

# THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

Vol. 9 No. 7 – JULY 2012



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

Matthew 5:15

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For A Conservative Mennonite Perspective

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

We hear much today about food standards and much is promoted as being 100% pure or No additives, artificial colourings or flavours and then in the small print you see the various ingredients that are added such as antioxidants, preservatives etc. all with their obligatory code numbers.

That is life in the natural flesh.

But what about our spiritual life? Is it 100% pure without the additives of worldly pleasures, is it tainted by the preservation of self and the mixing in of the leaven of doctrines that seem so right to those whose foundation is not laid on Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself warns us about the leaven of false doctrines as Paul, John and Peter also do.

The world has its standard of purity as it relates to many items especially to those things that we consume.

God also has a standard of purity for what we consume in our spiritual life. Jesus says we are blessed if we are pure of heart, Paul urges us to think on [consume with our mind] whatsoever things are pure and we know he is not talking of physical food but spiritual life, he also directs us to hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

In the Old Testament God gave much direction to Israel about physical purity and spiritual purity, from Psalms through into the New Testament we have many reminders about purity on the spiritual level. Psalm 24:3-5 tells us how we can receive God's blessing through having a pure heart. God's word is pure and therefore we love it (Psalm 119:140).

Proverbs also contain admonitions in regard to spiritual purity and so let us be sure that we will not be among that generation that are pure in their own eyes and yet not washed from their filthiness that it speaks of in Proverbs 30:12.

We need to give very serious consideration as to what standard of purity we need to keep if we are to receive God's blessing. A full commitment to Christ and His call to discipleship is needed to attain the standard that the Scripture calls us to.

To help us think right about God's standard of purity a message of that title is published in part this month with the concluding portion in the August edition.

*J.v.L.*



*God's Standard For Purity*  
*Brother Delbert Eby*  
*Churchtown Mennonite Church - 2011*  
*Part 1 of 2*

*The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him,  
And delivereth them.*

*Psalm 34:7.*

I appreciated the brother's thoughts in the devotional meditation and certainly we are thankful that we have a God that is working on our behalf as we consider the seriousness of the subject before us this afternoon and we bring greetings in the name of Jesus, the pure, sinless, spotless Son of God. There is a story recorded in the gospel accounts of a time when a woman who was a sinner came to Jesus and she stood at his feet weeping and she wiped his feet with the hair of her head and she anointed his feet with ointment and there was a Pharisee standing off to one side and he looking at this seeing thought within himself: If Jesus only knew what kind of sinner this woman was, the one that touched Him.

And Jesus read the thoughts of that Pharisee and His response, and I'm putting it in my own words, His response to the Pharisee was this: I have not been contaminated by the sins of this woman instead she has been cleansed by me. And Jesus words to this woman were: Thy sins are forgiven. (Luke 7:36-48).

Purity is only possible because of the work of Jesus. Now this woman understood her need when she came to Jesus and I think that is very clear from the account but as she understood her need then she also experienced cleansing and she experienced purity.

Now I would like to look at the message this afternoon in four areas.

We would like to think first of all about why God is concerned about purity then secondly look at why we should be concerned about purity, thirdly God's standard for purity and finally fourthly, a few practical helps for maintaining God's standard.

God's concern for Purity.

Why is God concerned about purity, why this subject so important?

Maybe before we answer this question maybe we should think a little bit about what we talk about whenever we talk about purity.

Purity means something that is clean and untainted, it is unmarred by sin and uncontaminated by evil, that is purity.

Sometimes we use the phrase moral purity and in the using this term we are thinking about pure conduct in action and thought life, we are thinking about how we relate to those of the opposite gender and even those of the same gender, moral purity.

The Bible is very clear what God has to say about immorality, it was in relation to that which resulted in the Flood, and was in relation to that which resulted in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The Scriptures are clear that God is not winking at conditions that exist around us today.

Now why is God concerned about purity?

Listen to what God has to say about Himself, this is what God has to say. **1 Peter 1:15-16** <sup>15</sup> But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; <sup>16</sup> Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

That is what God has to say.

Why is God concerned about purity? Well He is concerned about purity because He is a holy God.

That is a very simple and yet very basic truth for us to understand and while I quoted a verse from the New Testament, first Peter chapter 1, Peter says that God said this before, and He had, and we can go back to the book of Leviticus and we could read various times where God emphasized to His people in giving the law that He was a holy God, He was a holy God.

And maybe sometimes we read the book of Leviticus and we wonder why God spelt out so many details in the law, why He said so many specific ways? One of the reasons is because He wanted to emphasize, He wanted to help His people to understand that He was a holy God and He also wanted them to understand their own sinfulness as well.

It is part of the reason why God emphasized His Holiness.

And would to God as we go through this message that we would have a vision of God like Isaiah did in Isaiah 6, and you know the account where Isaiah saw this great vision of God, and would to God that we would have the same vision, that we would see the absolute Holiness and glory and awe and splendour of the God that we serve and that we would understand our own un-doneness and allow this vision to purge out from us any impurity, any impure thought or motive or desire.

God is concerned about purity because He is a holy God.

Turn back with me to Habakkuk chapter 1, let's look at verse 13.

**Habakkuk 1:13.** These are words telling us something about God and I realize that we are breaking into a thought here but for the sake of time we will only look at verse 13: thou, referring to God, *Thou art* of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity:

It is important for us to understand that God is not only a holy God, He is a holy God, but there is just absolutely no speck thank of impurity in God, in fact this verse would tell is that God is so pure, God is so holy that He cannot even look on iniquity.

Now that does not mean that God cannot see iniquity, no, because we know that God sees everything but I think this verse is telling us that God in His very nature abhors evil, He abhors impurity. You get the picture of a God that is so holy that yes He sees sin and yet He needs to turn his face, He needs to hide his face from it, it is repulsive to Him.

God is concerned about purity because He cannot look on anything else, He cannot look on anything else and the Scriptures would teach that God doesn't want to turn His back on man but His very character mandates that He cannot look on evil.

Now I would like to go just a little further in the message and think of an answer to the question: Why should we be concerned about purity?

And I suppose a simple answer to that question is that we should be concerned about purity because God is concerned about it, right? And if we are the people of God therefore we should be concerned about purity but we would like to take it just a little further than that.

Turn to first Thessalonians chapter 4, thinking a little bit about why we should be concerned about purity.

In first Thessalonians 4 we have some of the teachings of Paul in relation to purity, I think these verses help us to understand God's standard for purity but they also help us to understand where our place is.

I'll take the time to read verses 1 to 8 of this chapter, and you think a little bit about why we should be concerned about purity, you think about that, see if you can make it out.

**1 Thessalonians 4:1-8** <sup>1</sup> Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort *you* by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, *so* ye would abound more and more. <sup>2</sup> For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. <sup>3</sup> For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: <sup>4</sup> That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; <sup>5</sup> Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: <sup>6</sup> That no *man* go beyond and defraud his brother in *any* matter: because that the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. <sup>7</sup> For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. <sup>8</sup> He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

Why should we be concerned about purity?

Well because it is the will of God, right?

Notice what Paul says in verse three, he says it is the will of God even your sanctification, we go down to verse seven and he says the same thing in a little different words when he says; for God hath not called us unto uncleanness but unto Holiness. It is the will of God, it is the will of God.

The Christian life is a call to Holiness and for the Christian to fail in exercising self-control and self-discipline in personal purity is to despise the command of God, it is to despise the command of God.

It is the unregenerate person who lives according to the lusts of his own flesh, notice that in verse five when he says, not in the lusts of concupiscence just like the Gentiles that don't know God. It is the unregenerate person that lives for himself and fulfils his own passions and lusts and in con-

trast the Christian walks so as to please God, notice that in verse one, and walks even closer and closer with the Lord.

Now Paul here in verse eight says that if we despise this call to purity we are not despising man but we are despising God, despising God who hath given unto us His Holy Spirit.

Now Paul enlarges on this thought of having been given the Holy Spirit in first Corinthians chapter 6 and I would just invite your attention to this passage, this helps us also to understand the way in which the Holy Spirit living within us relates to this subject of purity.

First Corinthians chapter 6, Paul says if you don't follow this command you are not despising man but you are despising God, God who has given the Holy Spirit.

Why is this subject of purity so important? Why should we be so concerned about it? Well notice what Paul says about it here in first Corinthians chapter 6 let's start reading at verse 18:

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

Now here is the reason verse 19:

<sup>19</sup> What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? <sup>20</sup> For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. **1 Corinthians 6:18-20.**

Why is this subject of purity so important?

Well because our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost. It is the will of God.

We should be concerned about purity because it is God's will and when we desire to do according to God's will and we have the Holy Spirit residing within then we are not our own, we are the Lord's.

And I think what Paul is saying here in first Corinthians 6 is that you know our body is where we meet with God, it is our meeting place with God, it is God's temple, it is God's temple.

And if you want to just use an Old Testament illustration for the Christian to live in impurity is just like defiling the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle, that's what it is like, that is what he is saying here. It is just like the

Old Testament and when we read the Old Testament we know what happened when men look lightly on where God met with His people and when they burned strange fire there and they took idols into the Holy of Holies they corrupted the Most Holy place, it was the judgment of God and the same is true for us today that if we defile the temple of God, the Holy of Holies, then we will face judgment, we are bought with a price.

And so it is the will of God, our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost.

Now why should we be concerned about purity?

Well we should be concerned about purity because our salvation depends on it.

Listen to these verses, [Hebrews 12:14](#): Follow peace with all men, and Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

And in [Ephesians 5:5](#) it says: And this you know that no whoremonger nor unclean person nor covetous man who is an idolater hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

This is not a neutral subject, our salvation depends on it, purity is a priority with God and it is important that we understand that to have impure thoughts in our minds or to permit ourselves to fantasize with impurity will destroy us spiritually, it will eat away like a canker, it will. Sometimes individuals reason that as long as they don't actually see what happens in their mind it is not so wrong, but that is deception because our spiritual life can be hindered by what happens in the mind.

We will touch on this just a little bit later.

Another reason why we should be concerned about purity is because our eternal destiny is affected by how seriously we see the call to purity, our eternal destiny is affected by how seriously we see the call to purity.

You remember what Jesus said in the context of purity in Matthew chapter 5?

He says this: If thy right eye offend thee pluck it out and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy

members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell [Matthew 5:29-30](#).

Those words help us to understand the seriousness of this subject.

Now Jesus there I don't believe was talking about literal self-mutilation, that is not what He was talking about but there is a sense in which it would be better for us to be blind then to miss heaven! Why? because that is how serious this subject is and Jesus wanted His disciples to understand that if we are going to live according to God's standard of purity then we are going to have to take some serious steps, we have to take some serious steps, but it is worth it, it is worth it.

Our eternal destiny is affected by how seriously we heed the call to purity. [Revelation 22:11](#) says: He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

Our eternal destiny is affected by how seriously we view this call.

Now another reason why we should be concerned about purity is because of the moral corruption of society.

And this has a very real way of touching us, it really does. It is one of the reasons why a subject like this is so important for us to look at from time to time and it is true that we don't have television, we don't have radio, we don't watch movies, but we are still faced with temptation and an increasing amount of perversion.

And you don't have to go very far to understand the perversions in the world around us, whether it is the magazines at the checkout counter in the grocery store or the pictures on simple household goods or the advertising fliers that come in the mail unsolicited, these things all reflect the lowering standards of society and they pose a threat to us.

And we probably all live with closer neighbours then most of our people did 50 years ago, we live in an increasingly urbanized surroundings and this brings pressures. Probably there are more brethren among us that have day jobs that take them away from the family during the day, probably more of that then what has been in the past as well, and that is not necessarily all wrong, but let's be honest, let us face the fact that these things all bring increased pressures and it seems like that society just has no stopping

point in relation to the perversions that are not only done in secret but are openly flaunted and even challenged in the courts of our land and taken to court to prove their point.

Brethren we cannot, we cannot allow ourselves to feel at home in the gate of Sodom, we just can't! And we need to be ready to draw some lines because of the moral decadence of society.

But you know we must get beyond just lamenting the moral decadence of society, we must get beyond that and recognize that we all deal with something inside of us that makes us want to go in that direction.

And it is that old carnal nature and until we are ready to deal with this then we will not have the victory, yes we can lament where society is going but let us reckon with the fact that we have that pull within us that will take us down unless we take some concrete steps to be on guard against the snares that are around us.

And I would like to look at God's standard, we have been somewhat alluding to this, we talked a little bit about why God is concerned about purity but I would like to look little more specifically at God's standard. What kind of purity does God require?

In other words we could say it this way: What kind of life do we need to live if we are going to enter heaven?

That is really at the heart of God's standard for purity.

One of the things that we should remember about God's standard for purity is that God standard of purity is an absolute standard, it is absolute.

And that is one of the things that we can get a bit caught offguard by sometimes, I think maybe some of the reason for that is maybe because of the way society is continually drifting further and further away from the moral standards in the word of God, but God's standard has never changed and so that is whenever we read what Peter has to say, Peter says as He which hath called you is Holy be ye holy!

And he emphasizes that God has said before be ye holy for I am Holy.

God's standard has never changed, God hasn't changed, it is still the same standard and even though we live in a time when men in places of author-

ity are making laws that conflict with the laws of God it does not change God's laws and it should not change ours either.

Maybe some of the ways in which this touches us the closest is in areas that have become somewhat normal in society.

Take for instance the way society views divorce and remarriage, it is very normal, very accepted, it is not looked at as a reproach and if we are not careful we can start to fall into the same line of thinking but God's standard has never changed and it never will! And let's recognize that.

*Editor's note: The August issue will have the concluding portion of this message.*



## Report of the History Meeting

Held at the White Oak Mennonite Church—October 25, 2011

*Editor's note:* Two topics discussed were, "The Clash of the Old Colony Mennonites With School Authorities." and secondly, "The Mennonite Church and Her Music" both are presented here to help our readers appreciate the continuing efforts of the Conservative element of the Mennonite Church to "hold fast" to the pilgrim and stranger concept that is being lost by so many who profess the Anabaptist faith. *J.v.L.*

### 1.] "The Clash of the Old Colony Mennonites With School Authorities."

Of the Mennonites who emigrated from Russia to Manitoba, Canada, from 1873 to 1880, those who came primarily from the Chortitza Colony in Russia were known as "Old Colony" Mennonites since that colony had been the first Mennonite Colony in Russia. They believed separation from the world to mean very little contact with the larger society. They used their own schools, taught in the Low German language as a primary tool to accomplish this. They believed education beyond the sixth or seventh grade would move their people away from an agricultural way of life.

Canada had welcomed this immigration in 1873 by granting freedom to worship as they pleased and to conduct their own schools. Eventually, new laws came into effect establishing tax-supported schools. Many of these schools were essentially "Mennonite" public schools by population. The

Old Colony Mennonites continued their own private schools.

The 1890 Manitoba Public School Act disallowed denominational schools and also made English the language of instruction in the tax-supported schools. The more progressive Mennonites accepted this.

In 1909 school inspection began, which resulted in the Old Colony schools not meeting the standards. They were not teaching in English, used a weak curriculum, and had a short school year. In 1916 came the School Attendance Act, which required (1) English to be the only language of instruction, (2) attendance from ages seven to fourteen, and (3) private schools to be allowed. Public school officials, however, could close them if they were found to be deficient and force the children to be sent to public school.

In the fall of 1918, all Mennonite schools were found inadequate and closed. Those who did not cooperate were jailed. An appeal that the government reconsider the promises of 1873 and the claim that public education would destroy their faith were rejected. The government was not trying to destroy the Mennonites' faith but was trying to bring about a more united society, and they saw the school as a way to do this.

Many Mennonites compromised but many of the Old Colony did not. From 1922 to 1924, five thousand of them moved to Mexico, and from 1926 to 1927, one thousand seven hundred settled in the Paraguayan Chaco. The latter were not Old Colony Mennonites, but Bergthalers, another more conservative element.

These people would not budge in the face of threatening issues. They "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13).

## 2.] "The Mennonite Church and Her Music"

Congregational singing was part of Old Testament worship as seen in Exodus 15 and in the Psalms. New Testament singing was largely influenced by the Old Testament music as it was carried through the synagogue tradition. Christians sang in daily experience and under test in tune with the principles taught in 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; and James 5:13.

During the Dark Ages, singing declined and became liturgical. A 1415 statement declared public singing forbidden and belonging only to the clergy. During the Reformation, congregational singing revived. Martin Luther encouraged it. Of the Anabaptists it was said, "They sang them-

selves into the hearts of many." Their hymns conveyed deep personal faith, commitment, and conviction. Singing in unison without accompaniment reflected their simple lifestyle.

English hymn writers have contributed much to Mennonite church music. Isaac Watts' lyrics focused on worshipping God. The Wesley brothers, John and Charles, provided songs emphasizing Christian experience.

The Mennonite Great Awakening produced a more active church life and, with it, several new hymnbooks. The singing school movement contributed to congregational singing with music instruction and an appreciation for shaped notes and four-part singing. The Sunday school movement called for a new type of song and contributed to the growing appreciation for the music of the church. The 1900s are known as the era of Gospel songs, which appeal more to the emotions than did those of the British hymn tradition. They focus more on the creature and on evangelism, they are typically faster, have a simpler harmony, and often have a refrain to be sung after each verse.

Spiritual discernment must grow along with music interests. Many Mennonites are singing Gospel songs that make them feel good, even though they are not living a life of obedience to the Word. They declare by their music interests that there is no clear line between the music of God and that of the devil. Some challenges for us are (1) We dare not allow the world to influence our music. (2) Our singing must be befitting to approach the holy God. (3) Our singing must move our hearts rather than our heels. (4) Our singing must pass the judgment of God. (5) Our singing must be genuine. (6) We need to guard against an overemphasis on musical proficiency.

When congregational singing sets the standard for singing in everyday life, it will endure for generations. We have a wealth of songs to use to accomplish this.



*CONDITIONS FOR BLESSINGS FROM THE LORD.*

"He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." Psalm 24:4-5

Man has an intense desire for approval. The spiritual side of man has a longing for the Creator's blessing deeply imbedded within his nature. God is able to supply every need according to His divine power. The apostle John wrote about the greatest blessing ever bestowed. "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" John 1:16-17.

Discovering God's principles that rule nature and behaviour brings a sense of satisfaction, and operating within the boundaries of these laws yields a blessing. The application of truth to our hearts and lives brings the approval of heaven.

Some blessings are showered upon all creatures. Life itself, morning and evening, and the productiveness of earth's resources are given to all. Love, kindness, and similar virtues are bestowed upon those who appreciate them. There are spiritual blessings available to those willing to take a position contrary to their natural inclination.

As in the days of old when Jesus was present in body, multitudes today are seeking for a blessing from Him. In the most profound sermon ever preached, our Lord began with conditional blessings. These conditions go right to the core of our attitudes and spirits.

As Matthew begins his record of Jesus' ministry, he recounts the principles fundamental to Christian living and gives the nine blessings Jesus pronounced upon those who meet the required condition. As the Ten Commandments were to the Mosaic law, so the Beatitudes are to the teachings of Jesus.

Matthew 5:1-12 <sup>1</sup> And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: <sup>2</sup> And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, <sup>3</sup> Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. <sup>5</sup> Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. <sup>6</sup> Blessed

*are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. <sup>7</sup>Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. <sup>8</sup>Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God. <sup>9</sup>Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. <sup>10</sup>Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup>Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

It is difficult for sinful man to meet the conditions attached to the promise of blessings. Human nature does not want all the things mentioned in the beatitudes, the spirit of the poor, to be meek or merciful, to be pure, or to fill the role of a peacemaker. Jesus could see right into men's hearts. Many times He exposed the inner motivation of those who followed Him. He does the same for us today.

Several of these statements of blessing give conditions for coming into the kingdom of heaven or for being in His presence. Jesus had come from the glories of heaven. He had tasted its bliss, seen its brightness, and felt its joy. Any virtue that would turn people away from material, sensual, and earthly things was pronounced worthy of a reward.

Every blessing is conditional upon being in a particular state. All the blessings begin with "Blessed are . . . Being poor in spirit, taking persecution for righteousness' sake, and being a peacemaker all require having a broken and contrite spirit. We read in Psalm 34:18, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

All believers suffer affliction in some measure. However, what appears to be an affliction at first may actually be a blessing when viewed in the light of eternal values. Emphasis is placed on the blessing of being reviled, persecuted, or falsely accused for His name's sake. It seems Jesus wanted to leave a special encouragement in this area. Perhaps He knew this would be a hard trial for His followers. The joy in this trial is the anticipation of our reward in heaven, where our environment will be one of perfect peace, love, and acceptance.

All of the conditions for blessing are followed by a particular reward.

Several of these rewards could be realized in the present time. A merciful person receives mercy from others whether or not he is in the kingdom of God. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness have their needs for right living fulfilled as they apply truth to their lives. Those who mourn are comforted, for how comforting and precious is the Lord's presence in the hearts of believers during a time of sorrow. How comforting is the care and loving compassion of the brotherhood in times of distress or bereavement!

Several of the conditions for a blessing concern our relationship with our fellowmen. The consequences of sin may cause relationships to become strained and distant. Misunderstandings may develop. A man with a meek spirit is always blessed. Being a peacemaker may result in material loss, but it brings the benefit of improved relations.

Looking at each blessing separately has merit, but all together they form the spirit Jesus exemplified. When the Holy Ghost has free course in our lives, we will enjoy all the promises expressed in the Beatitudes.

In the old dispensation, God's blessings were pronounced upon the nation of Israel. These blessings were of a temporal nature. They belonged to the earthly rather than to the spiritual realm. God promised to fight the nation's battles for them if they would obey His voice and trust His direction. He promised to increase their numbers to help them grow into a mighty nation. He promised an increase of their flocks and bountiful crops to provide for their physical needs.

In Deuteronomy 15:6 is the record of a blessing on their financial means as a nation. "For the Lord thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow." These blessings were all conditional upon the people of God listening to His voice and obeying His commandments.

In the gospel era, the focus is not upon our material affairs or our existence as a nation. While the believer has been promised provision for his material and physical needs through life, the emphasis is shifted to the spiritual kingdom. The rewards listed in the Beatitudes are all of a spiritual nature, with the exception of the meek inheriting the earth. Even this one exception has a deeper meaning than its literal interpretation. We know it is not with the Lord's blessing that one would set up a worldwide empire. Rather, a meek spirit will bring us into favour with others and will calm

and disarm those who may be against us.

Each person's attitude is his own choice. To receive God's kingdom, the gospel standard requires a meek, humble spirit. This especially applies to those in responsible positions. A requirement of good leadership is humility. When fathers can empathize with their children and adults with young people, a heartfelt care is communicated. This builds mutual confidence that helps influence those for whom we are responsible. To extend mercy or to forgive requires that our own eyes be fastened on the mercy granted to us from God's great storehouse.

We cannot choose to place ourselves in an impure environment and expect to remain pure in heart. To endure ridicule for our faith without being offended, or to be scorned for taking an unpopular stand for the right without losing our joy requires a firm conviction for the truth of God's Word.

Many times the Lord is gracious to us, blessing us beyond human understanding. He permits us to experience disaster, sorrow, distress, trauma, sickness, or terminal illness to draw our vision beyond this earthly realm. Sometimes it takes the dark valley of trial or sorrow to focus our eyes on heavenly values. The blessing lies in allowing ourselves to be exercised by these testing experiences.

Perhaps one of the greater challenges today lies in meeting the conditions set by the first Beatitude. To be poor in spirit, regardless of financial or social status, means that we recognize that "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" James 1:17. Everything we have, all we are, and whatever we have achieved in life are all through the grace of our heavenly Father. A blessing is given to those who take no credit for their gifts or for anything they have accomplished.

When we can meet the conditions of the Beatitudes, our lives will overflow with blessing. We can be a blessing to others, and together with them we can bless the Lord with thanksgiving.



## CHRISTIAN LIVING

In a recent conversation, the thought was brought out that the lifestyle of our times isn't conducive to Christian living. We're so busy trying to make a living that there's little time left for spiritual things.

As I've reflected on this, I've asked myself; Is it really any different from other times? A hundred years ago life was considerably simpler, but was it any less busy? And what about during the Reformation, or even earlier? Do we think they had any more time than we do today to study God's Word and to pray? Is Christian life reflected in the amount of time we give to the study of God's Word and prayer? Certainly, we need to avail ourselves of these times when we can freely, without persecution, study God's Word. But Christian living is more than that.

It is "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being" Acts 17:28. That means Christ in us, all day, everyday. We are a living witness by our deeds and words. Everything we do and say and everywhere we go is a living witness of that life within us.

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him" Colossians 2:6.

"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" Romans 8:4.

"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 ... and the God of peace shall be with you" Philippians 4:8-9.

May we be found faithful.

*A concerned sister in the Lord.*



## A Devotional Look at Luke 15

*Bro. Paul R Weaver, 1991.*

I am grateful to the Lord for giving us His Word and giving us His Holy Spirit to guide us in the Word, not only to help us to understand but then to help us to carry it out. I thank God again for the Holy Spirit's power in the life of the child of God who is fully committed to truth and ready to follow the Lord who has called him "out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). He enables us to be able also to experience the blessing of overcoming that "sin which doth so easily beset us" (Hebrews 12:1). I trust we have found grace to help us through our experiences as we seek to walk day by day allowing God also to show in us that which is needful and necessary. We need the wisdom of God to help make the proper applications in the proper spirit to work in harmony to do the things which are pleasing unto the Lord.

For a devotional passage sort of an in between the Sunday school and this worship hour I would like to read Luke 15. Luke 15 is a passage thought of many times as three parables. By some it is thought of as a single parable which helps us to see varied aspects of God's interest in bringing individuals to a saving knowledge of the truth. I will read this passage. Then, I will come back up and pick up a few thoughts that will help us to refresh our minds again to the work that God is doing constantly in our lives and constantly among us and calling us to associate. [Read Luke 15]

There are a few things that I thought we might notice here. All of these items that were lost had value. They were valuable to the owner thereof. The sheep was simply an animal, but it had worth. It was important that it was found. The coin had worth, but it had no value unless it was available. When it was lost, it had little value of purpose, or usefulness. The lost son is likewise the most important of all these items. This son while lost was of no profit and no value to the one who is the owner of him — God Himself.

In this let me first call attention to this fact that we believe that the lost sheep, the lost coin and the finding of the coin, and the restoring of the son show the work of the Trinity. The first parable, or the first account of the

lost sheep, is applicable to the work of Christ who came into the world where the lost sheep are to redeem them. It takes that in the life of every child of God to know the work of Christ. It was Christ who accomplished the only accessible opportunity to the throne of God and to the end to be called the Son of God.

The lost coin represents possibly in a figure the work of the Spirit especially to the child of God who was once in the house. I think of this: the lost sheep was outside, out on the mountains and needed help. The coin was in the house. It could represent the Spirit's works in the hearts of all us here today. It would represent those who have already had opportunity to be a part within the house, but lost because we did not know where it was or could be usable. Therefore, the Spirit is the one that searches our hearts. It may represent the work of the Spirit as the Spirit seeks to further bring us into sanctification.

We believe that when we are called of the Lord it is necessary and important that we are willing to accept wholeheartedly all that the Bible asks, all that the Lord is calling us to. As we grow in our Christian experience, the Spirit at work shows us some things maybe in our lives that ought not to be. These are things that need to be committed unto the Lord and willing to depart from, separate ourselves more fully in the Christian experience and expression of the Christ-life.

Therefore, the Holy Spirit helps us to find ourselves. It is possible to be in the membership of the body and still be lost to God. The Spirit would show us how we ought to be more and more conformed to the will of God and we are unwilling to allow that to be, or give up the things that stand in the way of our true Christian expression of our Christ-life. Or, are we unwilling to let the Lord have a complete control of our life? We could be lost even in the Church.

We believe the Holy Spirit is a great refiner to us. The Word of God has been given. The work of Christ has been accomplished. Unless that work is accomplished in us having its full expression in our lives by our commitment, we can still be lost unto God.

The son, we recognize is a self-willed expression. He turned aside and willfully went out. He asked his father for his portion. His father did not deny giving it to him. His father gave him the half of his goods.

He divided it between him and his elder brother, and so half of his goods the Scripture says in this parable the young man had. Then, soon he took his leave and went on.

It could be what happens with people who were once saved, who have once tasted, who have once been a part but leave because of offence. I am not sure all that this young man, this younger son, looked at when he decided he was going out to experience life for himself. It could be some who were willing to turn down the old paths and decide “Well, we are living in a new age now and there ought to be something different and something new. There ought to be a change.” Therefore, they are going out to try to find a way for themselves.

This young man was without. He really did not know what the world was like, I do not believe. The very fact was that he went out and wasted his substance with riotous living. He was going to have a fling in life and to experience life for himself. Maybe he might have decided, “I will have a good time. I would like to see what life is like on my own. I know when to return.” You know, “I know when to say no. I know when to quit.” He went out and did not realize what this society that he was stepping into would do to him. It took everything he had.

When he had come to the end of himself he was willing and turned around and went back and the father gladly received him back. Finally, all the work of Calvary and all the work of the Holy Spirit will not make us sons of God without the acceptance of God. Praise God today we can be restored even if we have lost out. God needs to accept all of us, and He will. He said He will. Therefore, we need to claim that promise by faith.

We have the lost sheep who were in danger and suffering. They can be brought into a place of safety unto the work of Christ. We have the lost coin, useless for its value. Its service for God is lost when we refuse to let God have His way. We can attend services every Sunday. We can be here for the communion services and keep up our outside form fairly well. However, down inside there are hankerings and longings. There are cer-

tain things of cares that occupy our minds. Sometimes we read about the love of sports and analyze the sports craze of the day. That can become an idol to so many people. Our society is filled with a lot of people professing Christ but they have more interest, more time, and more concern to keep abreast with all the things that are happening whether it is the ball games, basketball or all the sports activities than what they have to read the Bible.

There are times when these sports interests and the craze for them keep them from even attending God honouring activities. They would maybe spend money to travel miles to sit in a stadium and watch a ball game than they would put in the effort to be in Sunday morning worship and the midweek meeting and participate in the things of God. I am saying it is possible to be like a lost coin inside — lost of its value and not rendering to God what is due unto Him.

The lost son was not in touch with the father. His fellowship with the father was broken off. The father did not know where he was. That is not true, of course, with our heavenly Father. Our heavenly Father knows us wherever we are. He, in His sovereign omnipotence, His sovereignty, knows where we are. He knows exactly what we are experiencing. However, there is no way to save our soul, no way to expect that God will receive us until we are willing to return. There is only one way unto salvation, the way of God, faith in Jesus Christ and being disciples and followers.

There is one more lesson in this great parable and it seems to me maybe this is the climax. What happens when there is response of those who come in? We are glad if we have found the salvation that belongs to us. We are glad that people are willing to say they will overlook our past mistakes and our failures. We want to put on the effort and we are willing to go now the way of the Lord. Nevertheless, here was the elder brother who had his mind set on his benefits, and having a good time with his friends. He felt he never was told he could do that. Now the father killed the fatted calf and did all this for a son who wasted.

That could be any one of us if we simply sit here and look down and call attention, and call to mind all the failures that individuals have made, and are unwilling to forgive. It seems to me this is reflected in the latter part of

this chapter — the unbrotherly attitude, the unforgiving spirit. He had it in his own heart even though he was in the father's house. That could be one of us. I hope not. I hope we can see the worth of a child that is responding, who is willing to come to God and we can rejoice. It is not the material things.

All of this that He spoke about had its material relationships. However, that is so soon gone and so unimportant really to being saved.

I trust we can see the worth of the need of individuals of finding the light coming to the light, finding their hope established in God as they find the interest we have. If we do not have that kind of interest, it is time to ask the Lord and His Spirit to help us to understand the greatest mission that we have in the world. No, the unsaved will not come to the knowledge without someone to tell them or preach to them.

Are you willing to be that conveyor of the truth, a preacher of righteousness, one who goes forth in the name of the Lord?

Are you willing to talk to your neighbours, talk to your friends, and be a witness wherever you go, unashamed of our calling of life in Christ because of the importance of knowing the Lord for everyone?

Are you leading them to Christ as the only One who can save?



*THY GUIDING EYE*

*Direct mine eyes toward Thine, dear Lord,  
Thy counsel to receive,  
For Thou dost give the very best  
To those who will believe.*

*Oh, may mine eyes be fixed on Thee  
With readiness to heed  
The teaching that Thou hast for me,  
The way where Thou wouldst lead.*

*Instruct me with Thine eye, dear Lord,  
And ever be my guide.  
May I be faithful in Thy will,  
Abiding by Thy side.*

*May nothing ever come between  
My contact with Thine eye.  
On Thee for guidance I depend.  
My hopes on Thee rely.*

*I thank Thee for Thy guiding eye,  
Which gives me vision clear.  
Prepare me for that heav'nly home--  
The day is drawing near!  
--Martha Weldy 1986*