

# 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 Anabaptist Perspective

## **From The Editor's Desk**

The following is a copy of the entry in "Beside the Still Waters" a daily devotional produced by the Anabaptist "Still Waters Ministries" in Kentucky USA for the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, 2009.

*And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.- And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*

*- Genesis 12:2-3*

In Genesis 1 we see God's sovereign power to create new things.

Everything He created has always been "very good!" God created you. Since He created you to bring glory and honor to His name, He expects you to be "very good."

Although we made mistakes last year, God has granted us the privilege of having a brand new year. This new year is like a brand new sheet where we can write just the way a student writes. Each year the student writes with fewer mistakes than the year before. He is now more experienced, because God has granted him the knowledge and the ability to learn and improve.

What are we going to do with this brand new year that God is giving us with the opportunity to do better? Are we going to make the same mistakes we made last year? God forbid! He expects us to be wiser this year. He wants us to improve and to help others improve. Jesus came to make us new creatures, so that we would be the light and the salt of the earth. This way we will not only be a blessing, but we will also be blessed. God has many blessings in store for His children.

If we believe He has the power to do all that and much more, then let's make good use of this provision. Live this year in such a way that it would be easy to see the improvement between last year and this new year.

*Richard del Cristo - Piedra Blanca, Dominican Republic*

**Don't let yesterday's mistakes trouble you,  
nor tomorrow's fear spoil your day.**



*From the Pulpit*

## Three Silent Sins

*1 John 2:16*

*From a message by Merle Ruth  
Culbertson Mennonite Church – 2000*

When you first saw this sermon title, *The Three Silent Sins*, I imagine it might have aroused your curiosity but you did find a biblical reference attached to it that made it rather easy to satisfy some of your curiosity. I'm assuming therefore that with a few exceptions you probably have a general idea of what is in store.

In my mind this question did arise: When we use the label *Silent* are we describing or classifying? Or are we possibly doing both? We are probably doing both.

Categorizing sin is not a new practice; in His Word God himself classifies sins. The assigned text *1 John 2:16* is one such instance for as we shall see it names three categories and then implies that all three are silent in nature, although it doesn't actually employ the word *Silent*.

For another example in *2 Corinthians 7:1* the Holy Spirit led Paul to issue a plea to his readers to cleanse themselves of all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. From that has come this twofold category sins of the flesh and sins of the spirit.

A variation of that would be sins of action and sense of attitude.

When we form a wrong attitude we have obviously committed a silent sin.

What about a sinful act?

Preparing for this assignment has made me to realize like never before how often an act of sin is committed silently. Take for example the sin of stealing, the thief acts as silently as he can. I concluded that sin is committed silently a great deal more often than audibly.

I raise now this question: How did John get onto this subject of the so-called three Silent sins?

In order to answer that we need to acquaint ourselves with John's purpose for writing, in particular what is his purpose in this particular portion of this epistle, chapter 2? A very important key to that purpose appears in chapter 1 verse three: "That which we have seen and heard

declare we unto you that he also may have Fellowship with us and truly our Fellowship is with the Father and with His son, Jesus Christ." *1 John 1:3.*

Here John is announcing his overall theme namely Fellowship with God and His people. John wants his readers to share with him the enriching experience of enjoying Fellowship of the most wonderful kind. First of all Fellowship with the Father and His Son, with deliberate purpose John puts the Son on the same plane as the Father because among other things he is combating the Gnostic heresy that robbed Jesus of that co-equal status. Now so that they could experience this Fellowship John instructs his readers in chapters 1 and 2 to walk in the light for God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

Right here we meet one of the characteristics of this letter, John employs extensively the element of contrast, with John things are either black or white, there is no in between or grey, for God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. That is the way it is.

Now John takes this idea of walking in the light and he elaborates on it in a twofold way, first he shows what walking in the light involves then secondly he shows what walking in the light excludes.

In chapter 1 and the first part of chapter 2 he shows that walking in the light involves prompt confession of one's sin, obedience to divine commands, loving our brother and being consistent in our walk. Also John insists that our saying and our doing must correspond, if we say we have Fellowship with Him and walk in darkness we lie. All this is involved in walking in the light.

Then in the unit from which our text is drawn John turns to the negative approach, if you determine to walk in the light there are some things that you must exclude, some things you dare not do.

Notice how this unit begins, verse 15: Love not the world. *1 John 2:15*

Batteries are useful because they have both a positive and a negative and so it must be with the Christian. To some things he must be negative, he must respond in a negative way. If you have a duty to love in one direction you have a corresponding duty to not love in the opposite direction. John is instructing his readers along those lines having already called them to what they ought to love John is now about to tell them what they ought not to love.

Hopefully you have now caught a glimpse of the context we are looking at, our text, *1 John 2:16*, is right in the middle of a three verse unit that warns against a great danger, the danger of loving that which will destroy our Fellowship and eventually even our relationship, the relationship that we so much need in order to remain alive spiritually.

Before I read this solemn warning I want to do one more thing, I want to show you to whom this warning is addressed. Very briefly let's go back to the very first verse, *1 John 1:1*: That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.

Unlike most New Testament epistles there is here no greeting, no naming of any church or individuals, the writer plunges immediately into this subject however, what is missing here in verse one appears later and in a somewhat different than usual form in chapter 2 in the verses immediately preceding the unit I just described John indicates to whom he is writing. I'm about to read those verses now, first John chapter 2 starting at verse 12, *John 2:12-14*

<sup>12</sup> I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. <sup>13</sup> I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. <sup>14</sup> I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."

Here they are, the first recipients of the letter the recipients also of the warning that I'm about to read, they resemble a typical congregation in that some are more advanced in their Christian experience than others, experience-wise the whole spectrum is represented even though some are little ones, babes in Christ, still they know already the joy of forgiveness. Now why am I calling this to our attention? Because I want us to see the connection between this and that which follows, right on the heels of this description of John's audience the Holy Spirit led him to sound a warning. Although some were more mature than others the Holy Spirit deemed it needful to warn them all.

For us the point is this: However knowledgeable you may be, however experienced you may be, however strong you may be, to your dying day you need what you are about to hear. We are now ready to listen to this stern warning, first John chapter 2 starting at verse 15, "<sup>15</sup> Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." *1 John 2:15-17.*

Here is an earnest plea with respect to a threat that is very real, although we ought to love our brother we ought not to love the world. However in even the best Christian there still remains something that finds the world attractive and because the world is so deceitful it often puts on a very appealing appearance. That is why we need passages like this, the world's beautiful face is only a mask, here that mask is taken hold of and torn away, here under God's microscope we are given a glimpse into the control room of the world and what does it consist of? Very little, nothing more than a trinity of evil desires, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

Some have found it difficult to reconcile this negative command "love not the world" with *John 3:16* where the world is said to be the object of God's love. While obviously this is talking about a different world and yet it is not real easy to differentiate between the two worlds, the world that God loves is the world of people apart from their evil ways, people whom He wants to save.

The world that we are not to love is a different world, it is a world that God hates, it is a world of sinfulness that has been created by those who are rejecting His love and consequently find themselves in the service of Satan.

In addition to a different world we have in focus here a different love. God loves a world of people with a love that is unselfish, sacrificial, redemptive. In contrast to that the love that is here forbidden is a humanly based selfish love, a love that is attracted to the world by the hope that it can gratify my desires, the desires that the world caters to are my sinful desires.

Some would say love not the world too much. That we cannot accept for we are not to love the world at all! You will notice that this restriction is then expanded, love not the world neither the things that are in the world, we must not love them either.

I am assuming that this means that we are not to love the things that are in that world, the one already named, Satan's world as opposed to God's world.

Even that very good world that God created is to be used only rather than loved and according to *1 Corinthians 7:31* it is to be used with moderation lest it become our master rather than our servant. However because of our inborn twisted fallen nature we do tend to get too wrapped up in even that good world, the world that God provided gives, we constantly need to be watchful lest the good become the enemy of the best.

Where does my greatest interest lie?

In God the giver or in His many gifts?

I can develop, and not neglecting God, because of my preoccupation with these gifts, I can develop a misplaced affection, that's putting it mildly, God might call it idolatry, but that is not the concern of this passage, this passage is concerned with another danger, this passage has in view primarily not that God created world but the Satan created world. This must be the case because the restriction is on this note; "Love not the world neither the things that are in the world, if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." He is obviously talking about things that are morally incompatible, so it must have in view a world that is the moral opposite of God and that is the world over which Satan rules.

Geographically it is co-extensive with God's good world for in chapter 5 of this epistle John asserts that the whole world lieth in wickedness. Verse 16 (*1 John 2:16*) agrees with this assertion by connecting the first part of verse 16 with the latter part to come up with this reading; "For all that is in the world is not of the Father." In order to make sense out of that you need to paraphrase it this way; For all that is in the world, the world that I now have in view, is not of the Father.

He must have in view things that have been introduced into God's good world from an alien source, and right in the center of this verse 16

the fountainhead of these alien things is identified as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

That usurper, Satan, has indeed created within God's world, or shall we say side-by-side with God's world, a counterfeit world, a world filled with allusions, nevertheless it is an attractive world, and it is the devil's attempt to duplicate the Kingdom of God.

Another name for this world is Babylon. All through the Bible Babylon is associated with defiance of God and enmity toward the people of God. In men like Nimrod and his successors, Satan found the material with which to build his kingdom of Babylon. Babylon is past, present and future, its form changes but it remains the same in essence and there is a sense in which Babylon's fall occurs repeatedly throughout history because sin is by nature self-destructive, but sin is also self-propagating, and so Babylon is also repeatedly revived and developed. Turn with me to Revelation chapter 18.

Depicted here for the consolation of suffering saints is the final downfall Babylon, the world that we are not to love, after having reached the zenith of its power it will be forever destroyed by God, verse 2: And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen. For all nations have drunk the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth hath committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed reach through the abundance of the delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached under heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. *Revelation 18:2-5*.

Verse seven: How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, Revelation 18:7.

And now yet the last verse of that chapter, verse 24: And in her was found the blood of prophets and of Saints and all that were slain upon the earth. *Revelation 18:24*.

Attractive? Yes, but also cruel. This glittering much loved world is the world that we are not to love, this is the world of which Jesus spoke when He said to his followers: If the world hate you ye know that it hated me before it hated you. *John 15:18*.

Now back to *1 John 2:16*, the same thing, the same world is in view here, however here the focus is not on the glitter and on the glamour as it was in Revelation 18, here the focus is on the sin soaked ground out of which it grows namely the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

In my assignment title these are called “The Three Silent Sins.” Notice again how it is worded; “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and that pride of life.”

I get from that the impression that the world doesn't really have much to offer; only this much and no more, all that is in the world can be reduced to these three things.

A lot of people are to be pitied because they are trying to get out of the world more than what is really in the world. And when put under God's microscope the little that the world does have to offer turns out to be contaminated, all of it is contaminated with the germs of sin. But however deceitful it may be, however disappointing it may be, sin can be made very attractive, at least one's carnal nature, and to a high degree the world has perfected this art, the art of making itself attractive.

We would not be far amiss to say that the world of which I am speaking is like one big temptation producing factory. Solomon coined that familiar expression: “If sinners entice thee.” (*Proverbs 1:10*) The world has made that its business and it becomes a vicious cycle, here is a definitely inspired description of that cycle; Evil men and seducers will wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived, *2 Timothy 3:13*. But what keeps it going? How is it energized? With what sort of fuel does it operate?

Our text supplies the answer for it is like a window through which one can see right into the control room of the world.

How does it create so many temptations? The world accomplishes what it does by catering to fallen human nature; it thrives on the cravings of man's fallen nature. That really when you reduce it to the lowest common denominator that is what the world consists of, self, fallen human nature trying to be happy with no regard whatsoever to God.

Furthermore with the help of the Holy Spirit John perceived that fallen human nature consists of this trinity, this trinity of evil propensities, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. These are the three basic sins, all the rest are clustered around these three.

This is not the first time this trio appears, already in *Genesis 3:6*, the very first sin committed by a member of the human race is described in these terms; And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, *the lust of the flesh*, and that it was pleasant to the eye – *the lust of the eyes*, and a tree to be desired to make one wise – *the pride of life*, she took off the fruit thereof and did eat.

As the tempter looked on she yielded to the power of that three pronged temptation and what a step that was, that step had further reaching consequences than man's first step onto the moon. That step lead eventually to the formation of a wicked world made up of wicked people.

Millenniums later and not in a garden but in a wilderness that same tempter approached another sinless man, not through a woman as in the first instance, but this time directly, to that hungry man he held out this enticement: Command that these stones be made bread, *the lust of the flesh*, Satisfy your hunger.

Having failed in that he tried again: Cast thyself down from the pinnacle of the temple, *the lust of the eyes*, make a display that will be appealing to the onlookers eyes.

A third time he held out his bait: Here are all the kingdoms of the world, take them from my hand, this is an opportunity to promote yourself, to elevate your status, *the pride of life*. *Luke 4:1-12*

In contrast to the Eve that Man three times refused to yield but the pull was there. That was a real temptation.

In Eve's experience the three were combined in one, in our Lord's experience the three were separated making the task more severe. I refer to those two previous occasions because I see in them a similarity to the trio that appears in our text, when you put all three side by side, the Genesis account, the gospel account and the 1 John 2 account you see an unmistakable correspondence, is that accidental? No, there must be in the human make-up something that accounts for that correspondence.

Now very briefly let's take another approach. Back in that time of the exodus, the Exodus from Egypt, God had a twofold purpose namely: Number one: To get Israel out of Egypt. Number two: To get Egypt out of Israel.

The latter was a longer process.

In working with us today God still has that same twofold purpose namely: To get us out of the world and then to get the world out of us. Furthermore the somewhat unique thing about this passage is that it defines the world in a subjective way, the world is not only out there, the world is in here (in us), the world remains. That passage, that first, that text *1 John 2:16* identifies the world as something that is found within a fallen human nature, the world remains in me to the extent that I make room for this trinity of evil desires. If I willingly entertain any of these three desires then to that extent the world is in me.

The least bit of love for the world will feed those desires and therefore John's God inspired plea is love not the world, sever your relationship with the world that is the way to starve those desires and keep them crucified.

Paul lived in victory because he can truly say: The world is crucified unto me and I unto the world, *Galatians 6:14*, the relationship had been severed. Relating to the world like Paul did will definitely minimize temptations but it will not eliminate them altogether, you may be through with the devil but the devil is not through with you, and the world is busily supplying the material with which the devil baits his hook and the devil knows what kind of bait will appeal to my inborn evil inclinations.

Some of his bait if accepted will feed the desire that is here called the lust of the flesh. In a lot of different ways and with devil like ingenuity the world invites me to live for the pleasure that comes from gratifying the appetites of my body and the cravings of my carnal nature.

Although bodily appetites are basically good if I allow my carnal nature to gain control of them they will get out of hand and take me beyond the boundaries that God has set but this whole process gets covered over with a very innocent appearance, gradually instead of eating to live I may find myself living to eat, I may travel miles for the pleasure of tasting the best in foods, gradually my friends become those for whom the gratifying of sensual desires is the main thing for which they live. Soon instead of merely overindulging I myself will be indulging in that which is wrong.

When I reach that stage I will no doubt have friends that will tell me that if it feels good it is good, and I will be too doped to know the difference between the truth and the lie.

Secondly: There is a slightly different kind of bait that if it is accepted will stimulate another of our perverted desires, the lust of the eyes. If I start feeding on this bait rather quickly I will notice a change, I begin to discover an attractiveness in things that once did not at all appeal to me, I begin to wonder why I did not see it before? I'll start using my eyes for a new purpose to explore that world that I have once been sheltered from, I'll become a TV fan, I'll join the movie going crowd, I'll develop an appetite for colorful degrading magazines, I'll enter the dazzling world of fashion, I'll dress to attract the opposite sex. By this stage my tastes will have been so debased that immodesty will appear beautiful and Holiness will appear drab.

Another tragedy will have occurred, but the world applauds for it will have one another victim.

Thirdly: There is another kind of bait that appeals to the pride of life. After you reach out for this bait you get on the social ladder, you start climbing, you become interested in self-improvement for the sake of self-glorification, you stoop to every method and tactic imaginable to impress people, if you can't impress them with what you know you try to impress them with what you have like King Hezekiah once did. (2 Kings 20) If that doesn't work you attempt to impress people with what you can do and when you fail in one field you move into another field. More than anything else you live to gain human applause but at the expense of losing your own integrity and in the process you become a slave to man and your changing opinions. Foolishly you replace liberty with bondage.

Normally whenever one yields along any of these three lines he does it gradually and silently. It may long remain silent but that makes it no less sinful. Unlike the birth of a baby sin is born silently. Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, then when lust has conceived it bringeth forth sin and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death. *James 1:14-15*. That whole process, that whole long process may remain silent but in the end it will prove to be terrible. Achan confessed, I saw, I coveted, I took.

No doubt as silently as he could!

Jesus said: From within, out of the heart of man, proceeds evil thoughts and then He listed a whole catalogue of sins, as (*Mark 7:21-23*) on that basis I believe we could say this that every sin has a silent

beginning and may long remain silent, nonetheless even the fact that it may never become audible does not change the fact that it is sin.

It is imperative that we recognize that sin begins long before the act. “That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart,” *Matthew 5:28*.

It has been observed that a worldward drift follows this sequence: First one begins to think like the world, then he acts like the world, then he talks like the world, finally he looks like the world.

So really as soon as I begin to think like the world I am already silently committing sin along with the world.

Stating it another way if I am living in the world of wrong desires I'm really not separated from the world no matter how separated I may outwardly appear to be I'm really not separated from living in the world of wrong desires.

In real practical terms what does all this mean?

It means to be careful what you look at, be careful whom you listen to, be careful what you think. All that is done in silence.

But more often than not that is the stage at which the battle is lost or won.

What the eye does not admire the heart will not desire.

What was it that got David in trouble? A roving eye.

What was it that got Eve in trouble? A listening ear.

Watch and pray Jesus said that ye enter not into temptation.

Why that warning? Because the very worst thing that can happen to any one has a small silent beginning.

When a Christian becomes a spiritual casualty and it is seldom if ever, a blowout, it is almost always a slow leak, hardly audible.

May God help us to deal with those silent sins, for that is the way to victory and the only way when we seek God's help.



*CONTROLLING THE APPETITE*

Appetite can be described as "the desire for the gratification either of the body or mind" (Webster). We know from experience that our appetite serves for a good purpose. This God-given function of the body is capable of adapting to a great variety of foods. As an example, children are urged to eat small amounts of those foods they don't like so as to develop their appetite. However, when appetite is indulged in an uncontrolled manner, it is the cause of many ills.

Overindulgence (not confined to food) is embedded so deeply in our human nature that we will battle it as long as we live. When Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them, he was using his awareness of this basic desire for the things of the world and what they do for us. "Things" not only serve us but bring us the intangible: prestige, honour, pride, etc. No doubt these are included in "the glory of them."

The first eight verses of Proverbs 23 speak of, among other things, a ruler and those who eat with him. There are also instructions on how to deal with the appetite. Solomon doesn't tell us exactly of which ruler he is warning us, but if verses 6 and 7 are referring to this ruler, he must be evil from the heart. Satan is just such a ruler. Jesus calls him the "prince of this world" John 16:11. The apostle Paul refers to him as the "the god of this world" 2 Corinthians 4:4. Paul says we are wrestling "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world" Ephesians 6:12.

As the Christian passes through this world, he must, to a certain extent, eat with this ruler. Of necessity, he must use earthly or worldly things. Otherwise he would have to "go out of the world" (1 Corinthians 5:10.) In that sense, a Christian must eat at the table of the ruler of this world. Satan has used this table since the beginning and seems to realize its value more than ever as time passes. His chefs have been concocting and dishing up an ever-increasing variety of tempting dishes, dainties, and desserts. This table has become irresistible to a world given to appetite.

The admonition to "consider diligently what is before thee" Proverbs 23:1 comes as a solemn warning to this generation. The luxuries of one generation become the necessities of the next. The little rhyme that

says, "Now, little gadget, don't you cry! You'll be a necessity by and by," is coming true more rapidly than ever. Technology has brought numerous things to the table and promises many more. The wealthy can and the poor try to taste and enjoy this abundance. The affluence in the church has contributed to the tasting of many of these "dainties" Proverbs 23:3. The result, as always, is an increase in appetite for them. Lot of old looked at this same table and chose from what was available—the well-watered plains and the cities of them. Finally, the life of ease and plenty in Sodom were, very nearly, his undoing.

Satan's scheme is ever so crafty and very often involves the dainties of this world. Solomon, with all his wisdom, failed at this table, and it was the dainties that destroyed him.

Few in life, now as then, are really content with the basics. Those dainties are so tempting and affordable, and all the while we are urged to eat, eat, eat! "Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee" The one with the evil eye is behind the urging. He is not with us but against us, for "as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).

The banquet table of pleasure is loaded to the point of collapsing under its own weight. Society, in general, is suffering from a self-gratification overload. And the modern Christian pilgrim is indulging in dainties like never before. As the dainties are consumed, the effect is always the same: a tragic loss of appetite (that borders on nausea) for eternal things and heavenly values. Spiritual conversation, deep concerns, and a burden for the lost are distasteful to the modern Christian who is filled with the dainties of this life. The candy of carnal thinking, the fluff of fancy homes, autos, and clothing, the snacks of secret loves, and indulgences with a frosting of fun to thickly coat all activity is sweet to the flesh. The earthly man loves these delectable things and will eat until he is full. However, "they are deceitful meat" (Proverbs 23:3). He eats but is not satisfied. He indulges in great quantities but grows weaker all the while. Still, his craving is for more, and his appetite ever increases. Surely God would say to the believers today, "Put a knife to your throat."

If Solomon had taken to heart what God inspired him to write, history would read differently. It has been said of him, "No fairer promise of true greatness or more beautiful picture of youthful piety is known in history." But he so sadly failed to control his appetite. Likewise, never

has the youth of the church had more opportunity to learn of God and to serve Him freely than now. But how controlled is the appetite?

The table of this world is more tempting than ever, and heaven with its great cloud of witnesses waits in suspense as the Church takes from this table. Will she control her appetite? Will the believers put a knife to their throats? Will they, like Moses, choose to suffer rather than enjoy? Jesus was offered food at the well near Sychar, John 4:31. Though weary and probably very hungry, He refused the natural food saying, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of" That meat was "to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work." That hidden meat has been, and still is, very satisfying to the true Christian. It is as a heavenly manna that nourishes and refreshes.

The believer who has been giving to his carnal appetite will need seriousness and even severity toward the flesh to deny himself. Surely God never intended for anyone to be giving to his appetite, and where this has happened, we must accept the responsibility. The fact that we are more acquainted with feasting and playing than with fasting and praying may be only a small indicator of the depth of the problem. A self-imposed repentance may not be enjoyable, but to ignore the evidence of an untoward appetite carries a cost too great to bear.



## IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

*From a message given at Decker Lake Mennonite Church.*

There are those who wish that they had never heard about the Bible. There are those who wish that they had their own personal copy, they are longing every day to have a copy of it.

Some people let their Bibles collect dust on a high shelf and others read their Bibles often enough that there is no chance for dust to collect on them. The Bereans in Acts 17:11, it says searched the scriptures. "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

What is my attitude toward the Bible, God's word and the importance of personal Bible study?

It's personal, it is done by myself without the help of others.

To study is to meditate and reflect, to read in detail especially with the intention of learning, to consider attentively and it takes time and effort. So here are a few reasons why it is so important to personally study the Bible.

I have a few verses picked to show a few reasons why it is important that we personally put effort and time into studying the Bible.

John 5:39

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”

First is a direct command of God. Search means to seek, investigate, we want to find out what God's will is for us from the Bible and also searching the scriptures is the key to eternal life because we learn about how God wants us to live. Personal Bible study is the basis of our faith. How would you know or how much would you know about heaven and how to get there if you never study your Bible? Or no one ever told you?

Creation provides evidence of God but we learn practical applications for our daily life from the deep study of God's word.

Aside from the command of God why is it important for me personally to study the Bible?

In 1 Peter 2:1-2 it says: “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:”

Personal Bible study is necessary for our growth.

You can picture a week-old baby just crying to be fed, it just can't wait, and it wants food now!

Do I have that kind of urgency when it's time to study the Bible, time for my personal devotions? Remember we can over indulge in eating but you cannot over indulge in Bible study.

Everything in Scripture is for our benefit, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says: “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

That is part of the growth for our Christian life that we desire through personal Bible study

Personal Bible study is necessary for spiritual growth because a good start is worthless without a faithful ending.

By studying the Bible we learn how to answer other people about our faith. 1 Peter 3:15 “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:”

Why do we study the Bible? Because the Bible has all the answers to the problems and confusion we may have in our life.

Others will question us at times how can we be so calm in the midst of all life's stresses? One thing in their mind goes wrong after the other, they do not know how to manage and what do I tell them? Have I studied enough myself to be able to point them to encouraging scriptures that have the answers for the problems of today.

If I can't back up my beliefs with scripture when they are coming enquiring why should they accept my religion over another. We are here to bear God's message for others, God does have the answers, have we studied enough to tell others?

Turn to Psalms for some more reasons as to why do I study the Bible?

Psalm 37:31 “The law of his God *is* in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.”

Personal Bible study provides stability for the Christian.

I must study so that I know how to live for God. When new ideas come out a diligent Bible student will study the scriptures to study the validity of the new idea. Remember how the Bereans searched when Paul preached? He was a well known leader, he should have known God's word and yet they still searched. There is that personal responsibility

that God has given leaders to lead us but yet it is my responsibility and yours to search it out as well. God's word is the only solid foundation for us to build on and a life that is rooted in God's word will stand the test of life.

Psalm 119:11 “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”

A very basic key, we study the Bible personally because a personal knowledge of Bible truth helps to keep us out of sin.

Now thinking of direction for our thought life or how we think or what we think about from Philippians 4:8 “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 be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.”

When we think on the pure word of God it leaves much less room for the devil's temptations. How many foolish thoughts would I allow if I would just remember Proverbs?

Proverbs 24:9: The thought of foolishness *is* sin: and the scorner *is* an abomination to men.

A deep personal Bible study when we know exactly what God expects of us helps to keep us out of doing wrong. Jesus opposed the devil by quoting scripture and that is a very strong weapon for us as well. Read Matthew chapter 4 verses 1 to 11 to learn how Jesus did that.

Victory over sin is only possible when we arm ourselves with God's word. Psalm 119:105 “Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Why do I personally study the Bible? Because the Bible lights our way to heaven. Remember any hidden lantern won't light up the ditches and neither will a covered Bible show us how to get to heaven.

Are we replacing that heavenly beacon with the shadow of earthly books?

If we really believe the Bible is our road map to heaven we will take time to study it diligently.

Why is it so important, what is the urgency behind personal Bible study?

We need to know what the Word of God says so that we can remain strong in our faith and true to Jesus Christ

In 2 Timothy 3:12-15 it says to us: “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*; And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

We are living in the last days, that is why it is important to know our Bible and how God wants us to live. Religious freedom isn't a guarantee.

Do I personally have enough the Bible verses memorised to support my believe if all of my Bibles were confiscated?

What about if I face the torture room? Would I have enough the Bible verses in myself to keep me on the right track with others are trying to persuade me otherwise, trying to make me renounce God.

Or if I were sent to prison do I have enough Bible verses memorised to encourage others.

In closing let us read the encouragement Apostle Paul gave to Timothy and it is for us today as well, 2 Timothy 2:15 “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

We study the Bible not just to get approval from man but approval from God, God is pleased when we study His Word and then live it.

How quickly can I find Bible references to back up my convictions?

How much time and I willing to dedicate to God in personal Bible study? Is God ashamed of my laziness and lack of skill in Bible study?

True Christians all desire to be faithful workmen for God.

As this verse from 2 Timothy says: Study diligently so that God can approve of our lives and so that we can rightly define right from wrong in our everyday life.

May God add His blessing as you study His Word – the Bible!



## God's Mercy and Forgiveness

*For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive;  
and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.*

*Psalm 86*

Mercy is an attribute of God's divine nature. It is infinite and inexhaustible to those who fear Him. Among the things that hinder our comprehension of the exceeding greatness of God's mercy is our inability to grasp the depth of ruin and deprivation occasioned by the Fall. However, the more complete our deliverance from sin, the greater our appreciation of His plenteous mercy.

God can only be worshiped in sincerity to the extent that one has personally experienced His grace and mercy. Few things will excite greater fervency in the worship of God than having a vision of the Saviour's compassion. It moved Him to so great a sacrifice for us who deserved it so little.

The incomprehensible God is worthy of all the worship and praise that humans can offer. The psalmist calls upon the depth of his soul to express the full content of its adoration in recognition of His holy name and for the exceeding richness of His divine favors. He reminds himself not to forget, lest some benefits would not receive their rightful place of joyful appreciation in his heart.

Foremost of God's mercies is the forgiveness of all our sins—forgiven so completely that reconciliation with a holy God is possible. Of all that God has done for the human family, nothing deserves greater praise

than this. However, physical prosperity is not to be forgotten, and the restoration of health whether by natural or supernatural means is evidence of God's providential care. The snare of death and destruction is only a breath away. It is only by the loving kindness and tender mercies of God that life is preserved from day to day.

God's gracious provisions also include the bounties of the earth. These benefits make it possible to enjoy the blessings of health and strength, often into the later years of life.

Those innocents who are defrauded or oppressed by unjust men are not forgotten by God. God is on their side and has their very best interests at heart. Eventually He will make it right in one way or another.

Among the greatest of all His benefits is God's revelation of Himself. A measure of God's will was known from earliest times, and especially to Moses major revelations were made. From Moses' time onward God has spoken numerous times through the prophets, and in these last days by His Son Jesus (Hebrews 1:1-2).

Oh how merciful and gracious is our God! The psalmist writes, "Yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath" (Psalm 78:38). Though He rebuke and chasten, it is but for a season, followed by the comfort of the Holy Spirit when the peaceable fruit is brought forth.

How thankful we should be for the atonement, for without it every disobedience would demand a just recompense of reward. And all our iniquities, whether great or small, would need to be accounted for on God's scale of justice.

Who can fathom the dimensions of God's mercy to those who fear Him? We have learned in modern times that the starry heavens, as it is spoken of here, are exceedingly vast. It is beyond the farthest reach of man's ability to search out. Likewise, He removes our transgressions as far as the distance between the east and the west. Thus it is impossible for transgressions once removed ever to return and condemn us again.

To help us understand the tenderness of God's compassion toward us, the psalmist calls our minds to the love that we experienced from our parents, and that we as parents feel toward our children. The mercy of the Lord is from the limitless past. Before creation He was as He is today, and will always be. Only in eternity will we begin to comprehend fully His mercy, and our amazement will become ever more profound.

God is faithful in calling the children of those who fear Him so that the torch of faith and of righteousness is propagated from generation to generation. The promise is particularly to those who have entered into a covenant relationship with Him and are careful to walk obediently by the Spirit.

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Sin, by definition, is revolt against God. King Saul was sent to utterly destroy Amalek but chose his own way instead of obeying God's command. Samuel called this disobedience rebellion because Saul had rejected the word of the Lord and regarded his own judgment above God's. All of us have "turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). Jesus tells a parable of a nobleman who went into a far country to receive a kingdom, whose citizens hated him and sent a message after him saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14). This is representative of man in his unconverted state and portrays the spirit of the carnal mind. We all "were by nature the children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3).

In the light of the above, consider the richness of God's mercy and the greatness of Christ's love. This world's heroes may give their lives for their country or some other noble cause. However, Jesus sacrificed Himself for rebel sinners. The sacrifice He made was the greatest possible. He was fashioned in human form so He could know the experience of complete surrender. Jesus showed His complete surrender by becoming willing to suffer the shameful death of the cross. Yet because of His great love for us, He emptied Himself so we could have the abundant life.

How can we doubt His tender mercy? Some individuals are plagued with doubts and fears, thinking He will not accept them because they are too evil. Or they are afraid they are not sincere enough, perhaps have not confessed all their sins, or were not remorseful enough. One of the ploys of the evil one is to get us to keep our eyes on ourselves. In that way he is able to undermine the grace and mercy of God.

Today Jesus is seated at the right hand of God. The great sacrifice has been accomplished, God's wrath has been appeased, and all the demands of justice have been met. The great invitation is sent out: "Who-soever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

The doors of grace and salvation are open wide. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 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?" (Romans 8:31-32).

Points to ponder:

1. God's mercy is offered to those who fear Him. Do we see this as a difficult qualification?
2. Does the Lord still become angry with His children?
3. Which is the greater error, to underestimate, or overestimate the mercy of God?
4. What is the source of inspiration that causes one to exult in the mercy of God?

May the coming year, should the Lord tarry, be a time for us as individuals to draw closer to God and become a witness for Him in our daily walk and action.



**“.....it is written, ‘Be ye holy, for I am holy’” 1 Peter 1:16**

We must continually remind ourselves of the purpose of the Christian life – we are not destined to happiness, nor to health but to holiness. Today we have far too many desires and interests and our lives are being consumed and wasted by them. Many of them may be right, noble and good and may later be fulfilled, but in the meantime God must cause their importance to us to decrease.

The only thing that truly matters is whether a person will accept God who will make him holy.

At all costs a person must have a right relationship with God.

*Oswald Chambers*

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