

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

Vol. 6 No. 6 - JUNE 2009



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

Matthew 5:15

From The Editor's Desk.

“Yielding to Jesus is to answer “Yes” to His call and surrender our desires, motives, and ambitions unto Christ's mastership. He then has the right-of-way in our lives.”

I was impressed with this sentence in the Article “Yielding To Jesus” and published in this edition for encouragement. I do not believe that it means just a once and for all yielding as when we first come to repentance and receive salvation.

No, it is far more than that, it is a continual yielding to Him who alone is worthy to be praised and glorified in and through our daily life. There are times when we may not want to yield in some area that pleases our carnal nature, the flesh, and if we are quick to recognise that it is the enemy of our souls that is behind that desire not to yield and that he is trying to foster in us a spirit of rebellion to God's word then we can and should deal with it promptly and submit ourselves to God.

James 4:7 sets out very clearly how we are crucify our flesh in this regard: “Submit (*yield*) yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Not only is there a command but there is a promise that goes with it and we could also think of God's words in the Old Testament in Deuteronomy 30:19: “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:” Yes, these words were spoken to Israel in the flesh but they apply with equal force to all peoples today.

The question that comes to mind is this: If we do not yield to God's ways will it lead to death? The scripture says it does. Not yielding is sin and how many of us do not know Romans 6:23? “For the wages of sin is death;” Yielding to God's ways brings us into the promise in the second part of that verse which states: “...but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (See also 1 Corinthians 10:13 for encouragement)

It is our prayer that the contents this month may be “solid food” and not “milk” for your spiritual life as you ponder the words written in the light of yielding to Christ Jesus, the dire results that await us if we do not and we thus choose life instead by showing that diligence spoken of in Hebrews 6:11: “And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:”

J.v.L.

MINISTER'S CORNER.**ARE WE COMPROMISING?**

By Min.E.W.

The burden of this article involves the method that Satan is using today to break down the saving faith of the gospel. Relaxing in the battle against Satan gives way to compromising with our flesh and sin. In 2 Corinthians 6:14 and 15, we read, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" This scripture clearly teaches us that there is distinct separation between the church and the world, and between spirituality and carnality.

We hear the thought that there are so many gray areas in Christian living today. However, one receives clear direction when living close to God. Spiritual vitality does not come through the intellect but through an intimate relationship with Christ. We are living in a time when communication and access to our wants exceed any time in history. Therefore it is important that we listen to the Holy Spirit and the direction He gives the church, because the spirit of compromising is always present.

One definition of compromising is "coming together by mutual concession." The following allegory explains compromising with Satan:

A hunter raised his rifle and took careful aim at a large bear. When the hunter was about to pull the trigger, the bear asked in a soothing voice, "Is it not better to talk than to shoot? What do you want? Let us negotiate the matter." Lowering his rifle, the man replied, "I want a fur coat." "Good," replied the bear. "I want a full stomach; so let's compromise. They sat down to negotiate, and after a time the bear walked away alone. The negotiation (spirit of compromise) had been successful. The bear had a full stomach, and the hunter had his fur coat.

Satan says to Christians, "Let's compromise," but there are some things that cannot be compromised. We will always lose when we compromise with evil.

For this spirit to work, what must be the condition of the heart? One real example is found in Revelation 3:14-18, which is the message to the church at Laodicea. The Lord told them that they were lukewarm because

their attitude was one of feeling self-sufficient. They felt they were rich and increased with goods and had need of nothing. History describes the city of Laodicea as a well-ordered, energetic, and pulsing center of trade, evincing coldness that was fatal to spirituality. It had qualities that contributed to making it a successful trading city of bankers and finance. It could adapt itself to the needs and wishes of others, ever pliable and accommodating, full of the spirit of compromise. This spirit had an impact on the Christians living there, and they could not thoroughly reject the temptations and allurements of the world. A deceptive spirit had made an inroad into their lives. They had become complacent and felt satisfied. It is very evident why the Lord asked them to repent.

Does the condition of the Laodicea church compare with the time in which we are living? According to the concerns and admonitions voiced through the recent years, one would agree that there are many similarities. We sense the urgency of this concern in many of our meetings. The tenor of this concern has received much attention in conferences. Also, the minutes to the district ministers' and deacons' meetings indicate that the topics pertaining to this subject are in the forefront.

Following are excerpts from five different conferences that express the concern of compromising with the world's influence. Already as early as 1944 a great awareness was present.

It was said then, "We agree to endeavor to stem the world-ward trend wherever threatening our faith, beginning in our homes and local congregations."

Another concern was expressed in the 1950 conference: "The ministers and parents, as well as all members, in the face of a decided drift toward worldliness, should make it their concern to prayerfully study the cause, and remedy it by acknowledging their mistakes wherever most beneficial, whether to individuals or in congregations."

In the first article of the 1983 conference, we read, "Due to the more recent drift among us, we recommit ourselves to resist permissiveness in our personal lives and to exercise spiritual care for one another as we have formerly promised, practicing careful and firm discipline in our homes, our congregations, and throughout the Church, being careful to involve sufficient counsel."

The 1993 conference stated, "We therefore resolve to find the necessary renewal of first love, bringing our lives, homes, and operation into a true

moderation, and disciplining our lives to have time for the Lord's work in the Church."

And the conference in 2003, "Resolved, that we adopt the following statement: '(A) Since a drift toward the world has been clarified, holy fear has come upon us as ministry, parents, and laity. Our burden is to fulfill our obedience by willingly going to the foot of the cross so we may take a stand by discipline and fearless teaching against all lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and pride of life. Sports involvement, love of affluence and luxury, and general permissiveness are issues we must face in the consecration God is asking of us. We look to the Holy Ghost for power and direction to perform our task.'" There was a real concern at that time in the area of "love of affluence and luxury, and general permissiveness." The Holy Spirit spoke and gave clear direction for us in all of the above concerns.

In Revelation 20:7, we read, "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison." Following are some thoughts that may help us understand this better. We believe that it is the time just prior to the return of our Lord. To the vast majority of people, and, sad to say, even to some of the so-called Christians, it will be a time unnoticed. Why? Because it is a time when Satan will work unhindered without restraint and in a deceptive manner. -

In the booklet *"The Peaceful Kingdom of Christ"*

Peter J. Twisck writes some very interesting thoughts on this verse. First, he refers to the time of the martyrs. He then continues his discourse on his understanding of what the time will be like when Satan is loosed: "And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea' (Rev. 20:8). This going forth of Satan into the wide world clearly signifies that it is the time when the witnesses of God lay dead in the street [referring to Rev. 11], in which men did eat and drink, bought and sold, married and were given in marriage until the day that Noah entered in the ark and the flood destroyed them, and as it was in the day of Sodom, when Lot went out of the doomed city, and fire and brimstone devoured the place, so shall it also be in those days.

"Christ the Lord himself shows us again and again that the last time before His second coming will be a time in which no one will be able to work any more (John 9:4), in which, indeed, the gospel will be preached in the whole world but understood as a dead letter for a witness only, in accor-

dance with Matthew 24:14. And thus this time may rightly be compared to the time of Noah before the flood, as also to the time spoken of by the prophet, when the witnesses of God lay dead on the streets, when high living and giving of gifts one to another seemed to be the chief work of men."

Twisck goes on to say that it is a time of continued liberty, favorable to the enemy of souls, and this time of liberty will continue in the world until the second advent of Christ.

This prophecy details a few points that are outstanding: (1) This time will be a time of high living, enjoying sensual living, living in self-gratification and with excess in the field of entertainment. The gospel will be preached, but it will have little effect on many lives, because men will be taken up with the above described lifestyle. (2) It will be a time of liberty, meaning that mankind will not be held back by physical restraint or moral standards, thus taking liberties beyond normal limits. (3) It is a time of freedom, meaning men covet the financial resources to do whatever their flesh desires, which will be granted. It indicates a world that is not held back by material or physical restraints. This lack of restraint will have a direct effect on the church.

We must keep in mind the lukewarm condition of the Laodiceans. When the spiritual temperature of too many members of a congregation or the church in general is lukewarm, compromising convictions that at one time were clearly defined, this creates an atmosphere in which we cannot unitedly do disciplinary work. We then find an open field for offences and for sin to remain within the church, which causes a weak brotherhood. In some cases, it almost seems impossible to do disciplinary work. Could this be included in the meaning of John 9:4, where Jesus says we should work, for the night is coming when no man can work? Oh, may we be diligent, brethren, in keeping house within the beloved church of God, lest we find ourselves wanting on that Great Day.

The method that Satan is using today is well described in the *Martyrs Mirror*, page 8, which reads as follows:

"He reveals himself on the one hand as an angel of light, 2 Cor. 11:14-15, as a kind, pleasant, yea, even divine messenger, with humble countenance, downcast eyes, plain garb, and living in seclusion from the throng of the worldly-minded, even as the holiest people, yea, the martyrs of God, formerly did. His words are modest, trembling and full of contrition—seemingly coming from deep meditation, inward fear and apprehension,

lest he might speak amiss or untruthfully. Meanwhile, and before one is aware of it, he seizes hold and tears like a wolf in sheep's clothing, robbing the innocent lambs of Christ of their precious faith, which he pretends to be of small importance, but without which faith it is impossible to please God.

As the first design is aimed at the faith, so this is directed against the true Christian life. Here lies great danger. Who shall escape these snares? He that would at no time be taken unawares by it must indeed be cautious and watchful. But our very flesh is prone to it."

Sometimes we chafe under the guidelines and warnings the church brings to us. Really, this should create thankfulness in us, and we need not look at warnings negatively. Rather, we can rejoice that the spirit of prophecy is active today in the church of God, giving His children clear guidance as how to live in the eleventh hour. Thanks to God for the true faith that has been "once delivered to the saints." The strength and victory lies in keeping our spiritual house in order. The Word of God gives clear direction in the evil day in which we are now living. Following are a few of those verses.

Jesus said, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace" (Luke 11:21).

In 1 Peter 5:5, we read, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

The spirit the prodigal son possessed and of which David writes in Psalm 51 will ensure for us spiritual power to withstand the evil days.

The third verse of Jude reads, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

In conclusion, the faith the Word teaches, the faith of our forefathers, and the faith that is alive today will keep us in the dark days we are living in and will keep us unto the end.

Used by permission from "The Messenger of Truth"



*"For we are but of yesterday"***Worldly Amusements and Entertainments**

This article appeared in the Historical Journal April 2009 Eastern Mennonite Publications and was felt to be a timely reminder God's people to beware of drifting in the practice of our Biblical faith and separation from the world and its many attractions. JvL.

God has called His people to a holy life of separation from worldly activities and excesses. "Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober.... as he which bath called you is holy, so be ye holy" (1 Peter 1:13-15). "For the time past of our life may suffice us ... when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot" (1 Peter 4:3, 4).

To the Christian, who does not run with the world, the terms "worldly entertainment" and "worldly amusement" both imply unwholesome activity. "The word *amusement* had a pejorative ring in the ears of conservative Mennonites, for it contradicted the strong Mennonite work ethic, and implied pleasure-seeking, idleness, vanity, waste, and worldliness."¹

The Swiss Brethren of the sixteenth century consistently separated themselves from the world. Even their critics acknowledged that none other "leads a more modest or pious life than the Anabaptist. As concerns their outward public life they are irreproachable."² They chose to avoid whatever popular entertainment was available in their day although persecution probably precluded any such involvement. And yet by the seventeenth century, some Dutch Mennonite groups, who experienced religious toleration, had already given up their opposition to the theater. One Mennonite deacon was a famous writer of tragedies, and another member kept a kind of amusement place.³

During the colonial period in America, men, women, and youth had little time to seek worldly pleasures as they carved their living out of the wilderness. Worldly entertainment began to pose a greater threat as the twentieth century unfolded. "Mennonite concern about participation in questionable amusements is evident from the more than 120 conference resolutions defining and condemning worldly amusements passed by the various Mennonite district conferences after 1865."⁴

During the twentieth century, the American culture underwent sweeping

social changes, which influenced the church. The corrupting influence of radio and television, and the counterculture of the 1960s each had their effect. Eating in public restaurants and attending moving picture shows became popular. As leisure time increased, so the pressure for entertainments mounted.

Throughout these years (1900-1970), many church leaders with vision observed a general drift in the Mennonite Church toward worldly pleasure seeking. Conservative groups did not run to the excesses that many did in society around them. "They shunned the entertainment program of the world and did not patronize the picture shows, music concerts, circuses, and fairs held in nearby towns."⁵ In 1939, Mennonite General Conference declared that worldly amusements "are as natural for worldlings as the joy of the Lord is for Christians.... All the carnal amusements that appeal to the gratification of the flesh ... are destructive to spiritual life, and should therefore be scrupulously avoided by all Christian people."⁶ As late as 1948, the Virginia Conference "adopted a resolution against 'the use of films or pictures which would corrupt the mind and create a thirst for commercial entertainment films.'"⁷ Someone has summarized it this way, "Possessing an inner peace, the typical Mennonite has not found it necessary to drug a restless spirit by resorting to sensual and ever more exciting amusements."⁸

As the Mennonite Church entered the twentieth century, Bible classes and young people's meetings were organized in an effort to counteract negative cultural influences and to keep the youth in the church. In some areas of Lancaster Conference, young people gathered for diversion first in the homes and then in succeeding years, at the church with the approval of the ministry. In 1936, S.G. Shetler, of the Allegheny Conference, wrote that the youth were asking, "We are not to go to places like the movies, where shall we go? What has the church for us?"⁹ Some churches answered questions like this by providing social activities for youth. One such program was Young People's Institutes which drew large groups of young people together annually from various conferences. In 1948, Mennonite Youth Fellowship was organized by the Mennonite General Conference. This institution was designed to meet the spiritual and social needs of youth. As the years passed, however, the social and entertainment aspects of the program were increasingly emphasized. By the 1960s, more and more congregations were planning their own recreational activities, sum-

mer camps, and youth retreats. Church life was beginning to consist of having a good time together.

This worldward trend contributed to the rise of various revival groups which separated from the Old Mennonite Church. Now in our day, for many professing Mennonite groups, "patterns of entertainment differ little from the surrounding culture." In some congregations, entertainment activities such as softball games are announced without apology along with other Sunday morning announcements.¹⁰

One strong influence toward play and entertainment came through the Mennonite high schools and colleges. The Eastern Mennonite College was founded (1917) "to safeguard student life" by educating youth in a safe environment. " 'All contest games with outsiders' were prohibited.... Musical instruments were not to form any part of the equipment at school."¹¹ "Attendance at movies and similar places of worldly entertainment was forbidden."¹² In spite of all this, however, as the years progressed interest in play activities grew. The school provided a program of athletics, and students eventually clamored for more and more sports. Extramural sports came to be allowed. "Earlier concepts of physical education did not emphasize the value of play for its own sake."¹³ Now sports took front-seat importance. In the field of music, singing in special groups was first allowed and then promoted. Some pressed for establishing "a good music radio station," which led to the use of musical instruments and the giving of musical entertainment shows—all under the umbrella of college education. The eventual acceptance of skits and dramas led to the use of full-blown plays. The Lancaster Mennonite School faced the same pressures and followed the same pattern in the years from 1940 to 1990. The sweeping social changes of these years both indicated the general course of the broad Mennonite Church and also propelled its people toward more and more of the same. We conclude that man's insatiable desire to find fulfillment in amusement and entertainment bespeaks of the emptiness of it all.

"Mennonites have, however, obtained recreational values from their regular activities. Not separating life into the sacred and secular, they have found religious and spiritual significance and satisfaction in their daily tasks.... In recent years the social life of the more seriously minded young people has to an increasing degree revolved around service projects."¹⁴

Worldly amusements and entertainments will continue to threaten the true church. How will our history read?

May God be pleased to bless those who have chosen to maintain the former Biblical position of the Anabaptist-Mennonite Church on this defining issue.
 —Nathan H. Burkholder

Bibliography:

1. *The Mennonite Encyclopedia, 1955-90, article "Amusements and Entertainment" (Vol. V).*
2. *Harold S. Bender, The Anabaptist Vision, (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press 1944), p. 24. Encyclopedia, article "Amusements" (Vol. I).*
4. *Encyclopedia, article "Recreation" (Vol. V).*
5. *Daniel R. Lehman, Mennonites of the Washington County, Maryland and Franklin County, Pennsylvania Conference, (Ephrata, Pa.: Eastern Mennonite Publications, 1990), p. 412.*
6. *Encyclopedia, article "Amusements" (Vol. I).*
7. *Hubert R. Pellman, Eastern Mennonite College, 1917-1967, (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1967), p. 173.*
8. *Encyclopedia, article "Amusements" (Vol. I).*
9. *Sanford G. Sheffer, 7 Centuries of Struggle and Growth, 1763-1963, (Allegheny Mennonite Conference. 1963: distributed by Herald Press), p. 390.*
10. *A. Grace Wenger. Frontiers of V*
11. *Faithfulness: The Story of the Groffdale Mennonite Church, (Leola, Pa.: Groffdale Mennonite Church, n. d.), p. 267. Penman, Eastern Mennonite, p. 17*
12. *ibid., p. 114.*
13. *ibid., P. 217.*
14. *Encyclopedia, article "Amusements" (Vol. I). Philadelphia.*



SNAPSHOTS.

Brief excerpts from historical publications.

ANABAPTIST MENNONITE VIEW OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The Holy Spirit

Virtually all **Anabaptist** statements regarding the Holy Spirit are orthodox. They identify him as the third person of the Trinity. How is it then, that **Anabaptists** have so often been labelled spiritualists, people who preferred the direct inspiration of God to the words of Scripture? The reason is

that the **Anabaptists** talked more about the Spirit than others did. They believed that they were living in the age of the Spirit, the time when every child of God would have the Spirit. They often spoke, almost naively, about being led by the Spirit, and being given divine illumination.

But most **Anabaptists** managed to maintain the tension between Word and Spirit, holding clearly and firmly to both. They claimed that every believer had the Spirit and was capable, therefore, of understanding Scripture and participating in its interpretation.

They rejected both the Catholic and the Protestant views which implied, practically, that only some in the church, the clergy and teachers, had the Holy Spirit.

The man who gave most attention to the relation of the invisible Spirit to the visible church was Pilgram Marpeck. With untiring effort he tried to articulate his view of the unity of outer and inner Word, of the work of God the Spirit in individual and church and what he called "the external apostolic service of the church." The Spirit, he writes, moves with the external service, but it may not therefore be concluded that if the service is performed the Spirit is there. The Spirit works only where there is faith and obedience.

Apart from these emphases we find the usual ones, based on Scripture, of the Spirit as the illuminator of Scripture, as the one who brings to remembrance all that Jesus taught, as the one who transforms believers from sinners into saints, and as the one who comforts the believer, especially in times of suffering and martyrdom.

Hans Denck, "Concerning the Law of God," ca 1526

Whoever has received God's new covenant, that is, whoever has had the law written into his heart by the Holy Spirit is truly righteous. Whoever thinks that he can observe the law by means of the Book ascribes to the dead letter what belongs to the living Spirit. Whoever does not have the Spirit and imagines that he will find him in Scripture looks for light and finds darkness, looks for life and finds only death, not only in the Old Testament but also in the New.... Whoever has really laid hold of truth can assess it without Scripture.

Balthasar Hubmaier, "Twelve Articles," 1526-1527

I believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son,

and yet is one with them, very God. He hallows all things and without him nothing is holy. In him I place all my trust that he will teach me all truth, increase my faith, and kindle the fire of love in my heart by his holy inspiration, that my heart may burn with true, unfeigned and Christian love toward God and my neighbors. This I beg of you with all my soul, my God, my Lord, my Comforter.

Hans Hut, "A Christian Instruction," ca.1527.

And now, what does he see through the Holy Spirit in truth? The Father in the power of his omnipotence by whom he has been made. He also knows the Son in whom he was tested, cleansed, justified, and circumcised a true child of God. He has open access to the Father and has become one with Christ and all his members. They are one community and one body in Christ. All the members of this community are enemies of sin and enjoy and love righteousness. And even if such a person sins and falls it is not done with pleasure. Therefore also he is not cast out, for the Lord holds him in his hand and his sins are forgiven and not counted as sin to him.... Now everything is all graciousness, mercy, praise, glory and honour in the Holy Spirit.

Jacob Hutter, "The Fourth Epistle of Jacob Hutter," ca.1535

You have also heard and understood that the Lord has long gone before you during the day in the cloud, that is his servants and preachers. But the night will come when the cloud will no longer be visible. Then the Lord will no longer go before us in the pillar of cloud, but in the pillar of fire will God go before his own. That is the light and brilliance of his Holy Spirit and through God's word, which word and spirit is in all godly, Christian hearts who by it are ruled, instructed, taught and led in all truth and through a true Christian well-grounded faith. That is the pillar of fire in our hearts. Happy is he in whom the light glows and shines for he will not fall nor be confounded even in the night as the Scriptures testify.

Peter Riedeman, Account, ca.1542.

We Acknowledge the Holy Spirit.

Since the strength, power, nature, character, and essence of the godhead are illustrated for us and to be recognized in the creation, the work of God's hand, we say that just as, when one speaks, one exhales and emits breath

with the word, so that from both the speaker and the spoken word a living breath wind blows and voice proceeds and is uttered, even so the Holy Spirit comes from the Father and the Son, or from the Truth and the Word. But as the Son or the Word proceeds from the Father and yet remains in him, the Holy Spirit proceeds from them both and remains in them both for ever and ever. Thus we acknowledge him, with the Father and the Son, to be God.

We believe that in the Holy Spirit we have all comfort, delight and fruitfulness and that he confirms, brings to pass, carries out and perfects all things; that he also teaches, directs and instructs us, assures us that we are children of God, and makes us one with God, so that through his working we thus become incorporated into and partakers of the divine nature and character. And this his work—God be praised!—we experience within ourselves in truth and power in the renewing of our heart.

Dirk Philips, "The Church of God,"

The Holy Ghost is the third name, person, power, and activity in the Godhead, of one divine essence with the Father and the Son (Mt. 28:19). He proceeds from the Father through the Son and acted with them in the creation. He is the Spirit of truth, a Comforter of the conscience (1 Jn. 5:8; Jn. 16:13), and a Dispenser of all spiritual gifts, which are poured by God the Father through Jesus Christ into the hearts of believers (1 Cor. 12:11). By him they are enlightened, renewed and sanctified (Tit. 3:6; 1 Cor. 3:11), and become a possession of God (Eph. 1:14) and new creatures in Christ. By him they are kept to everlasting life, and without him no one knows God or believes in Jesus Christ. All good gifts come from the eternal Father through Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Jas. 1:17; 1 Cor. 4:7), and are divided to us by the Holy Spirit (Mt. 7:11).

Menno Simons, "Triune God," 1550.

We believe and confess the Holy Ghost to be a true, real, and personal Holy Ghost, as the fathers called him; and that in a divine fashion, even as the Father is a true Father and the Son a true Son. Which Holy Ghost is a mystery to all mankind, incomprehensible, ineffable, and indescribable (as we have shown above of the Father and the Son); divine with his divine attributes, proceeding from the Father through the Son, although he ever remains with God and in God, and is never separated from the being of the

Father and the Son.

And the reason that we confess him to be such a true and real Holy Spirit is because we are brought to this by the Scriptures, for he descended upon Christ at the baptism in the bodily shape of a dove, and appeared unto the apostles as cloven tongues like as of fire; because we are baptized in his name as well as in the name of the Father and of the Son; because the prophets have prophesied through him, performed miracles, had dreams and saw visions; because he is a dispenser of the gifts of God, and that (take note) according to his own will. He moved Zacharias, the son of Barachiah; he moved John the Baptist while yet in his mother's womb, and He said to Simeon that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Paul. And to Peter, Behold, three men seek thee, He guides us into all truth; he justifies us. He cleanses, sanctifies, reconciles, comforts, reproves, cheers, and assures us. He testifies with our spirit that we are the children of God. This Spirit all they receive who believe on Christ. Paul admonishes us not to grieve him. Whosoever sins against the Spirit, says Christ, unto him it shall not be forgiven. David desired that God might not take from him this Spirit, for all that have not this Spirit are not of Christ.



Seasoned Speech (Part 3)

Matthew S. Garman Myerstown, PA.

A Tree of Life

A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit" (Proverbs 15:4)

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never harm them" is true as far as it goes. But while words cannot break bones, they can break hearts. A look at the definitions of words in the above verse reveals a vivid contrast. Wholesome means "healing" and perverseness means "viciousness." Breach means "fracture."

Our tongues have the power to make wounds or to heal wounds. Gossip,

backbiting, slander, and sarcasm are daggers to the heart. A lack of tact and graciousness may cause even right words to grate and grind. On the other hand, we can speak words that soothe, calm, and heal hurting hearts.

Wholesome words help heal the ravages of sin. Many sin-wrecked souls are left "stripped ... and wounded ... and ... half dead" along life's road. They need a Good Samaritan to bring the balm of Gilead and minister healing to them. One elderly neighbor asked a brother if the killing he had done while in the army would be held against him at the Judgment. The brother shared God's answer for sin—confession and repentance—and the neighbor found peace by repenting of his past. God gives us many opportunities to bring words of healing to sin-battered souls.

Wholesome words help heal the wounds of strife. Whether we are party to strife or a witness to it, we have the responsibility to speak words that make for peace. The children of God are peacemakers (Matthew 5:9). Humble words of apology and accepting responsibility for our mistakes will help restore peace. If brethren are at odds, we can plead for reconciliation based on their relationship in Christ (Philippians 2:1). A few words can help neighbors who are upset to put things in perspective. One mother would ask her quarreling children, "What will it matter one hundred years from now?" May our words quench, rather than fuel, the fires of strife.

Wholesome words help heal the aches of sorrow and the pangs of loneliness. How many around us are suffering grief, affliction, or bereavement? Have we spoken healing words of comfort to them? The promises of God strengthen, soothe, support, and stabilize. We can share pleasant memories of the past when someone has lost a loved one. Giving a testimony of God's help in our trials will minister hope to similarly suffering people.

In the early dawn of time, God barred the path to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden, mercifully preventing man from living eternally in his fallen state. In the dawn of our eternal day, God will welcome man to partake freely of the tree of life; thus he will live forever. Today God has planned for our tongues to be trees of life. May our tongues be used of God to bring healing, not hurt, to those about us.

Reprinted by permission from The Eastern Mennonite Testimony.



“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”
John 7:24

The Window Through Which We Look.

A young couple moved into a new neighbourhood
The next morning while they were eating breakfast,
The young woman saw her neighbour hanging the wash outside.
'That laundry is not very clean,' she said.
'She doesn't know how to wash correctly.
Perhaps she needs better laundry soap.'

Her husband looked on, but remained silent.

Every time her neighbour would hang her wash to dry,
The young woman would make the same comments.

About one month later, the woman was surprised to see a
Nice clean wash on the line and said to her husband:
'Look, she has learned how to wash correctly.
I wonder who taught her this?'

The husband said,
'I got up early this morning and cleaned our windows'

And so it is with life. What we see when watching others
Depends on the purity of the window through which we look.
I hope that you have a very blessed day!



SELF-SACRIFICE

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12-13).

Jesus' life was the ultimate example of self-sacrifice. Jesus gave everything through His life and in His death that He might redeem us to Himself and set us free from the binding chains of sin and death. Not only has He given us the gift of eternal life, but He has shown us the way of true happiness and joy of heart.

Oh, how blessed we will be as we realize that we are completely His. Having dedicated our lives to His service, we follow His perfect example in giving all that we are for the benefit and happiness of those around us and for the glory of His kingdom.

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

True self-sacrifice requires the patient endurance of all that comes against us in this life. We realize that our lives are not our own and that we can rejoice even in all our suffering, disappointment, or trial, knowing that these are only bridges to greater spiritual maturity and wholeness in Christ. "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Peter 5:10). "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3).

The life of self-sacrifice is not easy, but its rewards and blessings far outweigh any difficulty that may come into our lives. Such a life requires a complete giving up of oneself to God for His service, nothing reserved. It requires a truly humble heart. This will give us clear vision to see our smallness and our weakness and our great need of God's sanctifying grace and empowering strength. We remember that He has said, "For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even

your perfection" (2 Corinthians 13:9). "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). As long as this vision is clear, we will not find it difficult to surrender our lives daily into the loving and caring hands of an almighty and all-knowing God. "For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5).

As we give God full control of our lives, He will fill our hearts with His great love. Not only will we see the needs of those around us, we will also feel their hurt in our hearts. Their burden will become our burden, and their pain will become our pain. God's love in our hearts will prompt us to reach out quickly to help them.

Having made a commitment to be true at any cost, our life may be filled with hardship and adversity, bringing with it much pain and sorrow. Let us not fear these things. For Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). When we allow ourselves to fall into the loving arms of our Savior, He surrounds us with His love and lets us know that everything is going to be all right. He will keep us through this night. Here in His arms we may experience peace in the midst of our pain and joy in the midst of our sorrow.

While we patiently endure our suffering, God is preparing a blessing for us that will take us to greater spiritual heights than ever. "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10).

"For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have sheaved toward his name ... to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made promise to Abraham ... Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise" (Hebrews 6:10-15).

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. [36] For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. (Hebrews 10:35-36)



DECEPTION

Deception is a trick of Satan from the beginning. Eve was led to believe an untruth. The consequences were drastic, far-reaching, and very detrimental.

The Bible gives us many warnings about this evil. When Jesus was asked about His return and the end of the world, His first words were, "Take heed that no man deceive you, For many shall come in my name, saying I am Christ: and shall deceive many" (Matt. 24:4-5). I am not sure what is meant by saying, "I am Christ," but these people would claim to be Christians. Could that be what is meant? In our day, there are many who claim to be Christians and are causing many to believe their doctrine, which is not in harmony with the teaching of Christ and the apostles. Nonconformity to the world, nonresistance, true repentance, self-denial, and many such principles are disregarded almost completely. And yet they believe they are saved. Many are deceiving many. How very sad!

What can we do to try and stop this flood? It surely should behoove us to hold fast to the truth and live it to the best of our ability by the grace of God. In James 1:22, we read, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." This is an area we need to take a close look at. The word is preached in truth, and we may even say, "That was a good message," but are we careful enough to be doers of it? Does it cause repentance and change in our lives? Or do we say that would be good to live like that, but it's not for me? Have we deceived ourselves?

In 1 Corinthians 3:18, we read, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." It seems that when we have too high a concept of our own wisdom, we try to find a higher way. Or we try to figure out another way for ourselves, living in pride instead of humility? Also, in Galatians 6:3, are these words, "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." We need to remember our depravity and trust in God's grace. Then in verses 7 and 8 Paul says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Do we sometimes think we can get by with a little carnality or a little covetousness or a little foolishness or some other work of the flesh?

In Ephesians 5:5, the Apostle speaks of those who have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. And then in verse 6, he says, "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." There are many other scriptures that warn us about deception. But may these be enough to help us be aware of its dangers.

Now, how can we resist deception? I will try and list a few ways that will help.

First, by knowing the truth and continuing in it.

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Jesus is the truth. In John 14:6, He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Jesus also said in the prayer He prayed in John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

If we know the Word of God and obey it, we will be kept from deception! When we walk with the Lord and know His voice and obey it, He will keep us in His care. It is important for us to abide in the doctrine of the Bible, for in 2 John, verse 9, it says, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in it the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." It is also committed to us to keep ourselves in the love of God (Jude 21). Although there are many deceivers in our day and we are in danger of deceiving ourselves, God has a way for His faithful children.

By faith, believing the Bible, by prayer, diligently seeking God's will, by being completely committed to the Lord, our will is lost in His. By knowing and living the Word, the Truth, by abiding in the doctrine of Christ, by keeping our eyes on the Lord Jesus, we will be able to resist deception. Deception is a terrible thing. Can you think of anything worse than to think you are saved when you are lost?

May God keep us from deception.

With love and concern,

Brother Edward S., Arizona.



OUR MIGHTY GOD

*There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee:
neither is there any rock like our God (1 Sam. 2:2).*

Isaiah 40:18, 21-31

¹⁸To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? ²¹Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? ²²*It is* he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof *are* as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: ²³That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. ²⁴Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. ²⁵To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. ²⁶Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these *things*, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that *he is* strong in power; not one faileth. ²⁷Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? ²⁸Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, *that* the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? *there is* no searching of his understanding. ²⁹He giveth power to the faint; and to *them that have* no might he increaseth strength. ³⁰Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: ³¹But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.

Since his creation, man has had a desire to worship a higher power. He has worshiped many gods of this world, only to be disappointed by their failure to deliver and bless. In Elijah's time, a contest was held between Baal, an idol, and the God of heaven. God's power was reaffirmed, and the futility of worshiping idols was again demonstrated. It is futile to compare the paltry gods that man has devised with the almighty God.

Mankind was created to glorify God. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11). If our perception of

God is vague and distant, our worship will be tepid. Only as we come to a deeper understanding of God and who He is can we worship Him as we ought. As we perceive with the ability of finite minds the awesome might of God, may our hearts be enlarged with praise and adoration toward Him.

Isaiah's beautiful discourse on the power and majesty of God is opened with a challenge. His question rings through the ages, "What likeness will ye compare unto him?" Later God asks, "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal?" What follows is a description of the irrefutable truth of the Creator and His unrivaled authority and power over all creation.

God's greatness and power have been proclaimed through the ages. The biblical patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and teachers have passed on the truth of His sovereignty from generation to generation since the creation. Though we choose to ignore all that is written or spoken of Him, nature itself will continue to testify of a supreme Creator. All we need to do is lift our eyes on a clear night to the myriad stars to be reminded of God's power. Night after night, each star, known by name and numbered by God, appears in its place, never failing in its regularity because "He is strong in power."

Many times we place our chair so as to be at the best advantage for the job or situation at hand. God has the "circle of the earth" at His disposal to use for His divine purpose. Compared to God's greatness, we are as grasshoppers in the field. In contrast to the ant, grasshoppers are a careless type of insect, foraging today on whatever happens to be available, never giving thought for the future or for how they might improve their habitation.

Much of humanity lives in an equally careless manner, never stopping to consider how they might fit into God's plan and honor His name.

Man may rise to great power in the political and social world, exercising his authority selfishly over his fellowmen; however, even this authority is subordinate to God. History reveals that no ruler is so great that his kingdom cannot be reduced to nothing in a very short period of time. When God's purpose can be better fulfilled by dethroning kings, He makes swift work of bringing them down. Like a gardener, He plants and cultivates earthly authority. At His will, governments are allowed to take root and flourish, or He can cause them to wilt and die as a tender plant withered by the hot summer wind.

Isaiah asks the children of Israel why they would doubt God and think that their problems were too great for Him. Did they think that the answers

to their problems would be hid from God? He wondered why they thought their present situation was beyond hope. He then appealed to their knowledge, "Hast thou not known?" Had they not experienced His goodness and power before?

Three names are used in verse 28 of the text to set forth several attributes of God. "Everlasting God" reminds us that He is timeless. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Ps. 90:2). The name "Lord" reminds us of His authority over the entire universe and His leadership over His people. "The Creator of the ends of the earth" again reminds us that we owe our very existence to Him. In the same verse, we are reminded that God is not subject to the weaknesses that cause mankind to faint. God never wearies. The world values education and learning, but even the most learned cannot begin to plumb the depths of God's understanding.

One who has fainted has no power to arise or be of service. The text points us to the source of power that can lift those who have fainted under the weight of their emotional, spiritual, and physical burdens. Sometimes we face apparent failure in every direction we turn, the road ahead looks bleak, and we find no strength to go on. As we acknowledge our weakness God gives us power to rise from despair and increases our strength.

It is an accepted fact that man is in his physical prime during his youth. We admire the strength and seemingly boundless energy of young people and are inspired with what they can accomplish when they set their mind to a task. However, even in youth we face situations in which, strong as we may be, we find ourselves faint and weary. We see young people who have utterly fallen into the snare of the foe of their soul. Even for this calamitous situation, God has the remedy. We must learn to wait upon God.

Only in being patient and allowing God to reveal His way can man renew his strength and find grace to carry on in his service to God. Eagles are admired for their strength, grace, and ability to soar to great heights. We, too, may rise on the wings of our affection to God and find renewed strength in Him. God knows our potential, but only as we place our devotion completely on Him can we soar to the life that is abundant in peace, joy, and service. "I called upon the Lord in distress: the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place" (Ps. 118: 5). In this blessed state, we will find we can run the spiritual race without becoming weary; we can walk the

Christian road and not faint.

Often three words are used to describe God: omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. Omnipotence is God's almighty ability and strength; there is no limit to His authority and power over creation. In His omnipresence, God is present everywhere at all times. With this power, He is intimately involved in the lives of all mankind. Omniscience is God's infinite understanding of all things, His constant awareness of all circumstances, and His complete insight into all the mysteries of life.

The fact that God loves us, cares for us, and is personally interested in our lives distinctly separates Him from all the false gods of this world. The Bible promises rich blessings on the lives of those who fear and wait upon Him. "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies" (Ps. 25:10).

Many times we become weary in body and faint in mind as we battle against the forces of evil. Physical illness, undesirable family situations, and a fear of the future are a few of the things that tend to weigh us down. Modern medicine seeks to describe every emotional discomfort we face and to remedy it with medications and other treatments. There are justifiable reasons to take prescribed medications when proper counsel has been sought and it is in harmony with the teaching of the Bible. We do not, however, need to bear many of the fears and burdens that we encounter. God does not expect or even want us to carry our burdens alone. We often find peace of mind and a way through our dilemma when we are willing to lay down our own will and wait upon Him. Only as we completely trust Him and yield to Him will we find that refuge that our soul craves.

How does God reveal Himself to His children? If we will open our eyes, physically and spiritually, we will find Him everywhere we turn. His majesty is displayed in the tiniest snowflake and in the greatest avalanche, in the smallest insect and in the fiercest lion, in the gentle drops of dew on a rosebud or in the roaring waves that crash upon a rocky shore. He is heard in the cry of a newborn baby and seen in the quiet smile of a dying saint. He is the power behind the conviction brought upon a sinner and the comforting presence felt by the saved. Many times He reveals Himself to us through the conversation of Christian people. He is felt in the gentle hand laid on our shoulder by a brother or sister who cares about us. We are reminded of His power through the comfort and reproof of the Spirit.

If we will take the time to meditate as we study the Scriptures, we will

find that God has hidden rich gems of truth below the surface that go unnoticed by the casual reader. May our senses be awakened anew to the awesome greatness of God, and may our lives more clearly reflect His goodness and love.

Questions

1. How can our senses be more awakened to God's presence in our lives?
2. What might be some ways to minimize emotional distresses?
3. Does God personally direct every act of nature, or has He put the elements in motion and left them to random patterns? Does He speak to us through natural disasters and other acts of nature?



YIELDING TO JESUS

The call of God comes to everyone who hears salvation's story. This call to sinners is simple, quiet, clear, and distinctive. It beckons us to "yield to Jesus." One answers this call by responding yes to Jesus or by doing nothing, which constitutes a no answer to the Lord.

Yield has a two-fold meaning. One meaning is to give up, submit, surrender our rights, or hand our possessions to another. Used in this dimension, the word places the desires of one's will into the hands of another. The second meaning of yield is descriptive of an amount produced. We say, "That field of wheat yielded ninety bushels per acre." Of this nature, yield indicates a positive and good increase.

Our country has a network of highways. Signs along these highways tell us when to go, stop, merge, or yield. Yield signs are placed along roads in places where any secondary road meets a primary thoroughfare. These yield signs mean that we must surrender or submit to the flow of traffic on the main road while entering it. We must "yield to the right of way" of the other traffic.

Jesus is calling sinners today and asks us to travel on His highway of holiness. He requires each one to yield to Him. That is, to give Christ the "right of way" in our lives. Romans 6:16 states, "Know ye not, that to

whom ye yield yourself servants to obey, his servants ye are... " In yielding to Jesus, we surrender our wills. He then has the right of way in our lives. Choices and decisions are all subject to Christ, whether they are social, financial, or spiritual. This yielding is often simple and quiet—no big bang, crash of thunder, or falling star. We make a simple commitment, saying, "Yes, Lord, I'm yielding all to You from here on in my life." We then merge onto Christ's highway, and He becomes our Master. The Spirit of truth leads and directs us on life's pathway.

This commitment of true yielding to Jesus places us in His possession. Our lives soon bring forth fruit. There is increase in our lives as we yield to Him. Matthew 13:23 states, "But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

Zacchaeus was a little man who longed to see Jesus. He put forth a special effort to see Christ and yield to Him. He entered Christ's highway by submitting himself, inviting Christ to come to his house, and making restitution for past wrongs. In yielding to Jesus, Zacchaeus obtained a clear record and a fruitful life. Likewise, in our lives we need to see the Lord and be yielded to His mastership.

One day as Jesus taught by the Sea of Galilee, noontime came. The people hungered because of no food. Andrew drew Jesus' attention to a lad with five loaves of barley bread and two small fishes. Jesus blessed the loaves and fishes, and the yield was tremendous (John 6:8-13). Five thousand people were fed with twelve full baskets left over. What a yield! Such were the results of one prayer by the Master.

Jesus said in Luke 13 that the kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed. A man cast the tiny seed into his garden, and it grew and waxed to a great tree where the fowls of the air came and lodged. What a yield! The increase was from the smallest of all seeds to a great tree where birds could live. Also, the kingdom is like unto a little leaven (yeast) that a woman hid in three measures of meal. Soon it grew and expanded until all the meal was as one loaf. What a yield the smallest things produce when blessed by the Master.

Acts 5:1-10 tells us of an early Christian couple who only pretended to yield to Jesus. They agreed to keep back part of the price of their land from the apostles. They agreed to lie and live that lie. It cost them their lives, and immediately they fell down at the apostles' feet. No positive yield

came forth from their lives. Pretending is not yielding.

To do nothing when Jesus calls is an automatic decision to reject Him. To pretend not to hear Him is also rejecting Him. To pretend to follow and not yield everything to Him is also false. The lack of yielding to Him places us on the wrong road. This road leads to destruction and eternal hell fire.

Yielding to Jesus is to answer “Yes” to His call and surrender our desires, motives, and ambitions unto Christ's mastership. He then has the right-of-way in our lives. As we obey and continue yielding to Him, He brings about a yield or fruitage in our lives that is a blessing and inspiration in His kingdom.

Trust, peace, rest, and joy accompany this Christian life. This road leads to those eternal heavenly mansions. Will you be there? May we all find joy in "yielding to Jesus," the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2).

Brother Timothy, Kentucky.



"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country"
(Proverbs 25:25).

Compiled & Edited by: J van Loon
E-mail: shimara2@bigpond.com
Web: www.anabaptistmennonites.org