

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in
the house.

Matthew 5:15

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For A Conservative Mennonite Perspective

From The Editor's Desk

Discipleship and Living Sacrificially – Do these two go together or even belong together? The answer given depends on whether one is following the world or following Christ.

A disciple is one who is a follower of person or idea: somebody who strongly believes in the teachings of a leader and tries to live accordingly. Sacrificially relates to something being offered as a sacrifice.

The world or the anti-christ system would tell us that we should indulge our flesh and hence presents to us those whom promote a form of discipleship that requires no sacrifice but rather indulges the lust of the flesh- if it feels good do it, the lust of the eyes – if it pleases you possess it, and the pride of life – my way is best and my welfare is paramount. It is the broad way with a wide gate and it leadeth to destruction and there be many that go in there at.

The follower of Jesus Christ however denies self and the urgings or demands of the flesh.

The follower of Jesus Christ takes up his cross daily and follows his Master down the narrow road of sacrifice which leads to strait gate which leadeth unto life and there be but few that find it.

The world promotes and encourages pride – the Word of God says that pride goeth before destruction and a man's pride will bring him low.

The Word of God exhorts us to be humble – Jesus himself tells us that the humble shall be exalted and He will lift them up.

God's Word is full of encouraging directions to be a people that are prepared as His disciples to live sacrificially so that we can answer the question of, What will you give for your soul? with a resounding and unequivocal – Everything!

May the articles this month inspire us to live out daily Micah 6:8 – to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God. *J.v.L.*



From the Pulpit

Living Sacrificially (Part 1 of 2)
From a message by Brother Kevin L Kreider
Denver Mennonite Church Winter Bible School 2011

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ of the one whom we desire to lift up and exalt tonight, the one who truly is our pattern living sacrificially.

Tonight we will use that terms living sacrificially or a living sacrifice or sacrificial living somewhat interchangeably, I think in their essence and meaning they are very much the same.

This subject is a very broad subject, it is lifelong in its being worked out, and it is eternal in its focus. It is something that is not a once and done experience.

In the Old Testament you could bring a sacrifice and for a period of time that was sufficient but tonight brethren and sisters this thought of living sacrificially is not something that is a once and done experience but it is lifelong in its work.

We need a subject like this because we live or I should say it this way because we naturally are selfish. We live in a affluent, self-centred, humanistic society, humanistic has the thought of self exaltation of man lifting ourselves up as god eventually, we live in that type of society, our society lives for the dollar and lives for the present, they live for pleasure, and we need a subject like this because we in our natural selves, we are naturally inclined to the same we cannot evade that, we cannot escape that fact.

Turn with me to Romans chapter 12 for a text.

Tonight we want to look simply at a definition first of all of our subject and we want to look at a number of principles of sacrifice and then some practical applications. I found it difficult to think of a code whereby we can say that here on this side, this level of living, that is sacrificial living, and this level of living here, about this standard, is not sacrificial living.

In some sense that level of sacrifice is irrelevant to our situation where we are in life, maybe it is relevant to where we live in this world, but there are

a number of principles and practical applications that we do want to bring out in relation to living sacrificially.

In Romans 12 verse one; *Romans 12:1-2* ¹ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. ² And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

A living sacrifice, alive, but fully always continuously submitted and offered on the altar of sacrifice to our God, that is what we are thinking of this evening.

By definition the thought of living is very simple; it is how we conduct ourselves in life and we would say simply this, brethren and sisters tonight and tomorrow and today your doctrines, the way you believe is how you live, doctrine will become practical, your values, how you believe in God is evidenced by how you live, doctrine will become practical that is the living part, living sacrificially.

Sacrifice, I like this definition; Sacrifice is the root of sacrificially, this definition of the surrender of the desirable in behalf of a higher object of devotion or a higher goal.

I'll repeat that; Sacrifice is the surrender of the desirable in behalf of a higher object of devotion or a higher goal.

In the Old Testament the desirable sheep, the best, the perfect out of the flock, out of what a person owned was brought, it was desirable, but it was surrendered it was given up in behalf of a higher object of devotion or goal. Sacrifice is using the earthly in a way that attains the eternal, it is a part of that concept in principle of laying up treasures in heaven.

We might say it is giving up the good to obtain the better and again who is a better example than our Lord Jesus Christ. *Second Corinthians 8:9*; "Though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor that we through his poverty might be rich."

And what better exemplary pattern of sacrifice is there than our Lord Jesus Christ for us, giving up the glories of heaven, and it is humbling to think that His focus was asked and yes I do believe that He does obtain more

honour and glory but it was the surrender of the desirable in behalf of a higher object of devotion or goal, I believe part of that goal is that we can be partakers of His glory and it is an eternal perspective beyond this life and world.

Living sacrificially is a twin to self-denial and is directly opposed to self-ish, self gratifying ambitions.

I would like to list just a number of principles that are involved in this doctrine of sacrifice.

1]. First of all we would state that sacrifice is the only way to satisfy God's Justice and Holiness. Since the fall of man it is the only possible way for man to be restored to God's favour, it is through sacrifice, we understand that this is through our Lord Jesus Christ. *Hebrews 9:22* says without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. *1 Corinthians 5:7*, for even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

2]. Secondly any sacrifice that I can give or that you can give is insufficient to obtain God's favour, we cannot merit God's favour and God's graciousness upon us.

Micah 6:7, Micah says shall I give my firstborn, the fruit of my body, for the sin of my soul?

The answer is obvious, No. That is insufficient, it can not atone for the sin of our soul and this inability some would say if we are unable then well just live however we want. This inability is no excuse for us to live self-ishly and self gratifyingly but it is a simple fact of our humanity, our helpless humanity versus God's Holiness.

Nevertheless sacrificial living is a reasonable response to what Christ has done for us there in verse one of Romans 12, a living sacrifice, present your living bodies, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service.

And I would state this simple fact, the simple fact is that brethren and sisters we will sacrifice to and for someone, we cannot get away from that fact. We will be giving ourselves either to God or self, which in clear terms is actually Satan and the devil's interests.

3]. Thirdly true sacrifice to please God.

Though we cannot obtain God's favour yet true sacrifice pleases God.

Hebrews 13:16 says for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Not just pleased but God is well pleased.

The Old Testament sacrifices we understand were a sweet savour, *Leviticus 8:21*.

4]. Fourthly surrender and submission are key elements of living sacrificially or being a living sacrifice.

Go with me in your minds, in your memory to Isaac, he is a clear picture of this and he is also a clear type of our Lord Jesus, he was bound on the altar fully rational, he was yielded to his father's will, he was fully rational yet yielded to his father's will. (*Genesis 22:9*) We are called to the same level of sacrifice – living sacrificially.

Isaiah 53 says of our Lord Jesus he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter.

Isaiah 53:7.

Jesus said there in the garden, not my will but Thine be done. *Luke 22:42*.

The giving up of ourselves, we are called to the same level for the cause of God.

Jesus also said of his life He said, I lay it down of myself (*John 10:18*) He was not holding on to his own will and his own volition but He was surrendering it to the Father's will.

5]. Fifthly true sacrifice is voluntary, forced sacrifice we might call tribute, living sacrificially is a voluntary choice of how to live of how we are living, living sacrificially is a choice of how to live, *Romans 12:1* starts with, I beseech you, and Paul was beseeching his Roman brethren to live to present their bodies a living sacrifice.

This voluntary aspect of sacrifice is not just following a code of regulated giving but it is expressing self in a spirit of sharing, it is the response of a grateful heart, we love Him because He first loved us and so we give our life in sacrifice to Him.

Skimping in hard times is not necessarily sacrifice brethren and sisters; it may simply be severe circumstances that we are facing.

Sacrificial living must be giving in all humility and gratitude or it becomes void and unacceptable.

6]. Sixthly sacrifice is costly. The once for all sacrifice was very costly. Our Lord Jesus gave of his body and blood, it was pure, it was sinless, it was valuable, the blood was the very life of the body. *2 Samuel 24:24* David said there to Araunah in relation to the threshing floor and the oxen and the instruments being given to David to offer a sacrifice in atonement for the sin of David in numbering Israel and stopping the pestilence, David said to Araunah; “Neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing.”

And we are called to give the most valuable that we have to God. That is the extent of living sacrificially and that turns out to be our own will, that is the most valuable possession we have.

God required in the Old Testament the first fruits, the best, that without blemish, and He calls us in our lives to not just give of our surplus but our very living, we’ll try to pick that up a bit later, it is a total focus of life not just a Sunday focus or two thirds of our lives or that we give ourselves one evening out of the week that we just gratify ourselves, No, it is a total focus of life, it is every day.

7]. Seventhly sacrifice always has an object or a goal in view.

Jesus sacrifice did, our sacrifice, our choice of how to live is to have a goal in view. Men will do without many pleasant things to obtain property and position and power and prestige and it is noble to sacrifice for others but God is calling us to give our all to Him in service to others, our sacrifice must be aimed at pleasing God, self is crucified, we are seeking to prove ourselves, it says here in Romans 12, that ye may prove, we are seeking to prove that which is that acceptable and perfect will of God (*Romans 12:2*), that is a unworldly goal.

Men of this world are seeking to prove what they can gain for themselves and gather around themselves, business or power or prestige as we mentioned or whatever it is, but brethren and sisters we are seeking to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

To be concluded in the March Issue which will examine the expressions of this principle of sacrifice which is sacrificial living or living sacrificially

AN ANSWER TO PIETISM

By Brother Marlin Kreider

(The Editor: A burden shared for the church of today, 2013, by many)

My fellow conservative, Bible-believing Christians a large portion of the answer to the inroads of Pietism among us lies at our own doorstep. That answer is *revival!* History reveals that the main pietistic movement sprang up only after the revival fires of Anabaptism were on the decline. Today the spiritual revival fires of the 1960's and 70's are dying among us. Again we observe the rise of Pietism and pietistic tendencies.

In all fairness we must acknowledge that some of the pietistic emphasis both then and now comes from those who are honestly attempting to find answers to legitimate concerns. Not all who espouse Pietism are guilty of seeking an easier way. Many are caught in a spirit or movement of overreaction. To emphasize the inner life of Christian experience at the expense of a sound, external expression of that life is just as erroneous as promoting the outward forms at the neglect of the inner experience. No, Pietism is not the answer! However, we do have lessons to learn.

We need revival! I am well aware that this is not a popular consensus among us. But can we not see the handwritings on the wall? Once we see and admit our need, we are well on the way to the remedy (See 2 Chronicles 7:14).

Areas of Need

1. Powerful *Spirit-anointed Preaching*. We have many *teachers*; we are short on *preachers*. We (the church) need both, but there is a difference (Ephesians 4:11). Teachers instruct, help us to learn, make us understand, and show us how. Preachers earnestly and aggressively proclaim Gospel truth holding our feet, our hearts, to the fire calling us to decision and action (Romans 10:13-15; 1 Corinthians 1:21-24).

We also need a clearer understanding of the differing gifts and their functions. This is evident by the way we mix revival and evangelism together into one “heavenly hash.”

Revival is an *experience within* the church. Evangelism is an *expression of* the church. Revival always precedes evangelism. We ought to decide which we need and want, revival or evangelistic meetings, and then ask the appropriate speaker. Praise God some brethren have both gifts.

2. An emphasis on *pastors* rather than the exaltation of offices. 1

Thessalonians 2 is a most beautiful portrayal and example of this. As one sound brother has said, “We need shepherds, not cattle drivers.” Every congregation, every member needs and deserves a pastor, a leader with a shepherd’s heart, willing to lay down his life for the sheep!

Let us ordain evangelists and revivalists (Ephesians 4; 1 Corinthians 12) to travel and preach across the land and around the world. This is important work, and we ought to do more of it. But let us also ordain pastors to tend to the needs of the sheep at home. This is also an urgent need among our churches. Remember, the church is primarily built in the local congregation. This is where the battles are won or lost.

3. *The Fear of God.* We need a shift in emphasis from fear of the church to fear of God. Too many of our people have the cart before the horse. Our Old Order and Catholic friends are a clear illustration of this error. Fear of God always precedes proper respect for the people of God (the church).

Also, we need a renewed emphasis on church authority as under authority of the Word (Matthew 16:19; 18:15-20; Acts 15:28; 16:4-5). The church has a solemn responsibility to bind and loose on earth what God has already bound or loosed in heaven. (See Matthew 16:19). In both clear, direct Scripture and practical application of Bible principles God (Heaven) gives the orders, and we follow His authoritative direction, not vice versa. This is not always clear among us, resulting in confusion and problems.

Some issues are easily answered — “The Spirit (Word) of God has already decided.” In less clear areas we must seek until we know God’s heart, verdict and will on the matter. With such an awesome task committed to our trust, we tremble and fall on our faces, asking God for wisdom and discernment. *God is faithful!*

Preaching must be coupled with sound, firm administration and discipline. However, church purity rests more upon the Holy Spirit using the Word in the lives of God’s people than on our ability to present a stronger argument or draw a sharper line in administration (Isaiah 66:2).

4. *Prayer, Fasting, and Bible Study.* This is a threefold cord not easily broken.

We need a faith that prays because it knows the power of prayer and believes in the effect of fervent prayer (James 5:16-18).

We need a revival of desire for God (Psalm 42:1), His Word (Psalm 119:97), and righteousness (Matthew 5:6) that motivates us to push aside

the plate and the pillow and pursue progressive sanctification. Simply stated, we need renewal in our personal worship that moves us to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37); and an emphasis on personal holiness to match our emphasis on obedience. Outward obedience without inner holiness is cold, formal religion (2 Corinthians 7:1).

5. *Evangelistic Burden and Zeal.* In general our people lack a passion for souls. Professing to be Biblicists, we come up short on verses such as Matthew 6:33; 28:18-20. It is easy to be temporarily stirred in the public meeting only to go again as Matthew 22:5 says: “One to his farm, another to his merchandise.”

Some feel that we need to decide between either saving our own families or evangelizing the world. This writer believes it is basically all one package. Either we embrace Bible evangelism — all the Gospel for all men (our families and the world) — or we don’t.

There are extremes on both sides, and they both lead into the ditch. No, evangelism is not the answer to all our ills as some may suggest. But when the refreshing streams of Gospel evangelism cease to flow among us, we are headed for trouble.

We need to be more people-and-soul oriented! Scriptures such as Joel 3:14; Matthew 9:36-38; and 2 Corinthians 5:10-21 ought to move us to action. There is an urgent need for a ministry geared to the home in our nation and churches. Another urgent ministry is to the troubled youth of our land (products of the erosion of home life) many of whom have never heard the Gospel. We can turn our heads the other way (we have done that too long), but we can be sure that these problems will and are now already knocking on the doors of our own homes and churches. Where are the men and women of *burden, vision, and courage*? (Some have grown weary waiting on their brethren.)

6. *Communication Within and the Concept of the Body of Christ.* Spontaneous public testimony and confession are almost nonexistent in some of our churches. We have become famous for our “statement” reading. In the past, some have sincerely shared their hearts only to see it put on a wagon and spread around the country as gossip or used against them in disciplinary action. The local congregation needs to be a safe place for every member to share their heart in a discreet and open way.

Neither are we communicating effectively from one administrative fellowship to another. Our concepts of and respect for the universal body of

Christ are vague. How is it that we champion respect for *our* church's authority, but with no noticeable conscience problem, we turn around and ignore, condemn, or run in competition with another congregation's or godly minister's authority in the next county or state? These inconsistencies and the resulting confusion are so glaring one marvels at our blindness!

These words are shared with "charity to all; malice to none." But is it not time to consider Joel 2:12-18? Should we not be praying the prayer of Daniel 9:5, "We have sinned"?

Perhaps you would add *others* to this list of needs. Certainly there are also many good things in our conservative congregations for which we thank and praise God! We simply share these with a burning desire to see the church prosper and be under God's full blessing. These areas (at least parts of them) are the very stronghold and appeal of the "Pietists" that are affecting us today. (I urge caution on how we point fingers.) They do have some right positions that are attractive. The undiscerning do not see their weakness and errors. Unless we awake, a more Pietistic appeal will continue to take the day, even among the sincere seekers.

I close with this passionate appeal: We can have, we must have, all that the pietist has that is Biblical plus all the truth they do not have, such as, *safety* and *guidance* of a Biblical, disciplined brotherhood; the *power* of a united expression and practice that is a consistent, external expression affecting every area of life and that gives testimony to the manifold grace of God active in the inner man, making us heavenly minded, or "other-world" conscious; the *blessing* of time-proven practices such as the plain cape dress for sisters and the plain regulation coat for brethren (when tailored in the spirit of modesty, not the "letter of the law."); and last but not least, the *strength* and *anchor* of sound doctrine with all its practical applications in personal, home, and church experience so native to our Bible-based, Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage. Praise God for distinctive Bible truth that can be applied and will meet man's need in every culture! This is truth worth living and dying for! Let us shout it from the housetops with every ounce of energy God gives us.

No, Pietism is not the answer! A heaven-sent revival among our conservative churches is. Will you not pray and help usher it in? God is *waiting!* Amen. *Previously published in The Christian Contender 1990.*

Have Faith In God

*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 re-
warder of them that diligently seek him.*

Hebrews 11:6.

Humans are physical beings. We relate to what we can see, feel, and understand, but God has chosen to limit our insight into the spirit realm. But deep down we are convinced that there is more to life than what we can see. We seek to relate to an unseen God because we believe that He is and that there are no limits to Him.

The gap between God and man can be spanned only by faith.

By faith truths are revealed that are more reliable than the opinions and conclusions of learned men.

By faith man finds security in a God he cannot see. The person who chooses not to believe God is blind to spiritual values and the operations of God.

Matthew's gospel gives three accounts of people who were in desperate need. They came to Jesus because they could not find help anywhere else. Having a vision of Jesus, the miracle worker, they resolved that to Him and Him alone they would turn. Any serious problem, one which has no answer but in the Lord, is an opportunity for the Lord to do His work.

In the first case, a centurion's servant was grievously tormented by palsy. Medical help probably was limited. This man believed that his help was in Jesus. Perhaps he had heard that Jesus performed the impossible. Something deep down in his heart inspired him that there was hope and help in the Lord. **Matthew 8:5-10** ⁵ And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, ⁶ And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. ⁷ And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. ⁸ The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. ⁹ For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this *man*, Go, and he

goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth *it*.¹⁰ When Jesus heard *it*, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

In the second two blind men who came to Jesus had a difficult life. How does a blind person make a living? Usually the blind are at the mercy of others. But when these men heard of Jesus, they believed their lives could be different. They did not believe that Jesus would turn His back on their plea of faith. **Matthew 9:27-31**²⁷ And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, *Thou* Son of David, have mercy on us.²⁸ And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.²⁹ Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.³⁰ And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See *that* no man know *it*.³¹ But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

And third is the Syrophoenician woman whom had a daughter who was plagued with a devil. This mother felt her utter helplessness. Where could she go? Acknowledging her unworthiness, something in her heart settled on Jesus as the solution to her problems. **Matthew 15:22-28**²² And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.²³ But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.²⁴ But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.²⁵ Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.²⁶ But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast *it* to dogs.²⁷ And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.²⁸ Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great *is* thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Faith in God is not a mysterious process, nor is it something imaginary. It cannot be manufactured by an act of the will. Rather, faith is the result of accepting what is and what has been, of accepting God and His fullness, of

accepting the truth of His power. Such acceptance of God's omnipotence and omniscience brings trust and dependence on God into our lives. In our progressive society, great gains have been made in science, transportation, education, and the raising of living standards. This progress, however, is not evident in matters of faith. Social attainments frequently make man feel self-sufficient and less dependent on God. Has our faith in God grown, or is it becoming weaker? Are we more willing to make sacrifices for the invisible things of God? Is there in our hearts a growing personal awareness of lost souls?

Faith seems to be a New Testament word. It is interesting that when Jesus came, people were admonished to have faith. It would seem that with God appearing in a visible form there would be less need for faith, but just the opposite is true. The gospel can be experienced only by faith. Today, as we see God working in the church and in our brethren and sisters, there is a need for encouraging each other to faith in God.

The Bible teaches that without faith it is impossible to please God. Principles involved in attaining a redemptive relationship with God are such that only faith will achieve this. To come to God requires that we believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him, Hebrews 11:6. Scripture reminds us that "we walk by faith, not by sight" 2 Corinthians 5:7. Experiencing self-denial as taught by Jesus can be done only through faith. The vision of being purged of the covetousness of our nature is only realized in a deep faith in God. Our trust in Him enables us to be detached, as the Scriptures teach, from the affections for possessions. Giving as the Lord prompts us is an exercise of faith.

Filling our place in witnessing, reproving, and praying all require faith in God. May we always have the faith to labour victoriously for the Lord.

The degree of our faith in God is reflected in the purity of our Christian walk. A man of faith will understand his failings and be a humble person. It is impossible to really know the Lord and be proud. It is, however, possible to be very religious and yet be proud. The man or woman of faith will not be attracted to the things of the world. Because God holds the place of highest importance in his life, his eyes are open to the vanity of all the world's promises. Paul writes, "For therein is the righteousness of God re-

vealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17). So the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel through faith. That faith is progressive and desires to know more of the marvellous righteousness of God.

True faith embraces the belief that the Bible is the divine will of God delivered to man. We believe the Bible means just what it says and that it contains the answers for all our problems. A deep reverence for the Word causes us to devote ourselves to its study and to order our lives according to the precepts of the Word. Many people are seeking other answers for their lives. The intellectual and humanistic view advises individuals to explore other possibilities such as counsellors, drugs, and other things that money can buy to solve their problems. The people in our lesson scriptures had this settled in their hearts that Christ was the only answer to their need. A delayed response from the Lord did not alter that conviction. That is faith.

To live our convictions in the face of our peers is at times a supreme test especially for youth and even older ones too. The young Christian cannot draw from years of experience to reinforce his belief that God will generously reward the faithful doer. But such a one does have the reliable promises of God. His voice is trustworthy as He speaks to His followers. It takes faith to do what we really know we should do. When choosing a life's companion, the Lord will give the blessing of peace and rest as well as a natural attraction. The upward look of faith in the Lord inspires us with the needed courage and conviction to move ahead.

Faith in God puts us on a different course from those around us. Moses, for example, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Personal ease, economic advantage, and social status were sacrificed. Maybe it was a hard choice to make, but it was a clear choice: enjoy Egypt or enjoy the blessings of God. "He had respect unto the recompense of the reward ... he endured, as seeing him who is invisible" Hebrews 11:26-27. His faith was an effective antidote for peer pressure. Here was a man who looked beyond convenience and personal desire and persevered in performing God's will.

MARANATHA

The Saviour's Tender Love

*"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).

Matthew 11:2-6 ² Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, ³ And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? ⁴ Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: ⁵ The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. ⁶ And blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

Matthew 18:10-14 ¹⁰ Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. ¹¹ For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. ¹² How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? ¹³ And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that *sheep*, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. ¹⁴ Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Matthew 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Matthew 11:28-30 ²⁸ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;

for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ³⁰
For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.

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 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.

This is just as true for the young and the elderly, the new Christian and one who has been walking the Christian walk many years. Jesus is, in fact, more honoured by your dedication, because in this world it is so rare to see people, especially youth, 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 and we can accept His loving kindness in faith.

Oh what a wonderful Saviour is Jesus our Lord, A wonderful Saviour is He
 Loving, kind, merciful, willing to teach and comfort so let us ask Him:
 Saviour teach me day by day, love's sweet lesson to obey
 Thus may I rejoice to show that I feel the love I owe
 Singing till Thy face I see, Thou dear Jesus who first loved me.



Defining Discipleship

*But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ
 Philippians 3:7*

Many who followed Jesus were convinced He was a teacher who came from God. In the beginning of His ministry it was not difficult to identify with Him, because many were being healed and thousands enjoyed the loaves and fishes He blessed. But as the true cost of discipleship settled on

their consciousness, "many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him" John 6:66. Jesus asked those close to Him, "Will ye also go away?" Peter made a firm and bold declaration of faith in Christ and His teachings. Can we, also, make a commitment and not waver regardless what comes our way?

Let us look at some pertinent scriptures in the Gospel of Matthew for some directions from Jesus.

Matthew 4:18-22 ¹⁸ And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. ¹⁹ And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. ²⁰ And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him. ²¹ And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. ²² And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

Matthew 8:18-22 ¹⁸ Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side. ¹⁹ And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master; I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. ²⁰ And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head. ²¹ And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. ²² But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

Matthew 10:22-25 ²² And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. ²³ But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. ²⁴ The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his lord. ²⁵ It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household?

In Matthew 3 is the account of Jesus' baptism and the Holy Spirit's wit-

ness in the form of a dove lighting upon Him. Following this event, Jesus went into the wilderness, where He fasted forty days and nights. As a result of fasting, His body was weakened, and Satan took advantage of this by presenting Him with some very real temptations. Jesus overcame these temptations by using God's Word. This is a wonderful example for us. Jesus was not only tempted just like we are, but He showed us the way to victory.

After Jesus' victory in the wilderness, He was ready to begin His ministry. He wanted disciples who would be ready to leave their earthly pursuits to follow Him daily. Not only would they hear His teachings and see His miracles firsthand, they also would be taught and trained by Him for three years to continue His work after He returned to heaven. He needed loyal, selfless, dedicated disciples.

When Jesus called the disciples, they responded "straightway" and "immediately." There was no delay, and there were no excuses. They could not have known what the cost would be, nor how many days and nights it would take them away from their homes. Neither could they have known the many miles of walking, the deprivation and suffering, and, finally, the martyrdom that would be theirs to endure. One thing was paramount: Jesus loved them and had called them to follow Him. They trusted Him and wanted to do His bidding. They were truly committed.

What a contrast we see between the selfless disciples and others who were not fully committed. Jesus could see into the hearts of men, and He knew that some were not following with sincere motives. He told the latter that He did not have material advantages to offer. How can the dead bury the dead? Was Jesus teaching His followers to leave the lifeless affairs to those without spiritual life?

In Matthew 10:22-25, Jesus revealed the high cost of discipleship. It includes persecution and rejection. Jesus suffered these things for us. He taught clearly that His followers would have opposition until the end of time. Is the disciple who is unwilling for this suffering implying that he is above His Lord? Compare this with Paul's teaching in 2 Timothy 2:11-12.

Jesus told His disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny

himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). These words ring down through the ages to us in the twenty-first century with the same clarity as when first spoken.

The first requirement for discipleship is to be born again. Jesus told Nicodemus that unless a man is born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Although Nicodemus was a leader in Israel, this seemed to him an impossible requirement.

Defining Discipleship. John the Baptist preached repentance. The first message of Jesus according to Matthew's Gospel was, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). This preceded the call Jesus made in verse 19, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Believing and repentance are required for the new birth. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Menno Simons taught that the preaching of repentance brings faith. In the natural sense, there must first be a live birth for there to be a functioning person. Likewise, there must be a new birth for there to be a life that can respond to the call to discipleship. It is vain for a person to claim to be a disciple of Jesus and attempt to lead others to Him without being first a partaker with Christ. How can a person dead in sins lead others to life?

Another aspect of the new birth is conversion. Sometimes the term conversion is used as a synonym for the new birth. We may consider this as a process in which the convert is changed from the former person into a new being with new interests. We have an example of conversion in the change that took place in Saul. After meeting Jesus on the way to Damascus, Saul was a changed man. The lion became a lamb. The bloodthirsty persecutor who was zealous for the law became a loving brother to other believers, ready to lay down his life for the gospel.

Instead of continuing as an advocate of Jewish supremacy, Paul became the apostle to the gentiles, an ambassador for Christ, something which would have been impossible without being converted.

It is easier to set aside our own desires when it is done for someone we love. Accepting the challenge without making excuses proves our love and

devotion for Jesus. Why did Jesus include taking up our cross in His requirements for discipleship? In Jesus' time, crosses were ugly implements made for executions. This indicates what Jesus wants us to do with our self-will. Jesus' path led finally to the cross where He died for others. He bids us follow Him. When we die to self it is for our own good, but others are also blessed as a result.

Discipleship begins by accepting Jesus as Lord and Master, and then following wherever He leads. It consists of gladly doing whatever and going wherever He requests. No mountain is too steep nor is any valley too deep for the person who is truly committed to Christ.

Many people today freely profess to love the Lord. Many sermons are preached extolling the love and mercy of God. Countless songs are sung, offering love and praise to Him. In a "Christian" nation when the nominal believer's time to die comes, it appears there are no bands in his death. His pastor assures the mourners he has gone to be with the Lord, and there should be no sadness at this "celebration." The words sound good, but where is the evidence of discipleship, of taking up the cross?

The call to discipleship usually comes early in life before the individual has indulged in sin. Youth who respond and live pure and faithful lives are an inspiration to others who often see young people as being foolish and frivolous. When consecration leads to a study of God's Word and church doctrine, a good foundation is laid for a life of godly service.

Jesus taught, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John. 14:15). Love's proof, then, is obedience—obedience to the Word of God. "By Thy blessed Word obeying, Lord, we prove our love sincere, For we hear Thee gently saying, 'Love will do as well as hear' " (Christian Hymnal, No. 415)."He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" John. 14:21.

Jesus gave us another example of obedience in John 15:1-10. He taught that it is necessary for the branch to abide in the vine to bear fruit. It needs to be pruned of unfruitful and dead matter to produce more fruit. The branch that does not respond to this discipline is cast forth to be burned.

Jesus taught His disciples that they should expect suffering in life. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake" Matthew 5:11. "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake" Matthew 10:22. To the Apostle Paul the message was, "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" Acts 9:16.

Sometimes the disciple of Christ is called on to exercise self-denial when his "rights" are violated. He may chafe when taken advantage of in a business deal. It is difficult to take unjust accusations patiently. We do not enjoy suffering, yet Jesus taught that we should expect it. Jesus said, "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord" Matthew 10:24. We know that is true.

How can we prepare ourselves to accept suffering graciously and profit from it?

Does it make a difference if others receive a spiritual benefit or a prodigal turns to the Lord as a result of our suffering?

Perhaps learning patience through suffering will be the greatest benefit.

May we humbly say, "Thy will be done."

Jesus humbled Himself, Philippians 2:8 and submitted to the Father's will, Luke 22:42.

As His disciples that is our example.

Jesus spoke plainly so people could understand, often offending the self-righteous as His words still do today.

Are we too careful and diplomatic at times and water down the message of salvation and discipleship? because we are too concerned about the cost of following Jesus instead of just responding to His call?

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