

# THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

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

Matthew 5:15

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For A Conservative Anabaptist Perspective

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

### **In Who's Image?**

In the Scriptures we see times when God spoke directly to man and we sometimes wonder why God does not do more of that today when there seems to be such an almost overwhelming need for divine direction and guidance in the affairs of man, collectively as well as individually.

Recently these words by a secular author from the mouth of one of her characters caught my attention, the character portrayed was an chaplain trying to comfort another person struggling with coming to terms with the suffering and man's inhumanity to man on the battlefields of Word War 1 and the age old question voiced by so many in times of turmoil both for the Christian and the non-believers: Why does God allow this? Why does He not interfere?

Many of us probably can respond to that and say that evil is in the world because of the sin of Adam and Eve and the fact that we have been given free will to choose what we do.

The words of the character in the book struck me as a statement that we could do well to consider when we face difficult circumstances and people who wrong us and these were the observations made:

“Your face says that you are afraid.

I am not – I am certain of the things that matter.

Kindness and honour are always good.

Do not build God in your own image with your doubts, your fears, your need to judge and condemn, and your need for safety. Your need to be right whatever the cost to others and ultimately to yourself.

Let your soul be still and know that God is never capricious, never cruel and never wrong.

It is our own understanding that stumbles.

Even the cleverest of are yet children and the wisest of us know that.”

It is our heartfelt prayer not only for ourselves but for others too that these words may be an encouragement to us to examine our own lives and see if we are building God in our own image but rather see if we need to find more time to take heed and live the words of the psalmist, to know God and how He desires us to live and grow into His image and likeness as He created us.

Be still and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen,

I will be exalted in the earth. Psalm 46:10



*From the Pulpit*

**Strive to Enter In**

*From a message by David G Burkholder  
Danskin Mennonite Church*

Certainly we are privileged this morning to be gathered in the name of the Lord and to worship Him.

It is certainly our desire that the Lord would continue to call us as He has been through the Sunday school lesson and the devotional meditation to a life of yieldedness, the life of faithfulness to Him.

You may turn with me to Luke 13 for a basis for the message this morning we are going to especially centre our thoughts around the phrase in verse 24 where He says: Strive to enter in.

Strive to enter in, that is what I have titled the message this morning because I believe it helps us to see the reality of the Christian life, the fact that the Christian life is not just an easy street or that it is just the kind of situation that people will sort of float their way into heaven and somehow end up there and not know how they got there but rather that there is a striving side to the Christian life.

Sometimes when we need to strive in the Christian life we might wonder what is wrong.

Well it is true that there are things that God wants us to put away and deal with that we do not need to strife with you know there is a sense in which sometimes we might strive with our carnal nature and with our flesh far more than God wants us to because He wants us to crucify it and to deny it in that sense but there is a real sense in which the Christian life is a life of striving and the reason that Jesus made this statement here in verse 24 was because of a question that was asked in verse 23 and I would like to consider that question a bit at the outstart.

It says: Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? **Luke 13:23.**

Somebody asked the question: Lord, are there few?

Now we could do a little supposition here and suppose why did this man ask this question, why did he ask: Are there few that be saved?

No doubt he was hearing and seeing what Jesus had done, Jesus was giving parables about the Kingdom of God in verse 18 and on and I wonder whether this man may not have been asking the question somewhat in reverse in the sense that he was trying to find out how easy it would be to get to heaven. I think he was calculating a bit are there going to be many saved or are there going to be few saved?

And I think from that deduction he was going to determine the severity with which he would have to deal with his own life in order to be saved and I think there is too much of that which can go on in our own minds if we are not careful.

You see this man was saying are there few going to be saved or are there many going to be saved? And I think if Jesus would have said there are many going to be saved he would have cut himself a little more slack and thought well then there is a good chance that I will be among them.

But Jesus did not answer the question as He did many other times when people asked, He did not answer this question by way of numbers but rather He gave to this man a personal challenge instead but I think what He was saying to the man was instead of you trying to figure out the percentage or the calculation by which you might into heaven He gave him a personal challenge and said: Strive to enter in.

And that is where we want to allow the Lord to speak to us this morning because He was showing that it is not going to be based on numbers and percentages but rather when Jesus said strive to enter in He was making it clear that people will not be surprised if they enter heaven, they are not going to somehow end up there by way of a casual approach or being indifferent but that people are going to get into heaven because of conscious effort and as Brother John said by choice.

The word strive is quite an interesting word it means such things as to labour fervently, it means to suffer, it means to fight and the interesting thing to me was the fact that the Greek word, I looked it up in a word study book, the Greek word just looking at it quickly looks very near to the word agonise (*agōnizomai* Strong's Greek & Hebrew Dictionary) and I think that

is a fair definition of the word strive when people agonise about entering in. You know when we agonise over something we are concerned, we are careful, we struggle with that in our own souls and we are concerned about it, it gives that picture.

I would like to compare just a few other scriptures that are similar to this verse in chapter 16 of this same book and in verse 16 Jesus said it like this: The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. **Luke 16:16.**

People get thereby pressing into it not by slipping or sliding, not by just moving along casually but they get there because they press.

Matthew 11 also a similar picture in verse 12: And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. **Matthew 11:12.**

Again you have that picture of strenuous effort not just taking it easy and so this morning as we come to counsel in light of those scriptures I would like to approach the message from the basis of not asking ourselves the question whether we are surviving as Christians, am I merely surviving but rather am I still striving?

Am I still striving in all sincerity and in all honesty to enter into the kingdom of God? Because if we are not striving it certainly is going to be that we are on dangerous ground.

There are three thoughts that we would like to pursue from this phrase “Strive to enter in.”

First want to consider the goal that we are striving for, unless we have a clear picture of what we are striving for we are not going to be near as concerned. But now we want to begin with the idea of strive to enter in at the strait gate.

Now we are called to strive to enter the gate. You see the gate suggests conditional entry, it suggests limitation. When you come to a gate unless that gate opens or have the facility to open it, and let’s not think we’ll take a chance and pick the lock or ram it or something, this gate certainly sug-

gests limitation, and it suggests condition it means that unless we have the code or the access.

Recently we went to visit a man who had his place guarded with a gate and he had a code he had buttons to press at the gate and if you knew the code you could get in and if you did not know the code you could not get in and so on. His son was with me and I pressed the code and he said well that one didn't work, then he said try this one and then the gate opened.

Well you see a gate means that there is guarded access and so we are called here to strive to enter in at the strait gate, it is a place that is guarded.

The word strait also means that it is narrow; it means that we cannot enter at our own terms it means that we will enter at the terms of the one who is in charge of the gate and so He says we are to strive to enter in at the gate.

Well as I suggested a bit ago one of the reasons that we want to get past the gate is because of what is beyond the gate and I would just like for us to think about that a bit this morning that in our striving to enter in at the strait gate we need to have a clear vision of what is beyond the gate because if we decide what is beyond the gate is not important and it is not worth any effort that is how we will act but you see the question in verse 23 surrounded the question of being saved.

He asked the question well "are there few going to be saved?" and so the place that is beyond the gate is the place where those go who are saved who are in a right relationship with God.

Now I would just like to turn to Revelation 21 and make a few observations here in this chapter that give us a picture of at least a measure of what to expect beyond the gate.

Now there are many things we could point out here but I thought the last verse summarizes it so well it says: <sup>27</sup> And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. **Revelation 21:27**

Now here he is telling us that beyond the gate there is a place where there is no sin which tells us obviously that no sin will go through the gate. He also tells us in this chapter and especially in verses such as verse four that

there is no sadness beyond the gate it says God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. **Revelation 21:4.**

There will be no sickness, there will be no separation, there will be no sorrow, there will be no funerals, there will be no pain because all those things he says are taken away and so this morning if we are going to be interested in going through the gate we need to be focusing our attention on the experiences beyond the gate and there is a measure in which the Communion is especially intended to help us to understand that there is much more beyond if we are willing and ready to lay eyes and hands and our hearts upon it.

But we must realise that we have an enemy and we can simply summarise that this morning in what Jesus told Peter in **Luke 22:31** He said Satan has desired to have you.

And therein lies the battle dear ones that there is a city, there is a place, there is a presence for us to be if we enter through the gate but let us remember this morning that those who do not enter through that particular gate are going to enter through a gate as well but it will be to their eternal destruction and eternal separation from God but this morning God wants us to enter in through that strait gate.

And so coming back to our verse in Luke 13 I would like next to discuss what I call some goads, reasons to strive, there are positive and there are negative reasons and I chose that word for several reasons but in Ecclesiastes 12 it will give you the understanding of the word.

**Ecclesiastes 12:11** says: The words of the wise *are* as goads, Goads as they used them in the days of the scriptures were long pointed sticks which they used to prod their animals and I am using the word goads here this morning, goads for us to strive, for reasons for us to strive and you see here he says in Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of the wise *are* as goads, they give us proddings, they give us reasons to do something and reasons to move.

I'd like to go back now to the passage in Luke 13 and from the context draw a number of things that I think are going to help us to become serious

about entering in. In verse 24 He says: Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able, **Luke 13:24.**

You see He makes a difference here, He says there will be strivers and there will be seekers. And you do not need to go very far to find seekers you go and ask people well would you like to go to heaven? Well of course I would like to go to heaven. And He says here there are people that are going to be seeking to enter in and so I think this morning the first goad that we ought to have in our matter of striving is that there is a possibility of entering heaven which is the positive side and then on the negative side there is a possibility of not being able to enter and that ought to strike deep concern our souls should it not because obviously He says that the seekers will be many and they will not be allowed and so He indicates here that while the possibility is here for us to enter heaven the reality is that it is not going to be easy, it is not going to be handed to people on a platter in fact Jesus said it is like going through the eye of a needle.

Now He was referring to the rich man but the truth of that statement was that Jesus said you cannot, it is like going through the eye of a needle. I believe what He meant is that we cannot do it without Christ, we cannot go through the gate without Christ and the opposite side of that is that we cannot do it with the flesh.

You see if we hope to enter heaven we cannot do it without Christ and we cannot do it with the flesh.

The problem with the rich man in that setting was that he was not ready to put aside his riches, he clung to his riches, he chose his riches instead of Christ and because of that he could not enter in.

And so we cannot do it without Christ and we cannot do it with our flesh and so there are going to be many He says who seek but shall not be able.

In verse 25 there is another solemn truth that ought to goad us on He says: When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: **Luke 13:25**

And that is the solemn fact that there is a cut-off time, there is a time in which opportunity is passed, we can procrastinate now, we can spend our time comparing ourselves with other people, we can spend our time justifying ourselves, we can spend our time criticising ourselves, we can do what we want as long as we wish but there is a time to when He says the master of the house rises up and he shuts the door.

And so this morning as we think of striving to enter in we must recognise that we do not know when He is going to close the door at the level of all humanity or when He is going to close individually through death but there is a cut-off time.

And so in essence we finally conclude we could say well when should we strive? Well the only save answer to that is right now is it not?

Right now is the time for us to be striving, not some other time, not saying well if other people do this and other people do that than I'll do this but now is the time for us to be striving to enter in at the strait gate and so there is a cut-off time.

In verse 26 He comes back again to the same thought at the end of verse 24 He says: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. **Luke 13:26**

They are going to say we've been around you, we have known you, we know the language. But the fact is that there will be disappointed people.

Here were people that thought when the gate is closed they are going to be on the inside and now they are on the outside.

Should that not concern us this morning the fact that there will be disappointed people. People who thought that they knew the Lord, people who thought that when the time comes they would surely be accepted but He says that He is going to say I don't know you.

But these were people that knew Jesus didn't they, they knew the language, they knew about Him, they knew Him with their heads but evidently not with their hearts.

You see they had spent time with Jesus and in fact according to Matthew seven the last part of the sermon on the Mount Jesus said it like this:

**Matthew 7:22-23** <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in

thy name done many wonderful works? <sup>23</sup> And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

You know the fact that there are going to be people who were doing things for the Lord, who are doing wonderful things, miracles but He says they are going to be disappointed and that certainly is a very sobering matter is it not the fact that there are going to be people who are deceived, who are spending their lives thinking that they are on the right side but at that moment discover that they were left on the outside.

That is why Jesus is saying strive to enter in at the gate because there will be those who will be disappointed.

In verse 27 of Luke 13 He gives that awful word of utter rejection I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. **Luke 13:27.**

You know there is going to be utter rejection of many people from what He says here and you know the thought of the possibility of that should strike hard in our hearts should it not. You know the fact that there will be people who will be thinking they are on the right side but when they get there are rejected.

Verse 28 **Luke 13:28**, another goad to striving he says: There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, [now notice] when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out.

It seems to me it is going to add to the pain of the whole thing when He says that you are going to see, these people He was talking to, you're going to see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the others go in and you're on the outside.

It is not that people's consciousness is going to be blanked out and they won't know anything but He says you will see and then you yourself will be thrust out.

Then in then in verse 29 think another wonderful goad is, this is a positive one now he says: <sup>29</sup> And they shall come from the east, and *from* the west, and from the north, and *from* the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. **Luke 13:29**

You know there is going to be a host of people who will be from all over who will have the privilege of entering in and the challenge for us is for us to have it determined in our hearts that we will be a part of that host that comes from the east and the west and north and the south and sits down in the kingdom of God.

Well this morning obviously since people will be disappointed, since people will have a form of godliness it raises the question well how can I know that I am among those who indeed will be not only seekers but those who are accepted when the gate is closed?

We are going to lastly consider the fact of grace to strive.

You know it is only by the grace of God that we can enter in to the gate, we know that this morning, we know that it is not by human effort, it is not by works but it is based on a relationship with Jesus Christ and while I was thinking about where is the answer to the situation in this context? You know Jesus usually, usually gives the answers to the problems that He poses and I found the answer to my own heart in verse 34 and here we find that Jesus promises grace to strive,

**Luke 13:34** O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen *doth gather* her brood under *her* wings, and ye would not!

The word picture that I see in this verse is the fact that Jesus is picturing Himself as a hen gathering her brood under her wings.

Now the grace for us to strive lies in us being like faithful chicks under the protection of the hen. That is what Jesus said He wants to do, He said what He would like to do is that He wants to gather all the children; He is speaking here to Jerusalem and gather them together and keep them under His wing.

And so this morning the grace to strive lies in us being faithful under His wings.

I like that picture and I know you have heard the stories of hens that were found in fires charred to death with their brood under them, well our Lord is much greater and much better than that.

In John 15 Jesus and He uses various word pictures like that, in John 15 He gives the picture of the vine and the branches He says without me you can do nothing, but in reverse in essence He says that with me you can do everything.

So you see the grace to strive that we can rest that we are among those who are striving and will be and are acceptable to Him is as we are in Christ.

In chapter 14 verse 26 the Grace to strive he says in two verses here, **Luke 14:26-27**

<sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

Grace to strive comes if we love the Lord Jesus Christ more than anything or anybody else. He says if one hate not his father and mother, what I understand that word hate to mean is to love less, unless we love our father and mother, wife, husband, children, brethren and sisters, unless we love them less than the Lord Jesus Christ we are not worthy to be His disciples and so the grace to strive comes by loving the Lord above all else and if I think and we have all tried it often enough to know that if we put anything ahead of the Lord it does not work because we lose His power and His grace working in us.

Well the grace to strive then comes by truly knowing Him in our hearts and in our spirit and I do not know how to describe this, you know words fail a person when you try to verbalise the working of the Holy Spirit within us but what I was thinking here was that if we are going to strive to enter the gate it can only be done as God is striving with us.

In Genesis God said my spirit shall not always strive with men (**Genesis 6:3**) and we know what happened but He has given us the Holy Spirit to strive with us and to strive within us and I'm thinking in just three areas that first of all the Holy Spirit strives with us in convicting us.

I'm sure we know what that's like, the work of the conscience, the Holy Spirit is striving with us you know we've done something, we have an attitude, we've spoken something and the Holy Spirit pricks us and says you know raises questions and says you have done wrong and we might argue

and we might justify, we might dispute but the Holy Spirit is there to convict us.

Given the fact that we do what we ought to He will also then correct us. The Holy Spirit's work like the conscience is not only just punish us when we are wrong but it is also the correct us and I believe like **Psalm 32:8** says I will guide you with mine eye, that God would much rather guide us with His eye rather than punish us for having done wrong.

Another Scripture says that it's like the maid who has her eye on her mistress' hand because that is where she gets her signals. Well the Holy Spirit is going to strive with us to let us know what He wants us to do and He will comfort us whatever the needs are but if we are going to strive to enter in at the strait gate we need to know what it is to let the Holy Spirit strive with us and win with us, not just make us miserable but the fact that we have a relationship with God through the Holy Spirit that is going to be helping us to strive.

And there are basic parts, you know we must know Him in the sense that when we read the Scriptures, when we pray, when we fellowship that we are not just going through actions but that it is God's opportunity to touch us and for us to touch God. If we are going to be striving to enter in at the strait gate we are going to need to have the kind of devotional life that puts us in touch with God, that provides strength and it needs to not only be a time of devotion but it must translate into a devoted life.

You know unless our devotional life's produces a devoted life is it going to have done us any amount of good?

Well beyond the personal aspect of striving to enter in at the strait gate it has a lot to do with our relationship with other people and with the brotherhood.

You know it is impossible for us to really care about ourselves without caring for our brothers and sisters.

I had to think about chicks under a hen, I don't know how all that could go but you know unless there would be a fair amount of unity under that hen this going to be trouble and I'm sure there is a whole lot more chicks can get underneath a hen if they are peaceful.

My mother used to say you can get a lot of patient sheep into a small pen. And I think she was trying to put her boys there when she said that but you

see unless there is a patience and the right kind of relationship within the brotherhood it is going to affect our inspiration to really strive to enter into the gate ourselves.

I think we all know what it is like to have frustrated relationships, we can get so involved in thinking about what the other person ought to have done, what the other person did to us and we get so involved in what that person is doing that we forget what we ought to be doing and I think that is one of the problems.

We need to in this relationship within the brotherhood we need to care enough about ourselves that we want to help of the brotherhood and I agree that sometimes people try to help us they are not very wise in the way they go about it. You know somebody said to me once it is really hard for me to say it right so that you are ready to accept it. And I say that to my rebuke. But you know we can be that way that we make it very hard for somebody else to help us if they don't do it right or if they are not quite consistent or whatever we can get our back up and we can get defensive and we can become counter-attacking but you know if we really care about ourselves are we going to be so concerned about whether the help given is just right?

And so you know it takes that and then I think we need to be ready to accept and appreciate the help that the brotherhood is trying to give us without comparing and criticising everybody else to death in the process because there is a grave danger that we will become victims.

You know what James said but if you bite and devour one take heed that ye be not consumed one of another, **Galatians 5:15**, we will be devoured and that's how it works.

If we are as concerned about to enter the strait gate I think it is going to make us a lot more appreciative of the help that the brotherhood is trying to give us rather than to compare it to criticise the situation until we are frustrated and there is very, very little possibility of us really wanting to be held in it. But depends on how concerned we are about entering in.

You know we can so easily spend more energy on thinking what others ought to be doing then what we ought to be doing ourselves and Jesus dealt with that in the first verses of Matthew seven in the Sermon on the Mount.

He said it like this in: **Matthew 7:1-5** Judge not, that ye be not judged. <sup>2</sup> For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. <sup>3</sup> And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? <sup>4</sup> Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam *is* in thine own eye? <sup>5</sup> Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

You see what I understand Him to be saying here is that we are to be helping each other surely but in the meantime we have our first responsibility to ourselves and I think we all have enough of our own nature to understand how that can work but you see all these things Satan tries to get them to divert our attention away from me striving to enter the gate and putting attention on other things.

I believe if we can put our interests and our focus and our burden on entering in at the strait gate that then we are going to want each other's help and we are going to not only want to survive ourselves but we want to help each other to get there. Galatians 6 tells us how we are to help each other and so this morning when He says strive to enter in at the strait gate we need to strive first of all for our own sake and then for the sake of our brethren and sisters and then for all mankind.

This morning it raises the question you know are we seriously striving to enter the gate? That is the burden on my heart for myself as much as for anybody else. You know are we really as urgent about this as we ought to be or are we more concerned about just being a survivor?

This morning my burden is that we are concerned that we are not merely survivors but that we are strivers, that we are taking the issues of life seriously and uppermost in that is the matter of being in Christ, in our relationship with Him personally allowing His grace and power to enable us to strive to enter in at the strait gate.

That is what I believe the Lord would have for us.

## Pursuing Godly Wisdom

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” Colossians 1:9.

Wisdom is something that we all desire. What have we done to pursue godly wisdom this last week? Is our Bible reading and prayer life meaningful? Although we may not feel so wise, surely God has guided us in some small way. Since the beginning of time, man has felt a desire to pursue some form of wisdom. When Eve saw that the tree was pleasant and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof. Genesis 3:6.

The title tells us that godly wisdom will need to be pursued. This indicates that godly wisdom is not a plain or plateau that one can attain; rather, it indicates a need to put forth continued effort to gain more of it. This illustrates our own incapability and our need of God.

**Proverbs 8:1-11** Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? <sup>2</sup> She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. <sup>3</sup> She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. <sup>4</sup> Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice *is* to the sons of man. <sup>5</sup> O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. <sup>6</sup> Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips *shall be* right things. <sup>7</sup> For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness *is* an abomination to my lips. <sup>8</sup> All the words of my mouth *are* in righteousness; *there is* nothing froward or perverse in them. <sup>9</sup> They *are* all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge. <sup>10</sup> Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. <sup>11</sup> For wisdom *is* better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

**Proverbs 8:17** I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.

**Proverbs 8:32-36** Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed *are they that* keep my ways. <sup>33</sup> Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. <sup>34</sup> Blessed *is* the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. <sup>35</sup> For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. <sup>36</sup> But he that sinneth against me

wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

God is the giver of all that is good. He has a storehouse full of wisdom that He would like to impart to His children. "For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist" Luke 21:15

There are times when we know we will need the wisdom of God. This may be when a child needs instruction or discipline. We may also be faced with situations that come up unexpectedly, like questions about the principles of our faith. In times like these there may be no time to sit down and search out what the Bible or doctrine books say on the matter. Therefore we need to be diligent each day in our pursuit to acquire godly wisdom.

In our text from Proverbs we find godly wisdom personified by a person who calls and invites us to herself. "She" wants everyone to receive of this wisdom for it is better than anything this world can offer. Wealth or fame have no comparison to it. It is up to us. What will we choose? God is calling us to follow Him more closely each day. When we receive this wisdom we become more alert and watchful for the snares that Satan sets in our path. Our Bible reading and prayer life will be active and rewarding. Our love for those who share this wisdom will be warm. It will help us to be our brother's keeper because we all want eternal life. The more we give ourselves to the pursuit of godly wisdom, the more we desire it.

If our love to God and godly things has cooled, our desire for godly wisdom will diminish. Then the selfish wisdom of this world will become our guide. This would be sinning and placing our Christian life and hope of salvation in jeopardy.

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" Proverbs 4:7.

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" James 3:17. In the verses preceding this quote, we read of many undesirable things that the wisdom of this world will bring to us if we reach out for it. Bitter envying, strife, and confusion result from this selfish way of thinking. "A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not:

but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth" Proverbs 14:6.

Our sinful flesh is inclined to think that we can handle the situations of life on our own. After all, we think we have lived a good life, and because of that we begin to lean on the arm of flesh. Soon we find that we are not as victorious as we should be. Once again we need to ask God to forgive and show us where we have left off seeking His wisdom.

When we are totally yielded to the wisdom that is from above, God's mercy and peace are felt in our hearts. We are at peace with one another, our joy is full, and life is worth living. While we pursue godly wisdom we find that we become more dependent on God and His Word. The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth. To lean on His wisdom, we need to let go of self. This takes faith, and faith comes by hearing and obeying His will and ways.

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" James 1:5. No doubt each of us has cried out to God many times for wisdom for the tasks before us. We feel our insufficiency and seek out the source of all wisdom. This search is often accomplished on our knees in our secret closet of prayer. There are times when God immediately gives us what we ask for, but at times it may seem that we feel no wiser than before. Later, possibly after a test or trial, we look back and see how God has indeed helped us in a way that makes us feel unworthy. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" Matthew 7:7-8.

"Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord" Leviticus 19:32. Here we see another source of counsel and direction. Those who have experience in Christian living often have good advice for those that are younger. The writings of the martyrs and other men of faith are an inspiration to us when we feel troubled about our Christian walk of life. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" Romans 15:4.

There are many decisions to make in our everyday walk of life. Challenges

and opportunities face us on every side. Youth face many challenges today, and if God's wisdom is sought, He will guide them by the Holy Spirit, the Bible, parents, and the church. This is a wonderful time to get established in the faith. Time spent pursuing godly wisdom today will stand anyone in good stead in the future. When we need to make important decisions, we should ask ourselves: What would Jesus do in this situation? And Does He expect me to obey?

May we pray for each other as Paul admonished in Colossians 1:9, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."



### *RACIAL PREJUDICE*

What comes to your mind when you think of a racist? Perhaps the image that pops into your head is one of an extremist, someone who is filled with hatred for anyone who is not of his ethnic group. Maybe you think of a poor, ignorant person who is out to build himself up by degrading others or a backward individual who has never matured beyond the mentality of the antebellum South. (*Time before the American Civil War*)

Regardless of our perception of who a racist is, it is rare that we include ourselves as possible candidates for something so vile. But, truth be told, the pride that fuels racial prejudice is within us all. For some, the thought is ingrained from the time of youth that certain groups of people are inferior. Perhaps it isn't spoken in so many words, but it is simply picked up from the context of our speech. Have you ever caught yourself telling your child that some ethnic groups are just plain lazy? Maybe your children have heard you make distinctions between those of different ethnicities by labeling some as the "decent" ones. And, of course, by "decent" we mean those who are more like ourselves. How about using racial slurs? Do you know what it implies to call someone by these names? When the person to whom you are referring hears these words, it brings back the pain of being considered a second-class individual, of being judged solely on the basis of skin colour or country of origin.

Jesus also suffered prejudice while here on earth. The insignificant fact that he was a Nazarene was a mark against Him in some people's minds. When

Philip ran to tell Nathanael that he had found the Christ, a Nazarene, Nathanael responded with a prejudicial scoff: "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). He had been raised to believe that those who came from Nazareth were inferior to him in every way. However, he was able to overcome his ignorance and accept the Lord as his Saviour.

Being raised to believe you are a cut above those around you is a detriment to our purpose. An individual may feel the Lord is asking him to give his time in another land. The people there will be of a vastly differing culture and with skin of a different hue. But who will reach their souls upon arriving in their land? Will the missionary who has subscribed to the theory that the white man's culture, ideas, and methods are the best and that he is there to teach a group of inferior beings the "right" way? Or will the Christian who realizes that in order to reach the soul, you must truly love and respect the man to whom it was given?

The most effective missionary knows that true love is not puffed up. When you love someone, you do not consider them beneath you, nor would you desire them to be in a subservient position. He also believes that once a man has repented and found salvation and is baptized, he is a brother equal to him in every way. When dealing with him, it will never be a consideration otherwise. I think we all know which of the two would be better suited for God's work. But ask yourself a more searching question, "Which of the two am I?"

Are we willing to re-examine our beliefs as they pertain to those of different cultures and nationalities? Do we have the vision to tell the difference between those things that our culture holds in high esteem as being appropriate and that which is irrefutably proper in the eyes of God?

It is my conviction that we are weak in the area of racial tolerance. I have wondered at times if we see racism as the sin it is. Do we feel the Lord is pleased with our feelings of superiority or the stubbornness with which we hold to the ignorance of prejudice? How does He look at it when we teach our children through our actions that there are those who are too far beneath us to warrant respect?

Let us never forget that God created all men in His image. All races tend to believe He is the same colour as they are, and perhaps He is. One thing for certain, we cannot say that He made anyone of us to be supreme over all other men. His Spirit would rather be one of ignoring petty differences and focusing on the similarities of the human condition. We all need salvation,

and we are all prone to fall. And somewhere in every one of us, whether we are white, black, or brown, there is the image of God and a spirit that longs to return to his Maker. *A brother in the Lord*



### ONE PIECE AT A TIME

Most of us have had the experience of putting a puzzle together. One of the first things we do when we begin is to look at the picture on the box to give us a general idea of how the finished product will turn out. Then, referring to that picture, we separate the different colors, placing similarly colored pieces close together.

Generally, we start with the border, since it is a bit easier to do because there are straight edges on the pieces. As we begin to assemble the puzzle, sometimes we might put a little pressure on a piece, trying to make it fit in a certain spot. We are convinced that it is the right place, but as we continue, we find another piece that fits there easily. So we make a switch.

Life is somewhat like a puzzle. It is full of pieces. But unlike a regular puzzle, we do not have a picture to look at to show how it will all come together.

Most of us have dreams in life, hope of how things will turn out for us. We have painted our own picture of life. If it all happened the way we see it, we could put the pieces together very well. However, the things we had hoped for and dreamed about do not always occur in just the way we thought they would. Perhaps something confusing or even unpleasant comes our way. Where do we fit that into our lives?

The Bible gives us an answer in Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

While it may not be immediately apparent how some pieces of the puzzle fit in our lives, it is important that we keep in mind that whatever happens is in the will of God for us and will work for eventual good.

In the book of Genesis, chapter 37, we find the account of Joseph, a man whose life illustrates that point. We read that as a young man, Joseph got a picture of his life in a dream. God revealed to him that he was to rule over

his brothers, his father, and his mother and that they would all bow down to him. That was a pretty good picture, but how was it going to come to pass? Joseph related his dream to his brothers and his father, but they would not accept what he said. The brothers decided to make sure that it could not happen.

This was a puzzle in Joseph's life. His brothers stripped off his clothes, and he was put in a dark pit. Where does that fit? How could that fit with the picture he had seen of his brothers bowing to him? However, it was part of his life, a piece of his puzzle. Think about it!

If the next piece of the puzzle had been good, perhaps Joseph could have put the previous piece aside, figuring that it would fit sooner or later. Instead, he was sold as a slave and sent down to Egypt. Another piece that did not seem to fit! "Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him ... and [they] sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph to Egypt" Genesis 37:27-28

In the house of Potiphar, things went pretty good. He found favor with the master. Things were entrusted into his hands. He could have thought of this as a pretty good piece. "I will use this one." However, while doing his best to faithfully serve Potiphar, he was falsely accused and as a result was put into prison—another piece.

Years went by. Joseph gained favor with the keeper of the prison and was put in charge of certain areas of the prison. There in the prison he interpreted a dream for one of the prisoners. Just as Joseph said would happen, the chief butler was released and called back to the house of Pharaoh. Joseph told him, "But think of me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house" Genesis 40:14

A year went by, and Joseph heard nothing. The butler had forgotten. Where does that piece go? Another year went by, and Joseph was still in prison. At last the scene changed. "Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day" Genesis 41:9

The butler remembered the man Joseph, and he was called out of prison. He told the dream of Pharaoh, and because of that he was put in a position of authority next to the king. At last a piece that was positive! He could use

that piece.

It is so easy to use the pieces we like. It is so easy to match them up and put or fit them into the picture. We notice when doing a puzzle that pieces with certain colors and shapes fit readily with others. Joseph could really see where this latest piece fit.

The day finally came when all the pieces fit together, and the picture emerged. It was exactly the picture God had revealed to Joseph in his dream so many years before.

In Genesis 42:6, we read, "And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth." This was the piece that was needed to complete the picture—the one that made all the other pieces come together.

Even the one that had seemed so out of place finally fit in. All things had worked together for good in Joseph's life.

What about your life? Maybe there are pieces of your life's puzzle that you wonder about. They are not what you had hoped for. They do not fit in the picture you had envisioned. What are you going to do with those pieces?

In Romans 8:26 and 27, we read, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." May we rely on the Spirit of God to make intercession for us.

You may have infirmities. Where do physical pains fit in your puzzle? That may be one of the harder pieces that must go into our lives.

Where do spiritual conflicts fit? Persecution, discouragement, financial reverses—have you had these? God can help us accept these hard pieces graciously.

We may not know why adversity comes our way, but in all of it, we can cling to the assurance that "all things work together for good." We will be able to say, "Lord, I don't know where this piece fits, but You know." Give it over to God and trust that in all of these things He is working out something for our good.

*Brother Charles*

## OPENNESS

Lord of immortality, before whom angels bow and archangels veil their faces, enable me to serve Thee with reverence and godly fear. Thou who art Spirit and requirest truth in the inward parts, help me to worship Thee in spirit and in truth. Thou who art righteous, let me not harbour sin in my heart, or indulge a worldly temper, or seek satisfaction in things that perish.

I hasten towards an hour when earthly pursuits and possessions will appear vain, when it will be indifferent whether I have been rich or poor, successful or disappointed, admired or despised. But it will be of eternal moment that I have mourned for sin, hungered and thirsted after righteousness, loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity, gloried in His cross. May these objects engross my chief solitude! Produce in me those principles and dispositions that make Thy service perfect freedom.

Expel from my mind all sinful fear and shame, so that with firmness and courage I may confess the Redeemer before men, go forth with Him hearing His reproach, be zealous with His knowledge, be filled with His wisdom, walk with His circumspection, ask counsel of Him in all things, repair to the Scriptures for His orders, stay my mind on His peace, knowing that nothing can befall me without His permission, appointment and administration.

*From A Collection of Puritan Prayers*

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