

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

Vol. 7 No. 7 - JULY 2010



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.

Do believing and conviction go together?
Do my convictions shape my beliefs?
Does what I believe shape my conviction?
Does my belief express itself in my conviction?
Which comes first, belief or conviction?

Many profess to have strong convictions about something but are not always able to back it up with a satisfactory explanation as to how they arrived at their conviction, their belief in the matter is unformulated and easily swayed by the persuasive words of others and thus are liable to change their conviction.

As Christians are our convictions based on the unchanging Word of God, is our belief of such a standard and strength that it cannot be shaken and hence our convictions are likewise rock solid and backed by Scripture?

Is my faith and your faith built on the one and only Rock, Jesus Christ? Or is it built on the shaky ground of human thought and carnality?

This month there are excerpts from messages and the writings of godly men who have thought upon this subject of belief and convictions and how they bring us to the place where our anchor is our faith in the atoning work of Christ at Calvary and the Church of which He is the head and which is truly our Ark of Safety in a wicked and self destructing world.

What you believe does matter! Our convictions are important! What you believe forms your convictions and will be expressed in your journey through life. Depending on what you believe and the outworking of that it will bring you to one of the two destinations Scripture so plainly outline – heaven or hell.

It truly is your choice so choose wisely for once you arrive at your destination there is no return. So make your journey worthwhile and your destination the New Jerusalem the city of our God where He awaits His bride the Church and those belong to it.

Take time someday soon and meditate upon the words of that well known hymn “The Solid Rock” and it will give you much direction as to whom and what our beliefs and convictions should be set upon. *JvL.*

MINISTER'S CORNER.***Believe.***

You may open your Bibles to the Book of John firstly perhaps to one of the key verses of this book. This morning I would like to think for just a few moments about the word "believe" It is a very primary theme in the Book of John and we are given a perspective to John's writings within his gospel where the Apostle explains how he decided what to write and what he did not write.

He says in John 20:31: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

Back in John 1:12 we notice this thought of believing is introduced in this verse: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

The words "received" and "believe" are synonymous in that verse.

Now let's go to chapters 3, it is the familiar story of Nicodemus, I remembered Nicodemus though he was a spiritual man, one that was much more ready to exercise his belief or his knowledge than many of the Pharisees were. Jesus had explained some things to Nicodemus that Nicodemus was puzzled by. In verse 9 Nicodemus exclaimed: How can these things be? (John 3:9)

There are some things about "believe" that are hard to explain, there are some things that are beliefs that don't necessarily fit into simple logic. There are some things that are hardly even contained in the thought of knowledge, there are things that we believe that we recite but we can hardly claim that even as knowledge. Let's begin reading at verse 11 and notice the emphasises to believe:

John 3:11-18

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. ¹²If I have told you earthly things, and ye **believe** not, how shall ye **believe**, if I tell you of heavenly things? ¹³And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

¹⁴And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: ¹⁵That whosoever **believeth** in him should not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever **believeth** in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

¹⁸He that **believeth** on him is not condemned: but he that **believeth** not is condemned already, because he hath not **believed** in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

And verse 36: “He that **believeth** on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that **believeth** not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

The story is told of a missionary in one of the regions of Africa as he was endeavoring to translate the gospel of John into the native title, he had not discovered a word within the native vocabulary that contained the thought of the word "believe" and he had struggled to find one and not finding any he went on leaving that spot blank in the verses as he was translating, but you can imagine that was a wee bit of an unsatisfactory approach when the Book of John so focuses on believing and belief.

Then one day there was a messenger who had come running into the village from a neighboring village through the jungle, it was a very difficult and strenuous task, when the runner reached the centre of the village he had, because he was so exhausted, flung himself into a hammock that was strung there between two trees and then he said a word that the missionary did not understand, did not know what it meant so he asked one of the bystanders: "What did he say, what did he mean?"

And the person explained that the runner was saying that all he can do right now is to rest all his weight on this hammock. He was resting all his weight on it was the English translation that he was given and that appealed to the missionary that that is one of the meanings of the words "believe" Resting our weight on God's Word.

I think there is truth in that as we think about our lesson, as we think about what Jesus was explaining to Nicodemus, as we think about living a Christian life today. Knowledge and believe are not true synonyms because people can know and not rest their weight on what they know, but as we

"believe" as Jesus said here, as we believe in Him, as we entrust our entire present, past and future then we are saved, we shall not perish, He that believeth on Him is not condemned.

It is not enough to have knowledge, it is not enough to give a mental assent but there must be a proactive response otherwise we will have a dead faith, James says faith without works is dead. (James 2:20, 26)

This morning do we count it a privilege to have the opportunities that helps us believe, that helps us to respond with more than just words. Can we sense the importance of endeavoring to rest all our weight, so that our entire scope of life leans on this one fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He loved the world so much that He came to give His life for our salvation.

May the Lord bless our knowledge and further our belief in His revealed Word. May the Lord help us to believe with all of our weight on His promises and order our lives according to His direction.



The Importance of Personal Conviction

A conviction is a strong belief and purpose of heart, or the state of being convinced, relating to moral issues. A conviction becomes personal when truth involving an issue grips one's heart and we can no longer be non-committed or indifferent. Personal conviction does not depend on another for support, but can stand alone as did Daniel and Joseph.

The basis for conviction must ever be embodied in the truth of the Word. It is possible to possess convictions which have no Scriptural foundation. Many of the cults of today have strong convictions for which they willingly give their lives. Saul of Tarsus had convictions which issued into persecution for the early Christians. He thought he was doing God a service for he said, "I have lived in all good conscience before God unto this day" (Acts 23:1). He also said, "I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Timothy 1:13). His conscience was not enlightened. But after the Damascus road experience, he was directed by a conscience under the control of Christ.

Personal convictions are important because we will be tested. “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened unto you” (1 Peter 4:12). Life is a proving ground, and it is as the saying goes, “If we don’t stand for something, we will fall for anything.” The enemy of our souls uses many tactics to intimidate and to break down resistance. Youth have testings unique to their sphere of life. The world is alluring; the flesh is easily attracted; society is saying “be someone, make for yourself a name.” Parents are tested by economic demands. The pressure is on to succumb to a substandard of holiness of life and doctrine. In the heat of fiery trials, it is personal conviction that cries from within, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”

Personal convictions are a restraint in an immoral society. The professing church has lost its abhorrence of immorality. Sin no longer seems exceedingly sinful. The voice of truth is almost silent, therefore society has little restraint. The torch of holiness of life is growing dim. We must be challenged to let our light so shine before men that they may *see* (be convicted) our good works (result of conviction) and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

As time draws near to a close, the moral fibre of the world is eroding (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Jesus’ prayer on behalf of the church was not that the Father would take them out of the world, but that He would keep them from the evil. Holy Spirit enlightened convictions are essential to maintain the Scriptural lines of separation. It was personal conviction that enabled Joseph to live a godly life, and to stand alone in the midst of immorality and great temptation.

Personal convictions stem the tide of apostasy. Unless we as God’s people possess and propagate Bible-based convictions, our history will be a repeat of the past. The flood waters of apostasy are running rampant and gaining momentum. The church can be likened to a polder (a piece of land reclaimed from the sea, that was once useless, but is now productive). The dikes surrounding the polder may be likened to convictions. It is said, “They who live in polders must tend dikes.” The waters are ever beating upon the dikes and as they gain momentum, the pressure increases. Personal convictions add to the strength of the dikes. The question is not, “Can we keep the water out?” but “Will we keep the waters out?”

Personal convictions are a stabilizing force in our lives. There are many voices and winds of doctrine challenging the authority and relevancy of the Scriptures. Question marks are being put where God placed periods. Where the Scriptures say, “God said”, man is saying, “Yea, hath God said?” Church leaders and parents, let us be rooted and grounded upon the solid rock Jesus Christ. May our testimony be, “God said it. I believe it. That settles it.” As sin comes in like a flood, we must lift high the banner of truth and not be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. Deception and fallacy must be refuted by Holy Ghost preaching and teaching. This will issue into the development and strengthening of personal convictions and contribute to the stability of our homes and churches. May our testimony be as Apostle Paul’s “For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded” (2 Timothy 1:12) — that is conviction.

Personal convictions are a contribution to group conviction. Convictions can be compared to a rope with each fibre contributing to its support and strength. More fibres add more strength. However, a thick rope made of poor quality fibres will break under test, also a rope with deteriorated fibres is of little value. The future of the church does depend on each member. We are either contributing to its strength or its deterioration. The uniting of personal conviction in a church group constitutes a mighty force which the gates of hell (powers of evil) cannot overcome.

In a spiritual fellowship, personal convictions should always complement group convictions. The Spirit of Christ is ever united. There may be a degree of variation in conviction on issues on which the church has not spoken. However, Scriptural conviction will never be in competition with a spiritual brotherhood.

Personal convictions are important because of retributive judgement. Everyone will be judged “according to the deeds done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10). That which we do or leave undone is greatly influenced by our conscience. When faced with a decision or temptation, our conscience brings its influence to bear upon our will. An active, properly educated conscience is a loud voice and mighty force, helping us to choose rightly. A weak (1 Corinthians 8:9), defiled (Titus 1:15), seared (I Timothy 4:2), conscience is of little value and easily quieted to the victory of satanic forces leading men to destruction. Our eternal destination as well as that of our family — that of our people and posterity — is affected by our choices.

May our testimony ring with the apostle's when he said, "Herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men (Acts 24:16).

Brother Mervin E. Martin, The Eastern Mennonite Testimony, June, 1988



A GARDEN EASTWARD IN EDEN: OUR HOMES

"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed" Genesis 2:8.

I have been impressed lately with the thought of our homes being as a garden. In the beginning, God saw fit to place in Eden a beautiful garden, filled with trees that were pleasant to the sight and good for food. He placed the newly created man in the garden and told him to dress and keep it.

That garden was a lovely place. It was a place of quietness and rest until the serpent came one day and, through temptation and the subsequent sin, destroyed forever the innocence and loveliness thereof. Today, also, we see too many homes, even among our circles, that are being undermined and destroyed by allowing sin. Thus their beauty and sacredness is marred and scarred, sometimes forever, never reaching the heights of happiness that God in His love has planned for them. God's people must catch a vision of this garden eastward in Eden and put forth our utmost efforts to truly dress and keep it as God would desire.

Part of keeping the beauty of this garden is found in the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 6:6-7: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

These verses are still relevant for parents today in the gospel age. They place a great and serious responsibility upon us.

It speaks here of having the commandments in our hearts. For example, in order for us to teach our children purity, unselfish giving of themselves,

and kindness, these virtues and principles must first be in our hearts as parents. It is imperative that we take every chance our children give us to teach and train them. I have prayed for a greater vision in this area. We should take advantage of the times when they fail us or disobey, seizing the moment to reach in and touch their eternal souls.

With a busy schedule, this is difficult at times, but may we have a vision of the child's future. Dealing with that little disobedience today may bring forth great fruit in the future, making a difference five years from now, or perhaps even ten or fifteen. On the other hand, the "little" attitudes, disobedience, and even moods we allow today will also someday bring forth fruit, and it may very well be to our shame.

These verses also speak of "when thou liest down" and "when thou risest up." I have to think of the importance of family devotions and the togetherness we need as a family around what is called the "family altar." Those times together are very likely what children will remember and cherish when they are adults with homes of their own. These things take self-denial, taking the time once or twice a day whenever it works best, to read the Word of God, sing together, and pray. These are also good times to share and reflect upon the happenings of the day as well as teaching our little ones to pray. If devotions are performed in a hurried way out of duty, that also will send a message to our children.

Another verse that has become very impressive to me is Revelation 22:2, "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." I have often wondered what the last part of this verse meant, "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." As I meditated upon this, different thoughts came to me.

When we look at a large, healthy tree in early summer, we see many leaves. It makes me think of this tree of life, with its many leaves, as representing a limitless storehouse of remedies. Here is a limitless pharmacy, we could say, which God is willing to open to us if we will but ask Him. It is inevitable that trials, problems, and perplexities will come in our homes, especially when we think of child training, the years of adolescence, and young adulthood. But it seems that God has answers for us as we come to Him in humility, sometimes even with the child by our side, and beg Him for wisdom and direction. The "leaves" are there for our use if we but avail

ourselves of them.

As I further pondered this verse, I had to think of how those healing leaves could very well be our own children. Are we raising children that will be a "healing" to the nations, a blessing to mankind? Are we doing what we can in preparing our children to give themselves fully to any service or calling God would lead them to? The title of a book, *Raising Your Children for Christ*, (by Andrew Murray), holds food for thought.

We all appreciate a family whose children are well trained and mannered. These children have been taught to be kind, to speak politely, and to work. No training will be perfect, but where God has been the head and where His guidance has been sought—His healing leaves utilized—there will be a family that is truly a blessing. This family will be a true witness to a sick world lost in sin and evil, as well as being a witness to the lukewarm Christianity.

Now we come back to the garden. What does your garden look like? Is it a beautiful place of quietness and rest, a place where there is respect and love? Does each live for the other, and all together they live for God? Is it a place that sends forth a call to a dying world, inviting people to something higher? Someone once said, "I am not an old person with answers but a young person with questions." That is how I feel. For me these are serious questions, which I need to answer for myself. I know I have failed, and I will fail as a parent, but my prayer is that God will somehow fill in the gaps and help me.

May He help us to keep our garden free from weeds, free from sin, that our children can be leaves that are for the healing of the nations.

Brother Ben.

*It is not too late
to reach what God
desires for you.
Heaven!*

The Church - An Ark of Safety.

From a message given by Brother Carpenter

Flora Mennonite Church - 2009.

Concluding from the June Issue.

When is our church an Ark of Safety?

You will notice that I used the term a *church* rather than *the church*. When is a church and Ark of safety? I heard a man yesterday make the comment that, he was quoting someone else, he said that the church of Christ is infinitely divisible. I got the impression from the way that he had said it that whoever had made that statement was a little disappointed in that and I think that, I don't know the person who would have all had said it, but when we look at scenes on this earth I can understand why a person would come to that conclusion.

And so in order to find their way through this world realise that there are many options and many different churches, many different groups, claiming making various claims, some are saying that they are the only church, there aren't very many like that but there are some who are saying that we are the right people when and if you are serious about following the Lord you will come and join us.

Well we don't agree with that without trying to judge those who make that claim, we still had to evaluate what group of people we associate with, which simply we choose to become a part of and which assembly we choose to allow to influence us. I think that is something that we have to pay attention to that whenever we become a part, whenever we voluntarily become a part of a congregation, a group of believers, and Fellowship of believers, we are choosing whom we will allow to influence us and our children. I think it is important that we pay attention to wear that group is going, what kind of influence that will be in our lives and in the lives of our children.

So we raise this question. When is a church an Ark of safety?

And [Matthew 18](#) I think gives us a number of answers first of all in [verses 1 to 4](#) when each member is converted. In verse three Jesus said using the illustration of a little child: Verily I say unto you except you be converted

and become as little children you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Convert means to twist to turn quite around, that is what has to happen to us in order for us as a body of believers to be an Ark of safety. If the flesh is not crucified, if the will is not surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ what is going to happen in the assembly? One is going to happen? Well you know there is get to the conflicts, instead of blending together harmoniously there is going to be clashes, there's going to be conflicts if flesh is in control, if the spirit of God is not in control. Self-seeking pride is not a part of children, humility and teachableness is so much more the case.

I remember on one occasion witnessing a couple of children playing in one of the children said about something: That's blue. In the other one said: No it's not, it is green. Then the first one said: It is green. Just readily agreed with the second one and I thought about at different times that was the end of it. Have you ever seen that happen with adults? Where there is that ready an agreement? You know there is something in us, we probably have but not on that same level but in other areas we have seen it, but it takes a converted heart you know to have that humble teachable spirit of a child and to make the church and Ark of safety.

Verses 5 and 6, when is a church an Ark of safety? In the second place when members readily accept and love each other as God's workmanship. Whosoever shall receive one such a little child in my name receiveth me but whosoever shall offend one of those little ones that believeth me it would be better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and if he were drowned in the depths of the sea.

When members readily accept and love each other as God's workmanship.

This is quite a challenge for us mortals, and I speak from personal experience, this is quite a challenge to us. Jesus said the first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord with all our heart the second is like to it, love our neighbour as ourselves. Have you been convinced of the truth of that in your life in experiences that you have had as you observed your own responses to other people, have you been convinced of that as you observed others lives? Well if you are observant if you pay attention you will discover that is truth, that's just the way it is, these are the two greatest

commandment is of course the second one is modified in the new Testament, love one another as I have loved you. But this thing of accepting each other as God's workmanship can be quite a challenge for us because as I look at my brother, as I look at my sister I can see some things, maybe the things that stand out to me easily, are the things that I wish were different, the things that I think could be improved.

But then I believe we need to put some deliberate effort into looking at our brethren and sisters differently, instead of having the critical why that says this and that and the other thing ought to change. I know for myself that it takes some effort to look at the other side and what other things that I can appreciate in this brother, this sister, what other things that I can pattern after, how can I learn from his life, from her life? And I think that will be a very great help to us if we look at each other in that manner and we seek to learn from one another and so if there is something that isn't the way it ought to be how can I help to influence that in a gentle manner, right way?

A third answer to this question when is a church an Ark of safety is found in verse seven, when each member strives to avoid giving occasion for another to stumble. [Matthew 18:7](#).

Woe unto the world for offences for it must needs be that offences come but woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh.

An offence is an occasion of stumbling. Now I would understand these verses to be saying that everyone of us will offend others at some time, it must needs be that offences come but woe unto that man by whom that the offence cometh. I don't know if it is possible for in human to live without somewhere or other having his foot in another's way in a spiritual sense, and we ought to pray that the Lord would deliver us from that. We ought strife, when each member strives to avoid giving occasion for another to stumble, that should be our goal, whether it be a brother in the church or a neighbour, a stranger, what is the influence of my life? Is it helpful? Or have you ever thought about it maybe in travelling through a train station or through an airport you might see, have you ever thought about it that the person that you see there, there might be quite a few that which is never ever see again in your life than just that little bit of time when they observed your life, your face, your facial expressions or whatever it might be,

what do they think? What sticks with them, what is the impression left, that I leave for God or against God in that little bit of time?

And then in a greater way what is the influence upon my neighbour that sees me day after day after day, or the person that I work with? Is it the influence of godliness or my brother bringing him closer to the church, my brother in the church, my sister, what is the influence? Is my life two faced, do I say one thing and live another? Or is there consistency that make the words have a lot more meaning and truth that I speak. We all know how to speak truth, it is not so terribly difficult for us to speak truth that we are challenged more but putting it into practice.

Verses eight and nine, in the fourth place, the church is an Ark of safety when each member mortifies his own flesh.

Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee cut them off, if thine eye offend thee cut it out. He is saying deal hard with the flesh. I don't believe that Jesus is mean by this that the first thing we do is to go cut off our hand and pluck out our eyes in a literal sense, there are individuals who have done that because of these verses, but I believe that He is speaking about mortifying our flesh in a spiritual way that we crucified, put to death, mortify, and more is a place for dead bodies and mortify means to put to death, we are called to mortify our flesh. You know many, many areas in which we have opportunities that, many opportunities, many, many areas where we need to mortify our own flesh, we want our own way, our own will and maybe it is just at the home level, instead of helping out in the home we just like to sit down and take it easy and be served instead of serving, many different areas where our flesh needs to be mortified and this applies in the church as well.

The church is an Ark of safety when each member mortifies his own flesh.

Verses 10 to 14, when every soul is valued highly, Matthew 18 verses 10 to 14: Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; I believe it ought to be painful to us every time someone chooses to leave us, it ought to be painful to us, it should not give us joy. And in the midst of life's experiences we need to look at other souls, every brother, every sister, as an asset to the body of Christ, each one has a benefit to bring and it should be our desire to see each one prosper and grow in the Lord and to do what we

can to influence each other to that end. When every soul is valued highly that is when a church is an Ark of safety.

Verses 15 to 17, when each member takes personal responsibility for purity and for peace in the church

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

If he shall trespass against thee, if he does you something wrong go and talk to him about it, go and talk to her about it, this is what we mean when ever we practice feet washing, I am saying that I am willing to help you keep a clean walk, when I let you wash my feet I am saying I'm willing to let you help me keep a clean walk. And that is a whole lot easier to watch each other's feet in a physical literal sense then for us to do what it means and this Scripture is calling us to do that. And we know that the Bible says that we are to do it in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted. But brethren and sisters it is one of the things that we need to do, that a church needs to do if it is going to be an Ark of safety. We need to point out to each other areas where we have failed and I'm not saying it is every time. How many times have you failed and afterwards wished very much that you hadn't?

You know sometimes we come to that realisation ourselves and if we have offended, if we had trespassed against our brother then we ought to go and apologise to him. But the fact is that don't always look equally the same to us, you have probably discovered that there are times when ever when someone else maybe says something to you or does something to you that he seems to be able to go on his way without thinking more about it and you look at yourself and say: If I had done that to him I wouldn't feel right until I went and apologise. And you know the Bible speaks about the need for bearing and forbearing, and I'm not here suggesting that we ought to be quick to jump to do these things that I think it is something we need to do with carefulness but I also know my tendency and I think it is human tendency to just shrink back from this. It is not really that easy to do to go and speak to our brother about his wrong in a right spirit and the right timing, we need the Lord direction in it but it is something that is necessary for a church to be an Ark of safety.

Next in [verses 17 and 18](#), when they leaders exercise their God given responsibility and authority in the fear of God:"

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. ¹⁸Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Now some view verse 18 to be saying that the church is not authorised to bind or loose anything but what is already bound in heaven, and there is certainly some truth to that, in other words the church leaders have no authority to go beyond what the scriptures direct. However I believe also that God has given a responsibility to the church that is very similar to the responsibility that he has given to the parents and I think it is many times misunderstood and not equated. When we think about the responsibility that God has given the parents to give direction to their children for their well being, I've used this illustration already: You know some parents decide that their children need to go to bed at eight o'clock in some decide that they need to get to bed at 830 and others decide that they need to get to bed at nine. Well what's the reason, what's the reason for the difference?

Well in every case the parents are seeking to do what is good for their children, they are exercising their judgement for the well-being of their children and you know in a home if the parents had decided that the children need to go to bed at eight o'clock the children resist that they are in the wrong, and they are not any more justified to wait till nine o'clock just because some other parents have decided that, they are not justified in that. And so God has given parents responsibility to look after the well-being of their children and in the process not all parents make the same judgements there is variation. And so it is also in churches that in an effort to seek the well-being of the members not all groups make the same judgements.

But does God expect those who sincerely want to follow Him to follow the guidelines of the group that they are a part of? Why by all means. Just as He expects the children to follow the guidelines of their parents, not somebody else's parents, so also in church groups He expects the same thing. And if, we are not saying that there are no limits we are not saying that, that parents can decide to just any thing and that children have to obey them regardless. I had the first year I went to a Christian school that

teaches that I had had been raised by her grandparents, her grandmother, and her grandmother asked to do things on Sunday that she felt were wrong to do on Sunday and she tells her grandmother that she would be very willing to do those things on Monday but she didn't want to do them today on Sunday, and I believe that was a proper response. So we are saying that there are some limits, yes certainly, the church doesn't have the authority to transgress the scriptures that inside the scope of applying the principles of Scripture when if we are part of a group that is seeking to follow the scriptures she does have that right, does have that authority on the basis of this Scripture and others to do some loosing and some binding and to say here is where the lines are. Then you and I then are responsible to give our support where the lines are drawn when the leaders exercise their God given responsibility and authority in the fear of God.

Versus 19 and 21, when it's a church an Ark of safety when members earnestly seek God's help to be reconciled in Christ.

Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Now in my Bible there is a paragraph marker after verse 20 and it is at the beginning of the verse 21 and the beginning of verse 15, it is interesting to notice the connection then between verse 20 which we have often quoted and thought about applying to a small assembly but the context here is actually the context of a brother going and speaking to his brother who is transgress against him, trespassed against them, that is two, he and the one he is speaking to, and then if he won't hear thee take two or three more. So the context here is actually a context of being reconciled to one another, if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing they shall ask, what might two ask for in that situation where one is trespassed against the other? Well maybe they will ask for forgiveness, maybe they'll ask if the Lord would increase their love for one another, and maybe one will ask the Lord to bless the other who has had the courage to come and speak to him and show him his need. You know you can think of other things that might be asked when members earnestly seek God's help to be reconciled in Christ.

One more thought from [verses 21 to 35](#) when is a church an Ark of safety when the members freely forgive each other like Christ. This is the story Jesus gives of the man who owed 10,000 talents, it was a huge sum that he wasn't able to pay and his Lord frankly forgave him his whole debt and then he laid hands on his fellow servant who owed him a 100 pence. A huge difference, a huge difference.

And so also with you and with me. How much has outlawed forgiven us, He has frankly forgiven us all. [1 John 1:9](#) was read this morning: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness



THE ANCHOR OF CALVARY

There was an evil hour once when I released the anchor of my faith; I cut the cable of my belief; I no longer moored myself tight to the coasts of the Revelation of God; I allowed my vessel to drift with the wind; I said to reason, "You be my captain;" I said to my own brain, "You be my rudder;" and I started on my mad voyage. Thank God, it is all over now; but I will tell you its brief history. It was one hurried sailing over the tempestuous ocean of free thought. I went on, and as I went, the skies began to darken; but to make up for that deficiency, the waters were brilliant with the glitter of brilliancy. I saw sparks flying upward that pleased me, and I thought, "If this is free thought, it is a good thing." My thoughts seemed like gems, and I scattered stars with both my hands; but before long, instead of these flashes of glory, I saw grim fiends, fierce and horrible, come up from the waters, and as I rushed on, they gnashed their teeth, and grinned at me; they seized the bow of my ship and dragged me on, while I, in part, was impressed at the swiftness of my motion, but yet shuddered at the terrific rate with which I passed the old landmarks of my faith.

As I hurried forward with a dreadful speed, I began to doubt my very existence; I doubted if there were a world, I doubted if there were such a thing, as myself. I went to the very verge of the dreamy realms of unbelief. I went to the very bottom of the sea of Unbelief. I doubted everything. But here the devil foiled himself—for the very extravagance of the doubt,

proved its absurdity. Just when I saw the bottom of that sea, there came a voice which said, "And can this doubt be true?" At this very thought I awoke. I started from that death-dream, which, God knows, might have damned my Soul, and ruined my body, if I had not awoke. When I arose, faith took the helm; from that moment I no longer doubted. Faith steered me back; faith cried, "Away, away!" I cast my anchor on Calvary; I lifted my eye to God; and here I am, "alive, and out of hell."

Charles Spurgeon - Gems of Grace.



Power to Witness - Part 6. (concluding the series on Power)

"For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."

Luke 21:15.

The world is lying in darkness, and sin is abounding. The heartache and guilt caused by sin can only be resolved through salvation, but when a sinner does not know how to be saved he is without hope. The words of the poet describe this condition so well. "Oh, to have no hope in Jesus! How dark this world must be!"

The Christian's calling is to witness to the lost of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. One definition of witness is "public affirmation by word or example." When a seeker sees Bible truths embodied in the life of a believer it does something that Bible reading alone cannot do. Jesus says, "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things" Luke 24:47-48.

Acts 6:7-15

And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. ⁸And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

⁹Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. ¹⁰And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. ¹¹Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. ¹²And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council, ¹³And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: ¹⁴For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. ¹⁵And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

Acts 7:51-60

“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. ⁵²Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: ⁵³Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. ⁵⁴When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. ⁵⁵But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, ⁵⁶And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. ⁵⁷Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, ⁵⁸And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. ⁵⁹And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. ⁶⁰And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

Stephen's power to witness is an inspiration to us today. The secret of his power was that he was full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom (Acts 6:3). The wonders done by the early church were to convince the Jewish people of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel changed lives in wonderful ways. Those who before had lived for self and sin became followers of God.

Satan did everything in his power to stop the rapid spread of the truth. He used ungodly men who also were willing to do anything to stop the witness of the Christians. The early Christians were not deterred by opposition. They willingly spoke the truth, and God established that truth. Yet the very truth of their witness made their opponents angry. And those who opposed the Christians used the untruth to try to discredit the Christian faith. The work of convincing people was left to God. He faithfully proved to those present at Stephen's trial that Stephen was His true follower. They all "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."

Another essential part of Stephen's witness was that it brought his listeners to a decision. Sin was reproved and the way of truth was made clear. When the Jews then rejected the truth, they focused their opposition on the one who was the mouthpiece for God. They blamed Stephen for the cut they felt in their hearts. If they had accepted his message, the outcome would have been very different. When Stephen died, his words, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," and his spirit mirrored the spirit of the crucified Jesus. With Stephen's death, another faithful witness was laid to rest. Stephen's faithful witness helped spiritual life to be born in others, and so God's purposes were accomplished.

Christian believers are to bear witness to the gospel message of salvation. Faithful witnesses help to make God's will known to man. A Christian, faithfully living the will of God, makes the Bible understandable. In Luke 24:45-49, that which the Lord's expects of us is concisely recorded. We are to carry the message of repentance and remission of sins. For our message to be clear both parts need to be told, for through the gospel we can live victoriously and without guilt.

It is important that we consider the power that is mentioned in our lesson title. Without power from God, our witness falls flat. If the power is of ourselves it is repulsive to the true seeker. There must be a strength from above that attends our gospel outreach. Obedience to the Bible gives access to God's grace. Prayer is a lifeline through which we receive direction and inspiration from God. On the contrary, a casual attitude toward Christian living and a love for the things of this world will slowly but surely erode our strength. A Christian cannot give testimony to something he does not have.

Even though we may be called to witness for our Master in a dramatic way at some point in life, it usually does not start that way. Much of our

witness takes place in our daily walk of life, in ways of which we are hardly aware. Opinions are formed in the minds of people around us from small, everyday actions. The expression on our face and a ready smile can invite people to God and His church. Financial dealings are long remembered, for good or bad. The way we drive makes a difference.

God often asks us to speak a word for Him. Usually that involves some of our time. Schedules that are too tight can cause us to miss opportunities even before we become aware of them. Our outreach is to struggling humanity in our own communities, and if we feel these people are not as important as other people, they will quickly detect it. Only God knows the depth of heartache that sin brings to peoples' lives. To be selective in choosing to whom we will witness hinders God's work. Those who are deep in sin need a ray of hope.

The mission programs of the church are another of God's ways to reach out to the world. Through these programs souls who are beyond the reach of individual congregations can be touched. The Holy Spirit uses consecrated couples in this work to draw souls to the right way. When a couple leaves home, the resulting self-denial and spiritual experience blesses them almost as much as the ones to whom they witness.

If we are serving in the structured mission outreach of the church, we should be in submission to those responsible for the work. Their direction comes from seeing the greater picture together with lessons learned from many experiences in the past. We must be very patient with those to whom we are reaching out. God inhabits eternity, and His work has that perspective. He will call men as long as time continues.

In all of our outreach, the united witness of the true church is essential. God has given the keys of the kingdom to her. The church stabilizes and undergirds our conviction and direction. God reveals His will to His united people and asks them to share it with others who are searching. We cannot stand apart from God's people and leave a true witness.

In leading people to a point of decision we must always remember that it is finally the Holy Spirit that convicts people of their need for the Saviour and no amount of persuasive talking on our part without the presence of the Holy Spirit will be effective for a lasting life in Christ.

We should always be ready should we be to reach out to people who express interest in the faith as displayed by our lives. 1 Peter 3:15.

Adapted from a series of 6 lessons by Gospel Publishers Moundridge Kansas.

*Free at Last**Suggested reading: Exodus 12:30:42 and Exodus 15:1-2.*

There are many striking parallels between our Christian journey to heaven and the journey of the Israelites to their Promised Land. Egypt is a type of the world, and, since we are by nature a part of this world, it is also a type of self. Moses is a type of Christ. The journey from Egypt to the Red Sea is like our journey to the cross, and our new birth is likened to the miraculous deliverance at the Red Sea (1 Cor.10:2-11). The crossing of the Jordan is commonly held as a type of our death. With these examples of God's ability and desire to make a way for His people, why do we lose faith? How many more miracles do we need? How many more miracles until we believe that a full surrender and a simple faith in God will bring the same deliverance to us that God gave to Israel long ago?

How many more times must God chasten us to open our understanding? In recent years we have lost several of our young people to tragic circumstances. Must we lose more before we will surrender? We have had too many failed marriages due to carnal living. Do we need even one more? Can we not believe our faithful parents, who, like the two spies, have gone before us and are promising us that the land ahead is a good land, and God Himself is for us?

Have those of us who are older lost faith? Have any of us in heart turned back to Egypt? In the continuing cleansing of the church, have we come up against a Red Sea? To go back to our old ways is certain spiritual death but to go forward looks impossible. It looks as though we cannot please the brethren, the ministry, our husband, our wife, our children, or maybe even the banker. The waters of the Red Sea will not part until we are willing to follow Christ in complete trust and obedience. Then wonderful things happen. The way opens up between us and our brethren. God makes a way through financial difficulties. We find direction through the perplexities of training our children. We are able to guide our youth and find our place of service.



Consecration and Worship

My God, I feel it is heaven to please Thee, and to be what Thou wouldst have me be. O that I were holy as Thou art holy, pure as Christ is pure, perfect as Thy Spirit is perfect! These, I feel, are the best commands in Thy Book, and shall I break them? must I break them? am I under such a necessity as long as I live here?

Woe, woe is me that I am a sinner, that I grieve this blessed God, who is infinite in goodness and grace! O if He would punish me for my sins, it would not would my heart so deep to offend Him; But though I sin continually, He continually repeats His kindness to me.

At times I feel I could bear any suffering, but how can I dishonour this glorious God? What shall I do to glorify and worship this best of beings? O that I could consecrate my soul and body to His service, without restraint, for ever! O that I could give myself up to Him, so as never more to attempt to be my own! or have any will or affections that are not perfectly conformed to His will and His love! But, alas, I cannot live and not sin.

O may angels glorify Him incessantly, and, if possible, prostrate themselves lower before the blessed King of heaven! I long to bear a part with them in ceaseless praise; but when I have done all I can to eternity I shall not be able to offer more than a small fraction of the homage that the glorious God deserves. Give me a heart full of divine, heavenly love.

Extract from Puritan Prayers.

Compiled & Edited by: J van Loon

E-mail: shimara2@bigpond.com

Web: www.anabaptistmennonites.org