was alive without the law; that is, I took all to be right with me, and thought myself not only clean, but, compared with the generality of the world, beautiful too; but when the commandment came, when the glass of the law was set before me, then sin revived, and I died - then I saw my spots and deformities, and discovered things amiss in myself which before I was not aware of; and such was the power of the law, and of sin, that I then perceived myself in a state of death and condemnation.” He saw himself as he was before God.

While one continues to look in the mirror he sees his true appearance.

For if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer James says. The ground of the comparison in these verses is obvious. The apostle refers to what all persons experience, the fact that we do not retain a distinct impression of ourselves after we have looked in a mirror.

James also observes that one is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass, For he beholdeth himself, The phrase “natural face” (*Greek: the face of your nativity*), the face or appearance which we have by virtue of our natural birth. The word glass here means mirror. Glass was not commonly used for mirrors among the ancients, but they were made of polished plates of metal.

While actually looking in the mirror, we see all our features, and can trace them distinctly; when we turn away, the image and the impression both vanish. When looking in the mirror, we can see all the defects and blemishes of our person; if there is a scar, a deformity, a feature of ugliness, it is distinctly before the mind; but when we turn away, then it is “out of sight and out of mind.”

The next step says James is and he goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. The apostle is referring to what is

known to occur as a matter of fact - - As soon as he goes away from the mirror he forgets how he looked; and especially if there was anything in his appearance that required correction.

While he continues to look into the mirror he is affected, and may very well wish himself to be different to what he appears, and may determine some ways of action of doing what he can to render his countenance more agreeable but on going away he soon forgets what manner of person he was, because the mirror is now removed, and his face is no longer reflected back to himself; he no longer recollects how disagreeable he appeared, and his own resolutions of improving his countenance often evaporate at the same time.

When we are no longer confronted by our own countenance it gives no uneasiness, and, even if capable of correction often we take no pains to remove it. This applies to our spiritual life as well.

It is that way in our walk of faith, when we hear the Word of God it is like a mirror held up before us and in the perfect precepts of the law, and the perfect requirements of the gospel, we see our own short-comings and defects, and perhaps think that we will correct them maybe at some more convenient time. We are reminded here of Felix in **Acts 24:24-27** <sup>24</sup> And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. <sup>25</sup> And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. <sup>26</sup> He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. <sup>27</sup> But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

We see here that Felix looked into the mirror of God's Word presented by the Apostle Paul but like we see in our text two verses from James 1 he turned away from the mirror and did nothing except to come back to it every now and then and was no doubt able then to take another look at himself so to speak.

Some will make the necessary corrections but many turn away immediately, and forget it all and thus deceive the soul. By not continuing to look

in the mirror of God's Word, many soon forget what manner of person they are; or, maybe they are deceived or deceive themselves by placing faith or confidence, or trust in somebody or something that is unscriptural rather than trust in God's mercy, they reason themselves out of the necessity of repentance and amendment of life, Revival meetings often bear this out, people hear, people have good intentions but good intentions will not save us.

If, however, we are doers of the word," we will endeavour to remove all those defects and blemishes in our moral character, and to bring our whole souls into conformity with what the law and the gospel require. We can liken the word of God to the glass or mirror referred to in these verses that show us the spots and blemishes upon our faces, that they may be remedied and washed off, so in a spiritual sense the Word of God shows us our sins, that we may repent of them and get them pardoned; it shows us what is amiss, that it may be amended.

James 1:23-24 gives an account of those who do not use this glass of the Word as they ought: He that beholds himself, and goes his way, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was. This is the true description of one who is a hearer of the Word of God and does it not.

How many are there who, when they sit under the Word, are affected with their own sinfulness, misery, and danger, acknowledge the evil of sin, and their need of Christ; but, when their hearing is over, all is forgotten, convictions are lost, good affections or desires vanish, and pass away like the waters of a flood: he straightway forgets.

"The Word of God (as one commentator says) discovers how we may do away our sins, and deck and attire our souls with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. - Our sins are the spots which the law discovers; Christ's blood is the laver which the gospel shows."

But in vain do they hear God's Word, as they look into the gospel glass, if they then go away, and forget their spots, instead of washing them off, and forgetting our remedy which is the blood of Christ shed at Calvary, instead of applying it. This is the case of those who do not hear the Word as they ought and let us remember that we all can fall into the same category.

There is an old fable of a palace, in which one room was remarkable above all others because it was lined with glass of a special quality. Whenever a person entered whose life was inconsistent with truth, a mist blurred the surface of the mirrors so that he was unable to see himself clearly. He was deceived!

How much better would it be for us to do as the Apostle Paul when he compared his own self-centred goodness with the love and purity of Christ, he lost all hope of justifying himself, and confessed that the things which he had counted gain were only loss.

We need God's truth and love for His truth in our life, Truth and Love are indissolubly connected. Love is of God, and so is Truth. If you have the one, the other must follow. If the soul, looking into the mirror of God's Word perceiving that there is a blur sets itself to remove all that has caused it; and if it continues in this attitude by not being a hearer who forgets, but a doer that works, he shall be "blessed in his doing."

There is a blessedness of doing and becoming. It is only as we do, that we become. Even to behold Christ will not make us Christlike in character, unless we translate into action what we have discovered in Him. The impressions made on the hearer through the ear are very vagrant, like the breeze on the water. We look at ourselves in the mirror held up before us, and straightway go off and forget what manner of persons we were. It is only as we cease to be hearers who forget, and become doers that work, that we can make any progress in the Christian life and walk.

Listen attentively to the Word of Truth, written or spoken. Be quick to notice the smallest symptom of inconsistency between your life and the perfect beauty of Jesus, and set yourself immediately to correct it. Be merciful to the failings of everyone else, but be merciless to your own. Let no fault remain uncorrected, and no call to duty unanswered. For you to live, let it be Christ. Your blessedness and happiness will come in choosing the Christ-life, in doing, and continuing to do what He would have you do.



## HE DIED FOR ME

I will sing the wondrous story  
Of the Christ who died for me,  
How He left His home in glory  
For the cross on Calvary.

I was lost, but Jesus found me,  
Found the sheep that went astray.  
Threw His loving arms around me  
Drew me back into His way.

I was bruised, but Jesus healed me,  
Faint was I from many a fall.  
Sight was gone, and fears possessed me,  
But He freed me from them all.

Days of darkness still come o'er me  
Sorrow's paths I often tread,  
But the Saviour still is with me,  
By His hand I'm safely led.

Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story,  
Of the Christ who died for me,  
Sing it with the saints in glory,  
Gathered by the crystal sea.

*Francis H. Rowley*

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