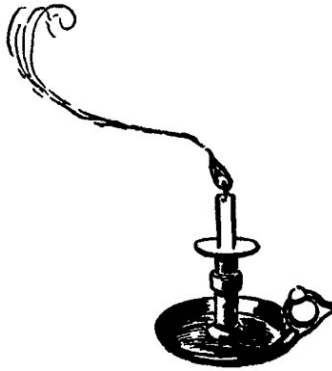


THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 2-19

Vol. 9 No. 12 – DECEMBER 2012



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

www.anabaptistmennonites.org

For A Conservative Mennonite Perspective

From The Editor's Desk.

Worldly people sometimes have a saying when some festive occasion is at hand, "It's party time!" and it is how many of them see this coming Christmas season. Some shops "get in early" and start their sales pitch for the so called Christmas "goodies" in early November and even at times October is not too early for them to chase the consumer's dollar.

No doubt we all like festive occasions to some degree or other but we are called to be separate from the world, not unequally yoked, to come out from among them just to mention some Scriptural injunctions to the Christian in how to conduct his relationship with the unbelievers and ungodly. That relationship extends beyond our personal contact with them but also to their patterns of behaviour and way of life especially where it is contrary to the spirit of the Word of God and not just the letter of the law.

Remember how Jesus spoke to the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:23, they obeyed the letter of the Law, for which He did not condemn them but He did call them hypocrites because they ignored the other more important issues, judgement, mercy and faith - the spirit of holy living.

We can so easily find ourselves in the same place, paying scrupulous attention to the "rules" or the law but ignoring the spirit of our calling in Christ. The Apostle Paul puts it very well in Romans 7:6, speaking of the born-again believer, ⁶ But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

By all means let us celebrate some festive occasions such as births, marriages and such like but let us also recall to whom we owe our existence and our future, none other than God, the Creator Himself, and maybe, just maybe we ought have this motto in our homes and before our eyes as a permanent reminder to Whom we owe it all!

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do,

Do all to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31.

J.v.L



WARNINGS FOR OUR TIME

by Brother Errol W.

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" Jude, vv. 3-4.

Jude wrote this stern warning when he heard of the sudden appearance of the devastating heresy, which he writes about in verses 6-19. Following, he pens these words, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (vv. 20-24). These verses, together with many others, give us courage in this evil day. God will always aid the faithful to the end.

It is related that Domitian, who was the eighth ruler of the Roman Empire, during his persecution of Christians (A.D. 96), looked for the heirs of the kingdom of David. He ordered the arrest of the grandsons of Jude, the brother of Jesus. They told the emperor that they were farmers and lived by the toil of their hands and that Christ's kingdom was not a kingdom of this world. Apparently the example that their grandfather had left had been a good witness not only to his son but also his grandsons.

In Bible history there have been six world empires, namely: Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman. Out of the Roman Empire, another power arose, which was the Papal Roman Empire. During the Papal Empire era and following, much confusion and deception entered

men's hearts.

When a nation basks itself in pride and immorality, God always has a way to bring it down. He often has allowed another country to come and bring it to ruin. It was that way with the above world powers, and so it is today. God will not let a country continue when they willingly and blatantly continue down the road of sin. Only God knows when the time is that His grace runs out, and He permits another nation to overrun that nation.

At this time many nations are involved in a war that causes their leaders much confusion and agitation. While it is stated that this is a war against terrorism, the leaders of most Western nations realize that the Islamic religion is involved. Today, Islam is one of the fastest growing religions with a membership of more than 1.2 billion. Many people do not understand the Muslim way, thereby causing consternation as how to deal with them. Is God allowing this confusion in the nations because the cup of sin is full?

According to the Scriptures and early church writers, the Roman Catholic faith also bears the marks of great heresy. Today its membership exceeds 1.1 billion. So in these two (Islam and Catholicism), there is a total of more than twenty percent of the world's population. If we then add all the other deceptive faiths and cults, the percentage increases much more. In this country, and many others, there are those who seem to be devoted to the truth. Yet, on the other hand, many churches are generally and thoroughly pervaded with humanism. They are full of worldliness, indifference, half-heartedness, pleasure seeking, and unbelief. There is little of the real spirit of Christ because of ignorance or unwillingness to follow God's Word. One can easily understand why the Revelator says, "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" (Revelation 20:7-8).

Now, referring to the sixth vial in chapter 16, John saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon (Satan) and out of the beast (secular or world governments) and out of the mouth of the false prophet (apostate churches and sects). They were spirits of devils, working miracles, which went forth unto the kings of the earth and the whole world,

gathering them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. When we see that the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet are allies, it helps us understand that Satan is loosed today. They are in a real battle against the truth that the Bible teaches. Satan is gathering his forces and confronting the faith once delivered to the saints. While we are deeply involved in our pursuits in life, Satan continues to strengthen his fight against all righteousness.

John speaks of frogs in the above verse. We do not notice an abundance of frogs until the weather conditions are just right, and then they appear everywhere. Is there some similarity to these evil spirits working today? When the conditions are just right, they show up everywhere.

Jesus said that His coming would be preceded by "great tribulation" Matthew 24:21-29. He said it would be a time of "mourning" for all nations, Matthew 24:29-30, and men will be fainting for fear and expectation of things coming on the world, Luke 21:24-26. He implies that there will be little faith at that time, Luke 18:8. Daniel also spoke of a "time of trouble such as never was" to be like at the "time of the end" Daniel 12:1-13.

In Matthew 24 and 25, Jesus gives us warning of what it will be like in the days prior to His coming. Chapter 24 gives us the events that will be in the world. In chapter 25, the scene changes from world conditions to the conditions in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said, "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins ... And five of them were wise and five were foolish." Many a powerful sermon has been preached on this text, and two lines of thoughts have been presented. Does this refer to the general kingdom of all believers or does it refer to the church of God? The view that this refers to the general kingdom of all believers must not weaken the carefulness that should be exercised. The view that this basically refers to the church causes a real soberness, and we more readily bring ourselves into judgment.

"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept" (v. 5). The time that we are living in is fertile ground for the spirit of slumbering and sleepiness. Many are overcharged with a drive for gain and wealth, and many sense the pressures of this life. The media is full of advertisements of all sorts, trying to persuade one to purchase many things. Also in the array

of allurements are many books that have a subtle way of removing the self-denied life to an intellectual approach to Christian living. This spirit has a sly way of removing us from a Spirit-led life, which begins a process of removing the ancient landmarks and convictions that are Spirit based. When this spirit takes possession of our hearts, there is indifference to the warnings that are echoed today. Then the old adage, "Human reasoning is the greatest enemy to God-given conviction" becomes true. Because of our time, there are too many in a state of slumbering and sleepiness.

Another area of great concern is that the untruth is taken for the truth. Truth and reality are absolute. Reality does not alter itself to match our perception. If, therefore, we have a wrong understanding or belief about something, that does not change the fact. The fact remains steadfast, and we stand in error. There is only one reality, only one truth. Therefore we must search to find the truth and conform ourselves to it; for it will not conform to us. Our search for truth must be sincere and wholehearted. Eternity is infinite; one cannot risk being on the wrong road.

Another concern that is shared by many brethren is that it appears when concerns are brought forth in larger meetings about our material area, there is a lack of strength or courage to see the discussion through. Why is this? Are we not willing to allow the Spirit to touch our material pursuits? May we all together allow the Spirit to search our hearts to see if we have all on the altar.

The world is full of pleasure seeking, and this wants to affect Christians also. Is this a sign that some believers are lacking the filling of the Holy Spirit, and therefore, we are trying to fill the heart with something else? The late Tobias Unruh told the conference of 1940 that he saw a dark cloud coming out of the West. His thought was that a time was coming wherein, because of shallow spiritual living, many would fall in time of temptation due to a lack of understanding the Scriptures and the leading of the Holy Spirit. This comes by not giving ourselves to studying the Word, resulting in very little or no conviction. We see this happening today. Evil forces that we have not faced before are challenging us. This is all part of that dark cloud.

Evil forces are openly challenging the faith we dearly love. It will take a complete commitment to God for us to stand against the times. A commitment is a decision, not a feeling. It is a promise one keeps regardless of the emotions of the moment. A commitment also isn't affected by circumstances. One doesn't measure the cost and then decide if he will live up to his commitment. Commitment stays true even when circumstances are hard. Let us earnestly pray and encourage each other to faithfulness and sincerity.

With faith and obedience to God's Word, we can have courage. "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." God has been and always will be true to His word; so let's be faithful and inherit that eternal crown. The faithful need not be discouraged in the times we are living in. Rather, think of the scripture that says we should lift up our heads for our redemption draweth nigh, Luke 21:28.

By permission: The Messenger of Truth, Gospel Publishers, Moundridge, Kansas.



The Dawning Light

*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,
And we beheld his glory,
The glory as of the only begotten of the Father,
Full of grace and truth
John 1:14*

Everyone appreciates the beauty of a new day dawning. After the darkness of the night, a faint glimmer of light begins to be seen. Eventually it springs into the full brightness of day. How much more beautiful is the story of the coming of the Christ child. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, spoke of "the dayspring from on high" who came "To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Luke 1:78-79). May we remember the time when the light of life first dawned in our hearts and we accepted the plan of salvation and found the remedy for our sins. Let us

also be mindful of the many for whom Christ came who have yet to experience the true beauty of the Christmas story.

Matthew 1:18-23 ¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. ¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. ²⁰ But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. ²¹ And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. ²² Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, ²³ Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Matthew 2:1-2 ¹ Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, ² Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

Matthew 2:9-12 ⁹ When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. ¹¹ And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

In the above Scripture setting the children of Israel were in a spiritually dark time once again. No divinely inspired prophet had spoken for several centuries. In fact, the Word of God had been largely neglected during the last four hundred years. Bowed beneath the double yoke of the Roman Empire and wicked King Herod, whose despicable crimes repulsed even

the ungodly rulers of his time, the Israelites surely must have longed for the freedom that the promised Messiah would bring. The prophecies of Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many others had told the nation of the joy that would be theirs when Christ would come. The thought of the future fulfilment of these promises must have lightened the heavy burden of the people on many occasions throughout their history. Their sad hearts must have been cheered as they heard faithful men of God speaking of the blessed gospel era that was to come!

"There came wise men from the east." We wonder at the faith and perseverance of these men of old.

Many facts about them are not revealed, such as their nationality, the distance they travelled, and the time they spent following the star. God has allowed us to see clearly, however, that they were obedient men, keen to the Spirit, respectful to authority, and dedicated in their search. Did they lose sight of the star as they neared Jerusalem? For one reason or another, they entered the city and were brought to see King Herod. But it was not in Herod's royal palace that the Christ child would be found. The Creator of the universe had been born in a humble cattle stall in Bethlehem.

The wise men accepted the word of the scribes and chief priests and directed their camels toward the quiet countryside. As they looked into the night sky, they saw it again! The same star that had led them so faithfully was there, again leading the way. Joy filled their hearts at the sight of the familiar celestial body, knowing that to follow was all that was required of them. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" Hebrews 11:6. The wise men had this true faith in God, and they were finally rewarded when they saw the King whom they had been seeking.

"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" Genesis 1:3. God created light on the first day of Creation. He created it as a basic element in nature. Without light, life as we know it on earth would not exist. The Canadian Oxford Dictionary defines light as "the natural agent that stimulates sight and makes things visible." We are interested in the spiritual parallel of this natural law. As God created light, so He has sustained it. There have

always been those who held out the true light, even in times of great darkness. A small light shines brightly in darkness, and many small lights put together make a brighter light. The martyrs are a great source of inspiration for us. As each one held forth the torch that he had received by faith in Jesus Christ, he became one of a great "cloud of witnesses" Hebrews 12:1. They "shine as lights in the world" Philippians 2:15, as the written record of their sufferings and testimonies touches our hearts even today.

In the present time, late in the gospel era, how is our light? Our minds tend to see the vast darkness around us. When this darkness overwhelms us, we begin to sink as Peter did when he took his eyes off Jesus and saw the wind and the waves. If we keep our focus on Christ, we can be assured that the darkness will not overcome us. As we go about the daily duties of life, let us keep our lives pure and clean so that the gospel light can shine forth and give the hope of salvation to those bound in the kingdom of darkness. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" Matthew 5:16, that is the call of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of all mankind to all of us but especially those who profess to be His disciples and go by His name.

Christian youth especially can be useful witnesses for Christ. The world stops and takes notice of young people whose lives are free from the harmful practices of the day. They see youth in the prime of life with a real destination and a sense of purpose in their lives and cannot understand why they do not desire to follow the ways of the world. Young men and women are giving of their time to help the sick, suffering, and underprivileged. Since the virtues of unselfishness and moral purity are so rare, many watch to see if we really live up to the standards of the Bible in all areas of life. May we be steadfast in our commitment so that one day we can be among the righteous who "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" Matthew 13:43.

Christmas is a joyous time of year for most people. Families get together, sometimes on several occasions, and enjoy Christmas dinners. Christmas carols are sung, and the story of Jesus' birth is retold. Unfortunately, there are many who are not privileged to enjoy such a Christmas. Family members may be missing from the table, or there is not sufficient means to buy

nice gifts. Others do not know the Christmas story and the carols. How ironic and sad that Christmas can be the loneliest time of year for many people. As we include others in our Christmas celebrations and share with them the Christmas story, it will become more beautiful and meaningful to us. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" 2 Corinthians 4:6. As the darkness presses in, let us hold up the light of God's love to a lost and dying world.

Can we relate to being the people spoken of in Isaiah 9:2?

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."

What a blessing and a privilege to see the great Light, Jesus Christ, and to walk with Him.



Key Anabaptist Positions

Edited from an address by Brother Melvin Burkholder

At the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church Ministers Meeting, Ashland.

We greet you in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Key Anabaptist Positions.

I wrote in my date book when I took this assignment that it is intended to show the difference between Anabaptists, Catholics and Protestants, especially the Protestant position, it is a big subject, I'll share some thoughts but I'm not sure how I'll far get, I don't claim to understand everything you do for that matter either.

Maybe a good place to start would be with their view of the Scriptures.

1]. Key position number one – their view of the Bible.

Roman Catholic, Protestant and Anabaptist all agree that the Bible is authoritative but the Anabaptists had a different view of the relation of the Testaments, they had a step view of the Bible in which the New Testament was on a higher level than the Old Testament, it had more authority and we call that key position number one, a step view of the Bible.

Anabaptists demanded, because they viewed the Bible this way, demanded New Testament backing for every church ordinance and for the entire ethic of the Christian.

Reformers also recognized differences between the Testaments but they did not believe that the New Testament could forbid what the Old Testament allows and you still find people interpreting Matthew five and six, Matthew five especially in that way, as if Christ can't possibly be saying something different from what the Old Testament said and yet the natural reading of that passage is definitely that Christ is changing the standard a bit.

The Reformers reached back in the Old Testament to justify many practices not found in the New Testament, practices like the state church, the elaborate liturgies, the oath, and so forth.

The relationship of the Testaments has many implications.

The Mennonite encyclopaedia says it was this relationship between the two Testaments which was discussed at length in each of the major disputations between the Anabaptists and the Reformers and that shows that both sides saw the importance of the question.

The Reformers, when the Anabaptists talked about the relationship between the two Testaments the Reformers said: Well you are throwing away most of the Bible!

Zwingli said: "The Anabaptists deny the entire Old Testament which I have seen with my own eyes for they wrote to our magistrate that the Old Testament has been done away with."

And the Anabaptists responded something like this: "You are using the Old Testament to reason away the clear teachings of Jesus Christ."

Dirk Philips said it like this: "The false prophets cover and disguise their deceptive doctrines by appealing to the letter of the Old Testament, what-

ever they cannot defend by the New Testament scriptures they try to establish by the old."

Now the Anabaptists did recognize the inspiration of the Old Testament and used it freely for an example or for instruction, I'm not going to have quotations through the whole thing but I have a few at the beginning here, Menno Simons said: "The whole scriptures both the Old and New Testaments were written for our instruction, admonition and correction."

And yet somebody calculated in his writings I saw in the book on theology that he quoted the New Testament three times as much as the Old Testament and I counted it myself in the Dortrecht confession and there are 25 references to the Old Testament and 140 references to the New Testament. So this difference between the Testaments the Anabaptists one of their key positions was that they based their doctrine and practice squarely upon the New Testament.

2] Key position number two, I'm going to call it full obedience.

Anabaptists were Biblicists who held that the New Testament was to be literally obeyed; they were people of the Book.

If the New Testament did not include liturgies well that they were not going to have liturgies, the same for elaborate church buildings and many other things.

And one modern Mennonite historian says about their turning away from liturgies and church building is and such like he says: "The Mennonite traditions are deprived of necessary beauty."

And that is interesting, I think the Anabaptists would have scoffed at such an attitude and would have said something like; God knows better than you what we need and we are going to go by what He says.

Literal obedience.

They believed in explaining the commands and then living them out instead of explaining them away and then ignoring them. And this insistence upon obedience brought accusations; they were called externalists and legalists.

Zwingli said: "If one looks into this matter closely it is sin that you can tend (to go) only for unimportant outward things."

You are just concerned about the outward things, you're externalists. Obbe Philips who ordained Menno Simons and later defected from the Anabaptists cause complained: "The letter of the scriptures took us prisoner."

So he is saying legalism, we are taken bondage by the letter.

Now the Anabaptists replied like this: "Whosoever boasts that he is a Christian must walk the same as Christ walked."

They would have said that is not legalism that is just Christianity, following and obeying the Lord Jesus Christ. They spoke a lot of the law of Christ.

Zwingli could call it legalism, Luther could urge to sin bravely or sin boldly because salvation is by faith alone.

The Anabaptists always objected to that they said: "Works demonstrate the validity of faith, faith without works is dead."

But the reformed clergy could make the distinctions between primary and secondary commands and they said things like love and justice and faith, they are primary, they are important but baptism and church discipline they are secondary.

The Anabaptists attitude was: "Show it to me in the New Testament, without obedience faith and love are empty noises."

The Anabaptists denied the charge of legalism, they said too that the law of Christ is not external it is spiritual, it is written on the heart, they were not in bondage but were set free to obey Christ, no one forced them, they freely chose to follow, obedience was an expression of inner liberation.

Obedience flowed from within; it was not imposed upon them externally from without.

And as far as church membership they said; None are forced to join us and all are free to leave us, this is freedom, this is not legalism, voluntarily accepted discipline is not legalism.

I think these insights on legalism and freedom are very pertinent to us today, very pertinent to us today as we still face charges of legalism and the answer to the charge is still basically the same if we can still say it that this is something that is not imposed upon us from without but rather it is

something done through the Spirit of God right within us and we love to do His commandments!

And may we all say that and may our young people also be able to say that.

3]. Key position number three is related, discipleship is the keyword here.

The Anabaptists made following Christ central, paying special attention to His example in His teachings in the Gospels, the Sermon on the Mount as well as His death and especially His resurrection.

Keywords were discipleship and following.

The theology of the Reformers tended to start in the Old Testament and when it reached the New Testament tended to skip over the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and go right to His death as interpreted by Galatians and Romans.

And I think probably that is due partly to Luther's life changing discovery that the just shall live by faith in the book of Romans, Romans 1:17, and even today for contemporary reformed writers the focus still tends to be on the theological implications of Christ's death rather than on practical discipleship.

Calvinism as an example of reformed theology where is it based? On the Sermon on the Mount? No, on Galatians and Romans especially!

Anabaptists were more concerned with following Christ than with an intelligent understanding of His work.

They believed all the epistles said, it is not that they did not believe them but they spent little time trying to explain the theology. When they spoke on theology they tended to stay with the words of Scripture and did not attempt to unscrew the inscrutable, they were not theologians, they were disciples.

And it is interesting that the Roman Catholics and the Reformers both made so little of the Sermon on the Mount, I mean after all according to what I've read the Catholics considered the Sermon on the Mount, especially the words of Jesus which began; "It hath been said but I say unto you." as councils of perfection, capital 'C' and capital 'P' Councils of Per-

fection to be kept by capital 'C' Christians, the clergy, but not by small 'c' christians, the normal person, the laity. (*Class distinction which Jesus does not condone*)

And some devout lay men and lay women became dissatisfied with this attitude about these teachings in this Sermon on the Mount and they took these so-called councils of perfection to heart as well as voluntary poverty and celibacy and this was the beginning of the monastic orders in the Catholic Church.

Years later when the Anabaptists took the sermon on the Mount literally and obeyed it Martin Luther dismissed Anabaptism as a revival of mediaeval monasticism and it is interesting, I've often thought that our position as a church shares some of the good traits of monasticism, that serious commitment and separation, withdrawn from the world, but even today nominal Christians fail to take the sermon on the Mount seriously. The extreme dispensationalists relegate it to some future age and say it does not apply today.

Well the early Anabaptists took a different attitude, they said the life and teachings of Jesus Christ are very important too but he sees himself as a disciple of Jesus and attempts to follow His Lord. And it is hard for me to see how any serious Christian could ignore the sermon on the Mount, after all it is the longest portion of Jesus' teaching existing, the biggest section of red print in your Bible, it lays out the ethical framework of the kingdom of God, it is given great emphasis by Jesus himself.

And I would like you to turn to Matthew chapter 7 just now to notice this, I like to get this point across pretty hard this morning, but Matthew chapter 7 just notice the conclusion of the sermon here, we could start at verse 13, Enter you in at the strait gate, the two ways, the testing of the prophets by their fruits, Starting at 13 it is not exactly ethical teaching but it is the testing spoken of there we want to notice.

Matthew 7:13-15: ¹³ Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: ¹⁴ Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which

leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. ¹⁵ Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” And then as the conclusion of the sermon He says in verse 21;

Matthew 7:21-27 ²¹ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. ²⁴ Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: ²⁵ And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. ²⁶ And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: ²⁷ And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

These words have always been made much of by Anabaptists, this is not just 20th or 21st century Mennonitism that made much of these words but when you read those words and it says "not everybody" and then it proceeds to explain who are the true followers of Jesus Christ and it is those who "hear these sayings of mine and doeth them"

What are “these sayings of mine” that Jesus is talking about?

Well I think if you go back into His sermon you will see, you go back to Chapter 5 and you see these verses;

Verse 21: You have heard that it was said by them of old time they shall not kill -but I say unto you: That whosoever is angry with his brother without cause.

Go down to verse 27: You have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Verse 30: It has been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife let him give her a writing of enforcement, 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 committed adultery.

Verse 33: Again ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself but shall perform unto the Lord thine oaths, But I say unto you, Swear not at all.

Verse 38: Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil.

Verse 43: You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy, But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. (Matthew 5:21-43)

There is a forbidding of anger, a forbidding of lust, of divorce, of oath swearing, there is the commanding of nonresistance and love for enemies.

The very things, now listen, the very things that Catholics said were not necessary for ordinary Christians and that Luther dismissed as monasticism and that the dispensationalists say do not apply today and that nominal Christians explain away as unnecessary, they are the very things that Jesus Christ said will tell who are the real Christians and who will stand in the judgment and who will not!

Let us not get too far from the Sermon on the Mount!

I'd do not want to be misunderstood, the Anabaptists did not neglect the death of Christ and the epistles teaching what His death means to the believers, they just felt that the Reformers were neglecting practical obedience to a living Lord who issues real commands in favour of an intellectual emphasis on theology.

4]. Key Anabaptist position number four. The Anabaptists saw salvation as a process.

In the Reformation days when salvation was simple, bring your baby to the clergy or the priest for baptism and the child is saved. Both Catholics and Reformers looked at it that way, get your baby saved, getting saved right away, getting saved while he is little, you get him and bring him into the church, the water will cleanse him, the water will wash away his sinful nature, his original sin.

And you can make sure he is saved!

And they looked at Anabaptists who refused infant baptism as being unfair to their children, it was a terrible thing; Don't you want your children to be saved?

Today some still believe in salvation by sacrament, by baptism, by the mass or salvation by formula, the four spiritual laws, repeat these prayers, sign your name on the dotted line, put your hand up in mass evangelism meetings, put your hand on the radio while the radio evangelist prays and the reformed doctrine of eternal security makes the transaction final and irrevocable.

They are not all so extreme as I'm saying here but too many are.

But if you look up “saved” in the Bible you will find that Christians are saved and that Christians are being saved and that Christians will be saved, you will find all that in the Bible - past, present and future.

We are saved in the past -that is called justification when our sins are taken away through our repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

We are saved in the present - that is called sanctification, it is obedience and discipleship and a purifying of life.

We are saved in the future -that is called glorification.

Salvation is a process that is finally completed only when the Christian is faithful to the end and if he neglects any part of the process before that it is not salvation

Saved, that is the Anabaptist concept.

And that is I think partly why they looked with a little suspicion upon assurance of salvation as it is taught by some because it smacks of this one

time shot saying that it is all done and settled and wrapped up and it is all guaranteed now and they say, No, no it has to continue, you have to continue in obedience and discipleship and be faithful to the very end and when you are received into glory then you are finally saved.

So really as you think through that question: Are you saved?

It is a good question but it is incomplete, a better question is do you know Jesus and are you following Him in company with the believers?

That is what it means to be saved.

The Roman road to salvation admit your sinfulness, confess your sins, believe Jesus died to save, accept Him as Saviour, that is all good but it is incomplete without Luke 9:23, If any man will come after Me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

The Roman road is the way to justification but then there must be a growth, a sanctification, a practical discipleship to Jesus Christ if we are ever going to come to glorification.

You see salvation is a process.

That is the Anabaptist concept as opposed to the Protestant concept.

Editor: This presentation will be concluded in the January 2013 issue.



REMEMBER THE WORD OF THE LORD

The evening before Jesus went to the cross, He again went over vital points of discipleship with His chosen ones. He wanted to imprint on their memory things that would help them be faithful. During this sharing after the Last Supper, one of the things He said to them was, "Remember the word that I said unto you..." John 15:20. That is the kernel of being a Christian and the heartthrob of the church.

The Lord wants His followers to remember Him and His doctrine until

He comes again, 1 Corinthians 11:2-25. The way in which He wants to be remembered is different than the world thinks. It thinks in terms of the historical Jesus Christ. The true remembrance of Christ is based in knowing Him in a personal, ongoing relationship. That is what it means to be a Christian. There is no way to have a personal relationship with the Lord without remembering and keeping His word, John 14:15.

No one wants to be forgotten. To be "forgotten" can mean that others aren't taking one into their hearts. Some are lonely while surrounded by people. In a sense, this could also be true of the Lord. He wants believers to allow His word to abide in and work through them, John 8:31; 15:17, but they may shut Him out. One must conclude that in many Christian professors the memory of Him and His word is faint.

Jesus' teaching is quite well known by many people today. By reading the Bible, hearing the preaching of the Word, and Bible study the words of Jesus are etched in the mind. But the Lord says, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit sayeth unto the churches" Revelation 2:7. This "hearing" is more than intellectual knowledge of Jesus' words. To have an ear that hears what the Spirit says implies obeying that word. This is the need of our day. The Holy Spirit reminds believers of the words of the Lord, John 16:13 and expects obedience. It should be a common experience of Christians to hear the Lord reminding them, "Remember the word that I said unto you ..." John 15:20

Christ had an inner circle of close associates during His earthly ministry. They suffered with Him, and He with them, Acts 9:4. When the multitudes began to forsake Him because of His teaching, some of those closest to Him also wavered. Jesus sorrowfully asked, "Will ye also go away?" John 6:67. The Lord still has an inner circle. But considering the great "falling away" 2 Thessalonians 2:3, is the Lord asking again, "Will ye also go away?" One doesn't want to think that the Lord's word is grievous, 1 John 5:3, to His own, causing them to waver.

An enduring memory is usually established by experiencing something poignant, frightening, exciting, or grievous. The Christian's memory of Jesus' words is founded in the experience of having been convicted of one's sins and lost condition. In his soul's trouble, he looked to Jesus as his only

hope. Upon repentance, he received the forgiveness of sins. A person with such an experience does not forget the words of the Lord, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28. Indeed, all the sayings of the Lord become meaningful to him.

Some forget the conditions on which they found peace with God, 2 Peter 1:9, to come to this condition, the Holy Spirit has been quenched. The Spirit then has no basis from which to remind him or her of the Lord's words. This quickly leads to their spiritual understanding being darkened. Eventually deception overtakes them. To forget the words of the Lord, in the extreme, carries the risk of being given over to "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" 2 Thessalonians 2:11.

Small matters of disobedience to the Word, tolerated and excused, are the first symptoms of forgetfulness. Slowly the heart becomes hardened to the grief that disobedience causes to the Holy Spirit. Because the Word is "full of grace and truth" John 1:14, neglecting and spurning it brings a gradual loss of power and fervency. Unwillingness to suffer reproach with the people of God sets in, often accompanied by defensiveness and self-justification. In this state true brotherly fellowship, which is on the basis of the Word, suffers and is finally broken.

The Holy Ghost is bidding Christians to come close to the Lord. He says to remember Christ's word. Jesus teaches us that this world is not our home, John 18:36; 1 John 3:1. He said His followers' have a high calling (Rom. 1:7), and consequently, He has ordained a peculiar way for them to live—by faith in God, Mark 11:22. He said a Christian has a single eye which is full of (heavenly) light, Matthew 6:22. He warned about the tragic consequences of being ensnared with the cares of this life, Luke 21:34. He said we should be content with the common and basic things needed for life Matthew 6:24-34. Are we remembering—truly remembering—the words of the Lord?

Ecclesiastical history tells us that the greatest challenge to God's church has been to maintain spiritual fervency and resist becoming worldly minded. In other words to not be conformed to the world. This is what salvation is about—being rescued and delivered from the sin in this present and un-

godly generation so we can serve the Lord. Down through the centuries, the Holy Spirit has brought to the believers' minds the words of the Lord when He said that which men highly esteem and crave is an abomination to Him, Luke 16:15. He taught against catering to the vanity of the flesh in any form. All this teaching is not to isolate Christians but to preserve a beloved people for the service of the Lord.

When a religious people, who have a certain form of godliness, disregard the word of the Lord, they become an oddity rather than being "a peculiar people" Titus 2:14. Their ways may be different in some respects than those of the world, but because the real "kernel" isn't there, contradictions arise that becloud the Christian witness. For example, professing to be strangers and pilgrims on this earth, they take to themselves the bigger and better, which the spirit of the world promotes. While Christian professors make a claim of heavenly citizenship, the world may hear and behold a conversation that is all too earthy.

Perhaps the words of the Lord most tragically forgotten or ignored pertain to His second coming. He said, "I will come again" John 14:3. Many are putting that day far away, 2 Peter 3:4, living as though this world will go on and on. He said, "Be ye therefore ready also: For the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not" Luke 12:40. He said we were to occupy ourselves in His eternal purpose until He came, not in earthly ambitions, Luke 19:13. Finally, He said that real meaning and fulfillment in life is found upon losing one's life, Matthew 16:25-27. What a divine and profound mystery!

Hope and courage are found again and again in remembering Jesus' words. He said that we should observe all things He taught us, and He would be with us until the end, Matthew 28:20. He said He gives us eternal life, and we need not perish, and no man can pluck us out of His hand, John 10:28. Hearing Him speak thus, the Christian's heart is warmed, Luke 24:32.

And most importantly remember "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" Hebrews 3:15.

Let us hear Him earnestly saying, "Remember the word that I said unto you ..." John 15:20.

Emmanuel

He came as an infant, so helpless and small;
But He was the Maker and Ruler of all.
He came with one purpose, to die for man's sin,
That He our eternal redemption might win.

Long, long had the promise been given to men,
By prophets repeated again and again:
A Horn of salvation, a Dayspring of light;
A Day Star to dawn and to banish our night.

The bearer of pardon, salvation, and peace,
Of gladness, and joy, and the captive's release;
Our Wonderful Counsellor, Teacher, and Friend,
Whose mercy and tenderness never shall end.

Emmanuel — God with us — never to die;
Our King who shall reign through the ages on high.
— *Ada Wine*

*From the Eastern Mennonite Testimony
December 1987, Vol. XIX No. 12*

Compiled & Edited by: J van Loon
E-mail: shimara2@iprimus.com.au
Web: www.anabaptistmennonites.org