

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

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

Matthew 5:15

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For A Conservative Mennonite Perspective

From The Editor's Desk

In this and the last issue the focus is on Discipleship, Defined and Illustrated, both being published to illustrate the importance of a life of discipleship for the Christian. Christian Discipleship in all its forms is based on following our Master and Teacher, Jesus Christ. That's what discipleship is - emulating one's Master and taking up our cross daily.

Our Anabaptist forefathers stressed discipleship and they knew the cost of discipleship, they understood that the Christian life was not just a heart and head knowledge, it was not something that was just spoken, it was not just something that was understood and the heart was saved and there it stopped. They understood that it was a patterning of the life after the Master, following after Christ; it was a life of Christ like expression.

That made a dividing line between themselves and others, we might say the nominal churches of their day, those who claimed to be followers of Christ, and it is still true today.

Crossbearing which is an essential part of discipleship still creates a dividing line between professing Christianity and practising Christianity.

In a recent conversation with people from a long line of Mennonite ancestors the subject of separation/non-conformity came up and in particular *2 Corinthians 6:14-18* and the exposition given in the *Complete Writings of Menno Simons, Foundation of Christian Doctrine 1539 Refutation of Roman Catholicism*. (Ed. The dominant religion of the time and we contend the same principles apply to other religions/denominations today.) This question was asked in the context of attending other denominational services for funerals and such, "Can't we be an Anabaptist and Mennonite too?" implying these were separate lifestyles. They appeared to see their Mennonite traditions and acceptance by their non-Mennonite neighbours as being of equal importance and sometimes of greater importance than adhering to the gospel way of life as lived by the early Anabaptists and acceptance by Jesus

Sadly today many are loosing that vision of discipleship but rather choosing to please men rather than heeding God's call on their lives. Discipleship to Jesus includes separation from unscriptural practises and persons. What saith the Scripture?

Some thoughts to ponder on in respect of separation are in Job 28:28, Proverbs 29:25, Ecclesiastes 12:13, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. *J.v.L.*



From the Pulpit

Discipleship Illustrated

From a message by Ernest Wine

Fall Bible Conference CMCO

October 12-13, 2008.

We greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that One whom we serve and the One whom we want to be like and more like our Master.

I especially appreciated the key verse that our brother used, It is enough for the disciple to be like his master ([Matthew 10:25](#)).

And that parallels very closely as we think of discipleship illustrated.

Thinking of illustrations of characters whom were like our Master and whom we want to follow.

It is indeed a pleasure to be with brethren and sisters, though I know so few of you yet I feel close to you as we are fellow disciples, I'm especially noticing tonight how many, many young people, youth that are here. The question came to me as I was looking over the group: Can you tell a disciple by looking at him?

In other words as I look you over can I say, Yes, that he is a disciple, and I can see, Yes, she is a disciple I can see that by looking at her. Can you tell by looking at me that I am a disciple or does it take more than that?

And I think the answer to that question is that we have to see how a person acts, we can see someone who looks as if he would be a disciple but is he or she really a disciple?

Well I would have to observe that person in action and that will help me to answer that question more clearly.

As I first received this assignment I thought of a dear brother, he has gone to his reward now, we had special services in our congregation at Miners Village, this was a number of years ago and a visitor showed up from about an hour's drive away maybe an hour and a half away, I don't know if he had ever been to our congregation before and I was puzzled as to why he would come for this special service but he showed up, there he was.

And lo and behold after the service someone came to me and said this man he said he is a disciple of the preacher that was there. The preacher was from Ohio, some of you would know him, Brother Marion Good, and this brother came one hour plus to hear Marion Good.

Someone said he is a disciple of Marion Good. Well he admired the preacher, he liked hearing him preach and I think he wanted to pattern his life after what that man was showing.

Well a disciple is a follower; a disciple is as a student and I think those thoughts have come out in what was shared with us already.

One well-known teacher was approached and they said: I understand that such and such a person is one of your students?

He replied: He may have attended my lectures but he was not one of my students.

You understand what he meant? He was there, he heard me talking but he did not really apply himself and learn from me, he was not one of my students.

And aren't there, I'm sure with me you would agree, there are many people who would like to be called disciples because they have been in the presence of Jesus and they have listened to the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of the church but they have not really applied themselves and probably will be told some day: Depart from me I never knew you. (*Matthew 7:23*).

I like examples, I like illustrations, I think most of us when the preacher is preaching he makes a point perhaps and we are not quite sure what he means and then if he gives us an illustration we can say, Oh yes, now I know exactly what he was talking about. And I believe that looking at discipleship illustrated may serve that purpose.

I have chosen to pick out certain areas of the Lord Jesus, our Master, and what He was like and then look then at several examples of characters who show us that quality.

I'm thinking first of the idea of servanthood and sacrifice.

And so Jesus even though He was the Son of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God yet he made himself of no reputation and took

upon him the form of a servant. A servant made in the likeness of men.
Philippians 2:7.

If I am a servant or if I'm to be all going to be like my master then I'm going to need to be a servant.

Who do you think of in the Scriptures that apart from Jesus Christ Himself who showed that example of a servant?

Well my mind went immediately to the Apostle Paul and how he was a servant, he sacrificed for the cause of the Lord, a day and night in the deep, he was beaten, was it three times with 40 stripes save one, and he was stoned and shipwrecked and many, many difficulties (*2 Corinthians 11:23-28*) and he was indeed a servant.

But I am directing your attention now to a less prominent one now, turn with me to Acts chapter 9 and I like this simple example of a disciple, in fact this person is called a disciple here.

Acts 9:36-37 ³⁶ Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. ³⁷ And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid *her* in an upper chamber.

And then we understand here a bit later, verse 39, Peter came and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments Dorcas made, while she was with them. *Acts 9:39.*

Not nearly as many people saw Dorcas and honoured her for what she did as what saw the Apostle Paul yet she was a disciple, it uses that term to describe her and how she sacrificed, here she so kindly helped this poor widows, these poor people making garments for them.

Have you ever discovered that it does not feel good to be treated like a servant? Did that ever happen to you?

Someone said you can tell whether you have a servant attitude by how you respond when you are treated like one.

I remember a situation where we had purchased a small fruit farm and someone came, I was walking in the lane one day and someone came driving in and he stopped me there and he started giving me directions, he wondered about certain things and then he said: You go in there and you get a basket and you pick me a basket of whatever it was.

Do you think I liked that? Would you like to be talked to like that?

Who did he think he was? This was my farm, it wasn't his but he was telling me what to do and I did not like it, and I don't think that my attitudes were very Christ-like, I don't think I was a very good example of a disciple right at that moment.

It does not feel good to be told to serve.

We tend to think this is unreasonable, why should I do this, they did not have any right to demand this of me and I don't have to do this. That is our normal response.

But as disciples if we are going to be like our Master we must be ready to serve, humbly serve.

A character, not from the Scriptures, is the character in the book “Allegheny Gospel Trials”, I'm sure some of you have read the book about a brother, Rhine Benner was his name, who served in the hills of West Virginia, I'm not sure of the dates but the early 1900s, he went on the mission field and he discovered when he got there that the mission board had not provided him with a horse and carriage, they sort of stammered around, the mission board members, and then finally they said: Well we weren't sure if you would last at this work, we did know if it would be good stewardship to use the boards funds to buy a horse and carriage until you have proven yourself.

And so there he was in the hills of West Virginia, rugged roads, and his schedule required him to walk something like 25 miles on the weekend to preach at various places.

I'm not sure, I'm not sure if I would pass that test, I believe by the grace of God that I could but I'll tell you what, that puts a man in a place are we ready to serve? It seems a bit unreasonable especially when he knew that the people back home who were sending him and were so concerned about

how they spent their money on the mission field but things a whole lot better back home.

It is a very inspiring story to read of this man Rhine Benner and his humble service in the hills of West Virginia, Allegheny Gospel Trials.

Another story comes to us from 1579 and it takes place in Germany, there was an Amish man there, we do not have a name for him, but after the French had defeated the Prussian soldiers in that area this Amish man was out walking down the road and he was stopped by a group of French soldiers and they demanded that he should lead them to some forage for their horses and of course he hesitated and tried to not be made responsible for that but they demanded that he must serve them. And so he turned around and told them to follow him, he turned around and walked back down the road and they went good distance and they passed one barley field and he kept on going and they passed another barley field and he kept on going and the French soldiers began to wonder, Is this man up to a trick here or something?

And finally he came to the field and let down the bars and led them into the field he said: Graze your horses here.

The commander said: Now what about those other fields, you led us past various other fields, why did you not let us stop there?

Do you know what he said? Those were not my fields, he said this is my field you graze your horses here.

Disciples are servants ready to sacrifice.

Are you am I ready to be like a Master in serving and in sacrificing?

Another example we think of our Lord Jesus, another area of His life was His forgiveness and when He was on the cross we all know how He said: Father forgive them for they know not what they do, [Luke 23:34](#).

And when we go to the Scriptures and look for an account of someone who illustrates this let's just turn to Acts chapter 7, your minds likely would go here even before we mentioned this, here is a disciple and there is no question about it when I look at his life and see what he did, he was a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ undoubtedly and it shows in his actions.

Acts 7:58 says: ⁵⁸ And 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. ⁵⁹ And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. ⁶⁰ And 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. *Acts 7:58-60.*

What was the verse our brother gave us? It is enough if the disciple is like his master.

This disciple was certainly like his Master – ready to forgive.

I'm sure some of you are familiar with this story of Peter Miller, a man from the Ephrata Cloisters, which is in our home area Pennsylvania, I thought about him when I talked about men who were not Bible characters and evaluate their lives do I have the right to say they were disciples of Jesus? Well I think we could at least say undoubtedly whether they were showing the characteristics of the Master.

Peter Miller had a man, an enemy, by the name of Michael Whitman, Michael despised him and he shamed him in public, he reproached him in public and spat in his face, had ugly words, bitter words for Peter Miller. Their paths parted and Peter Miller lost track of Michael Whitman, didn't really know what became of him and then I think it went several years perhaps and he got word once more of this Michael Whitman who lo and behold had been caught by General Washington's forces as a British spy and he was condemned to die.

Peter Miller got the word that this man who had treated him so reproachfully was condemned as a spy to be hanged and immediately, immediately he set off by foot from the Ephrata Cloisters to Philadelphia, I believe it was a three-day journey for him, an old man, he was 70 or 70+, walking in haste to get there to try to reach his enemy before his enemy was killed.

When he got there he was taken in and even given a hearing with General George Washington and he said that he has come to ask for a pardon for Michael Whitman but George Washington explaining to him he said: No, we can't do that, Whitman was found spying, he was tried and he was

found guilty and he will have to die. He said I'm sorry but I cannot free your friend.

Peter Miller said: Friend? He is my bitterest enemy!

That moved Washington to give the man his pardon.

And he took the pardon, he was given a written pardon, he took the pardon and got to the gallows as they were putting the noose around the neck of his enemy and he cried out he said: Stop! I have a pardon here for Whitman, Whitman is pardoned!

And sure enough he was pardoned, he was let go free.

Peter Miller was an example, he was an illustration of the disciple who forgave like his Master forgave.

We are so quick to nurse have grudges and our grievances, it hurts when people do things to us that are not fair, it hurts and it tends to brew within us and we tend to think ugly things back but our Master forgave.

And it is enough for the disciple to be as his Master, ready to forgive.

I'm thinking of another man this happens to be someone from our present time, I'll not give his name, but he is a man who grew up with a very difficult childhood. His father was an overbearing father, a cruel and harsh father.

Just for example once he got a pair of shoes, the father bought him a pair of shoes and they were too small for his son and they pinched his feet in and hurt very badly but the father said: I got those shoes for you and you're going to wear them!

And wear them he did.

In his later years he suffered from ingrown toenails which he believed were the result of wearing those shoes that were too tight for him.

Another time there was a bull, and mad bull, a wild bull that they were trying to stop and the bull came running in his direction, we'll say this young man's name was John, and his father said: Stop him John!

One of John's uncle said: Don't you do such a thing.

But John thought his father had told him and he had to listen. And he stopped the bull.

Those are just two examples this older man gave in his older years and someone asked him the question and they wondered how was this, tell me about some of the things that happened in your boyhood.

And he said: I can't talk about them.

Did he have bitter attitudes? Was he brewing inside towards what his father had done to him?

The answer is no, he had forgiven.

And he knew that if he were to start to rehash those things it would stir up feelings that he had crucified, feelings that he was not ready to feed and so he said, No, he could not talk about them.

I say that is an example, that is an illustration of a disciple forgiving like his Master.

Another area of the Lord Jesus in His life and in His teaching was in His compassion and in His love.

We read numerous times how Jesus when He saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion and He acted to help them.

We will not turn to this example but in the Scriptures we have the story of the good Samaritan, I thought of him. Maybe it was just a story that Jesus told, maybe it is just a story for the sake of the story but I tend to believe it was an actual event that Jesus was recounting of the good Samaritan of how he came across a man who was wounded, a man who was in dire need and he stopped, he had compassion, he helped him, put him on his donkey, talking to an inn, paid for the bill.

That was an example of someone following the Master, the Lord Jesus in his compassion and in his love.

I believe it was during the Revolutionary War in our area of Pennsylvania, somewhat in our area, 1783 there were some British prisoners who would have been captured by the American forces and these British prisoners were fleeing, they were getting away and they stopped at the home of a Mennonite and they were begging for food, they were begging for help.

Well that is a dangerous thing to do but our Master did say that we are to love our enemies and we are to feed them, clothe them. And so these Mennonites out of the following of their Master they gave help to these escaped prisoners.

It was found out, they were arrested and things looked very bleak for them, they were due for some very severe punishment but interestingly the Peter Miller that I told you about who forgave so freely the man who had spat at him, Peter Miller himself pleaded for these Mennonites who had held the enemy and he helped the authorities to understand that these men were simply doing good, not as traitors to the country, but out of love to all men, and through his pleading they were spared.

I think in our day we have so many things so good and life comes to us so easy, it flows along, and perhaps we don't really look around us with the eyes of compassion and the heart of compassion that our Master had and showed us.

God help us to use our resources and our abilities to reach out and help others.

Another example of the Lord Jesus in His life and in His teaching is His nonresistance.

In Matthew five He said: I say unto you that ye resist not evil. [Matthew 5:39](#).

And I thought of the interesting verse in James chapter 5, we'll just turn there, this I will give as a Scriptural example of disciples who were following the Master in the area of nonresistance.

James is condemning the rich man here ([James 5:1-6](#)), Go to now, ye rich man.

They had been withholding the wages of those who work for them. Verse five says ye have lived in pleasure on the earth and being wanton then in verse six notice, Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.

So whoever these men were that were being condemned and killed by these heartless man in the book of James the Scripture testimony is that they did not resist them.

One of the characters, not a Bible character, one of the characters that I've read about and admired is a Mennonite Brethren man, actually he was from Canada and when he was called to go into service in World War I he found himself in difficult circumstances and I would like to read to you a few excerpts from his book he recounted on nonresistance under test.

I'm thinking of this man, E J Swan, as a disciple, an illustration of a disciple of our Master in his non-resistant life.

"He arrived at the army camp and one of the officers there they said to him I will give you this tip, he said first there had been some others that had claimed conscientious scruples and he said I'll give you this tip, Don't try anything like this my boy, for we have had two or three that tried that here and until we got through with them they were mighty glad to carry on and be a soldier, and I would advise you to profit by their mistakes."

I think of these young men here to my left, I'm thinking of you brethren facing a situation like that. How would you fare? The pressure is on. We take our stand and we are threatened, we are intimidated, how would we fare?

"They were led to an interview with a Major Bennett who said they could make reference to the exemption privileges where they thought there would be some exceptions given to them but he (Bennett) said that in all his searches he believed that those exemptions had been taken away and he said that I would have to take service of some kind, non-combatant to say the least, to which I replied: I would not.

First he tried to flatter me, then he tried to scare me and said that there were no others in the army who were taking the stand that I did. He said that there had been some but after they were threatened and were told what would happen to them that talk stopped, they took service and carried on. He told me I had better take service or else I would be put in chains, taken overseas and placed in the front lines as a barricade and would be shot down first thing with all the other cowards and despicable characters who would stop bullets to save better man who were coming up behind.

E J Swan replied: Be that as it may, by the grace of God I am determined in my stand and I will not take service because I intend to be a conscientious objector."

Well he was given more threats, he was court marshalled and he was sent to prison.

I'll not read a lot more of what he had to say. But as he was facing prison he did think of the Scripture, not the Scripture verse but of the song: That prisons would palaces prove if Jesus would dwell with me there.

And his testimony is that is exactly the way he found it in prison, it was a time of tremendous blessings as he prayed and prayed and read his Bible, studied the Scriptures.

We say we believe, we believe in nonresistance.

But my dear brethren, not only our youth but us older ones as well, we have not been tested on that point, not really severely tested, and it is so easy for us is it not, so easy for us that if something comes up that is not to our liking that we are ready to bristle. And that is not a disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh such a little thing as having a driver pull out in front of you, I'm sure that happens here in Ontario, you're in a hurry, you are going somewhere and someone pulls out in front of you and then he just pokes along! Maybe you can always pass here I don't know but we have curves and hills that we cannot always pass - that is irritating, that is irritating and we tend to think some nasty thoughts!

But we want to be like our Master, we want to be disciples.

It is enough if we can be like our Master. God help us to be like Him, non-resistant, no feelings of ill will and spite and retaliation rising within us.

I hear sometimes people get to talking about something that happened and they say: I would have told him so-and-so! Or, Why didn't you do this or why didn't you do that?

Those are not godlike ideas that we talk about in those moments.

We could read numerous accounts from others who in the hour of trial in this matter of nonresistance stood firm; they were illustrations of our Master.

I have one other example of Jesus and His teachings and His life and that is the area of submission and suffering.

And I'm calling your attention now to Matthew chapter 26.

We have here a disciple who wanted to be like his Master, he was determined to be like his Master.

Matthew 26 verse 31, Jesus was facing the cross experience, Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. ³² But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

Now notice!

³³ Peter answered and said unto him, Though all *men* shall be offended because of thee, *yet* will I never be offended.

Oh well, good, Peter is going to be a faithful disciple, isn't that encouraging even if everyone else forsakes the Lord, Peter is going to stick by Him. That's what he said here right? And I'm sure he intended that to but a little further here in verse 34:

³⁴ Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. ³⁵ Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples. [Matthew 26:31-35](#).

Well that is an example of a disciple at least with these resolutions and his determinations, they were noble, we know that Peter failed but the day did come when Peter follow through on his commitment, the day did come when Peter did not back down in the face of opposition.

On the day of Pentecost he stood and he faced the ones who had crucified Jesus and he gave them a real message, he did what he said he would do and we do know I think too that history would tell us that Peter died a martyr's death. When he was facing death by crucifixion he said that he did not feel worthy to die like his Master, he wanted them to hang him upside down on his cross which they were glad to do.

So Peter failed, yes, and we may fail sometimes in our efforts to be disciples but thank God we can go again, God gives us a chance to pick up and to make good on our commitments.

I would like to share an example of a disciple of Jesus, a disciple who followed his Master in submission and suffering, this was in the time of the Anabaptists and the character was Michael Sattler.

Michael Sattler, this is the sentence that he received:

"Michael Sattler shall be committed to the executioner, the latter shall take him to the Square and there first of all cut out his tongue and then forge

him fast to a wagon and there with glowing iron tongs tries to pieces from his body. Then on the way to the site of the execution five times more as above and then burn his body the powder as an arch heretic."

That is a frightful sentence for a man to receive.

Michael Sattler was an influential character in Germany, I believe that it was his work perhaps largely writing the Schleithem Confession of Faith, he was a leader and effective organiser but he had been captured and condensed with other Anabaptists and this was the sentence that he was given. He argued very ably explaining his position and the charges that they brought against him but it was all to no avail, he was condemned to die.

The torture, a prelude to the execution began at the marketplace where a peace was cut from Sattler's tongue, pieces of his flesh were torn from his body twice with red hot tongs and he was then forced to the wagon.

On the way to the scene of the execution the tongs were applied five times again.

In the marketplace and at the site of the execution still able to speak the unshakeable Sattler prayed for his persecutors.

Doesn't that sound like a disciple of Jesus? To pray for his persecutors?

After being bound to a ladder with ropes and pushed into the fire he admonished the people, the Judges and the Mayor to repent and be converted. Then he prayed: Almighty eternal God, thou art the way and the truth. Because I have not been shown to be in error I will with Thy help this day testify to the truth and seal it with my blood.

And the story goes on that as the ropes were burnt off his hands he raised the first fingers of his hands, it was a sign that he had given the believers that it is bearable to die a martyr's death that would be the sign and he gave them the sign that he had died in victory.

We could read of numerous others, go to the Martyrs Mirror and the accounts are one after the other faithful disciples who submitted, they said like Jesus "Not my will but thine be done."

This matter of discipleship is a matter of complete commitment to God

In closing I would like you to turn with me to Luke chapter 14.

I'm not sure if our brother referred to these verses or not but if he did we will read them again.

Verses 25 to 27 of Luke 14: ²⁵ And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, ²⁶ If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. **Luke 14:25-27.**

I see in these verses that to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ that it requires complete commitment to Him.

I hesitate to use this story almost, I wanted to know I'm not at all trying to be humorous, but I think the illustration makes a point just so well that I will share it.

Supposedly a hen and hog were walking down a country road one day and they passed the church with a pastor had printed the title of the sermon on the billboard outside of the church: "What can we do to help the poor?"

And as the hen and the hog saw this the hen immediately said:

"Well that's easy, we can give them bacon and eggs."

The hog was much more hesitant about that and he pointed out to the hen he said:

"That's all right for you because for you all that requires is a contribution-an egg. But for me that requires total commitment."

And how true if they were going to have bacon and eggs that hog had to be completely committed.

And I would ask us this evening:

Are we trying to be disciples of Jesus by making a contribution to His work?

Or: Are we giving ourselves completely committed as His disciples?



Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.

Embracing Our Mission

Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

Jeremiah 20:9

Most people have an aim in life or some purpose in mind. Some goals are noble and for the good of man, and some are selfish. The Word states clearly that man was created to glorify God. We are not our own. Christ bought us with His own blood. As redeemed servants of Jesus, we are commissioned to tell others the story so that they also can come to know and love Him.

The word embracing indicates a fervent attachment to a cause. The word mission indicates a purpose. We are to be zealously engaged in the divine task of saving souls. As Christ called His disciples, He immediately charged them to call others. His parting message obligated them to gather in the lost.

To be a witness, one must have personal contact or experience with the One of whom he is to witness. "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

Matthew 5:13-16 ¹³Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. ¹⁴Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵Neither 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. ¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Jesus was preaching on the mountain. The salt He was referring to likely had some relation to the Old Law. Leviticus 2:13 says that all meat offerings were to be offered with salt. Without the salt, the offering would be of no value. Salt was a means of sealing a covenant. God Himself made a covenant of salt with David (2 Chronicles 13:5). This salt signifies the living presence of God or His Holy Spirit. Without this Presence of life, we are dead and useless.

Christians with a living faith are a salt to the earth at whom the world marvels. "For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away" Psalm 48:4-5.

Salt has hundreds of uses. Possibly the most common use is in food preparation. Many foods are made more tasty by adding salt. If salt would lose its flavour, it would have no value as a food ingredient. Christians, like salt, add flavour and act as a preservative on the earth. How bland and useless would it be if the salt lost its savour! True Christians are often deeply respected by the world, but when they are found to lose their faith, or savour, people are greatly disappointed, even if they never express it with words.

We hold forth the light of the gospel. Christ says we are the light of the world. Not only do we have the light, we are the light. Even in our frail human state the light of the gospel will shine from our lives to the point that the world will not see us but will observe the Light! Someone walking in the dark and having a light would naturally share the light with anyone he would meet. When we are in the dark we normally welcome a light. Those who have been lost or are searching for something that is lost seldom refuse a light to aid them in their search.

How often has doubt or unbelief hindered us from holding forth the light? May we take courage just as the apostles did when Christ was reminding them that all power was given unto Him. Surely He knew their hearts as He encouraged them and gave them the charge to tell the world. He will be with us even unto the end of the world!

Matthew 28:17-20 ¹⁷ And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, the penalty of death

fell on the entire human race. Sometime in life, God calls everyone to repentance. As a sinner comes face to face with his lost condition, he has a choice to make. A song, kindly word, or a tract at this crucial time can make the difference whether or not he chooses the right way.

If, by God's grace, the sinner acknowledges his lost condition and pleads for mercy, God has promised He will hear and forgive. Forgiveness and peace fill his heart to overflowing. No longer does he yield when the world with its pleasures beckons. He begins to see the many lost souls around him, and a longing stirs in his heart that they, too, would be saved. Deep gratitude for his redemption prompts a desire in him to serve the Lord for the rest of his life. Even small deeds of service now bring him pleasure. It does not matter whether or not they are noticed. He has a hunger for God's Word. Even when he goes through valleys and dark times, he finds that in surrendering his heart to God anew he grows in understanding and faith. This opens up even more avenues of service. He has no other intention than to serve his Redeemer all his days.

Is our love still intact?

Does it overflow to others around us?

Do we still have a vision of the debt the Saviour has forgiven us?

All true Christians, disciples of Jesus, are missionaries. We may be at home, on the job, on the farm, or wherever God places us. One important requirement of an effective witness is an absolute surrender to God and His plan. Mordecai told Queen Esther that she had become a queen because God planned to save the Jews through her (Esther 4:14). God told Ananias that He had called Saul to be a chosen vessel for Him (Acts 9:15). In 2 Timothy 2:21 we read that if we purge ourselves from sin, we shall be a vessel unto honour. Do we believe God has a plan for us in His great work of saving souls?

Jesus speaks of letting our light shine. This opens the way for each Christian to fill the place God has for him in his own talent and calling. No one is called to do something he cannot do. We do not hide the light, nor do we force the light to shine.

Young people, (and older ones too) dedicate your life to God. Read the

Bible and commit it to memory. Deepen your Christian life through prayer and spiritual activities. Be ready to serve at home with your parents and family. Seek avenues of service outside the home among the aged and sick. God has a plan for you. The best you can do is to be faithful today as He is preparing you for tomorrow. "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22).

Christians of all ages should be ready to tell of the "reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). A few tracts in our pockets or in our vehicle can be ready for the unexpected open door to share a word. The thought shared may seem so small, but God takes note and promises a reward.

Young mothers, shut-ins, and widows all have a place in God's plan. As you fill the place God has for you with contentment, a light is shining for all to see. You can give a word of encouragement, write a letter to a missionary, or pray for someone in a struggle.

Missionaries far from home, let God use you as He desires. The work is the Lord's. Tell the simple story of salvation. Pray for the church at home. God has promised a reward for faithful service.



Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.

The Nature of Christ's Kingdom

*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink;
But righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*
Romans 14:17

It is our prayer that this article may instruct and inspire us to gain a better understanding of and appreciation for Christ's kingdom and a greater insight into its nature. The nature of something is its "inherent character or basic constitution," its essence, disposition, and temperament. As citizens of the kingdom of God, is the nature of that kingdom clearly apparent in our lives? Are we truly worthy to be called disciples of Jesus Christ?

How are we to view this Kingdom established by Christ?
How do we fit into it and what is our position in it?

Jesus has some directions for us in His own words:

[Matthew 18:1-4](#) ¹ At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? ² And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, ³ And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

And also:

[Matthew 20:25-28](#) ²⁵ But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. ²⁶ But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; ²⁷ And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: ²⁸ Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

In a miraculous way, the wise men of Matthew 2 knew that the One whose star they had seen in the east was born King of the Jews. As we recall how Jesus went about doing good, we may sometimes forget that this humble, quiet Man is a king. He did not muster an army to confront the alien Roman rule of His homeland, as His followers so much hoped He

would. He showed no interest in the throne in Jerusalem or in assembling a government to rule there. Indeed, He told Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). As He humbly preached the gospel to the poor, gave sight to the blind, healed the sick, fed the hungry, and blessed the children, He personified the very nature of His kingdom—love, joy, and peace—in every way.

The humble, childlike ones understood best the truth Jesus taught about His kingdom, and they were the ones who proclaimed Him King as he entered Jerusalem shortly before His death. Because God is over all, it could be argued that the entire world is His kingdom. It is true that God rules and overrules in the affairs of men as He chooses, but Jesus taught that "the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). God has reserved the final vanquishing of Satan and the enemies of His kingdom for the end of all things and the final judgment. Until then, He reigns in the hearts of those who humbly give themselves to Him in faith, believing His gospel.

Jesus explained His kingdom in interesting terms. In His own words the kingdom is described as being most valuable, yet somewhat obscure, as a treasure hid in a field. As a single pearl, it is ascribed such worth that it required all the merchant man owned to buy it. In the comparison of the mustard seed and the leaven, the kingdom is portrayed as something unassuming or small, but with tremendous influence and effect. (Matthew 13:31-44)

The parable of the treasure in the field portrays a very important principle: If we want the treasure, we need to buy the whole field to obtain it. We ought not to expect to receive the gift of eternal life if we refuse the body of teachings and commandments in which it is found. The examples of the treasure and the pearl illustrate the worth of the kingdom to every soul and the price required to purchase it—selling all that we have in complete surrender and commitment by faith to God, the owner of the field and of the pearl.

The leaven and the mustard seed are clearly portrayed in the growth of the kingdom since its beginnings in the New Testament era. Hearts were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, and three thousand

people were added to the faith through their efforts. Before He went back to heaven, Jesus gave His disciples a far-reaching commission to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to every creature. As the mustard seed germinated, rooted, and grew, and as the leaven was stirred into the meal, His followers took the good news of salvation to much of the known world. As the fires of persecution scattered the believers, the faith went with them and became the seed of the church.

It is also clear from Jesus' teaching that the kingdom of heaven is reserved for those who are childlike, humble, willing to be like Him who made Himself of "no reputation" (Philippians 2:7), and who accept the truth of the kingdom in childlike faith. The contrast is shown in Luke 18. Jesus took the children into His arms and blessed them, saying, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein" (v. 17). Immediately following this instruction, the rich young ruler came to Jesus, desiring the secret of eternal life. When he was told what it would cost him to be saved, he went away sorrowful. He was too big to be a child.

In the organization and structure of Christian living and church life, it is possible that we sometimes lose the focus of the nature of Christ's kingdom. The Scriptures always teach a way of humility, kindness, and charity in our relationships with one another. Jesus told His disciples, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). Although obedience and conviction are proof of our faith, in this lesson Jesus was showing His disciples the nature of His kingdom. It seems impossible to separate love and humility; indeed, they are one.

Jesus never ignored the needs of the hungry, the requests of the sick, or the prayers of the sinners. He did not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. Why does 1 Corinthians 13 teach us that charity is greater than faith and hope? It is because God is love. It is His nature, His "inherent character" and "basic constitution." He is our King, and as He reigns in our hearts, it must be our nature, also.

How often do we become judgmental or critical of our brethren?
How often, in discharging the responsibilities in the kingdom, does our zeal overtake us and we do not portray the nature of Christ?

How often do we lean on our own experience, opinions, or abilities when God would be pleased and our brethren blessed if we would give ourselves humbly, unselfishly, and patiently in the manner of our King?

How does the world know that we are His disciples?

Do they take notice of us, that we have been with Jesus?

Do they know because we love them as Jesus loves us?

In dealing with our brethren, and in meeting the physical and spiritual needs of humanity, we can labour tirelessly and efficiently, but if our efforts are not permeated with and motivated by the true love of God, they are nothing. That is because we bypass the nature of God and His kingdom.

All kingdoms have kings and subjects, but in greater or lesser measure they are maintained by fear of law and judgment. Although some are benevolent, many are motivated by greed and selfish ends.

They are defended by weapons and soldiers, and often war is deterred by compromise, threat, and political manoeuvring. It is the nature those kingdoms.

The church of God is a living organism, not a mere organization. The church lives because she is the body and bride of Jesus Christ. Because the church lives in Christ, she is partaker of His divine nature. His love flows through the body, and the body returns its love to Him. Love is the greatest force in heaven or in earth. The citizens of the kingdom of heaven are bound together in love—it is the nature of the kingdom.

What a tremendous privilege that we, by the mercy and grace of God, should be worthy to be citizens of the kingdom of heaven. What an eternal gift God has given us that we should be His children, filled with His Spirit, partakers of His nature.

May we be faithful ambassadors of His kingdom to the world.

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