

# The Australian Anabaptist

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Timothy 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*

Over the centuries and even today there are those who tend to over emphasise the woman's role or supposed role in the sinful tendencies of men.

It is clear from the account in Genesis 3 that God apportioned blame where it belonged, to the serpent first of all for questioning the truth about God's commandment not to eat of that one particular tree and thus causing doubt in the mind of Eve.

God apportioned guilt for her actions to Eve and in verse 16 determines her lot. Then God comes to Adam and not only apportions blame to him also but in fact holds him responsible because he hearkened to Eve's voice and instead of correcting her went along with her suggestion to eat of the forbidden fruit although before Eve was created had the commandment of God been given to him not to eat of that particular tree, Genesis 2:8-18.

Maybe you have heard the saying by someone who has sinned "the devil made me do it" or something similar. That was Eve's excuse and Adam's excuse was Eve, she made me do it. But neither of their position did anything to excuse their own personal responsibility before God and it is the same for each of us today.

Let us not blame the actions of another for our own behaviour, we do have a free will and yes the choice for good may not always be as appealing or as easy as we would like it to be, it may bring us some discomfort or ridicule, it may even cost us our life as it has done for many who have chosen God's way instead of giving in to the enticements of the devil or man.

If we have a problem with something that we see we can turn our eyes away or avoid the areas where those things are, it may be speech or books or magazines that create a hazard for our spiritual walk but there are many steps we can take to keep us from succumbing to temptation, Jesus did advise us to pray to God and ask not to be led into temptation, we have Jesus as our example if we think that we cannot resist temptation, (1 Corinthians 10:13 and others).

Let us remember the words of Paul: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. James 1:13-14.

We are personally responsible for our actions.

*J.v.L*



*From the Pulpit*

“But I Say unto You”

Purity For the Brethren

*Matthew 5:27-32*

*Edited from a message by Brother Ernest D Wine*

I extend greetings to each one present this morning in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; we invite and welcome everyone to this part of our morning service and invite your attention this morning to Matthew chapter 5 we want to look at a few verses here starting at verse 27 where Jesus said to His listeners, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time” and then quoted what was said, He then went on to say: “But I say unto you” and He had something different to say and I will read these verses now starting at Matthew five verse 27 and reading through verse 32.

**Matthew 5:27-32** <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>29</sup> And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. <sup>30</sup> And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. <sup>31</sup> It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: <sup>32</sup> But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

I suppose we could entitle the message “But I Say unto You” and we are looking specifically at these two changes that the Lord Jesus made to what had been said, between the standard of what was said by them of old time. In Old Testament times they had their standard they had the Law of Moses and they had what was said but now Jesus says: “But I say unto you.”

It seemed like the Old Testament standard was more a standard that governed their actions and they were responsible for what they did, Thou shalt not commit adultery, the act is sin, whereas in the New Testament Jesus was introducing a higher law and men were responsible for their thoughts and Jesus said the man who even looks at a woman and has the evil thoughts in his mind he is guilty. A much higher standard.

In the second place regarding divorce here it is perhaps not exactly the same here was an action, divorce that was tolerated in the Old Testament and in the New Testament now it is not tolerated but I think again behind that whole thing was this matter of a man's thoughts and the matter of the desires of his heart and his control of his inner being and his inner purity and uprightness.

Back in the earlier verses before those we read earlier Jesus talks about murder and He said it is a sin, it is wrong to kill your brother but then He said: But I say unto you that you are not even to be angry with your brother and to have evil thoughts about your brother it will put you in a very serious position, Jesus said it there.

So we see a raised standard from the Old Testament moving into the New Testament.

And I did find it interesting in light of saying that and yet when you think about the 10 Commandments; Thou shalt not - that did relate to a person's attitudes and his heart condition not just his actions, remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal but the last of the 10 Commandments is thou shalt not covet and really that is a heart condition so even in the Old Testament God did address issues of the heart it was not that they could be full of pollutions within and still be innocent before God.

This issue in focus right here in [Matthew 5:27-32](#) is looking on a woman to lust after her and the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment is thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, which really sounds surprisingly close to this commandment as Jesus gave it here.

2 **Peter 2:14** talks about people having eyes full of adultery and I think that relates to this matter of a look and thinking, the thoughts within one's heart, eyes full of adultery.

If we just backup to **Matthew 3:10**, it was John the Baptist who said: "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the tree."

I remember years ago a Minister describing that as getting down to the very attitudes of the heart and I think that really does describe it.

Now I would like to come back to these verses in Matthew five and consider specifically what does this mean when it says in verse 29: If thy right eye offend thee, **Matthew 5:29**, what is this offending eye that He might be talking about?

And this is not the sort of offence where sometimes today a person may be hear something that upsets him and we say he was offended when he heard this or that had been said about him or something else and we feel offended or hurt but this rather would mean if our eye causes us to stumble if it causes us to fall.

One writer said that the noun form of this word offend was actually used for the trigger on a trap, the part an animal would touch and then the trap would spring. If our eyes is a snare to us it is a trap then Jesus says we are to pluck it out cast it from us.

It was a new thought to me He doesn't just say pluck it out but pluck it out and cast it away, get rid of it, it is taking strong action.

We could further ask exactly what did Jesus mean here? Did He mean that we should if our eye causes us this kind of problem and that because of what we see and do not control our thoughts and we have evil wicked thoughts does this mean that we should then literally pluck out our eyes and get rid of them?

Well obviously we do not do that in our circles we all have our two eyes none of us have taken this step and I grappled with this over the years, I was satisfied that this does not mean literally our eye, our brother in our Sunday school lesson talked about things that are literal or things that are figurative but I believe that Jesus was teaching us that this requires strong action, the strongest action that we can take and we dare not go on offend-

ing, having our eyes offending us and falling into sin because of the things that we are seeing and the things that we are thinking.

We know by experience I think all of us that what we see and what we allow ourselves to think starts a process and if we entertain thoughts, right thoughts or wrong thoughts, especially evil thoughts, if we entertain them why down the road a bit that thing comes back and it tends to grow and it leads on and on.

Our minds go to David and how his eyes I think caused him to stumble he saw Bathsheba and it lead to his downfall there. [2 Samuel 11:1-5](#).

[James 1:14](#) says: <sup>14</sup> But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. And then James said how it leads to sin, it bringeth forth sin and sin when it is finished and bringeth forth death. [James 1:15](#).

What our eyes see can begin a process that leads us to destruction.

Several writers commenting on this verse compare it to surgery and we do this we see this at various times if a person has appendicitis the appendix is inflamed it is sick, it is poisoning him the solution is to cut it out and get rid of it otherwise it would destroy him or tonsils can be something that cause a lot of problems for a person they can be removed and they remove the problem and I think it is a similar thought here that we must not let our eyes go on offending us but we must deal with them.

I thought of it this way we might say pluck out your eye and cast it away and we might say we can't do that I don't want cast away my eye! Well the answer then is control it, control it, don't let it go on offending it.

As I followed on considering this is one of the things that assured me, it reassured me that God that does not literally intend for us to pluck out our eyes, is this a fact?

God has given us power to control our eyes has He not?

In the Old Testament they did not have the Spirit of God within them as we have today they did not have the new nature through being born again as we are today and God gives power to get His children to overcome the temptations of life in fact [1 Corinthians 10:13](#) says: There hath no tempta-

tion taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.  
There is always a way to escape.

I have found that sometimes in the midst of temptation the way was there to escape but I was drawn after the temptations and chose instead to follow after the attractiveness of the temptation but that is a failure and God does make the way to escape and He gives us the power to choose that way to escape.

**Romans 7:24** after Paul had talked about trying to do what is right and failing to do it and trying to stay away from evil and turning around and doing it he cries out: <sup>24</sup> O wretched man that I am! (This is miserable) who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

And in the very next chapter begins with *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. **Romans 8:1**.

And it goes on to talk about the power to be able to rise above the failures that men experienced in the old covenant.

If my eye offends me I just dare not live that way but must deal with it and by the grace of God I can when I purpose to do that.

**Galatians 5:22-23** talks about the fruit of the Spirit and says the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, and numerous things and then it concludes with temperance or self-control. The Spirit in our life gives us power to control ourselves.

Paul said **1 Corinthians 9:27** But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection.

We likewise need to find that experience.

In **Colossians 3:5** we are told mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.

Put them to death and he specifically mentions fornication and uncleanness.

I think you will know what I'm talking about when we talk about sometimes we have seen people and they have been referred to as a dirty old man, did you ever hear that phrase, does that communicate something to you?

I think most of us have seen an old man who had lived his life following the lusts of the flesh and the evil, the filthy stories as he went through life he picked them up, he collected them, he enjoyed telling them and as he arrives in old age here is and he is a filthy character that's what he is through and through, he has lived a life where he has given himself to wickedness and corruption and now is an old man, he is a filthy, despicable old man, you know what I'm talking about and very likely you have met people like that.

By contrast I think of the saint of God and old man who has lived his life saying no to the flesh and overcoming this thing of an offending eye he has not allowed himself to have these evil thoughts and lustful thoughts he instead is following after that which is pure and holy and right and what does he look like when he becomes an old man?

Well there is a beauty about his life there is a holiness it is completely different.

I thank God for faithful brethren and sisters in our circles, in our congregation here who illustrate that kind of victory and the fruit of a life of purity and uprightness.

I would like to share several safeguards in relation to this matter of the offending eye.

This is serious, this is something we dare not say yes I know, it happened again and it happens here and it happens there but it is something that we must live in victory over and there are some things that we can do to help ourselves.

This is addressed to men it says: Whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her.

I believe the problem is more severe for men but it is not limited to them and women likewise are called to purity in their thoughts and what they allow themselves to see and to consider.

But I would say for one thing that we guard we help to safeguard ourselves and our eyes from what we are going to see by washing ourselves daily in the Word of God.

We read this scripture here and it is a warning if we were never to see it again and go through the rest of our life never thinking about this from the scriptural standpoint we probably would lose our position but we come back to the Scriptures this is God's standard and we wash ourselves with this Word, this pure Word.

We read about Joseph and how he resisted the temptations that came to him, powerful temptations for a young man and he fled from them we read that story, **Genesis 39:7-12**, and it strengthens us to take a similar stand and we are not defiling ourselves.

We read the scriptures keep thyself pure, **1 Timothy 5:22**, and flee youthful lusts, **2 Timothy 2:22** and as we expose ourselves to God's Word and God's standard it is an aid to keep our eyes pure.

We must pray, Brother Andrew in his devotional meditation talked about prayer and the power of prayer and we need to pray that God would keep us from the temptation in this struggle that He would keep us pure, God will certainly be faithful to do His part and we must take the way to escape as He offers it.

Another thing that helps us in this battle is that when we see something that we know is not fit to see we do not look a second time but we look away we avert our eyes.

I know there have been times in course of business facing individuals where suddenly there to my view was something that simply is not right for a man to see and I close my eyes, turn aside, don't take a second look.

And I would warn us in connection with this about the curiosity of mankind we are by nature curious and when we tend to see something maybe on driving down the road and here is a billboard, What was that? Curiosity can draw us into something where we had better just avoid it turn away from it.

We get a newspaper and newspapers are full of flyers they are not fit to see, look away don't allow ourselves to look again and say, What is that?

I think you know what I'm talking about, we are human and we face these struggles together.

We need to avoid places of special temptation and for that reason when I get my fuel I'm glad to pay at the pump where I can simply make my transaction at the pump and I do not need to go inside the store.

More and more today you go into the store and there is an array of things that are not fit to see they are simply not fit to see and if we must go into a store to make a transaction like that then we need to look at the right places avert our eyes, we cannot afford to look and ponder and enjoy seeing these things that really are illegitimate for us.

I believe we do well as married men to let our wives to take care of some of the things that need to be done.

The mail it used to be something that anyone could get the mail the children could run and get the mail but the mail today is not fit for looking through many times and it is an area where our wives can help us to shield us from something that may be our undoing and lead us to sinful thoughts.

We do not get a regular newspaper at our place but sometimes pick up the newspaper to see especially when something significant is happening in the nation or worldwide and I believe you as well as I know what it is like to read in the newspaper and here we read something and: What is this? And we start reading through it, this is terrible, this is what they did and so on and you know we can read through that and what it amounts to is that we have dragged our minds down through the very filth that we condemn and say they should never print something like that.

Well then why do I find it so interesting to read? And it is interesting reading some of those things.

We do well many times and I'm not saying there is never a place to read of what is happening about some of those events but many times those things are things that will do us no good and we should turn from them – if your eye offend you, call on the power of God and turn away and don't allow your eye to lead you into what is evil.

Those of us who are members of our church here when we were baptised we promised, we were asked: Are you truly sorry for your past sins and are you willing to renounce Satan, the world and all the works of darkness?

Is that what we are talking about, are you willing to renounce all the works of darkness and your own carnal will and sinful desires?

And we said: I am.

That was a vow that we made to God, let's remember that vow, let's live up to that vow we renounced these wicked things we put them from us.

Those of us who are married we promised that we would love and cherish our partners and forsaking all others keeping ourselves only unto our partner as long as we both shall live.

Remember our vows and live up to them.

Our sisters can help us in this issue as well by dressing modestly and conducting themselves with reserve and I appreciate so much that very fact of our relationships with our sisters.

We meet women of the world sometimes and it is a very difficult to converse with them to share with them because it is just not fitting, it is not comfortable hardly to look their way but our sisters dress modestly and they conduct themselves with a reserve so that there is a comfort, the problem the difficulty is removed.

Thank God that it can be that way.

In conclusion at this point I would remind us that when Sampson went down to Gaza the scriptures say that he saw there a harlot and we see from the story that follows he was not true to what he should have been. **Judges 16:1**

Years later there was a man in the New Testament also went down to Gaza that was Philip and the Spirit told him arise and go down toward the south, what did Philip see when he went to Gaza? Philip saw the eunuch reading the Scriptures and he went and witnessed to him. **Acts 8:26-31.**

When we go out into the world tomorrow and into the coming week and as time goes on we will see many things and I think this example of Philip can be a challenge to us that our attention should be to the things that are noble, things that are good, things that God would have us to see and that will lead us to that which we should do.

Finally remember **Matthew 5:30** talks about our right hand offending us and again I think if in our actions if there is something that is a snare to us continually a snare we need to deal with that decisively lest it causes us to sin and to fall.



### *FORGIVEN OR EXONERATED?*

In the Court of the Lord, the guilty charge has already been given to mankind. The gavel has fallen, and we have all been pronounced "guilty as charged." We can either seek forgiveness or endeavour to be exonerated: relieved of blame or accusation; acquitted; absolved.

When a judge or jury hands down a verdict that does not necessarily establish the truth ideally, the verdict identifies the truth. The same is true when we pronounce our own "verdict." One can only be exonerated in the event of false accusations, and even then one must say, "Except for the grace of God I would have..." No matter how good we meant to be, how much we were deceived by evil, or who instigated it, wrongdoing cannot be merely exonerated. It must be dealt with. Restitution alone will not bring about forgiveness or exoneration. Someone may forgive me, truly and from the heart, but before I can reap the blessing of being forgiven, I have to understand with my mind and heart that I need forgiveness and do not deserve it.

The Scriptures pronounce a guilty charge upon mankind of every race and era. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" Romans 5:12.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" Romans 3:23.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" John 1:8.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" Isaiah 53:6.

In the figment of our minds, we can establish "not guilty" pleas for ourselves upon the simple notion that we have not been so bad, not really needing redemption in the first place. We may even be able to persuade ourselves that God will surely recognize the absence of "bad" in our lives, not to mention our good works. This is deception.

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" Isaiah 64:6.

"What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" Romans 3:9-12.

The sin of Adam and Eve has been paid for, and that case is closed. The supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ paid for it. There is no balance due or unpaid. Jesus paid it all.

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" 1 Peter 1:18-20.

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

The price of redemption cannot be paid again or repaid to Jesus Christ. It is a gift, even to those who discard it. Unless we have accepted the truth that payment has been made, we are yet guilty.

Alas, we find ourselves facing our private sin. Not private as in secret, but private as in personal ownership. Confronted with these truths, the humanistic approach is to seek exoneration. "Yes, I am guilty. But by some miraculous, unexplained way, I am not accountable for my misdeeds. My

good deeds outweigh the bad ones. I am basically good inside and merely have to let it come out."

In my Christian life, I made some grave errors that brought on a financial crisis. This caused injustice to family and business associates. Teetering on the ledge of financial ruin, I sought counsel and soon saw things as they really were. I came to understand that the situation was a fruit of a proud, arrogant spirit I had allowed to dwell in my heart. I fell into a depressed condition that neither allowed me to sleep or eat for days. Deuteronomy 28:66-67 became true in my life: "And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even(ing)! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see."

One day the realization came crashing into my heart that my condition was faithlessness, and it was sin. Falling to my knees, I said to God, "I know the Scriptures say, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11:28) But that is not reasonable in this instance. This is not something that happened to me; I brought it on my family, others, and myself. To just hand it over now would just be the wrong thing. I am guilty of this thing and must somehow work out a solution to correct it."

I wanted exoneration, not simple forgiveness. My mind's pursuit was that somehow through a self-work that God should show me, I would be exonerated—freed from blame, declared guiltless. But the Holy Spirit gently, simply, and lovingly said, "That's okay, just give it to Me." Stunned at such a simultaneous guilty and forgiveness pronouncement, I rose from that prayer with newfound courage and hope.

In dealing with offenses we bring on God, others, and ourselves, we sometimes falsely presume that we have the following multiple choices:

- (1) Acquittal—to release from duty or obligation.
- (2) Arbitration—the settlement of a dispute by a person chosen to hear both sides.
- (3) Amnesty—a deliberate overlooking of a wrongdoing.

- (4) Clemency—fornbearance, leniency, or mercy towards an offender or enemy.
- (5) Justification—good reason, explanation, validation, excuse.
- (6) Pardon—to release from further punishment for a crime.
- (7) Absolution—a formal freeing from guilt or obligation.

Forgive: To give up resentment or desire to punish; stop being angry with. This is the only way to freedom. When God forgives a man, he has peace. None of the other "options" deals the ultimate "death blow" to the offense. The Scriptures establish that we cannot be exonerated before God. Forgiveness is our only hope. And the Scriptures promise it (John 6:35-37; 1 John 1:7-9)!

Repentance is an irreplaceable ingredient in finding forgiveness. But repentance is not forgiveness in itself. Judas repented bitterly without finding forgiveness. There will be repenting in hell never equalled on earth (Luke 13:28). The word repent (repentance, repented, etc., included) is used at least sixty times in the New Testament (KJV) alone. "When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" Mark 2:17.

"Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after" 1 Timothy 5:24.

*Brother Adam*



#### A COVERING FOR THE NAKED SOUL

The Apostle Paul spoke of desiring to be clothed in the spiritual sense. There is spiritual clothing, viewed only by the eye of faith, which covers the inherent nakedness of the soul. Although not seen with the natural eye, that covering is more real than tangible or physical things in the sense that it pertains to one's eternal destiny.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked" (2 Corinthians 5:1-3).

In His revelation to the Apostle John, Jesus reproved certain "believers" who were naked but did not realize it. They had at one time been clothed, but they had lost their garment of righteousness. The Lord admonished them for the "shame of [their] nakedness" and urged them to put on proper clothing (Revelation 3:1-18).

In all but the most primitive and isolated groups of people, there is a common sense of shame, or embarrassment, connected with public bodily nakedness. A disconnect from the compass of morality is indicated by the utter absence of decency and chastity present among some fringe elements of modern society. Here there seems to be no shame. But that is not the norm of society, where a certain amount of common sense and propriety still rule.

The natural guardedness of most people regarding the exposure of their bodies is no doubt an endowment of the Creator, although it was not active until the fall. In Adam and Eve's sinless state, they were naked, without any inhibition or cringing. This correlates with the innocence of small children. They are completely free from embarrassment when they are unclothed. In contrast, one of the first consequences of Adam and Eve's disobedience was that they became acutely aware of their unclothed bodies. To alleviate the burning shame, they endeavoured to clothe themselves, thinking to hide their nakedness from God. Thus, the natural aversion to being seen unclothed serves as a reminder of the shame of the unclothed soul.

That there is a latent sense of shame when the soul is not "covered" may be observed in the fact that man feels compelled to justify all his doings. The inner uncomfortable feeling of conscience betrays that the individual is "uncovered." It is at this point that the fallen nature moves to hide its shame. It sews aprons of fig leaves (Genesis 3:7). Thus a man explains to himself, and justifies before men why he did what he did. Some of those aprons have several layers of fig leaves. One's excuses may seem logical or

even have a religious accent.

But all such "aprons" have two things in common. The first is that regardless how many layers of fig leaves are used, God sees right through them. He desires "truth in the inward parts" (Psalm 51:6). The person who sews himself "aprons of fig leaves" ignores the reality of his or her condition and spites God. The second, which is related to the first, is that fig leaves aren't worth anything; they don't have a cost. There is no "atoning blood" involved, neither is there any price of denying self attached to them (Matthew 16:24). Coverings of fig leaves always spare and protect self and leave the soul naked. The inclination to gratify the flesh and overlook sin is the essence of soul nakedness. "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22) of sin and no true covering of one's nakedness.

When God came to the Garden that fateful evening, He knew it all. He saw it all. And He has seen the wretchedness of every person since until today. Adam and Eve's aprons of fig leaves were as nothing when He found them; He saw their nakedness and loss of innocence. But He also knew their sense of shame and felt for them. In His holiness, and in His love, He moved to clothe them properly. That meant the shedding of blood in order to provide a symbolic garment that truly covered. One can believe that Adam and Eve, with remorse and acceptance of God's judgment, and upon submitting themselves to that "garment of righteousness," received release of the shame of their nakedness. Although they now knew good and evil, blood-bought garments covered them.

All this, of course, pointed to the spiritually naked state of every soul since the fall and to the divine Lamb of God. Jesus would need to be slain to provide the only true covering that avails before God. But according to the Word, there are, comparatively speaking, only few who avail themselves of the true clothing of God's righteousness in Christ Jesus (Matthew 7:14; Luke 13:23-24).

When one has on the garment bought by the shed blood of Jesus, he ceases to justify himself. Christ is now his justification (1 Corinthians 1:30). Rather than acquitting himself, he admits and confesses his sins and weaknesses, and he turns from them by the grace from Calvary. He willingly walks the strait and narrow way, not being ashamed of the "fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Reve-

lation 19:8). He goes forth with quiet assurance, knowing that as he abides in Christ Jesus, the shame of the old sin nature is covered. He has been made a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

On the Judgment Day, all the natural laws, which restrict and limit the perception of faithless people to only what they can see, feel, smell, and understand, will be lifted and rendered void. All men will then appear before God and the whole world in a completely new dimension. Then men will see and perceive the reality of the spiritual realm. On that terrible day, the "shame of thy nakedness" shall have its sharpest and fullest meaning. No longer just a bad dream, the unclothed will appear before God's all-seeing eyes (Revelation 1:14) to receive their sentence.

Nowadays some men revel in their licentious life and flaunt their nakedness. They have lost all sense of shame relating to being naked and open before the Almighty. They have clothed themselves in their own thinking and proud thoughts. Backsliders and prodigals, who once had on the beautiful garments of Zion, are walking "naked" and yet holding their heads high before God and His people. They seemingly have little or no shame for their nakedness. But on that day, the shame of being unclothed will be so acute that many will call for the rocks and mountains to cover them (Revelation 6:16).

The Son of God shed His precious blood to make the atonement for sin, the priceless covering for the naked soul. His suffering and labour on the cross did not end until He knew He had fully satisfied the Father's wrath against man's sin (John 19:30). There was not one jot or tittle of the Law, which justly accused man of every sin and imperfection, left unsatisfied upon Christ's death. The holy law of God was absolutely quieted by Jesus' sacrifice. This is the grounds of justification and the only holy garment that covers the nakedness of the soul.

Being of a penitent heart and spirit, confessing one's sins, willingly making restitution where needed, and reaching out in faith to lay hold on the merits of Jesus' offering are conditions of justification. Meeting those conditions opens the door for the Holy Spirit to do His most blessed work. He takes the garment of the Father's acceptance of His Son's atoning death and

places it upon the repentant sinner. He is now fully clothed. Such love bestowed on such unworthy sinners cannot be fully comprehended (1 John 3:1; 1 Corinthians 2:9) in this life!

*Brother Gladwin*



### *THE SAVIOUR'S TENDER LOVE*

Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him! (John 11:35-36).

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33). Surely the tender love of Jesus is one of those ways. The Word affords us a glimpse into the ways of the Lord, and what we see in this glimpse is boundless. It is like looking out over the ocean, so immense—yet in that glimpse we see only a small part of it. May we take this look with the eyes of faith and experience the joy, comfort, and security Jesus desires to give us. "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

We do not know exactly what was going on in John the Baptist's mind when he sent his disciples to talk to Jesus. Perhaps he was discouraged, being locked up in prison, and desired a firsthand report of what was going on. The answer Jesus gave reveals His tender compassion for the poor, sick, and unfortunate instead of only reaching out and comforting them in their misery, He delivered them from it.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden," is one of the most beautiful and tender invitations in the Word. All of us labour in some way. Men of the world often burden themselves with pursuits of wealth and honour. Others who crave sensual pleasure labour in its pursuit. Though blinded by the fun of the moment, they are really slaves to the lusts of Satan. Still others labour in vain to establish their own righteousness. Sinners are heavy laden with guilt, and even the true believer has labours and burdens because of the temptations and afflictions of Satan. The beautiful invitation to come to Him goes out to the whole world.

In coming to Jesus, we must take His yoke, submit to His authority, and be willing to learn from Him in all things. We need not fear the yoke, for this yoke is fleeced with love. Though it requires self-denial and exposure to difficulties, these burdens are made light by inner peace and joy that comes from walking close to the tender Shepherd.

A loving father takes good care of all his children, but he is especially tender with the little ones. Likewise, Jesus is especially compassionate to the weak, the young, and newcomers to the faith. He sternly warns against doing or saying anything that would cause them to go astray. He yearns after those who have strayed from the fold. He does not stand over them with the hatchet of criticism, but with a yearning heart He seeks to restore them.

A hen gathering her chicks under her wings is a suitable example of the Saviour's tender love toward both those who trust in Him and those who reject Him. He stands ready and waiting to receive anyone who will turn to him with his whole heart. Only pride and unwillingness can stand between us and eternal happiness.

The world is teeming with people overwhelmed with heartache, pain, and sadness. Children are cruelly abused. Others are emotionally devastated because their parents have parted ways. Consider all the children, and adults as well, languishing in hospitals in pain with terminal illnesses. Think of all the people killed or maimed by accidents. Vast numbers of people spend their entire lives working hard to earn just enough to buy the barest of necessities, with no hope of things ever getting better. Imagine how a mother must feel when her little children are crying because there is not enough food. Others are actually starving to death. Add to this all the devilish wickedness, crime, and immorality prevalent worldwide. It is impossible to comprehend the magnitude of all this heartache, pain, and sin in the world, for we can only see such a small part of it at any one time.

Our compassion is often stirred when we get a closer view of just one sad condition, such as an account in a newspaper about some helpless child being severely abused. Jesus sees the whole woeful picture in one look. How much more must His tender compassion be touched by the thought that so many of these sad circumstances could be relieved if people would only turn to Him with their whole heart. Seeing how He yearns over one sheep who is out on the cold mountain, how must He yearn over the millions who are out there!

Considering all this, our problems surely do not seem so great. Yet, we also must bear suffering. Accidents maim or take the lives of our loved ones. Children are born with defects. Many of our brothers and sisters are suffering from cancer, heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, and other diseases. It sounds melancholic, but let us not forget that Jesus sees and is touched by all our problems, as well as by all the other problems in the world.

If our health problems are the result of our own self-indulgence or ignorance, Jesus tenderly seeks to instruct us in those things we could change. If our financial problems are the result of poor management, He seeks to help us manage better. We should be humble enough to accept help and to listen. When our difficulties are the result of conditions beyond our control, Jesus stands with outstretched arms ready to enfold and comfort us.

In some cases, God would heal us if we would believe Him. In other cases He helps us to say with the apostle Paul, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

What Jesus most yearns for, perhaps, is that we would know His love in a personal way and daily walk close to Him. Would He not like to gather us under His wing as a hen does her chicks? What keeps Him from doing this? Could it be our pride, covetousness, envy, a craving for pleasure, or simply an unwillingness to fall into His arms in complete surrender? One thing is certain. If Jesus seems distant, it is not His fault. Jesus waits beside His children longing for that close bond which results from their devotion.

Young people, this is just as true for you as for the elderly. He is, in fact, more honoured by your dedication, because in this world it is so rare to see young people truly consecrated to God.

Do we want to be more like Jesus? As we become more like Him, will we not experience more of a tender, yearning heart? Do we linger in fervent prayer for the salvation and general welfare of our children and for the brethren? Are we too busy satisfying our wants to yearn for the salvation of our neighbours or the world in general? Jesus provided us with a wonderful example of a tender, yearning heart.



*Mercy*

Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man (Proverbs 3:3-4).

God decreed in the beginning that sin's penalty would be death. Judgment Day will reveal what we have done about our sin. As we accept our accountability, we must turn to Jesus and experience justification in Him through faith. By His blood the penitent sinner who comes confessing and begging for mercy is cleared of all guilt. When we realize that we deserve God's judgments, we begin to fully appreciate His mercy. Is this not the true essence of mercy? What a wonderful part of God's plan! In this condition our hearts are warm and easily touched, ready to extend mercy to others. We dare not harbor an unforgiving spirit toward our erring brother but rather have an empathizing spirit so we can bring about his quick recovery.

May we grasp anew what the quality of mercy means for us. Someday we will be judged according to how we have judged others (Matthew 7:2). Jesus teaches us well on this topic, and the practical examples He gives in Matthew 18 contain answers for us today

The question of how often to forgive a brother was more than a casual matter to Peter. The Jews had a maxim that they should forgive three times. Peter may have thought seven times was already more than required. The passage preceding the lesson scriptures relates how Jesus addresses the matter of brotherly admonition and the process of helping one who has trespassed against us. Each of the three steps is motivated by a hope that the offending one will hear the concern and return to the right way.

Where in all of this does mercy fit in? How often shall I forgive my brother? Jesus says seventy times seven. In Luke 17:4 we read of forgiving our brother seven times in one day. This could translate to offering mercy to someone every two hours, not counting night-time. To keep up this rate for seventy days, we readily see Jesus' point of unlimited forgiveness.

In the parable, Jesus mentions two aspects of mercy so the truth may be better understood. First, He mentions the servant's debt to the great king and secondly, his fellow servant's debt to him. The one owed the king ten thousand talents, or about ten million dollars. This was the highest number in Greek arithmetic. The fellow servant owed him a hundred pence, or about seventeen dollars.

Looking at the first part of the parable, we envision a wealthy king with many servants. As he managed his affairs, a time came to settle some accounts. One man owed him an excessive amount, so much like our indebtedness to God. This poor servant was bankrupt. The king would have taken all he had, even his wife and children, turning every possible asset into cash. This teaches that no part of our lives remains untouched when we come before God. As the servant begged for time to pay, he was graciously forgiven, and the king compassionately erased the record. The Christian today also recalls a time when the load of sin was heavy. Then, upon acknowledging a dire need within, Jesus forgave all sin and filled his heart with peace.

Next, let us consider the second part, showing mercy to our fellowmen. Upon finding one who owed just a trivial sum, the servant grew angry and actually cast him into prison. It pains us to see how pitiless he was. Matthew 7:5 says we must first recognize the beam in our own eye before we consider the mote in our brother's eye. We can feign a certain type of love, but can we feign mercy? To forgive is to have compassion. To forgive is to forget others' past mistakes and failings. In mercy we build on the present with good hope for the future. May we not be as the one who was delivered to the tormentors, but rather practice a mercy that forgives and forgives again.

We are prone to forget the importance of mercy. In daily interaction with our fellowmen, there are many occasions for little misunderstandings. Our proud natures would react to even small failings by allowing an unwillingness to forgive to slip in. This leads to hasty judgments and blaming others.

May we take a closer look at the matter of blaming others, neither we nor our brother gain by focusing on faults. When the woman poured precious ointment on Jesus' head the disciples criticized her, but Jesus did not. In His mercy He knew it was not a time to find fault. The disciples thought it wasteful and possibly were embarrassed for their Master. Quickly they passed judgment on the woman who so sincerely brought the best she could obtain. Jesus, however, sympathized with her. He knew her heart's language and admonished the disciples for troubling her. His tenderness toward both sides is a lesson for us today. The account of this woman's deed, Jesus said, should be related wherever the gospel would be preached (Matthew 26:13).

Often the blessings of mercy are available right in our homes. The greatest tests are often with the ones we hold dearest. Young parents find that raising children is challenging. The question of when or how to discipline a child can be overwhelming. Sometimes family relations have been stressful for a time, but we do not understand why then God tenderly reveals that we have become harsh toward our children. We need to recognize again that we, too, have many failings, and need to allow God to cleanse us.

May all of us rise to the challenge of being merciful. Think of it as a privilege, something you personally can do. Do not become losers by holding a grudge against someone for what he did. Only when we are tenderly sorry at the mistakes of others can we hope to reach them. May we, like Jesus, be willing to humble ourselves and identify with others around us.

It might be helpful to think that God could have created us all with identical natures and with no need to be subject to one another. This was obviously not His plan. Rather, we are to exercise forgiveness and mercy among ourselves. As we do this, by God's love and grace we are drawn together. Our own identity is lost, and there is a blending that is wonderful to experience.

The Old Testament account of Joseph is a touching example of mercy. During the years of famine, his family joined him in Egypt. He forgave his brothers there, and they lived happily together. However, when Jacob died, Joseph's brothers remembered their former wrongdoing. They thought perhaps Joseph would now take revenge. They were so afraid they sent messengers to beg pardon. Later, coming themselves, they knelt humbly before their brother. Joseph wept at their predicament. Again he laid no blame. He simply said, "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good.... Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them" (Genesis 50:20-21).

To Joseph, God's purpose was paramount. As long as good could come forth, it mattered not what his brothers had done to him. How easily their evil deeds could have paralysed him but on the contrary, God could use him in a great work.

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