

# 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

**From The Editor's Desk.**

Greetings in Christ Jesus name to those who acknowledge Him as Lord of Lord's and King of Kings.

Reading in the Complete Writings of Menno Simon recently I was blessed to read a few comments on Saved by Grace and pray that in sharing it with you in a condensed form it may be a blessing to you also.

“We do not believe nor teach that we are to be saved by our merits and works as the envious assert without truth. We are to be saved solely by grace through Christ Jesus.

*By grace* the human race was created through Christ Jesus when as yet it was not

*By grace* it was again accepted through Christ when it was lost.

*By grace* Christ were sent to us of the Father. John 3:34.

*By grace* He has sought the lost sheep, taught repentance and remission of sins, and died for us when we were yet ungodly and enemies.

*By grace* it is given to us to believe.

*By grace* the Holy Ghost was given us in the name of Jesus. John 14:16.

In short, by grace eternal life is given us through Christ Jesus

We cannot obtain salvation, grace, reconciliation, nor peace of the Father otherwise then through Christ Jesus. As He himself says, No man cometh unto Father but by Me.

All those who disregard this preached grace and do not accept Christ Jesus by faith; who read His holy Word, will, commandment, and ordinances; who hate and persecute; who wilfully live according to their lusts, it will avail them nothing before the Lord to boast of their faith, being a new creature, Christ's grace, death, and blood; for they do not believe.

Therefore they are children of death as the Scripture teaches, for they know not Christ in whom is life. As John says, This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and He that hath not the Son of God hath not life. 1 John 5:11-12”



A SPECIAL NOTE regarding “Christian Burial or Cremation?” is on Page 24.

**THE SINISTER TWILIGHT**

The title is taken from the book, *A Sinister Twilight, the Fall of Singapore*, by Noel Barber, published in 1968. It is the account of the British aristocracy's taking for granted that the island city-state of Singapore, with all its colonial glory, would be spared conquest in World War II. That false sense of security was their undoing and tragedy. History is thought provoking, but "we have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed" (2 Peter 1:19).

Jerusalem was in the twilight when Jesus beheld the city and wept over it (Luke 19:41). No one seemed to realize that a terrible night was soon to fall upon the land. Things were continuing as usual in many respects, but a great and calamitous change was at hand. The same would have been true in Noah's day. In both cases the cup of sin and spurning of God's grace was just about to spill over the edge.

The parallels between Jerusalem and Noah's day and our time are many. They undeniably say that the world is in the twilight of time. Jesus said, "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all way; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:37-39). It should not be missed that Jesus described a setting where life was going on as usual while the world's destruction was nigh at hand.

Naturally speaking, twilight is a short period of time at the end of a day. The sun has set, but full night has not yet succeeded in throwing its thick shroud of darkness over the land. Often one slips into a pensive frame of mind. It may be a pleasant and beautiful time, but the reality is that the residue of light is fading away, and night is at hand. As the light dims, clear vision is lost, and things are not so easily identified.

Symbolically, twilight hints of the ending of the accustomed and presumed, and suggests eminent, foreboding change. In the case of Singapore, the die was cast while the soft and indulgent lifestyle of the privileged class continued despite the alarm of a few.

The Scriptures almost always presents the night and darkness as symbolizing the realm of evil or an inopportune time (John 9:4). This is what twilight foretells. But the children of God have a clean mandate in this setting. The Scriptures tell us, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of

the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation" (1 Thess. 5:5-8).

One ponders whether Western nations in general, and America in particular, may well be in the twilight. The Western world has had its day of glory and preeminence, but the decay of virtue and values is alarming. Does not the wise Christian sense a sinister twilight? In this context, certainly Paul's exhortation is timely: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15-16). It is not a time to be casual and unconcerned. Unclean spirits, after hiding themselves during the light of the day, rouse themselves at twilight in anticipation of the night (consider Rev. 20:7-9 and 2 Thess. 2: 3-7).

The burden of this article relates especially to how we are faring as it relates to fervency in the Spirit and in keeping the faith. Does a question from the ages penetrate our ears, "Watchman, what of the night?"

Watchman, what of the night" (Isaiah 21:11)? The falling night will and is challenging the vision of our real purpose and in keeping of the faith. The words of a song, "Watchmen, Awake!" (Margaret Penner Toews), capture a sense of urgency: "The night is upon us, the shadows are falling, A sinister stillness reigns in the gloom. O watchmen of Zion! Awake to your calling, Lest the enemy come to hasten our doom."

If in Israel's time God proved He was the God of the valleys as well as of the hills (1 Kings 20:23-30), He will also prove to be the God of the twilight. He is even now able to save to the uttermost (Hebrews 7:25), "and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24) if we meet the conditions. No one should despair. Light springs up for the individual, the congregation, and the Conference upon the movement toward obedience to the Lord's will.

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem..." (Zech. 14:6-8). *Adapted from an article in The Messenger of Truth.*

**MINISTER'S CORNER****Watch for the Lord's Return, Matthew 24.** (Part 1 of 2.)*From a message preached at Paces Creek Mennonite Church, KY.*

Our text verses are taken from Matthew 24.

I would just like to give the setting of these verses a bit before we read them. Turning back to chapter 23 we find that Jesus pronounced many woes upon the Pharisees for their hypocrisy and iniquity declaring that their house would become desolate. We have that at the conclusion of [Matthew 23:38](#): “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”

I understand the word “desolate” means abandoned, deserted become an utter waste. Right after saying this as they were departing Jesus disciples come to Him to show Him the buildings of the temple. Notice the first two verses chapter 24:

[Matthew 24:1-2](#)

“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. [2] And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

The disciples pointed out this massive great majestic building to Jesus as if Jesus never saw it before but we know full well that He did, He had been at this place before and He saw these buildings but apparently they wanted Jesus to consider how massive these great stones were that were used in the building of the temple. They wanted Him to notice how structurally sound this particular building actually was. Had Jesus perhaps forgotten this great stone structure when He said that some day their house would lay desolate, it would lay in ruins. They were thinking: “Surely not Lord.” But Jesus reaffirms that someday every stone of this building would be thrown down and scattered, not one stone left upon another. Then the disciples soberly asked when shall these things be? ([Matt.24:3](#)) and while you're at it they asked Him, what would be the sign of His coming and of the end of the world?

Perhaps they were thinking of how to prepare themselves for this, as we are this evening, we surely want to prepare for that Great Day of Judgment, the end of the world, the day we sometimes referred to as the last day.

That is the context of the verses we have before us this evening.

*Matthew 24:35-44*

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. [36] But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. [37] But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. [38] For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, [39] And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. [40] Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. [41] Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. (and here we have our text verses) [42] Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. [43] But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. [44] Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”

Jesus says here: Watch, watch therefore.

We are not going to be talking about this destruction of Jerusalem or the destruction of the temple except that just as surely as Jesus has said that every massive stone of this great temple would be thrown down, and it happened, so Christ will return again and heaven and earth will pass away, it will happen even as Jesus said.

The disciples asked for signs of Jesus coming, people today are asking for signs, and while Jesus said some signs will proceed and indicate His coming we think that the surest proof of His coming is that He said: “I am coming again.” Look at the concluding words of verse 44: The Son of man cometh.

How do we know that Christ will come again? Because He said He will come again, that is fact.

We can turn to [2 Peter 3](#) where it says that in the last days there are going to be scoffers. There will be and are people who laugh and mock at the idea of Christ coming back and of there being an end of the world, we find

people doing that today. They walk after their own lusts just like Peter said they would, they are not godly, they do not walk with Christ, they don't love God, they love themselves and they live for themselves and they pursue gratifying their lusts and they laugh saying: "What about this idea of Christ coming, there being a judgment, it is not happening, everything continues as it did for millions of years!" This they tell us and leave the connotation that the world is going to last for a long time yet.

But Peter says that they are ignorant of two things and one of the things that they are ignorant of is what happened in Noah's day. Jesus makes reference to that here in the verses that we read [Matthew.24:33-38](#) and Peter restates it he says: They are ignorant of the flood that occurred in Noah's day.

For years by the word of God there was a balance of water in the earth just the right amount to sustain life as the earth was in the water and out of the water, but in Noah's day by the word of the Lord there was a devastating flood, things did not continue as they did in the beginning, the earth was overflowed with water and the earth perished. The earth did not and will not continue as it always did.

The second thing that the scoffers are ignorant of is God's perspective of time and God's mercy that the Great Judgment hasn't taken place yet. A hundred years is a long time from our perspective, something doesn't happen for a hundred years people will say: "It never will happen." Some people think if something doesn't happen in five minutes it won't happen, we have that perspective of life sometimes. But a thousand years Peter says is only like one day to God, [2 Peter 3](#). God doesn't have the perspective of time like we do. Just because God has suffered or allowed the earth to exist for a few thousand years doesn't prove that it will always be and that there will never be a judgment.

Just consider that! We are alive today, we have the opportunity to be saved and get ready for the

Judgment, prepare to meet thy God! God wants us to be saved.

Here in [Matthew 25](#) Jesus assures us that He will come and He says that I will likely come when you are not expecting me. I will come when you are

thinking I won't come, in fact I will likely come in the very hour that you are thinking I will not come. Jesus knew something about human nature didn't He? Yes Jesus knew about human nature, He understands how we put things off and we think things won't happen.

Did you ever wake up in the morning with plans for the day swimming around in your head, you had many things that you want to do and you feel energetic and you think you are going to get them all done today and so you hurry into your day hoping to accomplish them all. Maybe in the back to your mind you are thinking about Christ coming but maybe you push that aside and you are thinking surely Christ won't come today? We are more likely to think Christ won't come today when our plans are not very noble and we hope that Christ will not come today, or at least not right now. We assume that Christ won't come today when we are putting off something important, some decision that we know we should be making and we procrastinate and we put it off saying: I know I should do this and I will do at some time but not now. Doing this are we assuming that Christ won't come for a while yet if there is something that we know we should do before He comes.

None of us to be known as a scoffer, we don't want that reputation, we are not scoffers we are believers. How believing are we? Maybe we don't openly scoff with words but yet we think like scoffers think that Christ will not come today, He will not come for a while yet. Whereas Christ says we should be prepared to expect Him any day, be prepared for Him.

Then He goes on to say if the home owner knows that at 11 o'clock tonight the thief will come to ransack his house we can be sure that he will be sitting up, he will be ready, he will be at home, he will have the lights on and he will be dressed and he will be prepared to meet the thief at the door. He doesn't want nor will he permit his house to be broken up. ([Matt 24:43](#)) But since the home owner doesn't know when the thief will come many homeowners are troubled and worried and install security systems, they buy insurances and do many things to protect themselves, they want to be ready for that thief when he comes.

Now if people are so concerned about the thief taking a few dollars from them why aren't they concerned about the Lord coming who has the power to cast the soul into hell?

Jesus says in Luke 12 verses four and five

[Luke 12:4-5](#) “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.” Murder is the worst thing that can happen to you but then he goes on to say:

Verse “[5] But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.”

We are to fear him because hell is torment forever, it is not just a few dollars we loose. We want to be prepared for Jesus coming.

Backing up to verses [Matthew 24: 36-39](#) again Jesus says that no one knows the day or the hour when He returns to judge the world, even the angels don't know this only God the Father Himself. So we want to be prepared. To some that last day will be a day of rejoicing. When the Saints meet Christ their Saviour face-to-face that will be a time of rejoicing and we anticipate that time and in anticipating that time the Saints are saying: “Lord come quickly.” That is quite the opposite of saying the Lord won't come for a long time yet, for thousands or millions of years yet, that is not words of the Saints but rather being Saints anticipating our Lord's return we say: Even so Lord come quickly. ([Revelation 22:20](#))

But for many people that last day will be hell and torment and it is for that reason that Jesus said watch, so that that it will not catch us unprepared, unaware and unprepared to meet Jesus.

Now there is something interesting to me here in [verse 39](#) it says that in Noah's day they knew not until the flood came. What didn't they know? I would like to think about that a little bit, they knew not until the flood came and took them all away. Didn't they know that a storm of judgment was brewing, that judgment was coming? Didn't they know that the flood waters were imminent upon them? Well maybe they didn't know but we think they could have known, Noah was building an ark and that was something that no one before him ever did, that should have caught their attention that something was about to happen that hadn't happened before. Noah was doing some things and Noah was perhaps saying some things that should have made them aware of coming judgment, aware of a flood, but they were too involved. We understand that they were too involved in

eating and drinking, too involved in lust for living and marriage and divorce and remarriage, marrying and giving in marriage. I think it all has that idea that they were too involved, too busy in to hear Noah and to think about the implications of a flood. They knew not, they did not consider their end or death until the flood came and took them all away. ([Genesis 6](#))

What else didn't they know? It appears that they didn't know that their carnal lifestyle, their indulging, their gratifying fleshly appetites, their assuming their own pleasure and comforts, in assuming that these were most important they were not aware that that would bring God's judgment upon them. Didn't they know the difference between right and wrong, sin and righteousness and that God judges sin? Didn't they know? And then we think that they could have known because Peter says in [2 Peter 2:5](#): "Noah was a preacher of righteousness."

Now I'm not sure how much Noah said, we know that he was doing some things building an ark and apparently in that Peter says that he was a preacher of righteousness I think he was saying some things too, his manner of living declared some things and Noah apparently said some things, he was preaching righteousness through right living, a personal example of right living.

So they with Noah could have sought to find grace in the eyes of God but again they were too involved in their sinful lifestyles and pursuing sin and gratifying themselves to think about or to learn about grace until it was too late. They didn't know grace until the flood came and took them all away.

What else didn't they know? Well I think we can simply sum it up like this: They didn't know God, they forgot God, they didn't worship God, they didn't even think about God, God wasn't real to them. Instead of God in their mentality the human being was real, that is known today as humanism, that is true of many "ism's" Sometimes we have all these ism's and we ask ourselves what is all these ism's about? But ism's are finally about what is real. To a person who is engulfed in materialism to him material is real in his life. To those who are involved in to what we refer to as humanism they are, their God is the human being, the human being is real in their life.

What is real in our life? Well God should be real in our life, we want God to be real in our life.

What a sad commentary on so many people that they didn't know God until the flood came and took them all away and how many people today wont know God until they are taken away and they lift up their eyes in hell.

We want to know this evening that the Lord is coming, we want to be acquainted with God, to know God's grace and to know God for real in our life so that God's record doesn't state concerning us: He or she didn't know, they knew not; but it rather says: He or she knew God, they knew Jesus Christ, they were prepared for Christ's coming so that that Day of Judgment doesn't come and catch us unprepared.

*To be concluded in the August Issue.*



## SNAPSHOTS.

Brief excerpts from historical publications

### ANABAPTIST MENNONITE VIEW OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURE...

#### The Bible

**Anabaptists** joined Protestants in rejecting the authorities of popes and councils and elevating the Scriptures into the vacancy. But there were considerable differences between **Anabaptists** and Protestants and, indeed, among **Anabaptists** themselves, as to the nature and function of the Scriptures.

There is first of all the view expressed by the Swiss Brethren, by writers like Riedeman and Marpeck, and by the Dutch from Hoffman to Philips that the Scriptures are the Christian's final authority. While this sounds very Lutheran examination reveals that the **Anabaptist** understanding of scriptural authority understood the Scriptures to provide models both for Christian teaching as well as for church organization and order. It is this view, precisely, that we find in **Anabaptism**.

This explains why **Anabaptists** were more interested in the New Testament than in the Old. For them the Old Testament belonged primarily to

the Jewish people, while the New Testament contained the "doctrine of Christ and the apostles" as well as instructions for the basic structure and functioning of the church. These **Anabaptists** did not reject the Old Testament, but they subjected it to the interpretive principle of "the doctrine of Christ and the apostles." Anything that agreed with this principle was also the Word of God for the present; anything that disagreed was not.

The Scriptures, say these **Anabaptists**, are not the wine but the sign outside the inn which advertises the wine. One does not gain eternal life from simply believing the Scriptures, but rather by coming to faith like Abraham and Moses and Paul of whom the Scriptures tell us. And this process of justification happens as God works directly in the hearts of men.

The Scriptures are often referred to as the outer word and the voice of God in the soul as the inner word. Most **Anabaptists** acknowledged that the outer can lead to the inner. At the same time they made the point that if people could not read, how then could God work in them if the outer word were necessary to salvation. Thus the written Scriptures were clearly important, but not indispensable.

As time went on **Anabaptists** as well as others became more and more aware of the problems which arose wherever the Scriptures were regarded as the sole authority. Which of the many possible interpretations (*N.B. This is not referring to different translations as we have them today in 2009 but rather to a personal interpretation of any given passage.*) was the correct one and by which marks could one identify it? The established churches could simply enforce their interpretations without explaining. Among **Anabaptists** one could insist that one had the only valid interpretation and, if possible, excommunicate those who disagreed. But some writers were more perceptive and began to identify marks by which interpretations could be checked for accuracy. Bernhard Rothmann said quite simply that an interpretation is reliable if it leads to behaviour that conforms to Christ. If such behaviour is not there, Scripture has not been understood.

Their interrogators were frequently astonished at the wealth of biblical knowledge held even by uneducated **Anabaptists**. The Bible was, in fact, indispensable even for people like Denck and Hut. They were biblical people, but not "fundamentalists." They reflected on the function of the Bible but were not "liberals." They were most concerned, not with the intellectual questions, but with humble obedience to Jesus to whom the Scriptures testify.

**Hans Denck, ca. 1527.**

I value the Holy Scripture above all human treasures but not as high as the Word of God, which is living, powerful and eternal, and which is free and unencumbered by all of the elements of this world. For insofar as it is God himself it is spirit and no letter, written without pen and paper that it may never be expunged. Therefore also salvation cannot be tied to the Scriptures, however important and good they may be with respect to it. The cause is that it is not possible for the Scriptures to improve an evil heart even if it is highly learned. A pious heart, however, that is a heart in which there is a true spark of godly zeal, will be improved through all things.

Thus, the Holy Scriptures serve the believer for good and for salvation, but the unbeliever to damnation as indeed all things do.

**Hans Pfistermeyer ca 1534.**

The New Testament is more complete than the Old. The Old has been fulfilled and explained by Christ. What Christ has explained and helped us to understand, I will adhere to, since it is the will of His heavenly Father.

I accept the Old Testament whenever it points to Christ. However Christ came with a more exalted and perfect teaching. He showed His people a new covenant which they would need if their righteousness were to exceed that of the scribes and pharisees,

**"Bern Colloquy" ca 1538,**

Firstly, we acknowledge the law insofar as it agrees with the New Testament and is an announcement, witness, type or sign of Christ, and that it is useful for the faithful in strengthening their faith. To that extent we grant it validity, for Moses himself witnessed to the prophet whom God would raise up and whom we should hear. It is valid insofar as it illuminates and reveals Christ. We are also satisfied with the way it deals with judicial matters and the punishment of evil and have nothing to criticize. But we do not find that Christ established and commanded the punishment of the body even to death. Instead he instituted the Christian ban....

We confess that the Old Testament is a witness to Christ. Further we grant it validity wherever Christ has not suspended it and wherever it agrees with the New. We consider it right and good if it serves faith, love, and a good Christian life.

**Menno Simons, "Foundation," ca 1539, CWMS.**

We certainly hope no one of a rational mind will be so foolish a man as to deny that the whole Scriptures, both the Old and New Testament, were written for our instruction, admonition, and correction, and that they are the true scepter and rule by which the Lord's Kingdom, house, church, and congregation must be ruled and governed. Everything contrary to Scripture, therefore, whether it be in doctrines, beliefs, sacraments, worship, or life, should be measured by this infallible rule and demolished by this just and divine scepter, and destroyed without any respect of persons.

You say we are inexpert, unlearned and know not the Scriptures. I Reply: The Word is plain and needs no interpretation, namely, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself (Matthew 22:37, 39) Again, You shall give bread to the hungry and entertain the needy (Isaiah 58:7) If you live according to the flesh you shall die, for to be carnally minded is death. The avaricious, drunkards, and the proud shall not inherit the kingdom of God. God will condemn adulterers and fornicators. (Romans 8, 1 Cor. 6) and many like passages. All who do not understand such passages are more like irrational creatures than men, more like clods than Christians.

**Dirk Philips. Ca 1560.**

Moreover the Word of God is known in two ways, the law and the gospel. The law is the word of command, given by God through Moses on Mount Sinai with such terrible voices and storms, thunder and lightning (Ex. 19:16-18) that the children of Israel could not hear it, but said to Moses: "You speak with the Lord, but let not the Lord speak with us, lest we die" (Ex. 20:19). Even Moses himself was afraid and trembled (Heb. 12:19). This shows the sternness of the law, for it reminds us of sin and condemnation, because it demands from everyone perfect righteousness in the inner man (Rom: 13-15; Deut. 4:1-6; 6:1-3; Mt. 19:17-21), the holiness of perfect human nature, exalted understanding full of the true knowledge of God, as well as a holy, pure heart that is fervent in love to God.

Moreover the law condemns the internal uncleanness, that is the destruction and loss of the natural wisdom and knowledge of God and the righteousness and holiness which has been implanted in the heart (Ps. 51:12; Eph. 2:1). It condemns the wicked desires and tendencies that are contrary to the law of God. Whoever reads the law with unveiled face must be terri-

fied and humbled at God's wrath (Rom. 3:20; 7:7; 2 Cor. 3:16; Ex. 20:19; Heb. 12:10) just as was Israel and even Moses himself, who are given to us as examples.

The law of God is given, not that it might bring to man perfect righteousness, salvation and eternal life (for by the deeds of the law will no flesh be justified) (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:17), but that, by revealing sin it might teach man to fear God, to know and humble himself under the mighty hand of God, and thus be prepared with penitent heart to accept Jesus Christ the only Saviour and to seek for and hope for salvation by his grace and merit alone (1 Pet. 5:6; 12:6; Eph. 2:13; Acts 14:14, 15:3).

The law teaches the knowledge of sin and such knowledge brings the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of all wisdom (1 Cor. 13:11; Eccles 1:16; Prov. 1:7), and without which no man may be justified. The fear of the Lord produces a broken and contrite and humbled heart, which is acceptable to God (Ps. 51:19).

Therefore the law contributes to the new birth, in view of the fact that no one can be born again or made spiritually alive, nor can anyone believe the gospel, except he first sincerely repents, as the Lord Jesus Christ himself testifies. For He first taught the people repentance, and then faith, and so He also commanded His apostles to do (Math. 3:2; Luke 24:46).

The gospel is the word of grace. It is the joyful message of Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God, the only Redeemer and Saviour (1 Tim. 2:5; Tit. 1:15), who gave himself for us that we might be ransomed from the power of Satan, sin, and eternal death. He has made us children and heirs of our heavenly Father, to be a royal priesthood (Gal. 1:4; Heb. 2:15; Rom. 8:14; Eph. 1:5), a holy nation, a chosen people, and a possession of God in the Spirit (1 Pet. 2:9)....

This is the true gospel, the pure teaching of our God, full of grace and mercy, full of comfort, salvation and eternal life. It is given to us by God's grace without any merits of our own or the works of the law, for the sake of our only and precious Saviour Jesus Christ. He became subject to the law for our sakes, and became the fulfillment of the law to eternal salvation for all believers, if we accept it in true faith.

#### **Bernhard Rothmann, ca 1534.**

The divine, unquestionably Holy Scriptures which are called the Bible alone have the fame that they are needful and sufficient for teaching, re-

proof, correction, and for instruction in righteousness, for which purpose also almighty God has given them, in order that the man of God be without error and equipped for every good work..... We are minded, by the grace of God to hold to this, since God's actual will is sufficiently expressed in them. It is God's earnest command that we should not stray from them to the right nor the left in word and action. Christ himself points to the Scriptures that we should search them. Consequently we have nothing to do with what the ancient or modern scholars have written. We are not concerned about them but only with what we find in the same Holy Scriptures which is God's Word and will. To this we surrender ourselves by his grace with all necessary diligence.... For he who holds only to the Scriptures needs no other writings. Rather he will have enough to do with the Scriptures and he will be abundantly taught by them about God as long as he approaches them with the right understanding. Yes, you say, how shall I understand the Scriptures correctly? I must have someone's interpretation, for of myself I cannot grasp it .... Peter says: No prophecy is a matter of one's own interpretation. Each one must be taught, but not through the written interpretation of men in glosses or postils. (*Ed. Postils - marginal commentary: A note or commentary on a text in the margin*)

Rather God and his Spirit must be the master here. It may well be that sometimes I will consider the interpretation of man and grasp the understanding of the interpreter and then be able to speak about it in flowing words. However, since God's kingdom does not consist in words but in power, I will never achieve the power of the knowledge of God unless God's Spirit drives me with power, teaches me, and leads me into the Scriptures. As Christ says in John 16 [13]: When the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you into all truth ....

But if you wish to understand the Scriptures correctly, very well, for this we will give you good advice. The content of the whole Scripture is briefly summarized in this: Honour and fear God the almighty in Christ his Son. This is the beginning of all wisdom. And in the same breath, that as Christ was obedient to the Father and fulfilled his will, we too should fulfill his will with trembling and quaking. Whoever understands this and proves it by his deeds is not blind but has understood the whole Scriptures.

Now how men should honour and fear God and what his will is, is so clearly expressed in the Scriptures that no glosses or interpretations are necessary. The fear of God is truly called the beginning of wisdom, and it

is so in truth. For whoever fears God should not resist his words and not be faithless. Whoever believes comes to the right understanding. He will grasp God's will through faith and carry it out in deed.... Thus God has restored the Scriptures among us. In them his will is abundantly known to us and we will adhere to them alone. And if we, with constant diligence, earnestly do what we understand we will daily be taught further by God. To him be praise, honour, glory, and thanks for it to eternity. Amen.



## FREEDOM

In perfect submission I find perfect peace.  
A perfect submission is perfect release.

Though trials surround me, Afflictions wax bold,  
After God's great refinery I'm stable as gold.

The hotter the fire, the purer the gold;  
To God be all glory I'm safe in His fold.

Send fire, send trial; Oh, Lord, quicken me.  
Though bound with affliction In Jesus I'm free.

*Brother Tim K.*



*Genesis 2:7*

*And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground.*

*Ecclesiastes 3:20*

*All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.*

Choose you the place before you die where you prefer in death to lie,  
Or do at least let loved ones know that you abhor cremation so.

Thou shalt be buried, saith the Lord; what right have we to change God's  
Word?

"For dust thou art, to dust return". How can it mean that we should burn?

"Yes, in the grave that I digged for me", said Jacob, "let my burial be".  
And Joseph, "Take my bones from here, and bury me in land more dear".

God buried Moses, none knows where; Divine the choice and preference  
there.

And Jesus, he was buried too, then rose from death to life anew.

Has God of scientists much to learn? Why say they it is best to burn?  
Does not our God reserve the flame for those unworthy of Christ's name?

Say not, "I doubt God's power and skill". Is not our God omniscient still?  
As when three men walked from the fire, no smell of scorch on their attire.

It may be asked, "Those lost through war, how will they be accounted for?"  
We safely leave them in God's hands, His key unlocks, He understands.

No saint of God sincere and true is lost through what the wicked do.  
But thoughts and actions of our own, may these in harmony be shown.

Can we in Christ new saints baptize, or hope in him ourselves to rise,  
If types and symbols held most dear must by cremation disappear?

When Jesus comes may we be found alive, or buried in the ground.  
May we, approved, receive His smile. White raiment fire cannot defile.

*Author: Mary Bellamy*

BEARING THE IMAGE

"As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (I Cor. 15:48,49).

The dictionary definition of image is: a reproduction of someone or something, to mirror or reflect, to symbolize or typify.

To the world, "image is everything." Man is very self-conscious of his image. Great lengths are taken to portray himself in just the right way. The businessman portrays himself as well-to-do, on top of things, learned, and informed. The sports star's image is that of strength, agility, and perfect poise in his physical movements. Many of the younger generation are striving for the "I'm different than anyone else" image. Earrings, odd clothing, chains, and colored hair are all used to get that "different" look.

There are very few in this world who are not trying to portray a certain image about themselves. Whether they are cowboys, bikers, rock stars, common laborers, or housewives, there is something about man that wants others to see him in just the right way. The common denominator in all these areas is that man is bearing the image of self. The image of self takes on many forms. Like the chameleon (a lizard-like reptile that can adapt its coloration to that of its surroundings), it has the ability to change in order to meet its surroundings. The self-image is directly connected to our fallen nature and, ultimately, to the god of this world, Satan. It is very deceiving and causes men to sacrifice many things in order to maintain their image.

Even Christians are plagued with this desire to bear the self-image. We are in contact daily with the world, and its influences easily rub off on us if we are not on guard.

To the Christian, "image is everything" also. But it is important that the Christian bear the proper image. One of the songs in our hymnal goes like this, "More and more like Jesus, I would ever be; More and more like Jesus, My Savior who died for me." We, as Christians, are to bear the image of Christ and of those things that are heavenly.

Our common desire is to be more like Christ, not to be outstanding as individuals. We strive for singleness of heart and mind with Christ. Our verse above implies that a change has taken place in our lives. Once we bore the image of the earthy, but now we bear the image of the heavenly. How and when does this change take place?

Second Corinthians 3:18 reads, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." This takes place at conversion. The new birth brings about the experience of beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord. In that experience, the Spirit enters our lives and initiates a conforming, in part, to the image of the Lord.

We are then to grow in that experience. We continue to be conformed more and more to that image as the Spirit reveals areas in our lives that need consecration. And so we take on the Lord's likeness by degrees. In this sanctification, we forsake the image of self, being resolved to follow God no matter what! This is not a work that we do of ourselves, although we play a part in it. Notice that the above verse states that it is God, through the Spirit, who initiates the change in our lives.

Acts 3:16 says, "And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." Our faith in God's work on Calvary frees us from the self-image and gives us a new image with "perfect soundness." This change from the earthly image to the heavenly image would not be possible without the shed blood of Christ. Second Corinthians 5:19, says "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." This change does not take place because we deserve it nor because of our own righteousness. Therefore, we come with a deep sense of unworthiness. This feeling of unworthiness should continue with us throughout our Christian life.

Psalms 17 is David's prayer that he would bear God's likeness in all areas of his life and that the Lord would preserve him from his enemies and the world. His opening statement is that the Lord would "attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips." Sincerity in our Christian lives is ever so important if we are to bear Christ's image. To speak with feigned lips means that the image we are portraying is outward only. The inner man has not experienced that needed change. The inner and outer man being united in reverence toward God is sincerity.

Again, one of the hymnal songs says, "I need Thee every hour, Stay Thou near by; Temptations lose their pow'r When Thou art nigh." Realizing our great need for the Lord to be our help and stay at every moment will cause us to seek for Him with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. Many

times we tend to put our trust in our talents and abilities instead of remembering from whence we came.

We are dealing with an enemy that has over six thousand years of experience in bringing men's souls down to hell. Why do we even consider whether we can stand on our own strength? To hide under the shadow of God's wing means to be placed completely under His protecting hand. We need the Lord daily, hourly, moment by moment. As the world rushes on, seeking its self-image, it is constantly striving for independence. The Christian, though, as he seeks the image of Christ, is constantly striving for dependence on the Lord.

The last verse of Psalm 17 is the crowning statement of this Psalm: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (v. 15). Proper spiritual vision allows us to behold the face of God. When we see Him, we will be changed into His likeness. This verse implies also that our will is given to the Lord. God created every man with a will. It is something that He will not dominate. It is a gift to man to use to voluntarily yield ourselves to Him. What greater gift can we bestow upon the Lord than voluntarily giving back to Him the control of our lives? Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). We can see here that Paul's will was not his own anymore. He had yielded it to the Lord so that God's will and his were one. "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (I Cor. 6:17).

We can look to Christ for our perfect example when thinking of bearing God's image. Let's look at some of His attributes. Sometimes perfect means full grown or complete. Was Christ not perfect (full grown, complete) in all that He did? Most certainly, we say, yes. Because He was His Father's Son, He surrendered His will and followed obediently in simple abandonment. This is that perfection that we need to constantly strive for—to be in complete obedience to the Lord's will. This is what it means to bear His image.

When we are lost in Christ in complete abandonment, we begin to take on His image. As we continue in that state, we "bear" His image. This is where many of us face difficulty. Matthew 6:22, "The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Jesus had single, focused vision when it came to the will of the Fa-

ther. He knew His purpose for being here, and He kept His eye on the goal, although He knew it meant pain and suffering. Can we say from the bottom of our hearts that our first and most important goal is to be faithful to God's will in our lives? What if God would have a different plan than what our thinking is? Is it easy for us to lay down our plans and goals when they conflict with God's will for us? When the test comes, we find answers to these questions.

God's people are challenged with bearing the image of our Lord and Savior in these last days. The Bible speaks of this time as being perilous. Do we recognize it as such? There are many warnings in God's Word that exhort us to be awake, alert, on the watch, prayerful, sober, and circumspect in our walk. We have only one opportunity to make it to heaven. May we make every effort possible to bear the image of the Lord Jesus Christ and not in any way be satisfied until we awake with that image.

*Bro. David: From The Messenger of Truth. Used by permission.*



### SAY THANK YOU FOR THE CROSS

If we had it in our power  
 To create new worlds of beauty  
 Hills and valleys of a thousand royal hues,  
 If we gained the greatest riches from all corners of the earth  
 Ours to give away however we might choose,  
 If we wrote the most majestic  
 And the sweetest sounds of music  
 That would echo throughout all eternity,  
 Or could pen the words of genius that would turn the world around  
 And go on to change the course of history,  
 If we offered up our homes,  
 Our lands, and even those we love  
 As small payment, never thinking of our loss,  
 We could count it all as worthless,  
 For there's nothing we can give  
 To thank the Lord, our loving Saviour, for the cross.

*Author Unknown*

**A PLACE TO FILL – A GIFT TO USE.**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I have often been inspired by this topic of the body of Christ, along with I Corinthians 12:14-16: "For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?"

None of us would blame our ears for not being able to see or our hands for not being able to walk. Yet, do we sometimes tend to do that in the church, the spiritual body of Christ? We have our different gifts, but yet we are all one body.

Some have the gift of seeing when someone is in trouble and needs help. There may be nothing said, but it is visible to those with the gift of sight. Others have a gift of hearing when someone is facing a difficulty or struggle. It may not be said in so many words, but those with the gift of hearing will pick up on the tone of voice or attitude. Do those who have the gift of sight sometimes look at the ones with the hearing and say, "How can they not see?" Or those with the hearing, "How can they not hear?" Some have the gift of feeling what others are going through without actually having gone through it themselves. And yet, with all our different gifts, we are all one body.

We all have different places to fill, and we all work together. Some might have a more noticeable place to fill than others, but that doesn't necessarily say it is the better job or place. In fact, the same chapter of 1 Corinthians, verse 23, reads, "And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour." So let's not be discontent with what we think is an insignificant place in the body of Christ. Those who are the least noticed are the more honorable.

I have been impressed with Ephesians 2:21: "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord." I remember the evening I was baptized that the minister preached on this verse. I was so happy to be a part of this building that is fitly framed together. It reminds me of the building blocks we had at home that snapped together to build almost any kind of structure you wanted. One block by itself was basically useless. But when you put it together with other blocks, you had a solid structure that was hard to break apart. Are we glad to be a part of this

solid structure?

Are we willing to be built together with our brothers and sisters for a habitation of God through the Spirit? Or do we find ourselves wanting to extricate ourselves from the structure and step back and criticize the body of Christ?

Remember that we all are part of the body of Christ. We all need to fill our places and be a part of that solid structure that is fitly framed together. Just like the building blocks, we by ourselves cannot do much. But when we are built together with the other blocks we help to form a solid structure that is hard to break apart.

I am glad to be a member of the body of Christ.

*Sister Sara.*



*SPECIAL NOTE.*

Recently the question of Burial or Cremation was raised and some thoughts in the form of a piece of prose by one Mary Bellamy came to our attention during some research on this subject. The prose is published in this issue and if any reader would like the information we have available on a “Christian Perspective Regarding Burial or Cremation” please feel free to contact us and request same.



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