

# 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***MAKING A FRESH START*

"Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."—Ephesian 4:22-24. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."—Romans 13:14.

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, Ephesians 4:20-21

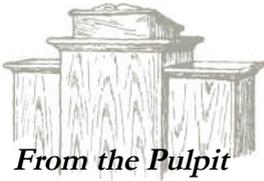
"The old man" which we must "put off" is clearly our former manner of life. If we have not put it entirely away, let us do so now by an immediate act of faith in the living Spirit. It does not take long for a beggar to put off his rags and take instead a new suit of clothes, and it need not take a moment 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 assurance of 1 Cor. 6:19; Rom. 8:9; Eph. 3:16. 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 the Holy Spirit be not grieved He will witness to our sonship; He will enthrone Christ as King of our life; will keep the self-life in the place of death; 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.

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. AMEN.

*From Our Daily Walk by F. B. Meyer*



*From the Pulpit*

John 17–Jesus' Prayer to His Father for Us  
*Brother David G Burkholder*

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus.

It has been mentioned a number of times that when we gather to worship that we focus on God. Do you think if we understand God that will answer all the questions of life? I believe it will.

So this morning we are going to do some eavesdropping in our message, usually eavesdropping is not considered to be very polite but God has given us a whole chapter in the Gospel of John that is eavesdropping on a conversation and it is a conversation between Jesus and God [the Father]

Turn with me to John 17.

This sacred scene is almost too sacred to listen in on but we believe that God has recorded it for our benefit and I think one of those reasons is that it does reveal the heart of God it reveals the heart of God from both the Son's side and the heavenly Father.

You are familiar with the setting here it was just before Jesus went to the cross, the Son is on the earth and His Father is in heaven and the Son is facing the moment of truth and the only opportunity for all eternity for man to be saved, had Jesus not succeeded in offering up Himself at this time and point in history what other options would God have had?

So you see the Son here is praying with tremendous weight on Him in order for Him to offer Himself up.

But you know that is not what this prayer is about, Jesus does not pray for Himself but He prays for us and I hope this morning that we can gain not only inspiration but also direction from this prayer.

I started out with the idea that I would choose seven truths as seven is one of God's favourite numbers and choose seven truths from this passage but I did not get very far in the chapter till I realised that my number is a little

low but on the other side of that I'm certainly not leaning to leaving the most important truths out but when I came to the Lord as to what to share this morning this is what came to me and I have 10 things from this chapter that I believe reveal in a measure at least the purpose and the heart of God and again I think that the setting is so very important that we remember that it is the Son on earth talking to His Father in heaven.

And so the first truth that we want to draw from this passage is in verse one, [John 17:1](#).

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee,

In trying to understand the real thrust of this verse the conclusion that one comes to is that the heart of God and the purpose of God is that He wants to be glorified, that God may be glorified.

Now that might sound selfish in its raw sense in that you know people want to be glorified for selfish reasons, they want to be glorified because of what it brings to them but I think God is a step ahead of that idea in that He wants to be glorified for His own sake but God knows that the best way for us to benefit from Him is if He is glorified to us.

And so Jesus said the hour is come and we know the hour that He was talking about and even though Jesus prays glorify thy Son the purpose of it is that the Son might be glorified in the Father.

So He was asking to be glorified to finish His work but He wanted all that glory to go back to God [the Father] and I believe it is one of the safe guiding principles of life for us.

You know it is a safe thing for us to ask God that God be glorified.

Now we talked this morning in Sunday school about how to pray, how to pray selfishly and how not to pray selfishly well the Son here is asking that the Father be glorified and in that request that the Father be glorified the Son found the answer to His own struggles and I think that is true of our lives as well.

You know if we pray that God be glorified that is also the answer for us and so the heart of God is that He wants to be glorified for what it provides for us.

The next truth in verse three, [John 17:3](#), And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

I was drawn to this phrase – that they might know Thee.

You know the heart of God this morning is that we would know Him not just know about Him.

You know there are some people that I have heard about and I have heard enough about them that I even get a notion that I know them a bit even though I've never seen them but many times that is very superficial, you don't know somebody until you really know them, till you understand their heart, till you have interacted with them, till you have interchanged and exchange with them in a way that we really know them and to God here the desire was that we would know Him.

Jesus saw Himself as the link, He knew that the only way for people to really know God is through Him carrying out His work and so He wants us to know Him by us belonging to Him.

One of the things that's outstanding to me in this prayer is that several times He uses this term about those that Thou gave to me.

In verse nine He said I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. [John 17:9](#).

You see it is the mysterious working of God that those who believed in Jesus of them He said God gave them to Him; God gave them to Him because they had responded to Him.

Lest we think that God gave some and He kept this one back and He gave this one and He did not give that one I think verse 20 gives us a sense of how this works and it worked this way with Jesus' disciples as well.

He says in [John 17:20](#) Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

Now first of all we are glad that includes us those that believe on Him through their word but what I wanted at this point is that Jesus said that God gave these to Him and He kept them. In verse 12 He says talking about them that He gave to Him, [John 17:12](#), but it was also always related to the responsibility of man not that God just gave some and some He didn't but God wants us to really know Him not only know about Him but

to know Him that they He says might know Thee, this is life eternal that they might know Thee, [John 17:3](#).

It is very important that we come to know God not only with our heads and with our minds but we know Him more deeply and I know that as this scripture unfolds that it will do that for us.

Now the third truth in verse four I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. [John 17:4](#)

Jesus finished His work and gave us a foundation to rest upon, a foundation to build upon, you know He prayed that we might know Him but now He says I have finished the work.

I would like us to turn to Hebrews 10, you know He gave us a foundation for us to build on that we do not and cannot provide on our own basis for our justification or reconciliation with God it only comes through the finished work of Christ and I am blessed with the fact that He said this in verse four as if it has already happened, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do, [John 17:4](#).

But then in Hebrews 10:10-14 he comes back again and again to this idea of one sacrifice once for all, now let's read these verses,

[Hebrews 10:10-14](#) <sup>10</sup> By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. <sup>11</sup> And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: [that is the old Testament sacrifices] <sup>12</sup> But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; <sup>13</sup> From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. <sup>14</sup> For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

You know in this prayer that Jesus prayed about the finished work of God He decreed that through the sacrifice of one perfect man Jesus Christ that He would for ever provide the foundation on which we can build and trust Him.

Now the fourth truth is from verse nine, I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. [John 17:9](#).

And I draw from this that God's people have a special place in His heart.

You know God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, [John 3:16](#). But God's people those who respond to Him have a special place in His heart and again as we move into the next verse we understand better what is behind this.

He says and all mine are thine, and thine are mine; [and I know it] and I am glorified in them. [John 17:10](#).

You know God is desiring to be glorified and the people that He is talking about here He says I pray for them which Thou hast given me for they are Thine.

Well it is those people who have responded to God's love, God so loved the world but those who respond to His love and I think we could dare say that those that allow themselves to be loved by God.

You know just like parents they love all their children but those children must choose to allow themselves to be loved to gain the benefit but God's people have a special place.

Now verse 11: And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me that they may be one, as we *are*. [John 17:11](#).

I'm still thinking about this matter of this special place and that is He praying that God would keep them.

Now much of the Bible is taken up in God telling us ways in which He keeps us and telling us how that He can keep. I thought of one scripture that stood out to me in relation to this in [1 Peter 1:3-5](#) after he says in verse three he says: Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup>To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup>Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

I was drawn to this passage on the strength of the beginning of verse five, Who are kept by the power of God.

You know Jesus prayed to the Father that He would keep us, you know the heart of God was that He would keep us and that is what He wants to do

and it just bleeds from this prayer that Jesus prayed His concern that we would be kept and certainly that is one of God's chief interests today, you know God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, [2 Peter 3:9](#), and so God is eager to keep us.

But I suppose the issue for us is whether we want to be kept, whether we want to be kept, and there are certain things you know certain things that we need to do if we want to be kept and that brings us to the next thought in verse 11.

At the end of this verse He says that they may be one as we are.

You know God's heart is that they may be one, this is something that occurred, and I hardly knew in what order to talk about these but in [John 17:21-23](#) Jesus comes across this idea again and again that they may be one, that they may be one.

God's prayer is that they may be one and I think the reason for that is that the believers are the family of God and God wants His family to be what it says in [Acts 4:32](#) that multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul:

You see there was a drawing together in the family that they may be one.

And [Colossians 2:2](#) is another verse that talks about the believers being one and being knit together in love, knit together in love.

And you know what happens when you take a knitted scarf or something like that if you stretch it the more you stretch it the tighter the fibres come together and the stronger it becomes because they are drawn close to each other that they may be one.

And I think it is very significant in this verse, [John 17:11](#) keep through thine own name those thou gavest me that they may be one as we are.

One of God's ways for us to be kept is to be one with His children and I think we can understand why Satan tries so hard to divide and to get us somehow separated and feel alienated from His people, from the body.

You know in a local congregation Satan is always trying to get people out of shape about this or that and to somehow get us out of shape about this or unappreciative for this or that, there is no better way for Satan to destroy people than to get them separated from the body and that is why Jesus prayer is again and again that they may be one because of the strength that lies in that being one.

And I discovered in my own heart and you do not need to go very far to see how easy it is for people to become disgruntled or to become distressed or discouraged but so often it comes back to somehow we are letting ourselves be set aside, be alienated and out of touch with the brotherhood and when that happens the situation only gets worse.

So let's remember that part of God's keeping is to keep us together.

You know that is so true of animals that the greatest protection is when they are together.

In verse 21 another reason that God wants us to be one now notice in this verse: That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. [John 17:21](#).

There is power in the unity of a brotherhood.

You know when the church works the way God wants her to work there is a testimony that here is a group of people that can get along with each other, a group of people who appreciate the same things, they have the same Master, they have the same goals, they are ready to sacrifice, they are ready to suffer, they are ready to endure so much for the sake of each other and He says that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

Because that is divine that is not normal.

In [John 13:35](#) he says <sup>35</sup> By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if you love me.

Is that right? If you love me did I read it right? Well that is true but it is not what this scripture says but it says: By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one to another.

You know it would be much easier, well I should not have said that but I was going to say maybe it would be much easier to love God because God does not do anything wrong but He does not call us to only love Him but we are to be loving each other and so God has tremendous interest in our oneness.

And I think we ought to think about that when something happens that should not happen and things do happen, unfair things happen and you know in those times Satan tries to harden our hearts, to take advantage and to alienate God's people.

All right now you know there is much more that could be said about all of these as we go along and the sixth one is in verse 13.

I said at the out start that this prayer so much of it is for us it is about us and here Jesus prays: And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. [John 17:13](#).

You know it amazes me that in the shadow of the cross and all that was working and all that was happening but still on behalf of us Jesus prays that we might have joy. Now is joy so important?

Well I think it is because joy is the result of many things in our relationship with God and so you know in the shadow of the cross Jesus was concerned that our joy that His joy might be fulfilled in Himself.

In John 15 He said these things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full, [John 15:11](#).

It is amazing to me how that God is concerned even about that but I think that He knows that people only have real joy when they are focused on the right things.

We have a lot of distractions, we have a lot of duties in life a lot of things that can stress us and bury us, smother us, suffocate us and if we allow that to happen our joy is gone.

But you see God knows that joy is a result of keeping our head above the troubles and above the clouds and above the difficulties and so He knows that joy comes as the answer to the problems that people encounter it is the answer to their problems.

You know it's an old, old story I suppose but it struck me as I read it recently but some people were travelling, I do not know if they were on ship or rail bus or whatever but they took all their food along crackers and just whatever they could take with them and the people, the other passengers, around them were eating living very well and so they took this whole trip eating crackers and suchlike only to find out at the end of the trip that the food was free it had all been paid for in their ticket but they ate crackers when they could have had first-class food.

Do you think their trip would have been happier? I think so. Can you imagine watching other people eat good food and you're eating crackers!

Well I think that is the difference about this joy business I think it fits here, you know we can be eating crackers when God has much better things for us and so you see that Jesus was praying that we might have joy because it represented that we had the benefit of the good things He has made available to us.

As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

Where is that verse found, where is it found? All right yes it is verse 18,

I must confess to you that this verse I don't remember it standing out in this context I would have gone to John 20 where Jesus said as the Father hath sent me even so I send you, [John 20:21](#), but in this situation here in verse 18 is that as Thou hast sent me into the world even so have I also sent them into the world. [John 17:18](#).

Now what I get from this verse is that God wants the believers to realise that they have been sent into the world.

You know one of the most devastating things in a person's life is if he has lost his sense of purpose. You know one of society's problems today is that people have no sense of purpose in life and people wonder what life is about and so many people they even become suicidal because there is nothing to live for but God wants His people to know that there is purpose in life and that there are reasons for us to be in the world and God deliberately, in verse 15 Jesus said I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil, [John 17:15](#).

We may wonder we might even wish sometimes that God would take us home, get us out of here, deliver us, take us away so we don't have to go through what is in life but God has deliberately chosen to leave His people in the world because there is a purpose for them and I think it is a part of this prayer because God wants us to realise that there is a mission for His people in the world.

And I think we can say along with that that God has a purpose for each of us, it is a purpose we literally spend our lives finding out what it is but I think upfront it is for us to be faithful to Him but He prayed that as He was sent even so have I sent them into the world.

I was a little shocked to realise that God had this so much in focus but as I think about that this morning it seems to me that it was to give us a sense of direction in life you know that even though sometimes in life we might wonder where we fit and how it fits, we might wonder just how or which way God is leading us but let us never forget that God has a purpose and we can spoil that purpose you know if we do not keep choosing right, if when we face issues we don't take the right way we can get lost in this mission, we can get so full of ourselves we can get so occupied with our own things that we forget why we are here.

So God wants that mission to be as in verse 20, neither pray I for these alone but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. [John 17:20](#)

When He says here that there will be those who shall believe on me through their word it is talking about the people of God who are being an example and talking and witnessing to people and others believe because they have been told. Thank God we have the privilege of being among them but again you know we can derail this whole process and I referred to verse 17 in relation to this, sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth, [John 17:17](#).

You know God has given us direct scriptures as a way to keep us sanctified, to keep us set apart, to keep us on course and on the path but we have to be allowing ourselves to be directed in that.

Now the eighth one in verse 23 and I call this the marvellous relationship and if you can explain this and I'm sure that none of us feel that we know it in full but let's read it,

I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. [John 17:23](#)

The marvellous relationship, I in them and thou in me and then He says and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.

Is that not a marvellous relationship you know that Jesus is in us and the Father is in Him and the Father loves us as He loved the Son.

It just continues to amaze me that marvellous relationship that we have the opportunity to have with God, I in them and thou in me.  
If we can fathom that, experience it, and live by it it will take us on the homeward way.

The next one in verse 24 and I call this the marvellous future, Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. [John 17:24](#)

And I take this verse to be talking about when He is at home as He talked to them in [John 14](#) but He said that I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am that they may behold my glory.

The marvellous future that God wants us to enjoy with Him and I ask the question this morning: Do you think that the presence of the saints in glory is going to add to God's pleasure?

Do you think it makes a difference in heaven whether one person is missing or one person is there?

Absolutely!

Jesus died for all and He is praying here that we might be with Him where He is and again you have this thought of beholding His glory and again it takes us beyond ourselves but it did remind me of that familiar verse in [Ephesians 2:7](#) that in the ages to come He might show us the exceeding riches of his Grace and kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

You know we have as believers, God's children, God's family we have a marvellous future ahead of us you know we have the opportunity, we have that privilege and Jesus prayed here that they might be with me where I am. And what a future that will be!

Now the last one and I call this the marvellous love, the love that the Father had for the Son and now verse 26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare *it*: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them. [John 7:26](#).

Now we talked about the relationship where He is in us but now He says the love that wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them.

God wants that the same kind of love that He had towards the Son that it might be in us.

I stagger under that, you know the love that the Father had for the Son that it might be in us and He prays that the love that was in Him that the Father had toward the Son might be directed toward His children and that it might be in us.

It raises the question about the quality of my love not only for God but for my fellow man, what am I ready to sacrifice for my fellowman. What am I ready to endure for the sake of those that I claim to love?

You may turn with me to Romans 8; you know we are talking about the love that the Father had toward the Son, the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them. Now we get the impression that this love is to become the property of our souls and I am still trying to identify how much love that God has for us which in turns hopefully would help me and help us to understand how much we are to be loving.

[Romans 8:31-32](#) talking about how much love the Father has for us: What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?

Well here I think it is just looking around and seeing what is against us in the world seeing who our enemy is and he raises the question what shall we say to these things? Well if God *be* for us who can be against us?

Well how much is God willing to put into us? Verse 32: He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

You know God started this love toward to Son in our behalf and now this scripture says that God is not going to let it fall short but God will continue to provide all that we need so that we can experience what He has made available to us.

But now back to our last verse of John 17 that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them. [John 7:26](#).

And I in them you see it is all bringing it back together.

Now in summary I ask the question: What should this do for me?

You know as I tried to reflect on a powerful scripture like this and what it should do for me today, what are the practical values?

Well the first one I think is this that it should certainly draw us into His bosom and comforting solace.

You know really is there anything more powerful in life than being loved, is there anything that is more valuable than being loved?

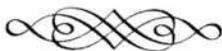
And this chapter just exudes the love of God toward us and so I think that what God wants to do first of all is to draw us closer to Himself.

The second is that God wants this scripture to enable us and cause us to trust Him for the future and you know all that Jesus went through because He loves us and because God had a greater plan for us you know we do not always understand what is happening, what is taking place but I believe that scriptures like this do help us to trust Him for the future.

But one thing that is so evident in this scripture is that we know that Jesus prayed for us, we know that He is with us, this is just referred to numerous times in this passage and finally that He wants to take us to be home with Him.

But we are not home yet and so God wants scriptures like this to encourage us to realise what He is doing for us and so that we then take advantage of that and be faithful to Him today so that we can be with Him in the future.

May the Lord help us to allow the heart of God to enrich us and draw us closer to Him.



### ***SPIRITUAL POVERTY***

Jesus begins the beatitudes by saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" Matthew 5:3. This means that those who see their sinful nature and are coming to God for help are blessed.

Before we were born again, our sins loomed up before us. We cried out to God for forgiveness, and peace came into our hearts. We were so happy to be saved and become a child of God. We would like to stay in that state of bliss but find that we must come to reality and begin our Christian walk. It isn't long until we face trials and tests that we thought we had left completely behind. These may start with our thought life. Absurd, horrible, immoral thoughts may pop into our mind. We react by praying and trying to repent deeper so that these thoughts will never return.

Then as we analyse our desires and inclinations, we see something deep in our flesh that actually reaches out for some of these things. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death" Romans 7:24? At this point is where some sink in despair. They begin to go in a circle of trying to repent of their inherent nature so that these sinful desires from deep within will not be felt. They try to be sorry, and just when they think that maybe they are attaining their goal, they are bombarded with bad thoughts again.

Romans 7:25 says, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." This means that Jesus Christ died for this old sin nature. Rather than repenting again and again of those terrible inclinations, we need to accept that this is just the kind of nature we have. Then we see how much we need Jesus. We lament our faults and failings, but at the same time, there is a desire to do God's will. So in this way, we serve the law of God with our minds but with our flesh the law of sin.

How do I prove whether my weaknesses and shortcomings are a result of not being dedicated to God or if God has given me a vision of my spiritual poverty?

Of course, any death sin automatically puts me in the category of being out of favour with God. But what about sins, such as, impatience, impure thought patterns, little secret love affairs, the desire to be somebody (spiritually or naturally), and secret envies? The list could go on. All of these are things that present themselves to us. Do they control me, or do I control them by the power of God? Do I, at times, share my life with someone with whom I have confidence? Am I willing to live my life as an open book? Or do I put on the best front possible when talking with those whom I consider spiritual?

I once had a neighbour who pointed out to me the good things he did for others. He seemed to take this as his justification that he was right with God. How often are we guilty of the same thing rather than seeing our need? We don't see our need if we do not have a teachable spirit. One who sees his spiritual need will experience the grace of God helping him overcome sin while, at the same time, seeing his spiritual poverty and lamenting the times he fails God. This should not cause him to sink into despair but rather to thank God for regarding his lowly estate. We keep looking to God for our help rather than being puffed up in pride.

Some are not willing to get on God's treadmill of sanctification. They want God to sanctify them of everything right away. It is difficult to patiently wait on God. They are like the white tail deer lying quietly a few feet off the path of the hunter. If the hunter continues on by, the deer will lie still and wait. But if he stops and stands still for a while, the deer will bolt. The hunter's odour and the deer's apprehension become too much. If the deer had lain still and waited, the hunter would have gone on and never seen it. We need to patiently wait on the moving of God's Spirit and then move only as He directs.

When we are walking with God, He gives us little assurances along the way. An impression from a song, something in the sermon that stays with us, a desire from deep within to serve God with all our heart, and a thankfulness rising up to God are indications that the Holy Spirit is leading us. We also have Holy Ghost-inspired thoughts and deeds to share with others. Even a gentle reproof from the Spirit is an assurance that God is with us.

Then if we feel the effect of our old nature rising up in the form of thoughts and unholy desires, we look to the atoning blood for our redemption. We don't make excuses for our nature but stay fully surrendered at the foot of the cross and allow God to effect sanctification over a lifetime. God usually uses' methods that are much slower, but more thorough, than what we would choose. If I do feel my old nature getting stronger, my love for the world growing, and my love for spiritual things waning, it is time to wake up and implore God for help. We simply believe that He will help, because "he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" Hebrews 11:6.

The devil's parallel (or counterfeit) for sanctification is being self-sufficient. We see our good points but at the same time see faults in the church and feel justified in quietly operating on the fringes of the church. Usually we are conservative in some areas but do not have direction in others. We still claim to have experiences from the Lord, such as songs in the night, but they never bring us to a true humility. These experiences rather allow us to continue in what we are doing without showing us our true spiritual need. Such a person only has head knowledge of his or her spiritual need. We need to come to the Lord to buy gold tried in the fire, Revelation 3:18.

When we follow the Lord, we have balm for our weariness, rest for our souls, and strength for our day. We see our sinfulness, but the blood covers it. We love the Lord because He has done so much for us. The comfort of

the Holy Ghost abides with us. Truly we are blessed if we are "poor in spirit."

*Brother Verle*



## THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON POSSESSIONS – *Brother Isaac*

We live in the richest society in the history of the world, surrounded by many millions of hungry neighbours. Yet we look to our governments to expand our economy in order that our incomes will increase each year. We insist on more and more instead all of this should stir all our hearts to do some serious reviewing of our attitudes on possessions.

There is seldom any question among us whether or not the Bible sanctions the holding of private property. There are groups that make the common holding of goods and property a central point of emphasis in their interpretation and practice of Acts 2:42-46. While that is an inspiring account, it is not mandatory as to its message, and there is no record that the practice as outlined continued for any length of time.

The Ten Commandments sanction private property, as stealing and even coveting of others' houses and animals is forbidden. These injunctions would not make sense if it could not be assumed that private ownership was normal. Likewise, Jesus assumed the legitimacy of privately held property when His disciple, Simon Peter, owned a house that Jesus frequented. The legitimacy of private property is constantly affirmed throughout Scripture.

The Bible has much to say about possessions and money. Economics is not a neutral secular area independent of the lordship of God. All economic activity, like every other area of life, must be subject to His will and revelation. Surely many of the irregularities and difficulties among us, with regard to money matters, stem directly from independent or self-centred personal decisions.

Being property-oriented and conditioned, we place a premium on ownership. But the right of private property is not absolute. From the biblical perspective, property owners are not free to seek their own profit without regard for the needs of their neighbour. A strong sense of responsibility

and accountability must temper the ownership principle for God's people.

It is certainly true that Jesus' followers continued to own some private property. But Christ clearly taught that the kind of substantial sharing He expected of them would involve personal sacrifice. "Sell all that thou hast" Luke 18:22, and, "Give to him that asketh thee ..." Matthew 5:42 were revolutionary concepts, and we need to hear them again today.

There needs to be a certain open-handedness and abandonment marking the genuine Christian in his dealings with his fellowmen. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" Hebrews 13:5. If we truly trust God and are unconditionally submitted to His lordship we can confidently imitate His carefree unconcern for property and possessions.

We must include under the heading of this article the warning of Jesus as recorded in Luke 12:15: "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Most Christians in the western world simply do not believe that possessions are highly dangerous—so dangerous in fact that it is extremely difficult for a rich person to be a Christian at all. "And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" Matthew 19:24.

The context of the verse above shows why possessions are dangerous. Jesus spoke these words to His disciples immediately after the rich young man had decided to cling to his money rather than follow the Lord. Riches are dangerous because their seductive power, very frequently, persuades us to reject Jesus and His kingdom. 1 Timothy 6 underlines and reinforces Jesus' teaching. "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" 1 Timothy 6:9-10. Lust for possessions prompts people to do anything for economic gain. The result, the Scripture warns, is anguish now and damnation hereafter.

The word covetousness appears nineteen times in the New Testament, thus showing clearly the biblical viewpoint on the danger of wealth. Simp-

ly stated, covetousness means "an inordinate desire for possessions." The familiar account of the rich man of Luke 12:16-21 illustrates the point graphically. His greedy compulsion to acquire more when he had no need for it stigmatized him as a "fool" by God's own verdict.

One cannot read this account without seeing a clear parallel with our society. We madly multiply more sophisticated gadgets, higher and fancier buildings, and faster means of travel and communication. This is done not because these enrich our lives, but because we are driven by an obsession for more and more. Covetousness has become a cardinal vice of western civilization.

The Apostle Paul clearly indicates that covetousness is idolatry Colossians 3:5. That which we devote our best efforts to and make the object and centre of our aims and strivings is finally what we worship. "For this ye know, that no ... unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" Ephesians 5:5. Those sins that are specifically mentioned will bar us from heaven and ought to be of gravest concern to us.

The Scriptures command church discipline against covetous persons. As Christian people, we are not surprised when Paul urged the Corinthians to excommunicate a member who had his father's wife 1 Corinthians 5:1-5. But little note is taken that he went right on to urge Christians not to associate or even eat with those who claimed to be Christians but were guilty of greed!

Are we not guilty of covetousness when we demand an ever-higher standard of living while a billion neighbours are hungry? We seldom hear of greed or covetousness as the reason for church discipline of a member. Such action may be the last means we have to communicate the biblical warning that greedy persons will not inherit the kingdom.

All that God created for our use, development, and enjoyment, when reviewed by Him in the beginning, brought the pronouncement, "It was very good." All earth's resources with their ability to produce and multiply have not been given us to exploit, squander, or hoard. They are for us to cherish and share, the earth's fruit supplying and blessing all men. What we so often confidently call our own has been given us in trust, as a loan. We need to remember to hold it loosely, knowing that it will be required of us again.

## CAREFUL OR CREDULOUS?

The Apostle John, an elder in the early church, wrote words of simplicity but great importance to his fellow believers. In today's spiritual environment, it is vital for us to understand their true meaning. We read as follows:

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" [1 John 4:1-6](#).

We clearly understand the initial warning contained in this passage: We must be careful not to readily believe every spirit that presents itself, even though it might present itself as coming from God. The apostle Paul condemned in the strongest terms those who came preaching any gospel other than that which came from God. Already in those early days of the church, strange spirits were trying to "pervert the gospel of Christ" Galatians 1:7. Surely in our day there are more false prophets than ever before.

The basic test by which false spirits may be known seems at first glance to be simplistic. The spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; the one that does not so confess Christ is not of God. Today's false spirits may be very careful to say that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. But what does it mean to confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh?

First of all, let us establish that confession in the sense used in this scripture means more than merely saying something. Jesus warned His disciples that in the judgment many people will try to justify themselves as having known Him and acknowledged Him, but He will tell them that He never knew them. They did not do what He taught them to do. Confession in its true meaning demands agreement of words and deeds.

It is wonderful to us that the great Power by which all things were made should have come down and lived on earth, full of grace and truth. Many have tried to explain how this was done. Some have gone to great lengths to support one belief or another about how the Son of God came down to the world. When He came, however, the world did not know Him, and neither does today's world know Him [John 1:1-5, 10-14](#),

We may not understand all the wonder of the incarnation of the Son of God. Job's three friends were adamant in their pronouncements about God. In the end, God told them to make sacrifice and ask Job to pray for them. His wrath was kindled against them, because they had not spoken rightly of Him. Let us be careful to maintain a simple faith in Jesus our Lord, believing what He said about Himself and what the Apostles said about Him. He came in the flesh to do the will of His Heavenly Father. He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. He is our Lord and our God.

We need to keep in focus the reason for any expressions of our belief that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. It is not an exercise in the ability to explain things in a way satisfactory to science so-called. Any such expression needs to be a simple statement of faith rather than an intellectual or systematized theology. God in the form of His Son is too great to be "put in a box" by the finite mind of man.

Many people would like to deal with essentials like faith and love and obedience on an intellectual or highly spiritualized plane. These then become subjects for discussion rather than practice. To confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh means that the teachings of Christ are totally applicable to my life in the flesh.

Jesus taught great truths in very simple terms. He asked not only for outward conformity, but also for inward purity. Having come in the flesh, He often put His teachings into parables that were striking and realistic, and they still are today.

Those spirits that do not believe that God's grace can enable us to stand in obedience to these teachings are spirits of antichrist. They would have us to be satisfied with a life of sin, saying that fulfilment of Christ's teachings is for some future kingdom. Let us beware of such spirits! There are many of them in today's religious world. They also come to attack us through the lusts of our own flesh. Christ's total victory over sin and Satan while He was in the flesh assures us that we also can be victorious.

Those spirits that try to explain away or water down Jesus' teachings are essentially trying to take away the authority of those teachings. God forbid that we should ever be found trying to make any explanation as to why we cannot in our day follow the commandments of the One who came down to redeem us! This would be tantamount to denying that He is in the Father and the Father in Him.

The Apostle John gave us a second point of proving for spirits that present themselves to us. This point has to do with what these spirits are interested in and what they listen to. Having a worldly source, they understand and are understood by the world. Their primary focus is on worldly things. The world listens to them.

John made the simple claim that true Christians are of God. Oh, how the world cries foul when we make that claim! Accusations of pride will immediately come from the spirits that do not acknowledge Christ's coming in the flesh.

The simple test is this: We who know God listen to one another. Those who are not of God do not listen to God's children. They rather maintain their own perceived personal link with God, doing according to their own world-influenced thinking. And the world approves of them, because it wants to do the same.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" 1 Thessalonians 5:21. God's Holy Spirit will gently help us to do this very thing, if we will walk in the Spirit, not fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. We need not fear, "because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" [1 John 4:4](#)

*Brother Roland*



## CONTENTMENT

*"But godliness with contentment is great gain ...  
And having food and raiment let us be therewith content"*

1 Timothy 6:6-8.

*"For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content"*  
Philippians 4:11.

To be content is to be thankful for what we have, not always wanting more and better. There is joy in the little as well as in the much. The contented person is relaxed and restful. He is not anxious for the future. Contentment is the grace to accept life and what it holds, especially those things we cannot change. We need to set our priorities and goals on spiritual values in order to enjoy the blessings of a contented life. A contented person is satisfied with his position and is pleased to exercise his talent to the best of his ability. He is able to accept himself as he is.

A person who is discontented with his talent and position finds himself comparing with others and their abilities. A discontented person is an unhappy person. He is not satisfied with his position in life. The usual joys and pleasures that are available are missed, and life is drudgery. Sometimes the cares of life cause us discontentment. They are so overwhelming that we forget to trust God. "Casting all your care upon him: for he careth for you" 1 Peter 5:7. We need to learn to bring our sorrows, disappointments, and worries to Him. Hebrews 13:5 tells us to let our "conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as [we] have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

We need to strive to be more contented in our thoughts and build positive attitudes and virtues. The Lord is pleased with this. It will bring contentment into our lives and promote it in others. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there by any virtue, and if there by any praise, think on these things" Philippians 4:8.

*Sister Marla K*

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