

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.

The transition between the year 2011 and 2012 is but one heart beat.

The transition between life and death is but one heart beat.

The transition between this world and the eternal hereafter is also but one heart beat.

How many heartbeats do you have left before any of those transitions take place?

How many heartbeats will it be before we stand in the presence of the One to whom we shall give account, He is ready to judge the quick and the dead (1 Peter 4:5) He indeed is ready and standeth before the door (James 5:9).

One heartbeat betwixt life and death,
One heartbeat betwixt heaven and hell.
One heartbeat will be our last
When it will be we cannot tell.

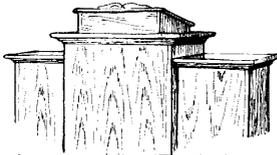
Brothers and Sisters and whoever else;
Take heed of your spiritual health!
Age and circumstance will not extend
Our allotment of heartbeats from God.

Let us do all we can to walk in His way
Whilst our number of heartbeats decline.
Our Lord the Word was made flesh,
His heartbeats were numbered for us

On Calvary's cross His last heartbeat came
Whilst dwelling in the tabernacle of flesh;
He arose to new life in just a few days,
He has set a pattern for us, shows us the way.

Our heartbeat will cease then the grave our place.
We too, if we have followed His way
Will arise to new life one day
And be with Christ the Lord in endless day.

J.v.L



Across the Pulpit

Biblical Basis for Church Standards

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Part 2.*

Last month *Part 1* of this message finished pointing out that both Matthew 16 and 18 imply that the Church is to do something more than what is just spoken to in Scripture otherwise the assignment is pointless and the following text was referred to show the ministry's responsibilities:

Hebrews 13:1: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

Part 2 of the message commences as follows:

Now let's just take this to some other assignments that the Scripture gives.

When the Bible teaches about obedience to the home, obedience to national leaders, does that imply that they, the government and the home are only to give direction as to what is spelt out in the Scriptures? And if that was the case they would have no right to set up any new speed limits or stop signs, or anything else right? They would have no right to do that.

The home, if father was only allowed to make rules in the home that applied and were only spelt out in Scripture he would be very handicapped, he wouldn't be able to fulfil his duty.

And yet many try to narrow the Church's authority to that same extent so that the Church and the overseers are limited to only that which the letter of Scripture spells out.

Well that becomes a bit pointless.

I believe that the Church, parents and the State have divine authority to make rules that are in harmony with the Scriptures sure, but especially the Church and Christian parents are obligated to the principles of Scripture, but they definitely are there to help to live out and to give body and to go beyond the mere letter of Scripture to scriptural principles, so when the Bi-

ble says submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake it has that in focus. [1 Peter 2:13](#).

If the Bible tells the Church to rule against gold and certain other ornaments doesn't it also mean that she should rule against some other things as well, in other words just because the Bible doesn't say diamonds I can have a diamond ring as long as it is silver but if it is gold then I can't? Ridiculous, ridiculous.

And so when the Bible says gold doesn't it also mean anything else that would be flashy or ornamental? Well surely common sense would lead us to that conclusion.

And I believe, just taking this for an example: Do you think a church would be Christian long if she allowed dancing? Or going to the theatre or chewing tobacco, do you think she would be Christian long?

And yet tell me where do you find those things in the Bible? Where do you find it?

Well there is a whole body of things that when we take the principles of Scriptures come into focus and the Church is responsible to give directions in those areas and to help to define what those areas are. In fact in [Acts 15](#) the one item, meat offered to idols, has hardly any direct application to the north American culture because we don't have that kind of thing, so that tells us that that generation saw it as their responsibility to take the Bible principles and apply it to the given issues of the day and that responsibility continues.

I believe the very nature of that meat offered to idols regulations would show that responsibility comes down to every succeeding generation and that every generation needs to find the meat offered to idol principle in their given culture and society and I believe that a Spirit directed church will forbid that type of thing.

If the Bible is all that is needed then you know we can hardly even preach, right? Really all we could do in public services is to just read the Scriptures because any additional comments would be violating that principle and so therefore we can see the folly of it.

Well the last concept that we bring into focus is this:

The Bible teaches that the Church is responsible to maintain collectively as a collective body, Bible tradition.

The entire New Testament was given by God to preserve and to transmit the faith and doctrines and the practice. In fact in Acts 2 it is called the teachings of the Apostles or more directly in [Acts 2:42](#) the Apostles doctrine and Fellowship, and it is clear that this apostolic doctrine and practice was considered foundational, it was simply the way they did it and one gets [to see] this as one moves through the New Testament that they had established the way they did things, it wasn't all spelt out in detail in the letter of the Scripture principle, but they had the way that they knew and did, some of the Scriptures which show that are:

[2 Thessalonians 2:15](#): Therefore brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been whether by our word or by our epistle.

[2 Thessalonians 3:6](#): Now we command you brethren in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received from us.

I like that, I'm going to enlarge on that thought a little bit later, but there is something about orderly and disorderly, Scripture would require doesn't it to have a pattern of doing that is more specific than the Scripture spells out?

Now we command you brethren that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which he received from us.

Even before the New Testament was fully written down there was a body of doctrine and practice and tradition that came into focus, in fact history shows us that.

You have the early Church using the Apostolic Creed as somewhat of a confession of Faith and you have them using what was known as the Teachings of the 12 Apostles somewhat as the manual of discipline, those things are still around today they can still be read, but it was part of the early Church, their confession of faith and their discipline. It is interesting that as the Church took form they very quickly had confessions of faith and they had church disciplines, (standards) and that is also true of our Anabaptist forefathers. Some of the first things they began to do was to have con-

fessions of faith and to give direction through church disciplines and some of those are still around too.

So that leads now to the concluding thought of this point and that is that the Church is held responsible to maintain a form which the Scripture often refers to as tradition, the Scripture also I believe supports the concept of house-keeping, Mennonites have often referred to that term especially as it relates to the bishop office, the keeping of house or sometimes it is referred to as maintaining order.

Well you have that concept in [1 Corinthians 11:34](#) Paul says he is going to come and set the rest in order.

We also have in [1 Timothy 3:15](#) he says he is sharing these things so that they know how they ought to behave themselves in the house of God.

That implies order and that always implies that there is a way to do things and a form and a standard. These terms lose meaning if you take the no standards approach.

Now leaving that let's go back to the text more directly [Acts 15](#), the biblical example here.

The biblical example we have some standards established here and there were maybe bigger questions as to whether the Gentiles needed to continue the Old Testament law on some of those details but there were standards that came out of this meeting.

I would like to just pick out a few verses that emphasise a few concepts in relation to the establishment of standard.

First of all the Apostles recognised the place of collective discernment.

Notice this in chapter 15 verse six, [Acts 15:6](#): "And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter."

Now notice in verse 28, out of this meeting came some conclusions, in fact standards are what are in focus here:

[Acts 15:28](#):

"For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us," they were recognising the scriptural place of group discernment as the way the Spirit moved. I don't believe the Spirit came to them there in an audible voice or other su-

pernatural way but it was just the consciousness that their thoughts had been led by the Spirit and that there was unity of purpose that had moved in harmony with the Scriptures and they saw that as the movement of the Spirit in their experience.

Now another point: One observes in somewhat of a general way that standard setting is to have involvement beyond the setting of the mere local congregation, there was somewhat of a group involvement here, and I believe that is a safety measure and it is a pattern from us.

In [Acts 16:4](#) leaders are shown to have a definite and predominant role in the setting of standards, it says: “As they went through the cities they delivered them the decrees for them to keep that were ordained of the Apostles and elders which were at the Jerusalem.”

Now we also see that somewhere they had some way of ascertaining that the entire brotherhood was satisfied, I'm not sure how they did that, but that is also indicated in Acts chapter 15, standards are to be based on Scriptures, that impresses one as you look at this passage how often they referred back to the Scriptures they had and they said on this basis we are going to write, [[Acts 15:20](#)] what the standards are. So it was on the basis of Scripture.

And that does mean that we don't as a body of believers and as leaders just have the right to establish a standard for the sake of a standard but only as it leads us and supports us in the principles of Scripture.

I want to hasten to say here that there are sometimes some individuals that have the idea that unless you can link an application to a direct scriptural verse that then it is invalid.

Well a lot of our standards can be linked directly to Bible truth but there is another category of things that either push us towards the Scriptures or they condition us away from the Scriptures and we learn that not so much by a direct scriptural verse as we do by spiritual observation and we have an obligation in that category as well.

For example I don't know where one would find a Bible verse that says it is only decent to have some of the shirt collar shut and your sleeves down and on your suit only some buttons closed, I don't know where you would find that, but observation tells us that it does something to our mindset, it does something to the way we think about worship and it moves us towards or away from the Scriptures and we have every right to give direc-

tion in that area, every right and I think that is an area we need to keep in focus.

Now the Apostles, another thing that is interesting, you know that if the Apostles would have taken a little more of a no standards approach they would have said: Well, the Gentile believers out in the distance are having a problem but if they don't quite understand a few things but if they are spiritual enough, if they have the Holy Spirit we can just let them go and they will find their way.

The Apostles did not understand it that way, they knew that the Church had a place, the collective body had a place in giving direction to that development and that growth and knew that it was their responsibility and so they assumed that responsibility and they recognised that place, they didn't leave it.

One person who was in a situation where they were facing apostasy, as a church leader he said it this way: "I'm tired of being the Holy Spirit to people, I'm going to simply preach and let the Holy Spirit deal with them."

Well he was overlooking this very thing that the Church has a place in the development in the maturing of the believer and the giving of direction.

Another truth that we see here is that the Gentile believers didn't feel that they were being restricted or that their liberty was being hindered or that the work of the Holy Spirit was being stifled, they rejoiced when they got this kind direction and this kind of help, it further shows how the Scriptures view this.

Now another thing we see from this passage that the standards that were given here weren't just merely suggestions, it wasn't just leaders urging, but they gave them as things to keep, those things are going to be required, that is how it was given, and I think that is another lesson for us.

Another thing we notice in [Acts 16:4](#) is that standards were applied group wide, they went all over the churches they weren't just for one given locality or congregation and they were expecting them to enforce the standards and they understood that, notice I come back to where we started out in [Acts 16:5](#), the churches were not hindered, they were not stifled, they were not put in a box, they were not crushed to the ground, but as a result of this position they were established in the faith and increased in numbers daily.

And I think a little observation, you don't have to be very old to remember where churches took this line that were not so insistent on standards and said we can be able to grow faster but now looking back over that 30 year period and one can see it is the churches that kept insisting on standards that have grown, the others have tended to lose ground, and I think that is part of the picture.

I would like to make just a few practical observations now in conclusion. Some of this might be a summary but I would look at as a little more as practical conclusions.

One of the first things we see here in the way of observations is church standards help to foster a scriptural balance between the inner and the outer life.

Many churches have the concept: As long as you think right then your practice is unimportant.

And they will quote such verses as the one that says a Jew is not one that is one outwardly but he is one that is one inwardly. [Romans 2:28](#).

Well the thing that they are failing to say and understand is that you are not going to maintain an inner life unless there is an outward expression and if the outward expression is neglected we will eventually lose the principle and the very thing that we say is on the inside. And so the two must go together and failure to give an outward expression is to lose the inner life and the inner principles.

Another observation is I believe that church standards foster a conviction for the right in our brotherhood.

We have conviction for Bible principles today because we practise them that is why, that is part of.

Sometimes individuals will say about young people: I hate to force them to practice something that they really don't have conviction for themselves.

Well foolish, that's the very way you help them get conviction.

So let's understand that principle, it is one of the things that helps to build conviction.

Now it is true that most of our average members live above the standards and there are a lot of our people we never even have to tap on their shoulder and say: Now wait a minute!

And there are others where it seems like you do a good bit of that.

You know there is a large block of our people you don't really have to touch and they live above the standard, they are doing it because of inner compulsion, but you know none of us would even be at that place if it hadn't been for some of the help that helped to bring it there, and so it is an important part of raising the next generation and to keep thinking right ourselves.

Another observation, it also serves as a fortress against the inroads of the world.

Now I believe we don't need to say this very often but without a regulated lifestyle, without standards, it will gravitate to the worldly.

And it is one of the puzzling things of this generation when one thinks about how many generations, how many people have played with this idea that you can have a church and not have standards, there are just a lot of people that played with that idea and it hasn't worked but you would think after a bit that they would catch on, but there is something about it that is in harmony with the old nature inside and it just wants to pull people that way.

The Wesley's had some standards but they didn't insist on them, even one of the Wesley's lamented that he didn't insist on them, he lamented that and that he didn't give the full body of it either.

So failure to establish church regulations results in the establishment of a world regulation and the line of demarcation between the world and the church becomes lost.

Another observation is that to have standards does help to expose the wrong attitudes and spirits that are among us sometimes.

A person that will not be regulated by the church is simply saying that he is friendly to the world and he would rather be regulated by them, that is really what is being said and standards help to expose that and it helps to reveal their heart condition.

I think sometimes it is hard to discern what is immaturity and what is just plain carnality, it is a real test to church leaders and it is something that we ought to keep working at and keep in mind.

Also standards provide a traditional base and stability.

Standards help as directives for the future and you know that each generation needs some obligation to something that is bigger than themselves.

This idea that we could just forget what has been handed to us and try to start all over, I tell you we might as well know now that before we even try it that we will come up short, we need as a generation, each generation needs an obligation to something that is bigger than themselves and I think we see that in what has been handed to us and giving respect to, the tried and proven. Standards help to carry that out.

It also safeguards our brotherhood individualistic tendencies.

Each of us has our blind spots, each of our congregations has their blind spots, and I believe it helps to protect us from the tossings that individualism brings and the shifts that that brings as well.

And lastly it provides a united front.

And our world today needs to be able to observe a people that stand together, doing the same thing, giving a united testimony to this world.

I believe that if our practice becomes too varied and variations become too many it leads to "not too sure what is the way we do" and it also can lead to the idea, and this is what has happened in the past, where variations among the congregations came that brought changes and after a bit it began to be looked at as just a cultural practice rather than an expression of Bible principles and eventually began to look like foolishness.

We all understand this morning that rules and regulations in themselves cannot produce Christians, we understand that, but churches without creeds and standards will produce apostasy and as leaders we need to be facing the issues of our day, raising up a standard so that the churches will be established in the faith and be in a position to increase in number daily.



NEW YEAR—WHAT IS NEW?

Does the year [2012] have any worthwhile significance? In [many countries] government programs, the election of officers, termination of office, and the beginning of their fiscal year is not on January 1. The Church program is not dependent on the turn of the year.

It is doubtful that God's calendar has any connection with the world's calendar. In due time and in the fullness of time, God sent His Son to save His people from their sins, but it was not on January 1 in the year 1. Even the wild speculations of the few dates set for Christ's return to earth have not been at the end or at the beginning of the year.

Nevertheless, man attaches many things to the changing of years, and often it is meaningful.

What is new about this New Year that is really meaningful to life? Is there new faith, new hope, or new possibilities for the well-being of man? "Watchman, what of the night? ... The morning cometh, and also the night" (Isaiah 21:11-12). Is [2012] a morning, or is it a night? Mornings give promise, hope, and opportunity. To the sick whose night has been doubtful, the morning brings assurance of another day. Those who are perplexed with problems often feel that, after sleeping over it, the morning will have direction.

"Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" (Song of Songs 6:10). What intelligent man looks into the new year as unto a morning?

From the creation on, God has never been out of touch with His creatures; He has spoken to them, provided for them, and reassured them of a blessed state in the end, providing they would obey and follow Him.

At the closing of an era, God used His servant Malachi (the last prophet) to bring a final message to His people, Israel. Following this, there was to be a four hundred-year silence, and then God would speak again, bringing in a new era—the gospel age.

When Malachi delivered God's message, the nightshades had already fallen upon the people. However, the concluding statements were exciting as they made reference to a new day, a Sun of Righteousness arising with healing in His wings. The message is again offering itself very meaningful and is capping it with the hope of a morning, a better day, but not [2012].

The message begins with "The burden of the word of the Lord." Jesus spoke about this burden: "How often I would have gathered you ... but ye

would not." This burden was again shown when God spoke to the churches of Asia through John the Revelator. And through the generations since, this burden has become more intense.

Through this prophet, God stated to His own (Jacob's descendants) that He had loved Jacob above Esau (His own today above others in the world), making them more responsible as well as more accountable. In turn, they were not offering to Him their best, but polluted bread, and were bringing that which was torn, lame, and sick. "Should I accept this of your hand? ... cursed be the deceiver."

No one questions whether our blessings merit giving to the Lord, but do we give the first and best or the inferior and the least? God said, because of this, ". . . I will curse your blessings. . ." (Malachi 2:2). That which has more than filled the storehouses shall turn and devour you. To have a blessing withdrawn is one thing, and to have it cursed is quite another. "Therefore have I also made you contemptible [despised by men and disgraced] ... " (Malachi 2:9). In Malachi 2, verses 10-15, He speaks about adultery and divorce, which is again at an all-time high and which is making itself felt in the church more and more. In verse 16, He says, "... take heed to your spirit."

In that day Israel called God their Father but did not honor Him. They called Him Master but did not fear Him (Malachi 1:6). Multitudes call God "Father" but have never become His children. The fear of God is also waning. Disrespect for man and God is very evident.

Malachi must have been thrilled to look beyond this dark four hundred years and be able to proclaim, "Behold, I will send my messenger [John the Baptist].... and the Lord [Messiah], whom ye seek, shall suddenly come..." (Malachi 3:1). The message spoke of a "fullers' soap," of a "refiner and purifier of silver," and of "judgment," counseling them to "return unto me" (Malachi 3:7).

Regardless of the dark night and the silence, there were those who feared the Lord and who spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it (Malachi 3:10). God is very conscious of that remnant—in Noah's day, in Malachi's time, and at the present time (Romans 11:5). "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts.... I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (Malachi 3:17).

This new era, this new age, and this morning is now in its closing hour. The message has been so true, but who really believes it today? Homes are

divided, children against parents. Christendom is divided. The Bible is disbelieved more and more. More and more Christians are becoming indifferent and even disloyal to their former vows. Selfishness is dominating more and more lives, with the love of money being the motive of life.

What is the good word for [2012]? Not only are the economic, the moral, the social, and the spiritual fiber under strain, but the very structures are in question. Nothing is stationary long enough for one to establish himself. Religious philosophers, who are far out in left field on biblical doctrines, show increased concern of the signs of the times—such as the spotting of and encountering with unidentified foreign objects (UFOs), the new comet coming into view, the demonic forces at work among Christian believers, subtracting and adding to the Word of God, and organizations in outright defiance to God and His Word. The great thrust is deception in any of its many forms—either ditch, just so it is off the way. Not every dramatic utterance, spectacular scene, or state of an overmastering feeling—a state of ecstasy—is of God. Beware of such.

World governments are not speaking of a new world or of a utopia, but the Word of God has the message of the age: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

The answer to the dilemma is not found in hanging our heads and trying to find a writing in the sand; it is found in lifting up our heads and looking up. Let this be the key word from henceforth forevermore.

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SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD

Several years ago, as we discussed our Christian witness in Sunday school, the questions, "How do we reach people? How do we get through to them?" were asked. These few, but ever-important words, are the subject of this article.

Although our words of testimony are to convince and persuade the sinner, it is the broken spirit of Jesus that speaks to the heart of the one who is searching. Here is a power that rests deep below the words we say. This

drawing power can go no further than the Christian life of service we each lead. As one man said, "We can only speak the faith we live."

This morning Luke 24:4-7 spoke to my heart. "And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments ... Saying, The son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified." These few words say so much more than my explanatory words. They were said to both Marys after they arrived at the empty tomb of Jesus. Do I feel this crucifixion, this death, as I go about my daily chores of life? A man was telling his friend, as he ate breakfast at my place of business, about several recent natural disasters in our country. And then he said, lightly, "And we sit here and eat biscuits and gravy." I applied his words spiritually to my own life. Someone is menaced by an eternity in darkness and terror, and where do I sit?

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). I need to remind myself of these words often, because my faith is so weak at times. As I work with and come in contact with unconverted people, they tell me of their hardships, and they tell me of their victories. At times I proudly separate my life from theirs. God gives them these trials and blessings just as He gives them to you and me. He is forever trying to draw the converted and unconverted to Him. Perhaps this line I draw between them and me indicates my feelings of superiority. I remember the words spoken in one Sunday school class, "We church people have this way of looking down on those who are not of us." Not too many years ago I was one of those. Now I am one of you. And now I share in your struggle to remember what the Lord did for me. Once I was lost, but now I am saved. I must remember that I did nothing to earn this life of peace. The only thing that separates us from the unconverted man or woman is sharing in the resurrection of Jesus that followed His death.

To put it simply, I want to stay humble and let my thankfulness be channeled into compassion. I want to find that river Chebar and sit down next to the lost ones and feel what they feel (Ezekiel 3:15). As Paul said, that I may become one of them so I might save a few. It takes closeness to God to believe that everyone of us is made of the same clay, no matter in what culture we were raised. Whether a man has buried his conscience or whether convictions have surfaced in his heart, in every man there is a need and desire to be saved. God installed this in his or her spiritual sys-

tem, below the surface. Will I be quiet enough to hear their cry? Or has that proud line of separation clouded my opportunity to share the gospel with those who come to me wanting to know the truth? If it is God's arrangement that brings us together, we can reach the lost soul that seeks a redeemer.

I have learned that people ask in many different ways—very few with words. In fact, it is impossible with human ears and human eyes to hear their cry. It must be felt with a broken spirit. Sometimes I speak too much of worldly things to the unconverted. Or I'm afraid to say what God tells me to. God has explained to me that this is the spirit of the world. And when this happens, there is no witness of Him. What have I given up for a few minutes of pleasing myself? What have I given up for a few minutes of bringing attention to myself?

The world is growing more sinful. We know in our hearts that Jesus will return soon. Is God speaking to His church that we may come close to Him and reap the harvest? He wants us to have a desire to do no evil and touch not the unclean thing. Evil is not only voodooism in Africa. It is not only heinous crimes, such as murder. Evil, to a born-again believer, is even worse. It is that which our consciences or the Holy Spirit proves to be unacceptable to God, yet we continue to do it. "And be not conformed to this world ... that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" Romans 12:2.

Many nights I have listened to my wife quietly rocking our little baby to sleep in the front room as I lie resting. My favorite lullaby she sings is about a little black sheep that has lost his shepherd. It is my prayer that I will hear the cry of that little black sheep. And that I will always remember that at one time, not too long ago, I was that little black sheep.

With God's love,

Brother Michael, Missouri



THAT LITTLE IMPORTANT WORD, "IF"

A poet asks the question, "Is thy heart right with God?" That is a legitimate question, one that reminds us of the scripture, "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" Hebrews 3:15.

What if there would be no tomorrow? Today would be our last day of life, whether we are young or old. This is a sobering thought; nevertheless it is true for many souls. Life is like a vapor, so soon gone for many. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." 2 Corinthians 6:2. "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow, For what is your life?" James 4:14. "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" Matthew 24:44. There is no promise of tomorrow, so what if this is your last day?

What if we would not be ready for that eternal call because the oil in our lamp has run out? The Bridegroom comes, and we are not prepared. What will our final answer be, especially those who have been reminded many times to get ready? The Scriptures teach us that those for whom it will be too late will mourn and weep. Traveler to eternity what is the advantage in waiting? It is Satan's cunning way to get us to procrastinate—wait until some other time. That time may never come, because it is appointed for man to die only once, then the judgment Hebrews 9:27.

What if we know what we should do, but we say "maybe tomorrow"? The rich fool said he would take down his barns and build greater ones, Luke 12:18. The big "I" seems to control far too many people. After the large barn is built, then what? The rich man told his soul that he could take it easy, live in pleasure, eat, drink, and be merry. The message of God was, "Thou fool, this night—not tomorrow."

What if we say others can do certain things so we can do them also, even if it is questionable? The Bible teaches plainly that to compare ourselves with others is not wise (2 Corinthians 10:12). If we do so, we may end up having a spirit of unity but not the unity of the Spirit. The Spirit of God dwells in the humble heart.

What if we slip into believing that since I've been saved I'll always be saved, even though living in sin that has not been repented of or forgiven? What if we disregard the Scriptures when they say, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" Ezekiel 18:4?

What if we find ourselves, by others reminding us, that we have been casual, possibly being a halfhearted Christian? How long do such people have grace to live in the kingdom of heaven on this earth? In the book of the Revelation, we read that God does not accept lukewarm Christians (Revelation 3:16), and yet His desire is that all be saved. Our God is longsuffering to those who put forth an effort to come closer to Him when they hear

His tender voice, "Come closer, My child, to Me." In 1 Samuel 21:8, David says that the "king's business required haste."

What if we find ourselves allowing some of the evil spirits and attitudes dominating our lives? We are reminded to try (test) the many evil spirits and not to believe every spirit. A true Christian will be knowledgeable of the Spirit of God.

What if we find ourselves in an attitude of discontent when we have so much for which to be thankful? The teaching of Christ reminds us that we cannot serve two masters. There is a fine line here, from which we do not want to take away or add to. Even though many may not worship idols made with hands, but do they worship God in spirit and in truth?

What if, in the end, we come to the final Judge of all judges and our names are not found in the Book of Life, like we read in the last chapters of the Revelation (Revelation 20:15; 21:27; 22:19)? Then, too, for those who were once enlightened, for those who once knew the Lord in sincerity, had made their vows to follow the true Shepherd but then forsook Him (Hebrews 6:4), how will their meeting be with a just God? The prophet Amos tells us all to "prepare to meet thy God" Amos 4:12.

Then, if the blood of Jesus Christ, upon repentance, has covered our sins, we will be found free and ready for the final call. When we love the brethren, our first love to God is genuine, and His Spirit witnesses to our spirit, our name will be found in the Book of life on that great day, and it will be a great time of rejoicing to be with our Maker in heaven.

How beautiful heaven must be!

Brother John.



A GODLY ATTITUDE TOWARD GOVERNMENTS

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" 1 Timothy 2:1-2.

I would gather that these verses are talking about our governments and their officers. For builders and tradesmen, it could mean various inspectors. If we are at a park, it could mean the park wardens. If we are out hunting, it could mean the game warden.

How do we really feel about all this authority?

It seems we can make a definite choice here. We can choose to be constantly defensive. When the building inspector comes to the job, we get all up tight because we feel like he's just coming to pick our work apart. When a tax auditor comes, we can hardly be nice to him because we feel like he's coming to scrutinize our books in hopes of finding mistakes that will cost us piles of money. Or if we catch sight of a police car monitoring traffic with radar, hiding as best he can, we might think he's taking unfair advantage.

It's interesting how easy it is to think of all these types of people as a super critical bunch.

But wait a minute!

If we are living that quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty, we have nothing to worry about. Our attitude towards them can then be quite different. We realize that these people are only doing their jobs. What good would a building inspector do if he didn't give a care how anything was built? What would we think of a police officer who really didn't care how fast or how dangerously people drove down our busy roads?

Let's not forget that without these authorities, our lives would not stay as relaxed and secure as they are. We should give God thanks every day for this privilege of being able to live our Christian lives without fear. Imagine how the Christians from the martyrs' time must have dreamt of living in a country like we live in today!

Our government nowadays seems to have to endure a tremendous amount of criticism from the media and the general public. Sad to say, we are not immune from the temptation to criticize. But supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks are to be made for all men, which definitely includes our rulers.

Romans 13:1 says, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." A verse like this puts our rulers on a plane somewhat similar to that of our church leaders. What do we suppose God thinks if, through the course of the day, we make a few nasty comments about our government, poke a little fun, maybe tell a few jokes down that line, then at night we kneel down and thank Him for our peace-loving country? It hardly seems He would take us seriously.

We don't believe in taking part in rallies and protests. We don't even vote, because, as Jesus said, our kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). Thus, we should be very careful what we say among our neighbors and friends when the talk turns to politics. From a worldly point of view, it would seem as though we do nothing to help influence our leaders, but I believe if we pray for our leaders with thankfulness, God will be glad to bless our efforts.

Brother Colin.



MAKING A FRESH START

Ephesians 4:22-24 ²² That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; ²³ And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; ²⁴ And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Romans 13:14 ¹⁴ But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

We can all start afresh! However far we have ascended, there is something higher; and however far we have fallen, it is always possible to make a fresh start. We need to take our place in the school of Christ and be taught by Him. In *Galatians 3:24-26* Apostle Paul tells us that before we had faith we had the law and it was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith, and then in the next verse he shows what happens when faith has come to us or been received by us, "But after that faith is come we are no longer under a schoolmaster(the law) being now the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" instead we have reached the position spoken of in *Ephesians 4:21*, If so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:

"The old man" which we must "put off" is clearly our former manner of life. If we have not put it entirely away, let us do so now by an immediate act of faith in the living Spirit. It does not take long for a beggar to put off

his rags and take instead a new suit of clothes, and it need not take a moment longer to put away habits and thoughts, ways of speech and life which are unworthy of the children of God. Do it now and look up to the Holy Spirit to keep renewing you in the spirit of your mind.

But more than this, let us "put on the new man," which is the life of Jesus Christ, that ideal which is in the likeness of God, and which the Lord created for us by His blessed life and death and resurrection. But to enable us to live this life we need the daily help of the Holy Spirit. He entered our hearts at the moment of regeneration, and has been with us ever since. We may not have realised His entry, but we believe it because of the assurances given in the following verses, we are His and He will strengthen us and dwell in us through the Holy Ghost.

1 Corinthians 6:19: What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

Romans 8:9: But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Ephesians 3:16: That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

For my part, I like to begin every day, before lifting my head from the pillow, by saying, "Thou art within, O Spirit of Christ, though I feel Thee not."

If we grieve not Holy Spirit He will witness to our sonship; He will enthroned Christ as King of our life; He will keep the self-life in the place of death; He will give us a hunger for the things of God; He will give power in witness-bearing. In order to have a strong and blessed Christian experience, the one thing is to see that we do not grieve the Spirit. I do not think that we can grieve Him away, but we may greatly limit and restrain His gracious work by insincerity of speech, the nursing of an unforgiving spirit, any kind of over-reaching or fraudulent dealing, impurity of speech, or failure in love. We may be bound, so as not to be able to move our arms, by a number of cotton threads, quite as tightly as by a strong rope-thong. Let us take care not to grieve Him by such inconsistencies.

Instead let us take Christ as our example.

Philippians 2:5-8: Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

In the verses from which these words are taken, the wonderful description of our Lord's descent to share our shame and sorrow is cited by the Apostle, that it might become a living impulse and inspiration to ourselves, not to look upon our own things, not to hold them with a tight grasp, but to be willing to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ, who became the instrument through which God wrought out His redeeming purpose.

Guided by the Spirit of God, the Apostle opens the compasses of his imagination and faith, and places the one point upon the throne of the Eternal God, and the other upon the Cross of shame where Jesus died, and shows us the steps by which He approached nearer and nearer to human need and sin; that, having embraced us in our low estate, He might carry us back with Himself to the throne of God; and that by identifying Himself with our sin and sorrow, He might ultimately identify us with the glory that He had with the Father before the world was.

"Let this mind be in you." Perhaps we could say the mind of Christ or His way of thinking and looking at life.

Johannes Kepler, a 17th century astronomer, is reputed to have said, when turning his telescope to the stars: "I am thinking over again the first thoughts of God." But we can think earlier thoughts than have been written by the finger of God on the heavens and earth. We are able to think some of the thoughts that filled the heart of Jesus, when, before the foundation of the world, He stood forth as the Lamb to be slain.

The Apostle bids us think as Jesus thought; do not look exclusively upon your own interests; do not count anything of your own worthy to stand in the way, but always be prepared to deny yourself that through you God's redeeming love may pass to those that need His help. We must be willing to lay aside ambition and glory that we may be the better able to succour

others. There is no other way to sit with Jesus on His throne; no other method of assisting Him in His great mission. Many who would sit on the right and left of His throne will never reach it, because they refuse to bear His cross, to submit to shame and spitting, to misunderstanding and hatred. We must take the low seat, do the unnoticed tasks, refuse the honour which comes from human lips, or we can never be counted worthy to stand before the Son of Man.

Fulfil in me, O God, those desires of goodness which Thou hast created in my heart, and perfect the work of faith, that Jesus Christ may be glorified in me. We ask, O Lord, that we may be so filled with these thoughts throughout the day, that our earthly life may be inspired with the spirit of Heaven. May we go to and fro about our business as those who have seen the face of God, and with the light of the other world upon our faces. AMEN.

Adapted from "Our Daily Walk" devotional readings by F.B. Meyers.



No Will But Thine

Jesus, 'tis my aim diving,
Hence to have no will but thine,
Let me covenant with thee,
Thine for evermore to be:
This my prayer, and this alone,
Saviour, let thy will be done!

Thee to love, to live to thee,
This my daily portion be,
Nothing to my Lord I give,
But from him I first receive:
Lord, for me thy blood was spilt,
Lead me, guide me, as thou wilt.

All that is opposed to thee,
Howsoever dear it be,
From my heart the idol tear,
Thou shalt have no rival there,
Only thou shalt fill the throne:
Saviour, let thy will be done.

Wilt thou, Lord, in me fulfil
All the pleasure of thy will;
Thine in life, and thine in death,
Thine in every fleeting breath,
Thou my hope and joy alone:
Saviour, let thy will be done.

—*Octavius Winslow*

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