

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 Three Great Virtues

“Now abideth faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love.”

1 Corinthians 13:13 (NKJV)

Virtue, by definition, is moral strength and beauty. It is not a passive quality admired by onlookers like a work of art in a museum. Rather, it is a dynamic grace displayed in a thousand noble acts on the highways and byways of daily life. Even the most ordinary among us can be extraordinarily virtuous.

Of all the great virtues that can be listed, and there are indeed many — the three greatest are Faith, Hope, and Love. It is to these three things that all mankind aspires, for Life is at its best and brightest when these three combine together and lift us above and beyond the lures and limits of lesser things.

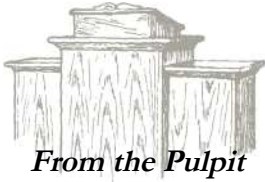
Without Faith, our lives began to diminish with the increase of gnawing doubts and mounting suspicions. We lose the innocence and sense of wonder that makes dreams come true. One must believe in order to be living. “My heart has no desire to stay where doubts arise and fears dismay; while some may dwell where these abound, my prayer, my aim is higher ground!”

Without Hope, our lives are ravaged and life becomes a foreboding haze of disappointments and disillusionments, penetrating our souls like a foul vapour of toxic poisoning — making us sick, lethargic, indifferent, and cynical.

And without Love, life is reduced to solitary confinement in a prison called Fear; where isolation robs us of vitality and vigour; and where bitterness wreaks havoc with all of our relationships.

Pity the man or woman whose heart is closed to Faith, Hope and Love. Now abideth faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love.

J.C.Ryle 1816-1900



Harmony of Love and Sacrifice in Marriage

*From a message by Merle Ruth
Centerville Mennonite Church
On the occasion of a wedding*

From the Pulpit

I greet you in the name of One who on an occasion similar to this performed His first recorded miracle, had Jesus not been present at that wedding a need would have gone unmet.

The greatest source of help to any marriage is the ever available presence of Jesus. When troubles arise to be able to go to Him will be for our brother and sister a great privilege but sadly it is a privilege some couples never draw upon.

And now I would like you to open your Bible to Deuteronomy chapter 24 verse 5. We have recorded here a divinely conferred regulation given to a people who were at that time the chosen people of God.

Let's listen to [Deuteronomy 24:5](#):

"When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war; neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken."

Now why a regulation like this? Because God had an investment in that marriage, His honour was at stake, He therefore wanted that marriage along with every other marriage to get off to a good start. And this ought to convince us that God is interested in what is about to transpire here today. He wants to see our brother and sister succeed in their marriage for they are following His plan. As you launch out into this new venture are you sure you God is all for you? Yes He is 100% behind you.

That which I am now about to share is an introduction to the sermon title. In the field of music a chord is a combination of tones that blend harmoniously when sounded together, some tones blend together better than others and consequently they are more pleasing to the ear. Our brother and sister recognize that harmony in marriage is God's ideal; furthermore their choice of a sermon title indicates that their aim will be to strike a chord that will produce beautiful marital harmony. They have come to believe that the

chord that they want to strike consists of love and sacrifice; they therefore asked me to speak on The Harmony of Love and Sacrifice in Marriage. When practiced in marriage these two virtues, love and sacrifice, do indeed contribute greatly to marital harmony.

In order to enjoy harmonious personal relations we soon learn in the growing up process that it is mutually beneficial to please those with whom we live and work, but long before that we acquire the habit of pleasing ourselves, to a moderate degree this is evidently acceptable, for in a non-condemning way the Bible states it as a fact that no man ever yet hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it. But for the Christian pleasing one's self must become something different than selfishness.

Even so the young Christian, however unselfish he has become, when he makes the transition from singleness to marriage will still face a big adjustment. From that point onward pleasing one's self, however rightfully it is done, must give way to pleasing one's companion also and more so. That will not be a new thing but began already in courtship but beyond the marriage altar the privilege of pleasing one another it becomes an obligation also and under every conceivable circumstance, both favourable and unfavourable.

Heretofore you did it on a part-time basis from now on pleasing one another will be your full-time employment.

Now perhaps you feel as though that I'm pushing this point too far. Is it really is scriptural to think that God wants me to aim at pleasing my companion? I'm of the opinion that this question is answered in first Corinthians chapter 7. At one point in this chapter Paul addresses readers who may be contemplating marriage.

[1 Corinthians 7:32-33](#): “But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.”

In a very direct way Paul is he throwing out a reminder to his readers who are entertaining the option of marriage. If you choose to marry it is going to be different. Some of that time and energy that you formerly threw into serving the Lord will need to be devoted to your marital companion pleas-

ing him, or her, it will then become an integral part of your marital responsibility.

We now have our answer it is here implied that with the sanction of God Christian couples do relate to one another in this way, pleasing one another has upon it the sanction of God for He knows in no other way can marital harmony be achieved.

Now the purpose of this Bible passage is not to discourage marriage but simply to help those who are contemplating that step to think realistically about the involvement in marriage. The fact that marriage calls for the pleasing of one's companion does not make it unattractive, I want to emphasize that point, and it remains a very inviting option. Why? Because far from being drudgery pleasing the one you love is highly pleasurable and a God honouring employment.

Well the stage is now set to examine more closely how love and sacrifice contribute to harmony in marriage.

May I first call your attention how that to a remarkable degree these two virtues complement each other; in this respect they resemble a well-blended musical chord. When put into practice love and sacrifice actually feed each other, they nurture and encourage each other. Stating it differently, love begets sacrifice and sacrifice begets love, all the while that interaction continues the marital bond grows sweeter and more secure.

It will work like this for our couple: In response to his love for her she will make personal sacrifices in order to please him and those sacrifices will in turn put fresh fuel to his love for her.

Obviously this kind of interaction will contribute to their marital harmony.

The truth I am trying to emphasize could also be stated in these terms: An atmosphere of love creates a willingness to sacrifice for the sake of one's companion and normally the more you sacrifice for your companion the more he or she will love you in return for the sacrifices you are making. And now, although these twin virtues work together, for the sake of this discussion we will try to take them apart and treat them separately.

So my heading for this part of the message is: “Love contributing to marriage, to harmony in marriage.”

The Bible clearly indicates that marriage is meant to be a love relationship. In order to make that possible and in a sense easy, God has built into men and women a mutual attraction to one another but in the long hard pull husbands and wives need something deeper yet and stronger yet than that alone.

This effect is illustrated in the biblical passage to which I am now turning namely Genesis 24. This chapter concludes with the record of Abraham’s servant bringing to Isaac the bride whom he had chosen for him.

Genesis 24 beginning of verse 63: ([Genesis 24:63-67](#)) "And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels *were* coming. ⁶⁴And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. ⁶⁵For she *had* said unto the servant, What man *is* this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant *had* said, It *is* my master: therefore she took a vail, and covered herself. ⁶⁶And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. ⁶⁷And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her.

Now bearing in mind that this was this couple's very first meeting!

Unlike in our culture there had been for them no previous acquaintance or attraction but nevertheless Isaac without any hesitation accepted Rebekah and immediately he loved her. Why? Because he knew she had been chosen to be his wife, he loved her because he knew that being his wife he was supposed to love her without any prior courtship experience, he loved her immediately and that demonstrated high-quality marital love is more than mere physical attraction, it is more than a warm cuddly feeling, real love is something you do, something you choose to do and furthermore it is something you choose to keep on doing, indefinitely.

In Christian marriage, in spite of the imperfections that you have discovered you continue to love your companion because that is the nature of true love and in marriage above all you do is because you have promised God to do it. Very shortly this brother and sister before us will take that step to

both each other and to God, they will promise to love and cherish each other.

And so love contributes to marital harmony and in this way it leads a couple into making marriage what God intended it should be, a lifelong commitment, and out of that commitment there comes ideally, an underlying determination to work towards the perfecting of marital harmony. More than ever it needs to be emphasised that marriage as conceived by God is not a short-term experiment, marriage is designed by God as an unbreakable lifelong commitment.

Marriage should therefore be restricted to people who are so steadfastly minded that they too can say to one another as Ruth said to Naomi:

"Whither thou goest I will go, where thou lodgest I will lodge, thy people shall be my people and thy God my God, the Lord do so to me and more also it ought but death part thee and me." [Ruth 1:16-17](#).

Marriage is for people who are steadfastly minded in that respect.

Our brother and sister have wisely recognised that their model for marital love is found in the 1 Corinthians chapter 13, you may therefore turn with me to that passage, but before we get into that allow me to inject this observation: There are few words in the English language that are so over-worked as the word "love" there are reasons for that. One reason is that there is actually more than one kind of "love" another reason is that some things are labelled "love" that ought to be labelled otherwise.

The love that enables a couple to achieve harmony in marriage can be rightfully thought of as a rope like a cord consisting of more than one strand, one strand of which is agape love. In this chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, using the label charity, the divinely inspired writer extols the virtues of this God-like love that every believer receives along with the Holy Spirit, but still, we, like the Corinthians, are not always as loving as we could or ought to be, we therefore find inserted between chapter 12 and 13 this significant transitional clause: "Yet show I unto thee a more excellent way."

In both church life and in home life that more excellent way is the way of love.

Now overall this chapter brings into view three aspects of Love.

First verses one through three, The pretence of love.

Secondly verses four through seven, The personality of love.

Thirdly verses eight through thirteen, The permanence of love.

For this occasion we will confine our attention to that middle block, verses four through seven.

[1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#) "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, ^[5] Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; ^[6] Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; ^[7] Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

In these few lines love is personified. It is viewed as a person with a distinct personality; we learn here that it is characteristic of love to do this and to not do this. Furthermore this paragraph tells us what sort of thing love or charity will do and what sort of thing it will not do. And on the basis of this description we can therefore project how love will behave in the context of marriage.

Be assured of this, love will continue the courtesies that they practice during courtship, but unfortunately there are marriages in which courtesies are sadly forgotten, too often that once helping hand gradually and sadly disappears, in its place comes possibly the unspoken but cruel message: Do it yourself!

Husbands especially have earned the reputation for gradually becoming cold, thoughtless, indifferent, unhelpful and unloving. When there are dishes to wash, when their own little ones need to dress love lends a helping hand. Heretofore his meals were prepared by his mother, possibly his sisters too, from now on he may notice that his wife's meals are different, that old familiar taste may not be there, but as a loving husband he will thoughtfully refrain from making any comparisons that would reflect unfavourably on his wife.

Because it is so godlike love doesn't demand perfection in the one it loves, without any sign of disappointment it graciously accept his or her condition without trying to remake him or her.

One very understanding wife put it this way: "To change my husband is God's business; to love my husband is my business."

Some wives become resentful toward their husbands because they think of their husbands as living in an exciting world while they are left with what they view as ordinary house work, but the truly loving wife will rise above that and rejoice with her husband rather than envy him.

If the ways of love are forgotten marital life can all too quickly degenerate into a get even contest, one or the other may say: If you do that to me I'll get even, I just won't talk.

The personality described here never acts that way because instead of thinking evil it will aim at doing its very best toward the one chosen to love whether or not that love is deserved or returned.

Sharp words between husbands and wives create wounds that are long in healing, the more excellent way allows love to bridle the tongue. Love will likewise keep you from belittling your in-laws for when you do that you inflict a stab of pain upon your companion. Don't expect your companion to all of a sudden lose interest in his or her family. Love will dictate that she will be allowed to no less contact with her family then you want with your family. Love contributes to marital harmony by making it easy to forgive and forget.

One husband said this: When we quarrel my wife becomes historical.

His friend replied: You mean hysterical.

No, replied the first man, I mean historical, she reminds me of every mistake I ever made. Well habits like that put marital progress in reverse.

Well that was a sampling of how the practice of agape love contributes to marital harmony and how the lack of it will contribute to discord.

As already indicated the couple before us also recognise that they will need to sacrifice.

For the newly married Christian it will to some extent come natural because love motivates sacrifice. Husbands especially are to be like Christ

who loved the church and gave Himself, sacrificed Himself for her. There the two ideas are welded together as they likewise will be in every truly Christian marriage, for at its best sacrifice is nothing less than the other side of love, the visible side.

Along with me you may have heard about a certain young man, whether he was real or fictitious I don't know, anyway he is supposed to have written to his girlfriend a letter in which he told her in all kinds of flowery language how very much he loved her, after signing his name to the letter he added this: p.s. If it doesn't rain I'll see you Saturday evening.

An unwillingness to sacrifice puts a big question mark over any thing that pretends to be love. Sacrifice is the proof of love.

In too many marriages that proves absent. Why is it absent? Because selfishness is present and that is an indication that self is still on the throne of one's heart. Ideally you have already died to self when you began your Christian life but living together as husband and wife will make it doubly necessary to live the crucified life. If a married couple doesn't live the crucified life their inborn selfishness will prevent them from making the needed sacrifices.

What do you do when you sacrifice?

You give up something that you value for the sake of something that you value still higher.

By the title that they have chosen our brother and sister are acknowledging right up front that they want to be willing to sacrifice even things they have valued in order to attain the higher values of harmonious marital relations, and that is very commendable.

As you begin to live your married life together differences that you may not yet be aware of will come to the surface and resolving those differences will call for some sacrificing of your opinion, your preference, your long-time habits and suchlike, but neither one of you should need to do all sacrificing.

Hopefully you can learn to take turns giving in and giving up.

Furthermore I warn you there may be times when you or your companion may need to sacrifice that which seems to you to be the very best option. But no sacrifice is too great for marital harmony. Even when you are not resolving differences you will now be living for each other instead of for yourself like never before. You will discover the meaning of that biblical expression “Labour of Love.”

But I have good news for you, such labour is not laborious as long as it remains a labour of love. Furthermore such labour is rewarded, highly rewarded. Again you may need to sacrifice not only for the sake of harmony but also for other reasons, for example: in the area of finances to simply make ends meet you may need to forego what you want and make do with what you need. And again in this area too, don't expect him or her to do all sacrificing.

I will not attempt to enumerate all the sacrifices you may need to make because there may be in store for you some unanticipated sacrificing such as long hours by the bed of a sick companion or a sick child.

I recently learnt of a wife who spent the last 25 years in a wheelchair with only a limited ability to communicate to a husband who faithfully cared for her all that long while.

Possibilities such as this do need to be reckoned with even on one's wedding day.

In closing I do want to emphasise that, although it sounds paradoxical, in marriage it actually pays to sacrifice.

I want to assure this couple and every other such couple that there are rich rewards awaiting you as you learn to sacrifice yourself interest on the altar of marital love. This kind of divinely energised self-discipline will put you on the road to marriage at its very best.



The Sin of Slothfulness

Believers are told to be not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord. Romans 12:11

All Christians are subject to struggles in keeping self and the flesh in subjection to Christ. The Word promises that we can be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us" Romans 8:37. Irresponsibility, laziness, negligence, and indifference are characteristics of our sinful flesh. Trusting in the Lord's providence is our only hope for grace to overcome our sinful inclinations. Being zealous and diligent is synonymous with a fruitful Christian life and is characteristic of a regenerate heart. Exercising diligence and good stewardship is not self-reliance but is the result of a committed walk with the Lord.

The sin of slothfulness, or conversely, the blessing of diligence, is rooted in the heart. The condition of the heart affects all areas of life, both spiritual and material. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" Proverbs 4:23.

Here are some reminders from the Book of Proverbs on this subject:

Proverbs 6:6-10: Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, *and* gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? *Yet* a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:

Proverbs 11:24-28: There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and *there is* that withholdeth more than is meet, but *it tendeth* to poverty.²⁵ The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

²⁶ He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing *shall be* upon the head of him that selleth *it*.²⁷ He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.²⁸

He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

Proverbs 15:19: The way of the slothful *man is* as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous *is* made plain.

Proverbs 18:9: He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.

Proverbs 21:25 The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour.

Much can be learned by observing the order in God's creation. The orderly structure that is maintained in an ant colony can be inspiring. All are busy at work in due season, and everything is done for the good of the colony. There is no obvious overseer driving them to the work, but an instinctive guidance from within. Through diligence provision is made for the season when there is no ingathering. When an object is too heavy for one, others quickly join in to help. This is a beautiful example for the brotherhood to be attentive to the struggles of others and to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

The welfare of the colony is maintained by carefully guarding against foreign invasion. Many will unhesitatingly give their life to protect the home unit. Similarly, we need a willingness for sacrifice and diligence in our own contributions to the welfare of the church and our homes.

Jesus drew a parallel between giving Himself for the church and a husband giving himself in love for the happiness and well-being of his wife. The Scriptures teach that we are to lay down our lives for the brethren. It is a blessing when all the members of the body are awake, working for the cause of the gospel, and giving themselves for the welfare of the kingdom. The world's influence seeks to enter the home through unwholesome reading material, companionship, and activities. Much harm has occurred through parental neglect. Slothfulness in guarding against these worldly influences often yields a harvest of sorrow.

"So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man" Proverbs 6:11. Just as surely as a traveler advances toward his destination, so poverty moves upon the unsuspecting sluggard. As an armed man in position for slaughter, so want will sweep down when drowsiness and neglect have claimed their victim. The differences in the levels of prosperity can often be traced to the differences in people's faithfulness to their attention in material affairs. In most cases at least, modest prosperity will attend those whose lives are governed by godly principles.

Thankfulness for the providence of God does not leave room for wastefulness. Misuse and wasting of food and other resources is wrong. Leaving things to spoil and rust is not good stewardship.

Time is a precious commodity and should not be wasted in idleness and vain pursuits of entertainment and pleasure. Throughout history, affluence has often led to excessive pleasure seeking and finally collapse of a productive society through moral decay.

Generous giving is "scattering" that yields increase to an individual through experiencing the blessings of God. These are not necessarily material, but are richness in faith and treasures of the inner man and finding favour with God and man. Dorcas, as recounted in Acts 9, was mourned by those who loved her as one who was rich in good works.

A stingy person will often end up lonely and unhappy. Assets preserved through covetousness generally end up being a bitterness to the holder and his children who have also learned a life of selfishness. Many who have trusted in their riches have ended in poverty, both financially and spiritually. The man mentioned in Luke 12 who wanted to enlarge his barns to store his bountiful goods was called a fool. He neglected to prepare his soul for eternity.

Some of the Mennonite communities in Russia became very wealthy and lifted themselves above the common people. Too much material wealth often impoverishes men spiritually. In an affluent, materialistic society, are we diligent in laying up treasures in heaven? Are we careful to teach our children that true riches are found in a humble walk with Christ?

"If the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through" Luke 12:39. At no time can we afford to lower our guard in keeping the home a safe sanctuary from the evils of the world. Christian nurture takes time and effort, but the rewards are eternal. Faithfully practicing family devotions is of great value in safeguarding and strengthening a Christian home. Spending time with a converted child in spiritual conflict is a good investment. Prayerfully pausing to regain a right spirit before moving into discipline is much more effective than reacting in anger and frustration.

Retiring one-half hour earlier and arising early enough to read and pray brings direction and strength for the day. A frustrating day is often related to a failure to feed on the Word and not taking time to pray before facing the demands of the day.

The quality of the literature offered by secular publishers reflects the downward spiral of the moral fiber of our nation. Keeping ourselves unspotted from the world in what we read is imperative.

Giving an honest day's work for a day's wage should always be a Christian's goal. To be a man-pleaser is to put on a show of industry in the presence of an employer while shirking duty at other times. A true Christian should have work ethics that will make him or her a desirable employee. Being habitually late for appointments and meetings is a fruit of slothfulness, it is inconsiderate of others, and infringes upon the principle of honesty. We should practice being on time.

A growing attitude of unconcern is evident in the world toward personal debts. Blame is shifted to the lending agency for making foolish loans. Thus the lender is deserving of delinquent or neglected repayment. The Lord's way is to "owe no man any thing" Romans 13:8. If we find it difficult to meet an obligation, we need to openly face our creditor and do the very best possible to honour our commitment. Ignoring a debt is dishonesty. "Waste not, want not" is an old saying with merit. Our throwaway society caters to irresponsibility and neglect. Frugal living is a godly virtue to be cultivated.

Diligent and considerate persons will not expect to be waited on, but will pick up after themselves and not leave disorder for others. Youth in the home should learn to help with the household work and thus make life easier for others.

Children should learn to care for toys and possessions; they should not leave them lie about to be driven or stumbled over or to be damaged by the elements. Habits acquired while young will influence a child the rest of his life. The old practice of youths with jobs turning over a goodly portion of their earnings to the parents for several years proved to be successful in teaching solid values. Having too much money too soon often results in

learning spendthrift ways and a life of financial indiscretion. "Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" Jeremiah 6:16.

The more I am willing to give, the more I can give.

He learned the blessing of applying himself "heartily, as to the Lord" Colossians 3:23.

It has been said that it is our availability rather than our ability that fits us for service in the kingdom.

May we always have a heart for willing and diligent service.



Redeeming the Time

*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom
Psalm 90:12*

In the beginning God created light and then divided light and darkness. That was the first day. Since then time has been measured. There was no way to record time before that, and after the earth is destroyed, measurement of time will cease also.

Every minute that is past is history and is gone forever. What we do right now is as important as realizing that this moment will never come again. How we redeem the time of this moment is going to determine where we will be when time is not measured anymore. Will it be heaven or hell?

Some things the Bible has to say about our use or perspective of time:

Proverbs 27:1 Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

²A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

³A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

⁴A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

⁵ A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

⁶ A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

⁷ A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

⁸ A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

⁹ What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?

¹⁰ I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.

¹¹ He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.

Ecclesiastes 3:17: I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.

Ecclesiastes 9:11-12: I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.¹² For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.

Romans 13:11 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

God created man with the power of choice, and through the Fall, man acquired a nature that tends toward evil. For man to be saved he must make a decision to serve God, and then he must put forth the effort to remain saved. To be lost takes no effort at all. Time is given to every man. How man redeems the time will determine if he will be saved or lost.

According to Ecclesiastes, time goes around and around and there is a time for everything. There is a time to be rich and a time to be poor. As long as man realizes that God has a plan for him and that God has the good of his soul in mind, he can be happy.

Man can be happy when he mourns because he can have the hope of Jesus in his heart. When a man is losing, being imprisoned, being hated, or having any number of atrocities committed against him, he can be happy in

spite of it all because of his lively hope of salvation.

Man tends to look at everyday existence more than at how he will spend eternity. Man wants to guard against adversity even if God may have planned some of that for him. Because many people do not trust in God, insurance companies have made millions of dollars. The concept that insurance provides security is false.

It is time to wake up and be concerned about our salvation because it is nearer than we think, Romans 13:11. Man continues to insure against disaster and has a hard time relating to the lily of the field, Matthew 6:28. Man often finds it hard to accept what God has planned for him. Peace of mind and rest for man's soul are as near as a prayer of complete surrender.

It may be later than you think. How have you redeemed the time in the recent past? We tend to think we have a lot of time. The fact is that we do not know if we have the next minute to live.

Time is a gift from God given to us to use as we please. We are responsible for the way we use it. The Bible has very much teaching on how we should use our time. Our lesson text tells us about all the things we can expect in life. God's plan is that time and chance happens to all men, and He uses this to help man to be saved. It is important to redeem the time for good, because the days are evil, Ephesians 5:16.

People claiming to be Christians have found a way to say it is acceptable to divorce and remarry. Man has found a way to justify himself in material pursuits far beyond his need. Man has found a way to break every one of the Ten Commandments and still claim to be Christian.

These are signs of the times. It is later than we think, Matthew 24:22. Though Solomon turned from serving God to idolatry, some of his writings are part of the Bible. It is a great advantage for us today to have the teachings of faithful forefathers to help us redeem the time. The final message from Solomon recorded in the Bible was an exhortation to fear God. That is an important thing for man to remember today.

Youth are tempted to experiment with a lot of the things the world has to offer. It is a blessing when youth realize that time is a gift from God and

what they do with that time will affect their whole life. Many older people would give a lot to be able to live their younger days over. It is impossible to do this, so while you are young, make it your determination to live for God all the time.

Man needs to be moderate in all things. God instructed that man should work six days and rest on the seventh (Exodus 20:9). Man tends to want more than it takes to supply his own needs. He ends up putting much of his time into gathering in. God can see all this and He knows all of the motives of man's heart.

How long has it been since you have spent some time for the Lord other than Sunday? Have you taken time to help your spouse? Have you had time to visit with someone about the Lord? Have you had time to go on a tract tour? Have you had time for your children? Do you read to them? Have you walked down the toy aisles with your children? Do you take time to discipline them? Do you take the time to teach them table manners, to care for others, and how to work? Do you take time to love your family?

Colossians 4:5 states that we should "walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." Sincere witnessing and upholding the truth to those we meet can make a significant difference in their lives as well as in ours. Are we willing to obey the Holy Spirit's promptings to help some soul find salvation? Are we willing to censor our speech and actions so they are pleasing to the Lord and He can use our lives to draw others who are seeking to fill the longing in their heart?

Let us be ready to spend time freely helping others find the lively hope in Christ that we enjoy in our hearts!

O Lord whatever comes keep me from getting sour.



Works That Cannot Be Hid

The idea expressed in the above title appears in a divinely inspired letter written by the aged apostle Paul and addressed to Timothy.

How was this young, mild-mannered, physically ailing church overseer to carry out his responsibilities? This is the subject being treated in 1 Timothy 5:17–25, the portion of the letter wherein these not-to-be-hidden works are alluded to.

Timothy is to make sure that the elders are properly honored (verse 17), properly supported (verse 18), and not improperly accused (verse 19). With absolute impartiality (verse 21), he is to aim at keeping a sin-free church (verse 20). And, in the work of ordaining men for leadership (verse 22), he is to proceed in a careful, unhurried manner. This last concern is the thing most likely in view in the first clause of verse 22, “Lay hands suddenly on no man.” Make it a rule to not ordain anyone too quickly. Allow yourself and others sufficient time to make a fair evaluation of the man’s integrity.

The second clause, “Neither be partaker of other men’s sins,” is probably related to the first clause. If Timothy, as an overseer, acts too quickly in this respect, and ordains men unfit for office, he is thereby rendered partly responsible for the wrongs which those men commit. The third clause, “Keep thyself pure,” would apply to this and every other form of defilement.

A more personal matter is addressed in verse 23, namely, Timothy’s health. As a remedy for some sort of ailment known to Paul, he counsels Timothy to use “a little wine.” What Paul had in view was likely the widely used, unfermented juice that nevertheless still carried the label wine.

The two remaining verses, 24 and 25, form the unit in which the subject to this article appears. The writer’s line of thought seems to be returning to the already-introduced subject of ascertaining the fitness of men for church leadership roles. The underlying principle to be observed by Timothy is the rule that Jesus enjoined upon His followers: “Ye shall know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:16).

First, in verse 24 Paul is led to write about committed sins apparently those sins that would render a man unfit to fill a church office. Then, in verse 25, he moves to the positive side and writes about the good works

that one would hope to find in a man before he would be chosen for this sort of responsibility.

Looking closer, one discovers that each of these two categories is in turn broken down into two smaller categories. The sins consist of two kinds — those that are obvious and those that are not so obvious. The good works likewise consist of two kinds — those that are manifest and those that are not so manifest. The reader will note that this second category of works is introduced by a modifying clause, namely, “they that are otherwise.” This does not mean works that are otherwise than good, but rather works that are otherwise than manifest.

The conclusion of the matter is that on the one hand some men are immediately eliminated by their obvious sins. On this basis, they are thus prejudged as unfit for any leadership role. In the case of other men, if you proceed with caution and do not act hastily, they too will be shown to be unfit. Their faults and sins which for a while remained hidden will eventually become manifest.

On the positive side, and this is our point of special interest, it will work the same way. Generally, the good works that witness to the fitness of a man for office will be manifest to all rather quickly. But again, there are exceptions to the general pattern. The good works of some are less obvious and not so well-known. However, these too will come to be recognized eventually. And for this reason also Timothy is to act wisely by allowing time for this to happen so that these equally qualified men do not get overlooked.

For the church, and especially for her leaders, this portion of Scripture is very reassuring. Here are workable guidelines by which to administer discipline and choose leaders. By this means, God can work through fallible men to supply leadership for His people. And, for individual Christians, there is in verse 25 this golden nugget: “Good works . . . cannot be hid.” Do you feel as though you are buried in obscurity? Are you making sacrifices that appear to be unnoticed? Are you performing deeds of kindness that seemingly are being taken for granted? Be assured, on the basis of this God-declared fact, that your situation is not altogether as it may appear to be. God has so structured life that good works of the kind you are performing cannot be permanently hid. More than you realize, you are being observed, and among your observers is One who sees it all. In His appointed time, He who so easily found David can find you too.

The final proof that “good works . . . cannot be hid” will appear in that future day when many once-obscure saints will hear from their Lord these surprising words: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40).

Merle Ruth Eastern Mennonite Testimony, Vol. XXX; February 1998



HERESY AND ITS EFFECTS

In His great love and wisdom, God has graciously provided direction and instructions for Christian living and for the propagation of the church and the faith. He has also given direction for the preservation of the purity of the church. Even though we are living in deceptive and perilous times, He has promised that even the gates of hell shall not destroy the church.

In 1 Timothy 4:1-2, we find these words, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron." And in 2 Peter 2:1-2, we find these warnings: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."

In Matthew 18:15-17, Jesus gives clear instructions how to help our brother in the event that he has trespassed against us. It is a very beautiful and yet humble way to help one another. Would to God that we would be more active in this area and thereby avoid more shipwrecks of faith! The Scriptures, likewise, give us direction in dealing with more serious, or death, sins. These need to be judged and dealt with more promptly. May God give us wisdom to move in a timely manner so as to keep the church pure and above reproach. May it never be as spoken in Ecclesiastes 8:11, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

There is another evil that the church has been troubled with from the very beginning. We see it yet today, and it is a very subtle work of the enemy. That is heresy. Webster defines heresy as "adherence to a religious opinion

contrary to church dogma." The Scriptures tell us that heresy is a result of subversion (perverting or corrupting by an undermining of morals, allegiance, or faith).

In Paul's writings to Titus, we find direction on how to deal with this evil. We read in Titus 3:9-11, "But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they gave any instructions to rulers. The state churches tortured and killed thousands of Christians, because they would not accept their heresy. They really thought they were doing God's will. It really behoves a Christian to not bring harsh judgments but to just present Scriptures for consideration.

In Jude 3, we read, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." On Pentecost that faith was delivered unto the saints. That day "they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). The young church was "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" Ephesians 2:20 Following the day of Pentecost the church had all things common (Acts 2:44), so their connection with one another was a lot more complete than ours today. All points considered, I fear we are not closely enough connected, instead of being too closely knit, as some say we are.

Jesus said, "By their fruit ye shall know them." Teaching the old ground and foundation is not a false teaching. It is what Christ and the apostles taught, and their teaching was right. I wasn't at the last conference, but I understand there was a lot of concern. May we all take these concerns seriously and search our hearts to see where we have drifted, lest the Lord remove the candlestick from us.

We must take the Scripture seriously. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" Matthew 6:19-20 "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins" 1 Peter 4:8 "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" James 4:6

Bro. Laurence

The Wisdom of the Gospel

The gospel is the sum of wisdom; a collection of knowledge; a treasure-house of truth; and a disclosure of mysterious secrets. In it we see how justice and mercy may be associated; here we see unalterable law entirely satisfied, and sovereign love carrying away the sinner in triumph.

Our meditation on it broadens the mind; and as it opens to our soul in successive flashes of glory, we stand astonished at the profound wisdom manifest in it.

Yes, dear friends! if you seek wisdom, you will see it displayed in all its greatness; not in the firmness of the earth's foundations—not in the measured march of the clouds of the sky, nor in the perpetual motions of the waves of the sea; not in the vegetation with all its intricate forms of beauty, nor in the animal with its marvellous tissue of nerve, and vein, and sinew; nor even in man, that last and loftiest work of the Creator.

But turn aside and see this great sight! – an incarnate God upon the cross; a substitute atoning for mortal's guilt; a sacrifice satisfying the vengeance of Heaven, and delivering the rebellious sinner.

Here is essential wisdom; enthroned, crowned, and glorified. Admire, you men of the earth, if you are not blind; and you who glory in your learning bow your heads in reverence, and admit that all your skill could not have devised a gospel that is one so just to God, so safe to man

From Grace Gems by C S Spurgeon



Why Not Discuss the Scriptures?

Spiritually minded people are attentive to scriptural teaching and preaching and they enjoy spiritual discussions it is not something that they try to steer away from but they enjoy those kinds of discussions.

You know it hardly seems right that people who have an interest in spiritual things that they keep quiet about them or become uncomfortable when discussing these things.

K Dyck – Being Spiritually Minded

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