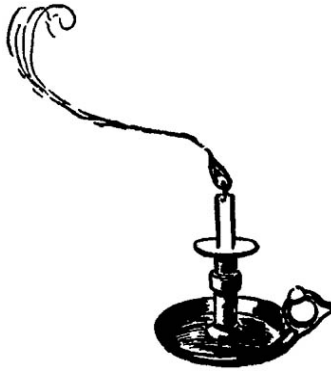


# THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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.****Wrestling Saints.**

The Apostle Peter in his second letter chapter 3, speaking of our Lord's return (vv. 8-10), reminds us not to be ignorant and that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, and then in verse 11 he reminds what sort of people we ought to be because of those things - we need to be holy in all our conversation and have godliness of character, in other words our whole way of living both inwardly and outwardly should be acceptable to God.

Because of our human tendencies, our carnal nature, we do tend to struggle with some of the areas of our Christian walk and those struggles can be and are very real at times and we can perhaps understand the Apostle Paul's words in Ephesians 6:12 somewhat better when we relate to our struggles in our spiritual life as wrestling.

Satan is our enemy, he is constantly seeking to find a chink in the armour of God that all Christians should be wearing, sometimes he attacks head-on and we know it straightaway, at other times he uses great subtlety to draw us in, hence the direction by Jesus to pray to our heavenly Father, Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. We do realise that God does not lead us to be tempted but He does allow it to come our way, we need to be alert and recognise those occasions and flee from them like Joseph did from Potiphar's wife but nevertheless it can be a struggle or wrestling.

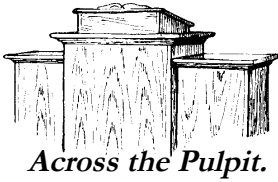
The Apostle Paul said this in Ephesians 6:12: For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Most likely all or most of us know how to deal with physical problems and know where or whom to turn to for help. As sons and daughters of God we have His strength to call on when we are wrestling in the spiritual realm.

We are not alone, there is nobody standing outside the ring watching and waiting to throw in the towel on our behalf when we look defeated but instead He will join us in the battle to win victory.

We are wrestling saints with victory in our grasp and certain through Christ Jesus.

*J.v.L.*



*God's Standard For Purity*  
*Brother Delbert Eby*  
*Churchtown Mennonite Church - 2011*  
*Part 2 of 2*

*Editor's note: In the previous portion of this message Bro. Elbert commented about the changing attitudes in society on divorce and remarriage and pointed out that God's standard on this issue has not changed and will not change and we need to recognise that. He now continues on a more direct and personal level:*

Maybe closer home to us the matter of changing standards in relation to this matter of purity is in the area of modesty.

You know it wasn't so many years ago that even society looked negatively on a woman in public with her legs uncovered, it wasn't so long ago. Probably most of us do not remember whenever that was but it wasn't that long ago.

You know today we grapple with that thing in the church don't we? But you know God still looks at that matter the same as how He looked at it in **Isaiah 47** when he condemned His people for making bare the legs, He still looks at it that way. But these are the areas where these things can come very subtly, our thought patterns can shift and we don't look at it so bad because of what we see as being the extremes. God's standard does not change.

When we consider a subject like this we must diligently go to the Word of God and follow the principles of God's Word rather than taking our signals from society around us.

What is God's standard for purity?

Well God's standard purity demands a cleansed heart, it demands a cleansed heart.

Let's just turn to Matthew chapter 5, we have referred to Matthew five in relation to what Jesus said about plucking out our eye, cutting of our hand

and how serious this matter of purity is but let's just notice what Jesus said right before this in Matthew five.

God's standard for purity demands a cleansed heart,

Matthew five let's read verses 27 to 28, this is what Jesus said, we read verses 29 and 30 before and in verse 27 Jesus said: Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: <sup>28</sup> But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. **Matthew 5:27-28.**

Immorality is not simply a matter of action but it is also and foremost a matter of the heart.

You see what Jesus was saying here is that he who thinks immorally is immoral regardless of whether he commits adultery or not and I think this Scripture helps us to understand that God has an elevated standard of purity in the New Testament, it is a higher standard here, and so we have verses like this in Philippians 4 where it says: Finally my brethren, whatsoever things are pure think on these things. **Philippians 4:8.**

And James says it this way: That the wisdom from above is first pure. **James 3:17.**

The elevated standard of the New Testament demands a cleansed heart.

Now what kind of thoughts was Jesus condemning here in Matthew chapter 5, what kind of thoughts was He condemning?

Was He talking about suggestive thoughts that come into our minds? Or was He only talking about those thoughts that we allow our minds to dwell on?

If it was the latter, if it was only thoughts that we allow our minds to dwell on then how long does the thought need to be in our mind before it becomes sin?

Really what was Jesus saying here when He said in verse 28, "whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

Well I think we Jesus was endeavouring to communicate here is that we need to have a heart that is devoted to purity, we need to have a heart devoted to purity, a cleansed heart.

That is really the heart of this issue is it not? A cleansed heart.

It is probably important for us to not necessarily try to establish whether a particular thought was wrong but to be committed to having hearts that are set on purity. The pure heart is not above temptation but it will struggle against sin, it will not relish it, the pure heart will seek ways of fortifying itself against sin it will not indulge in it.

And if we use our eyes to feed our lusts Jesus says we have sinned, God's standard deals with the heart of the matter.

Purity is not only purity in action but it is also purity and thought, it is purity in heart and let's never forget that.

Turn with me to Psalm 51, another aspect of God's standard for purity.

Maybe it would be good if we would take the time to read this entire some but we can't, you are familiar with it, this is a Psalm that David wrote that showed a repentant attitudes towards his own moral failure, the moral failure in his life.

And this is what we need to remember about God's standard of purity that God's standard for purity requires that in purity is confessed and repented of. It is just that important.

It would be good if we could read some of these verses here, let's just start at verse seven here and notice the attitude that David had in relation to his sin.

He said: Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. <sup>8</sup> Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice. <sup>9</sup> Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. <sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. **Psalm 51:7-10.**

And we could read on there but I think as we read this Psalm and we see a man who had failed in maintaining God's standard for purity, he lost his peace with God, he lost his relationship with God, he lost God's blessing, his conscience worked against him, he finally came to the end of himself and he repented.

Notice verse three: For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. **Psalm 51:3.**

This matter of purity is so important that in God's eye, so important in God's eye that impurity must be brought before God and confessed and repented of. It is the only way for the stain to be removed and we must be willing to go all the way, we must be willing to go all the way.

As we think about purity, the responsibility we have in times whenever we need to repent of impurity we must understand that when there is moral failure then there also needs to be repentance that is accompanied with confession, it is just part of it, part of it because of this sin, it is sin in the eyes of God.

And especially whenever moral failure involves others that needs to be a public clearing, it is part of repentance and it helps us to understand how seriously God looks at this matter and sometimes individuals back away from confessing failure because they are not willing to bear the reproach but remember that sin always has a reproach with it, it is part of understanding God's standard, the Holiness of God, because God's standard is so absolute sin will have its consequences, the Scriptures bear that out over and over again but praise God, but praise God the stain of impurity can be cleansed by the blood of Jesus and David is an Old Testament example of one who was forgiven and cleansed.

And so this afternoon if we recognize that we have failed in maintaining God's standard for purity there is a way back, there is a way back, it may not be an easy way back of but there is a way back -confession and repentance!

I would like to look very quickly at the end of the message at some practical helps for maintaining God's standard and there would be so much that we could enlarge on here but we are going to cover these rather rapidly.

I think one of the ways in which we maintain, one of the practical helps for maintaining God's standard to purity is when ever we have a proper fear of God, a proper fear of God.

And I think of the example of Joseph when he told Potiphar's wife: How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? **Genesis 39:9.**

God is concerned about purity and our thoughts and actions must be governed by a proper fear of God, it is a proper fear of God that helps us to avoid sin that may seem to be in secret.

And that is one of the snares of this subject of impurity, you know Satan would like for us to think that somehow we can cover it up and no one will know and what we think in our minds no one will ever find out and what is done in secret no one needs to know!

A proper fear of God helps us to avoid sin that may seem to be in secret.

A proper fear of God helps us to avoid places in circumstances that might lead us to failure.

A proper fear of God helps us to keep a right view of our accountability, there is a God in heaven that is watching.

Another practical helps for maintaining God's standard is when ever when we believe and obey the word of God, the Psalmist said in Psalm 119:9: *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.*

And we must not only take seriously the warnings that God has given in His word and believe and obey the Word of God but we must also be students of the Word, it is the Word of God that is able to take the filth of this world of our lives.

And brethren you know that if you know that you are going to be faced with the pressures of an evil world in your workplace he used the word of God to help you to have the victory, don't miss a morning in relation to having your personal devotions. You see how important this is.

And in family life you know when we understand the pressures that our young people face as they go out into a world that is so corrupt, is it reasonable to think that we can allow our young people to go out into such a corrupt world without the background of family worship in the morning or in the evening if that is when you have your time of family worship?

You think about it that way, believing in obeying the word of God it helps us to maintain God's standard.

We also maintain God's standard for purity when we have a cleansed heart and mind.

And Paul said this in second Corinthians chapter 10 verse five that we are to bring every thought into captivity, **2 Corinthians 10:5**.

It is the miracle of regeneration that is able to give us the power to live above the lust of the flesh but we still have a responsibility to control our minds and impure actions are the result of impure thoughts, impurity that has first gained a foothold in our heart in our minds.

Now there are some ways that we can help ourselves to have pure thoughts.

You know we must fill our minds with things that are good, it is part of the way in which we help ourselves in relation to our thoughts.

You know young people a simple thing of memorising songs, singing a song is a very effective way to have victory in your thought life.

Be careful of reading material. You know we live in a society where you can go to a so-called Christian, and I'm putting it in quotes, so-called Christian bookstore and you can find all kinds of novels that supposedly maybe have some good in them that they painted an unrealistic view of love and marriage and it will warp the mind. Cultivate good reading material.

If you are having more severe struggles with your thought life make yourself accountable to someone, ask someone to help you, ask someone to check up on you, ask someone how it is going. I think that can be a very effective way to gain victory in thought life to have someone check up on you, someone that you are accountable to.

It doesn't necessarily need to be your parents, sometimes it is good if it is but it might be someone else but reach out to another.

Young people, don't have so much free time on your hands, fill your life up with church activities and your work, that is part of keeping yourself occupied, too much free time makes or allows far too easy a way for Satan to get a foothold in our lives.

One of the reasons that it is important for us to have victory in our thought life is because our minds are a little like the ruts in the field lane, and you know what I'm talking about when you in this kind of weather es-



pecially when we have had all the rain that we've had in you never really put a good days work into the field lane but you just kept driving in it and after a while you have ruts and then after while the bottom of the tractor is dragging or the wagon or whatever your pulling and you are so sure that you are going to get yourself up out of the rut, you're not going to drive on the right and sure enough you slide right back in!  
And that is why you give up trying.

And that's a little of the way it this thing of the mind works, you know our mind tends to run in grooves, the things that we see that's where our minds go and the longer that we allow our minds to follow that channel the harder and harder and harder it will be to get out.

Another practical helps for maintaining God's standard is a pure and wholesome home life.

And I would love to spend the next half-hour on this subject alone, the importance of a pure and wholesome home life.

You know God established a home for the purity of the human race, the home is part of God's standard for purity and we must have a clear vision of what the home does in protecting us and our families from the impurities of the world around us. We must be committed to solid home life. We just must be.

Husbands, wives, what is your relationship with your spouse, what is your relationship?

Are you maintaining the freshness in purity that you began your marriage with?

And it is true that the freshness of youth does settle into the routine of later years, we know that, and things do change, but thing that never changes and that is that a marriage will not survive on autopilot, it just won't.

It takes some effort, it takes some diligence, it won't survive with the attitude that one husband had, he told his wife that he loved her and that if it ever changed he would let her know.

We must be willing in our marriage relationship to cultivate it and to do the work of maintaining a good relationship, good communication, marital fidelity is just so important!

Another aspect of wholesome home life is instilling in our children the conviction for purity and if you want a Bible example of this read what the wise man said to his son in the book of Proverbs.

We must teach our children the importance of purity by teaching them how to relate to others, they need to learn to respect others.

The very simple things of teaching our small children to keep their hands to themselves and to knock on the door before opening it and to show reserve in the presence of strangers.

We must help our children to understand modesty.

These are very important ways in which we maintain God's standard for purity and many of these things are taught little by little, they are taught little by little in home life.

For our children's sake parents make sure we give them information about life at the appropriate times and fathers you have the special responsibility in relation to your own sons and the same for mothers with growing daughters and when we come to this time in life it is important that we have a relationship with our children that enables us to share with them.

We also maintain God's standard for purity when ever we exercise the godly disciplines of life.

And that means exercising the proper reserve around others as adults, the simple exercise of self-denial and moderation and temperance.

You know even something is very simple as knowing when to lay down our spoon and fork in relation to a meal has to do with this subject of purity and understanding the need for temperance and for moderation, guarding our exposure to a corrupt world.

May God help us to maintain His standard for purity in the world that we live in and let's remember that in this subject we are going to need to continue to put forth effort, it is not just going to happen without us, it is not going to happen in voluntary but let's apply the principles of God's word and God will reward those who are pure.



## *Judgment and Separation*

We cannot fully comprehend the reality and finality of Judgment Day. The poet writes of "the crashing of ages, When time and eternity meet" ("Eternity," Christian Hymnal, No. 296). Every eye shall see the Judge, and all will receive their just and eternal portion. What a day that will be! Then, as Jesus said, He will separate the tares from the wheat and the sheep from the goats.

We try to remove such thoughts from our minds. Yet, they are too insistent to ignore and too powerful to deny. For many, the temptation is to procrastinate rather than squarely face the facts, and so they reason away the absoluteness of God's Word.

With the passing of each day, this event comes closer. Its coming is inevitable and imminent. "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" Luke 21:28.

Let us heed the biblical warnings and act accordingly, and the blessing will be ours. Instead of fear, we will live in the joy of the promises of what this unparalleled event will bring.

Matthew 24:42. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

Jesus said, "Watch." Do we understand what that means? Our apathy can be a result of thinking that we will receive a clearer warning of His coming than we already have.

In life it is often said, "Had I only known." Who of us will be saying this on Judgment Day? The faith that pleases God is believing Him because He said it, not having to know when and why. Such faith produces constant vigilance and obedience.

The Lord expects His children to be good stewards. They are required to be faithful, for they must give account. A vibrant church has faithful homes where fathers and mothers fill their God-given places. Not only are the temporal needs met, but spiritual nurturing is of utmost importance. The eternal goal is kept in view. This, of course, is done by attending to the Word of God and to prayer. Family devotions are consistent and warm. Respect for authority and for each other is taught. There is a season of opportunity and then it is gone. Too many parents live with regret for their

past indifference. Young parents, take heed! The eternal destiny of our children is at stake. By word and example, let us be diligent in this day of grace.

May our lives never resemble that of the evil servant. When we become self-centered and proud, we lose the vision to fulfill our duties properly. This holds true for ordained servants as well. All will give an account of their stewardship. The time is known only to God. We must be ready, lest our end be with the unfaithful!

In the parable of the wheat and tares, Jesus obviously was not speaking about the church's authority to discipline. He certainly would not have minimized His teachings as stated in Matthew 18:17. We know the church is a visible body and is to be kept pure and biblically sound with her doctrine intact. The field is identified as the world, meaning the world in which we live. It is not the church.

"The tares are the children of the wicked one" Matthew 13:38. Originally, God planned only one kingdom for this world. Satan is responsible for planting another one. It has always been Satan's scheme to copy the true kingdom that he might deceive mankind. Tares could be false Christians, void of the Holy Spirit, yet possibly having many good works. Self-righteous people, or those who speak much about love but lack godly works, also could be likened to tares.

The weeds and the wheat share the same soil, sunshine, and rain. Sometimes they are in the same family or religious group. In many respects, they interact in everyday living and commerce. They will not be separated, except in a spiritual sense, until the judgment when that which offends and is not of God will be cast into a furnace of fire. "Every plant, which my heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up" Matthew 15:13. Then the righteous will shine as the sun in that eternal, heavenly kingdom.

Fellow pilgrim, we cannot miss it! May we hear with spiritual ears!

The New Testament has much to say about Christ's return. The subject of His second coming is addressed on an average of every twenty-seven verses. Jesus gave many warnings and insights. The words "watch" and "be ready" stand out above the rest.

At the judgment bar, Christ will be the judge. He said, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" John 12:48. His

eyes, like a flame of fire, will pierce the heart and reveal its contents. No sin will remain hidden, every thought will be known, and every word will be brought into account. Imagine all of the unsolved mysteries of crime and sin that will come to light. All liars will be revealed, for there is nothing hid that shall not be made known. No advocate will be there to defend the sinner. It will be forever too late to turn. The tares will be separated from the wheat!

The Word of God, which we can know today, is His revealed will. By this same Word we will be judged. Now, His judgments are mixed with mercy, but then mercy will be forever past. God is true, and His judgments are righteous and impartial. There will be no excuses for ignorance and disobedience.

How terrible is the thought of being eternally separated from God and all that is good. Talent, money, or name will mean nothing on that day. Having our sins covered with the blood of Jesus is all that will matter. You will either be saved or lost, and that for all eternity!

The authority to loose and bind in a disciplinary program as outlined in Matthew 18:15-18 has been committed to the church. May she be true to this doctrine, for it is a redemptive work. Without it the church would become defiled and lose her identity.

Let us allow the Word to judge our lives, having our sins "open beforehand, going before to judgment" 1 Timothy 5:24. Otherwise, tragically, they will follow us to the final judgment.

It is imperative that we be ready. Always remember that God earnestly desires our salvation, but it is up to us. May we praise God for His wonderful grace. Let us respond to His love.



## *God Is Love*

No one but God could have revealed *that* to the world, for we all indeed, see nothing but its contradiction in our own limited world of experience. “God is love.” (1 John 4:8&16) From shattered, broken lives, from caverns of despair where fiends seem to be living rather than men, comes the existing contradiction to any such statement. No wonder the carnal mind, the merely intellectually cultured, consider us infatuated, mere dreamers, talking of love when murder and war and famine and lust and pestilence, and all the refinement of selfish cruelty is abroad in the earth. But, oh the inspiration of Abraham-like faith that dares to place the centre of its life and confidence and action and hope in an unseen and apparently unknown God, saying, “God is love,” in spite of all appearances to the contrary; saying “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” Job 13:15. Such faith is counted to a man for righteousness. (Romans 4:5)

Look back over your own history as revealed to you by grace, and you will see one central fact growing large—God is love. No matter how often your faith in such an announcement was clouded, no matter how the pain and suffering of the moment made you speak in a wrong mood, still this statement has borne its own evidence along with it most persistently—God is love. In the future, when trial and difficulties await you, do not be fearful, whatever and whoever you may lose faith in, let not this faith slip from you—God is Love; whisper it not only to your heart in its hour of darkness, but here in your corner of God’s earth live in the belief of it; preach it by your sweetened, chastened, happy life; sing it in consecrated moments of peaceful joy and at times of what seems unbearable pain and stresses of life.

The world does not bid you sing, but God does. (Isaiah 65:14, Jeremiah 31:7). Song is the sign of an unburdened heart; then sing your songs of love unbidden, ever rising higher and higher into a fuller conception of the greatest, grandest fact on the stage of Time—God is Love.

But words and emotions pass, precious as their influence may be for the time, so when the duller moments come and the mind comes to require something more certain and sure to consider than the memory of mere emotions and stirring sentiments—consider this revelation, the eternal fact that God is Love, not, God is loving. God and love are synonymous. Love is not an attribute of God, it is God; whatever God is, love is. If your conception of love does not agree with justice and judgment and purity and

holiness, then your idea of love is wrong. It is not love you conceive of in your mind, but some vague infinite foolishness, all tears and softness and of infinite weakness.

### 1. God Is Love—In His Very Nature

Some exceptionally gifted men may derive their conception of God from other sources than the Bible, but all I know of God I have got from the Bible, and those who taught me got what they taught from the Bible. In all my dreams and imaginings and visions I see God, but it is the God of the Bible that I see, and I feel Him to be near me. I see ever amid the mysteries of Providence and Grace and Creation “a Face like my face,” and “a Hand like this hand,” and I have learned to love God Who gave me such a sure way of knowing Him and left me not to the vain imaginations of my own sin-warped intellect. (Romans 1:20-21)

*In Creation.* The love of God gives us a new method of seeing Nature. His voice is on the rolling air, we see Him in the rising sun, and in the setting He is fair; in the singing of the birds, in the love of human hearts, the voice of God is in all. Had we but ears to hear the stars singing, to catch the glorious pealing anthem of praise echoing from the hills of immortality by the heavenly hosts!

*In His Wisdom.* God did not create man as a puppet to please a despotic idea of His own, He created us out of the superabundant flow of overflowing love and goodness, He created us susceptible of all the blessedness which He had ordained for us. He “thought” us in the rapture of His own great heart, and lo, we are! Created in the image of God we, innocent of evil, of great God-like capacities.

*In His Power.* The whole world moves but to His great inscrutable will, animate and inanimate creation, the celestial bodies moving on their orbits, the globe with all its diversified issues and accompaniments, are all subservient to this end.

*Yes, God is good, in earth and sky,  
In ocean depth and swelling wood,  
Ten thousand voices ever cry,  
God made us all, and God is good.*

*In His Holiness.* God walked with man and talked with him, He told him His mind, and showed him the precise path in which he must walk in order

to enjoy the happiness He had ordained for him; He rejoiced in the fulness of His nature over man as His child, the offspring of His love. He left nothing unrevealed to man; He loved him. Oh, the joy and rapture of God the Father over man His son!

*In His Justice.* God showed to man that compliance with His dictates would ever mean eternal bliss and joy unspeakable and life and knowledge for evermore, but that ceasing to comply would mean loss of life with God and eternal death.

That was in the world's bright morning when the morning stars sang together (Job 38:7) and all creation leapt in joy, but the wild, wild desolation of sin and disobedience and pride and selfish sinfulness entered and drove a great gulf between God's children and Himself. But, as ever, Love found a way, God came to us and for us, and we this day with chastened hearts and quivering lips and glistening eyes, yet with love deep and strong in our hearts, say all afresh with deep adoration, God is Love.

If God exhibits such glorious love in His Nature, what, oh what, shall we say of the glories of the dispensation of His Grace! That God would have walked this earth had sin never entered is very likely, yet sin did not refrain Him from graciously walking and revealing Himself in communion with men. No, still He came. But men were so blinded by sin that they saw Him not, they knew Him not, while He hewed a way back through the hard face of sin to the heavenly shores.

## **2. The Gift of God's Only Begotten Son**

The gift of God's only begotten Son surely reveals His love in an amazing degree—"He that spared not His own Son" Romans 8:32—till now it matters not how bad a man is, if he will but lift his eyes to the Cross he shall be saved. But yet so blinded and infatuated and imbecile has man become by sin that he can see nothing in the life of Christ save the evidence of a beautiful, good life, the best of human beings, living misunderstood, suffering, dying as a martyr. To meet this difficulty Love itself gave another gift—the gift of the Holy Spirit.

## **3. The Gift of the Holy Spirit**

When He shines on the Historic Christ, all the great and grey outlines spring into glorious relief and colour and beauty, and the soul amazed, calls out, "My Lord and my God." John 20:28.



When the Holy Spirit has begun His gracious work in your soul and heart by making it tremulously expectant, you see a new light on the Cross and the “martyr” becomes the Saviour of the world. “Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for *our* transgressions, He was bruised for *our* iniquities: the chastisement of *our* peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed” Isaiah 53:4-5.

Though it is too difficult, nay impossible, to trace that God is love by mere unaided human intellect, it is not impossible to the intuitions of faith. Lift up your eyes and look abroad over the whole earth, and in the administration of God’s moral government you will begin to discern that God is love, that over sin and war and death and hell He reigns supreme, that His purposes are ripening fast. We must by holy contemplation of all we have considered keep ourselves in the love of God then we shall not be able to be despondent for long. The love of God performs a miracle of grace in graceless human hearts. Human love and lesser loves must wither into the most glorious and highest love of all, viz., the love of God. Then we shall see not only each other’s faults, we shall see the highest possibilities in each other, and shall love each other for what God will yet make of us. Nothing is too hard for God, no sin too difficult for His love to overcome, not a failure but He can make it a success.

God is Love—one brief sentence, you can print it on a ring: it is the Gospel. A time is coming when the whole round world will know that God reigns and that God is Love, when hell and heaven, life and death, sin and salvation, will be read and understood aright at last.

God is Love—a puzzle text, to be solved slowly, as with tears and penitence, by prayer and joy, by vision and faith, and, last, by death.

*Adapted from Oswald Chambers "The Love of God."*



### The Tests of Life

We don't understand all God's ways,  
Nor why sore trials come.  
We only know God knows what's best  
As He sends each trying test!

We need to trust His guiding hand,  
As through each day we go.  
Then he will lead us safely on,  
To our eternal home!

Our lives need showers that He sends,  
Not always sunshine bright.  
To make our lives bear fruit for Him,  
And keep us free from sin!

He has a secret place for us,  
When troubles come our way,  
Where we can find a rest so sure,  
Within his arms secure!

So let us all take heart,  
This life will soon be o'er.  
Then we shall know and understand  
The mystery of it all!

*M. King*

## What Should We Forget and Remember?

Who would like to have a perfect memory and never forget anything?

Do you think that would be something beneficial to you?

What does the Bible say about forgetting?

Does it say more about forgetting or not forgetting?

The message is about not forgetting but the Bible does tell us to forget some things and there are two verses which make the contrast in forgetting and not forgetting or to put it another way to not remember or to remember.

Firstly we have Philippians 3:13: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,"

And the second verse is:

James 1:25: "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

These two verses seem to contradict each other at first glance, one tells us to forget and the other tells us not to, but as we look at them more closely we can readily see that they actually go together as we take them in the scripture context. Turn with me to chapter 3 of Philippians verses 12 to 21 and see what the Apostle was referring to when he speaks of forgetting those things.

We can see here that we are encouraged to forget the moments in life that may have caused us to suffer either at the hands of others or through our own actions and behaviour which may cause us to turn away from God because they can lead to bitterness and anger and be a distraction to us as we try to live the Christian life. I believe that is in part what Apostle Paul is referring to here in Philippians 3:13 that we just read. Paul can mean either his old pre-Christian life, his previous progress as a Christian, or both (all

of it) because his focus now is on obtaining the price of everlasting life, the crown of righteousness that awaits all of us as we finish the race that is set before us. Paul here expresses his earnest desire to be found in Christ; also his pressing on toward perfection; and recommends his own example to other believers.

He forgot the things which were behind, so as not to be content with past labours or present measures of grace. He reached forth, stretched himself forward towards this point; expressing and showing great concern to become more and more like unto Christ. He who runs a race, must never stop short of the end, but press forward as fast as he can; it is not as if the apostle had gained the prize, or were already made perfect in the Saviour's likeness but he knows that he must still press forward to it, in holy desires and hopes, and constant endeavours. Eternal life is the gift of God. There is no getting to heaven as our home, but by Christ as our Way and anything from our past that is detrimental to the Christian life and that we dwell on or bring to constant remembrance instead of forgetting will deflect us from our goal which is to be in heaven for all eternity with Christ.

Paul says in Philippians 3:12-14 that his goal is to know Christ, to be like Christ, and to be all Christ has in mind for him. This goal absorbs all Paul's energy. This is a helpful example for us. We should not let anything take our eyes off our goal—knowing Christ. With the single-mindedness of an athlete in training, we must lay aside everything harmful and forsake anything that may distract us from being effective Christians. What is holding you back?

The in Philippians 3:13-14 Paul shows us that he had reason to forget what was behind—he had held the coats of those who stoned Stephen, the first Christian martyr (Acts 7:57-58, Paul is called Saul here). We have all done things for which we are ashamed, and we live in the tension of what we have been and what we want to be. Because our hope is in Christ, however, we can let go of past guilt and look forward to what God will help us become. Don't dwell on your past. Instead, grow in the knowledge of God by concentrating on your relationship with him *now*. Realize that you are forgiven, and then move on to a life of faith and obedience. Look forward to a fuller and more meaningful life because of your hope in Christ.

We have here an example to follow in forgetting but now what has scripture to say on this subject of not forgetting? Or putting it another way remembering.

There is a great deal of emphasis in Scripture especially the Old Testament which tells us not to forget but remember and God gave many instructions to Israel which were meant to help them Not To Forget but to remember the miracles that He worked for them, He knew that they were prone to forget and so we see for example in Joshua chapters 3 and 4 one of the occasions that God instructed His people so that they would not forget Him or His helping hand over them by way of erecting a memorial.

Moses had died, and Joshua had succeeded him. It was time for the children of Israel to go on into the land of Canaan. The spies Joshua sent had spied out the land, and Rahab had saved them from the men the king of Jericho sent to search for them. Now the Israelites were ready to cross over the Jordan and inherit the land God had promised to them. God spoke to Joshua, and Joshua in turn told the people how the Lord would help them cross the river.

"That ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore" (Josh. 3:4). God gave the people instructions ahead of time. He taught them how things would be when they stepped into the water. All the things Joshua told them came to pass. It was harvest time, and the Jordan River overflows its banks at this season. The river stopped flowing, the water in the upstream side gathered and piled up in a heap, and the water in the downstream side disappeared. What a miracle! They marched through the river on dry ground and then on to the Promised Land!

But would God's people remember this great miracle? God knew they were prone to forget, so He instructed them to set up a memorial. To build it they took stones from the very path where they had walked through the waters. Then, as soon as everyone was safely through, the waters of the river returned, overflowing their banks as before.

Joshua 4:9 tells us that these stones "are there unto this day." In future times, when the children would ask what the stones meant, the parents

were to tell them of the great deliverance wrought by the hand of God, both at the Red Sea and at the Jordan. "That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever" (v. 24).

From the New Testament we read James 1:25 about not being a forgetful hearer, not forgetting the Word of God when it is spoken to us. The Apostle Peter was also diligent in reminding the readers of his epistle about the important things of life. He says that we will shortly put off this tabernacle. Let's turn to 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:10-15

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: <sup>11</sup>For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup>Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know *them*, and be established in the present truth. <sup>13</sup>Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting *you* in remembrance; <sup>14</sup>Knowing that shortly I must put off *this* my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. <sup>15</sup>Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

This is something we must remember, and it should make a difference in our lives. We can be thankful that Peter did what he could so that his words can be a reminder for all mankind.

The crossing of the Jordan was a significant event in the lives of the children of Israel. They had wandered in the wilderness for many years. Finally the time came to cross over this river into the Promised Land. It was a great victory and God helped them through it, leading each step of the way, promising that the waters would give way.

Death has often been compared to this crossing. We have been wandering as pilgrims and strangers in this world. Finally the time comes for us to go on. We have the instructions. We have many promises of God's guidance, final victory, and entrance into the Promised Land. But since we have not passed this way before, we must heed the instructions and reminders along the way.

As the children of Israel were in days of old, so we too are prone to forget the importance of God's deliverance. We tend to become complacent in our journey. The days go by, and it seems as though "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" we find that in 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3 verse 4. The people in the Old Testament built altars and memorials from time to time to remind them of God's great works and deliverance. When Jesus instituted Communion and feet washing, He said, "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19).

The number of scriptures that could be mentioned here is impressive. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32). "Remember how he spake unto you" (Luke 24:6). "Remember the word that I said unto you" (John 15:20). "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:35). "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen" (Revelation 2:5). God knew that man would be easily sidetracked to look at the things of the world. That is why He continues to remind us: Not to forget but to remember!

Thanks be to God for His Holy Spirit. Many times He reminds us of sin. He comforts us when we do right and reproves us when we err. As long as we follow where He leads, He will faithfully lead us. Sometimes we place too much emphasis on past experience and thus we neglect to experience the presence and leading of God's Spirit in our lives from day to day.

Do we sometimes stop to think about where we would be if we did not have the Lord? The miracle of salvation, the changing of a heart of stone into a heart of soft, pliable flesh, the gift of life for death, is after all the biggest miracle ever. The fact that we can become sons and daughters of God and inherit those heavenly mansions prepared for us from the beginning of the world is really worth remembering.

Two questions spring to mind and I do not know what your answer might be but:

How does the crossing of Jordan by the Israelites relate to Christian life?  
 Could it be a reminder of difficulties in our life that the Lord has miraculously delivered us from?

And secondly: What factors in our modern times cause us to become com-

placent and forgetful?

Could it be because we have too much of the material things in life that serve as distractions and the enemy of our souls?

So lastly:

What kind of landmarks should we erect to remind ourselves and our children of what the Lord has done for us?

Is our example of living a life of obedience to Christ and His Word, being a disciple of Jesus what it should be, do we speak of the great things that the Lord has done for us? Can we say with the psalmist

The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Psalm 126:3 and are we prepared to do as Jesus instructed the man possessed by many demons after He delivered him from his bondage - and remember we too have been delivered from a great bondage so let us also take heed of the words of Jesus in Luke 8:39:

"Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him."

*J.v.L.*



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