

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

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

Matthew 5:15

From The Editor's Desk.

There is much said today about people being free to exercise their own will, to do their own thing so to speak. Whilst most would agree that man has been given a free will by God to choose as he wants it is in the exercise of that free will that we can choose to follow Christ Jesus or the way of the world. Your choice. But then we also have to accept the responsibility of our choices and accept the ultimate outcome – Eternity with God in heaven or Eternity without Him in hell.

Regrettably there is much teaching in Protestant circles that deny the freewill of man and claim God has decided before the creation who would be saved and who would be damned. But how do you know if you are one of the Elect? Praise God we can have an assurance of salvation through the blood of Christ. *Whosoever* - Matt.10:32, John 3:15, Acts 2:21, Rom.10:13

This month's articles aim to clarify the scriptural view of salvation and refute some of the Calvinistic doctrines as summed up in the acronym T.U.L.I.P. and also to encourage us to preserve the faith as handed down from apostolic times.

Please contact us if you discern the need for more clarification in this area of being saved from your sins Matthew.1:21 rather than arbitrarily chosen by God.

JvL.

MINISTER'S CORNER.

Preserving the Faith – Letter of Jude.

Bro. Steve Hershberger, Gospel Light Fellowship, PA.

We are thinking of preserving the faith as we look in Jude 1. He addresses his epistle “To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” I trust I am speaking to people who have been sanctified and who know what it is to be sanctified. Yes, once we were not sanctified. We were lost in sin, but in Jesus Christ and through His love and the salvation that He has provided, we have been sanctified, and we have become a part of those who are called or, we might say, the elect. Then he says, “preserved in Jesus Christ.” We see that this thing of preserving is not necessarily ours to do. It is something that we are not able to do ourselves. The preservation is in the hands of Jesus Christ. There is safety, preservation, and protection in Jesus Christ. The only way

that we can be preserved is if we are in Jesus Christ. We cannot preserve ourselves. We must allow Him to preserve us.

In verse 3 we notice that we do have a part to play. I thought about that passage of Scripture where Jesus said (talking about the sheep), “My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” (John 10:29) That is preservation, safety, and safekeeping. In order to be kept, we need to experience that protection in the hands of the Father.

We do have a part to play in this thing of preserving the faith and that is mentioned here. “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.” That is our part. It speaks of diligence and putting forth effort. It is something we need to be in earnest about. God will not necessarily do that for us. Yes, He can enlighten the eyes of our understanding [Ephesians 1:18], give us a vision, change our hearts, but we must earnestly contend for the faith. That is what is necessary and what it takes to preserve. To preserve the faith we must contend for it. It is something that must be contended for.

Our faith puts us on a collision course with an ungodly society, with the world and with the forces of evil. When we embrace the faith that is what it does to us. We are facing the forces of evil. We are thrust into that battle. Verse 3 tells us that we need to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ and we need to, “Fight the good fight of faith, [and] lay hold on eternal life.” (1Timothy 6:12) This faith is the “once delivered” faith — it was once delivered unto the saints.

If we study the connotation of that verse, we find that it is speaking about the faith that was delivered in a full and a final way. It does not need a Joseph Smith to finish the faith — a new revelation, dream, vision or something. It was delivered once and for all. It does not need any additives or new revelations. When it was given, it was given full and complete, and we need to leave it at that. It is not a faith that needs to be revised for every new era that comes along.

There are a lot of people that look at the faith like a book. Often with books we have a second, third, fourth and fifth editions. Each time it is revised a little bit. There are people who have been doing that for generations. They have been tampering with the faith that was once delivered to the saints by altering it and revising it. They end up with a watered down,

washed out Gospel — one that will not change the life and will not save the soul. It might sooth the conscience a little bit, but it will not save the soul. It is not a faith that is worth contending for, but rather it becomes the faith that must be contended against. It becomes a tool in the hands of the enemy of our souls.

It is not only accepting Jesus as our Saviour, but it is about Jesus accepting us. One aspect of this faith is radical discipleship, where we are willing to turn our backs to the world and our face toward the cross, and we are willing to pay whatever price that it might demand or require. Regardless what an unbelieving, ungodly world, and a professing Christian society have to say about it, we are willing to follow Jesus and are willing to go all the way. That is the faith that we are talking about that must be contended for.

The faith does not need us to prop it up. It stands on its own. It will stand forever. The Scripture tells us the “word of the Lord endureth for ever” (1 Peter 1:25). “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33).

The challenge is not so much of losing the faith in the sense that the faith will disappear without us and without our faithfulness, but it is us being lost to the faith, or us losing the faith and losing our way. That is the challenge that we face unless we contend for the faith. Unless we do our part to preserve the faith, we will lose the faith and our children will lose the faith. The faith will not be passed on generation after generation as God has intended that it should. There are those outside who have not been in the family of faith. They have not been brought up in Christian homes, and they need the full Gospel presented to them — a Gospel that will save their soul and will take them all the way through to glory, not only get them started and then in the end perish in the wilderness like so many have. Much partial Gospel of salvation is preached today, but I wonder how long that a person can go on and be faithful to God with that sort of preaching. We need to preserve the faith for the sake of those who are outside as well as for us.

The next verse speaks about Israel. It shows one reason that we need to contend for the faith is because we see others who started out right but they did not end right. Israel was delivered from Egypt, but God was not well pleased with many of them. They lost their way and were destroyed in the

wilderness.

Then Jude speaks about “the angels which kept not their first estate.” (verse 6) It says that they are “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” They were once perfect beings in heaven. They were in God’s very presence. They were without sin, but they kept not their first estate. They had something to contend for and they failed to contend as they should have, so they lost out. They will be lost forever and there is no more hope for them. This is why we need to contend, because we are no better than they. We may be on the right road but that does not mean that we will reach our goal. Therefore, we must earnestly contend for the faith, and it must be in our interest to preserve the faith.

Moving down to verse 20&21, “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” *The first aspect of preserving the faith is building up ourselves on our most holy faith.* When I think of that, I think of our devotional life — feeding on the Word of God, and being faithful in our prayer life. It says, “praying in the Holy Ghost.” It does not merely say simply saying prayers. We must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we pray in earnest and our prayers are real. They are not mere prayers that are spoken. The Scripture tells us that we need to “Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17) We need to pray for ourselves and others. We need to plead with God on behalf of our children and others who need grace, salvation, direction, and so forth. We need to build up ourselves on our most holy faith.

Then Jude says, “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” One aspect of that is simply living a life of obedience from day to day and listening to the still small voice. That is one aspect of keeping ourselves in the love of God. Then, we have the assurance of salvation and His love burns strong in our bosom. Since we have a walk with God, we have a close personal relationship with Him and we find ourselves, in that special circle of God’s special favour. This does not give us anything to brag about. It is all because of God’s goodness, grace, and His work in our lives.

Preserving the faith must become personal with every one of us, or it will not be preserved. If it is not a personal thing, we do not have anything to preserve. It must first of all be a personal experience (personal relation-

ship) and maintenance of that personal relationship with God. That is the only way that we have a chance to preserve anything or to preserve the faith.

As we think of preserving the faith, we cannot gauge faith by numbers. However, there are some interesting things that we would like to consider as we go along and consider the shift in the balance between what were considered Conservative Mennonite churches prior to 1969 and how different the picture looks today in 2007.

I want to look at three means which God has given to preserve the faith.

- 1) Indoctrination,
 - 2) The Authority of the Church (or Church authority), and
 - 3) Separation — strictly thinking of outward separation from the world.
- 1) *Indoctrination*. In the conservative Mennonite churches and more so in the Conference type churches there is a strong doctrinal thrust. I think probably some of us are familiar enough with their literature that we could appreciate the doctrinal teaching that comes from Eastern Mennonite Publications and from the Nationwide Fellowship churches (like Rod and Staff Publishers) along with that. There is a lot to appreciate in the doctrinal thrust of those groups.

The idea of indoctrination is not foreign to the Scriptures. If we look at the books of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, we see that word “doctrine,” mentioned sixteen different times. In 1 Timothy 4:6 the apostle says that he wanted Timothy to be “nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine.” In order for Timothy to indoctrinate the church and to give sound doctrine and teaching that would be a blessing to the church and would help preserve the faith, he needed to be nourished up in that himself, first of all. He needed to be nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine. Then in verse 13, Paul said, “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine,” and verse 16, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine.”

Titus 2:1 says, “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine.” Perhaps the emphasis here is on the word “sound.” There is a lot of doctrine afloat today that is not sound. Therefore, it is important that we be established in sound doctrine, and sound doctrine has its source in the Word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for

instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” The Scripture is given by “inspiration of God, and [it] is profitable for doctrine.” That is where we must find our doctrine. The doctrine of the Church must have its foundation in the Word of God.

We read about doctrine not only in the New Testament but in the Old Testament as well. “Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little” (Isaiah 28:9, 10). This is the way it is as we think of the thought of indoctrination. It must be “precept upon precept; line upon line . . . here a little, and there a little.” We might say, “precept upon precept,” and then instead of “line upon line,” “doctrine upon doctrine.” I think there is a difference between precepts perhaps and doctrines (or at least maybe slightly). Precepts I think of as commands. That is what it takes for indoctrination to take place. It is a repetition. We need to hear it over and over. Sometimes we hear something and maybe there is one point that sticks with us. Then, we hear it again and something else sticks with us. Often, we are creatures that do not learn as fast as we should. Therefore, we learn and benefit from repeated teaching — hearing the same things over and over.

Under communism they used that approach as well. They used to brainwash their people. That is what they called it. They kept indoctrinating them in the tenets of communism. That indoctrination was effective with whoever accepted or subjected themselves to that. They were promoting their theories and they used propaganda and a lot of it was misinformation to brainwash their people about the tenets of their belief. We, however, are not talking about brainwashing but indoctrinating in the truth of God’s Word — the pure unadulterated truth of God’s Word.

In Titus 1:9 Paul speaks about the desired effect of indoctrination. With regard to a bishop, Paul says, “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” The idea of indoctrination or of doctrinal teaching is to convince, not only the gainsayers, but everyone. We need to be convinced and persuaded of the teachings of the Word of God. The tenets of the faith must be preserved.

The reason for this is so that we are not “tossed to and fro, and carried

about with every wind of doctrine,” (Ephesians 4:14) that floats around. There are a lot of winds of doctrine but we need to be established in the true doctrine, then we are not tossed to and fro. We need to be established in the truth, established in the principles of the Word, and not only the principles of the Word, but the applications to those principles as well.

We would like to pay a little closer attention to 1Timothy 4:16. “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” Timothy was called to preach the doctrine, but Paul says, “Take heed to the doctrine.” He needed to take heed to the doctrine himself. If he took heed to doctrine and he preached doctrine then that doctrine would “both save [himself,]” and those who heard him. The desired effect of teaching doctrine is that the doctrine would preserve the faith in his own life and heart. Also, it would have the potential to preserve the faith in lives of others. They however, first of all need to give heed to the doctrine.

We can be exposed to doctrine but if we do not give heed to it, it will not preserve our faith. We will not be established in the faith unless we give heed to doctrines. If it is not heeded, it will work like what we read in the book of Isaiah, where it says, “precept upon precept; line upon line.” If we go a few verses down in the chapter, it basically repeats itself. It says, “But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.” (verse 13) It brought about their destruction. Why? It is because they did not heed the doctrine.

Instead of preparing them for God’s blessings and usefulness in God’s kingdom, they became vessels worthy of and fit for destruction. That is the way it is with doctrine. Finally, the responsibility is not only all on the teacher, but it is on the listener. If we will benefit from doctrine, we must give heed to it and apply it to our lives. It is like it is oftentimes with a child in a family. Sometimes one child accepts the doctrine of his parents, and the doctrines of the church, and another child does not. The doctrine and the teaching were the same, but one accepted, and one rejected it. This is the way it works with doctrine. What is our response to the doctrines of the Word of God? Are we like the noble Bereans who “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so?” (Acts 17:11) That is the response God wants from us, not only to hear doctrine taught Sunday morn-

ing, but we go home and we look up the Scriptures ourselves to see whether those things are really so. That is how we become established in the faith and we are not tossed to and fro.

Oftentimes the doctrinal teaching that we get over the pulpit or that we read maybe is more to give us some direction and to whet our appetite, so that we can put our own roots down through our own personal research. How are we established as we think of the doctrines of the Word of God? What does it mean to me when I read, “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel” (1 Peter 3:3)? Does that bring our attention back to the standard of the church and that is where I must draw my line? Or, has it become a conscience matter with us — when I read that passage I am established in that and have my roots in the Word of God.

Therefore, this thing of doctrine does its thing in my life, and it becomes a matter of conscience, not a matter of what the church allows. That is the reason why I do not puff my hair, puff the sleeves on the dress, flare the ends of the sleeves, and that sort of thing or use extravagant looking material. It is not only because of the church standard, but because I am established in doctrine. That is the aim of indoctrination. It is contrary to the doctrine of simplicity so I refrain from those kind of actions. Or, when we read, “be not conformed to this world” (Romans 12:2), is that all I need — where it does not take the church to keep me back from following the fads of the world, because I understand I am part of a different kingdom? I am part of a different sphere. Therefore, I am not interested in following the fads of the world.

Or, since the Bible teaches non-resistance, therefore, we will not participate in warfare, nor go to war. Can we explain to someone exactly the reasons why? Or are we one of those who says, “I am a conscientious objector when it comes to war,” but we do not seem to seem to be opposed to having war at home with our brothers and sisters or with our fellow man. Can we go back to the Sermon on the Mount? Are we anchored in those truths which Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount — where we are to return good for evil, and where we do not resist evil? Nonresistance must be in our day to day life not only when it comes to going to war. Do we have that doctrine in our hearts and live it out day by day?

Condensed from a message given in November 2007.

The full text of this message is available from the publisher.

In the next issue the concluding portion of Preserving the Faith will be speaking to:

Part 2) *The doctrine of the authority of the Church.*

Part 3) *Separation or distinctiveness.*

Are these matters of conscience?

Renewing Our Acquaintance With the Major Prophets of the Old Testament: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

The Apostle Peter, in the New Testament, gives us a helpful perspective of the calling and work of these men of God. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:19-21).

These men, through whom God spoke, were honest and upright—"holy men of God." They had no desire and no motive to invent a message for their own purposes. They were not seeking inspiration to prophesy—it came upon them with a force that moved them to speak and write.

Many times the prophet did not

fully comprehend the message he was given to deliver. It was veiled in mystery- perhaps pertained to a future age (1 Peter 1:10-12). Furthermore, the words spoken by true prophets were unpopular and ill-received. These factors would have kept any self-respecting person from looking for a chance to prophesy.

The "moving" that came upon these men was the work of the Holy Spirit. By their actions and words we conclude that the moving was profound and powerful. God was speaking—they could not keep silence. These messages from God, delivered by faithful men of old, merit our utmost respect and full attention. "Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed" (2 Peter 1: 19). These messages are God's Word, shining as a bright light the darkness and squalor of this world. We have much to learn from them.

ISAIAH. Part 1.

We would miss so much if we did not have the writings of Isaiah. Our concept of God would likely be different than it is. Here we see the God of the Old Testament as being a God of love, very reasonable, and ready to forgive. This is the same as we see Him in the New Testament. He does not change. The terms for coming to Him and obtaining peace remain forever the same. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89).

How many revivals would have been ineffective without the golden invitation of the Old Testament? How many hearts, vacillating between surrender and self-will, have been moved to submission by the solicitous call, "Come now, and let us reason together"? This reasoning does not mean God will compromise with sin. It means that God will show us the way of truth and righteousness.

God is asking us to compare our way with His way. Does our way bring contentment, rest, and peace? Is it truly satisfying? Will it end well for us if followed to the finish? He wants us to see that His way is the only satisfying path for us. It is the only way that leads to eternal life. As we discover His way, we will find that He is not unreasonable. His goodness will be

revealed to us. He will not ask too much of us or ask us to do something we cannot handle. He will not let us down.

Apparently, the people of Judah which Isaiah describes in [Isaiah 1:4](#) as follows: "*Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.*" The people of Judah were maintaining an outward form of religion but were not worshiping from the heart. They were making sacrifices and observing days and times, but God was weary with their pretentious ways. He told them their hands were full of blood. This signifies that they were guilty of sin and they knew it. They were hypocritical, and God despises hypocrisy.

To the Laodiceans, Jesus said, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou went cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16). God wants our full devotion. He is not unreasonable in this requirement — this is part of His love and faithfulness to us. God knows that here alone lies the only way to be saved

and the secret to abundant Christian living.

What more could God offer us? He offers forgiveness of sins, peace, justification, blessed fellowship with Him, and life eternal! Although He offers so much, many choose not to accept His offer. God will not force anyone to serve Him but will continue to plead, "Come unto me."

Those who accept God's offer of salvation become an instrument that echoes God's plea to lost souls. To be effective in this calling our hearts must be made "white as snow." A clear remembrance of the time we lived in "Sodom" with soiled and bloody hands is a necessity if we are to relate properly to those we call. Our lives need to be free of hypocrisy, faithfully exemplifying what we believe. We must be willing and obedient to follow the Lord wherever He leads. Our spirits should be teachable so we may learn to be more like our Savior, and we will be a living invitation to the lost world around us.

Before ending His revelation to mankind, God made one more plea. The plea goes out to all. No one is excluded! "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life

freely" (Revelation 22:17).

ISAIAH Part 2

Although it is impossible for mortal man to see God in His full splendor, Isaiah received a glimpse of His glory. He saw the train of God's robe filling the temple. What kind of robe must that have been, and what caused smoke to fill the temple? This awe-inspiring vision brought Isaiah to the realization of his depravity. As he recognized his need, cleansing was offered to him. After being purged of iniquity and sin, Isaiah received a commission from God.

Isaiah is the only book in the Bible that speaks of seraphim. According to traditional Christianity, they are of the highest order of angels. They serve God and sing praises to Him. They are the caretakers of God's throne and are given special powers by God. Their power is demonstrated in the text, for when one cried to another, his voice shook the doorposts of the temple.

Peter heard the call to service on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. He immediately left his work and followed Jesus. After Jesus' resurrection, He met a small group of the disciples on the shores of the sea of Tiberias and made breakfast for them. After breakfast, Christ questioned Peter about his love for Him.

Was Jesus searching Peter's heart to determine if Peter loved Him above all else? Jesus instructed Peter, "Feed my sheep." The Lord gave Peter a commission. Thereafter, Peter zealously worked at spreading the gospel to all races and nations. The same commission applies to each believer today.

There is something about the good news of salvation that requires telling. It has been repeated over and over, sometimes at the cost of much human suffering. Why do men give their lives to tell this story? Why has there been such opposition to it? When the gospel message becomes real in men's hearts, it lights a fire that cannot be quenched by outside forces. It reaches down to the needs of the human heart and offers a remedy. That is why men are inspired to tell the story.

Over and over God's Word has changed lives. Not only does it change lives, it transforms the soul. Only God's Word can do this. God

puts His love in the hearts of His children, and that love must be expressed.

We know that sin has brought tremendous sorrow and suffering to this earth. It has affected many lives with tragic consequences. This Sinful world needs hope and comfort. God's Word offers hope for every sin-weary soul. Each born-again Christian becomes a messenger of that hope. "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary" (Isa. 50:4).

How do I know what my part is? When do I say a word for my Father? Am I to serve at home or abroad? Who can answer these questions better than the Creator of all things? In our searching, we need to sincerely ask the Father what He requires of us. If we humbly offer our service, the Lord is ready to point us in the direction we should take. He will answer in a way that we can understand.



T.U.L.I.P. The Five Points of Calvinism – Refuted.

Total Depravity

Refuted by Romans 1:18-32, Ezekiel 18

Total Depravity is the name given to the belief that no human being has any perfect aspects to their character and person. Everything is spoiled.

Humans are born already dead in sin, because they inherit the guilt of Adam's sin. When Adam and Eve fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, they were "wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation." This total depravity is said to result in a total inability to contribute anything to one's salvation.

Unconditional Election

Refuted by Matthew 7:13-14, 2Peter 1:2-12

Unconditional Election is a term given to the belief that God chose some for salvation, but nothing about those persons influenced God's choice, and salvation is not on the basis that if you do what God tells you (a condition), then He will save you. "Those of mankind who are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving him thereunto."

Limited Atonement

Refuted by John 3:16, 1John 2:1-2

Limited Atonement is a term given to the belief that Jesus did not lay down His life for all mankind, but only for some, and that the rest of mankind have no Saviour. According to this belief, Jesus did not shed His blood for everyone in general, but only for certain persons in particular. The benefit of the cross and of the message of the cross is available only to these fortunate persons. The atonement is irrevocably and utterly limited to that number, and the cross has no potential to make atonement for even one single person more. Limited atonement simply means that Jesus did not die for the whole world. This belief arises logically and necessarily out of the other points of Calvinism. It is wrong because they are wrong.

Irresistible Grace

Refuted by Luke 7:30, Matthew 23:37

Irresistible Grace is the term given to the belief that the grace of God is "free" which is to say it is not tied or obligated to anyone's choice, but operates apart from human will. In other words, if you have not received the

grace of God, you cannot apply to God for it and choose to receive it. Those who receive God's grace exercise no will of their own, nor are they able to resist. It comes to them perforce. This view of grace cannot allow of God laying down two alternatives, pointing out the eternal and unchangeable consequences of each, and giving a person the choice, especially when God's will favours one alternative and abhors the other.

Perseverance of the Saints

Refuted by Hebrews 10:10, 19-29, 1Peter 2:20-22

Perseverance of the Saints is a term given to belief in the impossibility of apostasy, meaning that a person who is saved cannot possibly become unsaved. God's grace is infallible. One cannot fall from grace. Apostasy is impossible. This security of the believer is not about being completely protected by God so long as one continues to seek refuge in God. It is about being imprisoned by God in his security, and quite unable to break out of it. Once saved, always saved. Any apparent apostasy by a person is either just that, apparent but not real, or else it was the person's salvation that was only apparent but not real. The Once Saved Always Saved doctrine!

Notes on John Calvin

John Calvin (1509-1564), along with Martin Luther (1483-1546), was a chief architect of the Protestant Reformation.

Calvin's theology is characterised by the way he looks at predestination. He was by no means the first, however, to hold these ideas about predestination. Calvin taught that ordinary mortals have no ability to contribute anything toward their own salvation. Those whom God has chosen for eternal life are no more worthy of it than those whom God has passed by. God made His choice entirely by His own sovereign will and free grace. No condition or quality in the persons He chose had any influence upon His choice. When Christ died, He did not die for all mankind, but only for those whom God had chosen. God compels the chosen to accept the grace He extends to them. They cannot resist it, nor can they ever fall away from it.

There are five aspects to Calvin's theology. The major Protestant creeds, which are still in effect today, confess all or some of these five principles. Most of the great Bible commentaries, still in use today, follow the Calvinistic point of view to some extent.

If you find the five terms somewhat unfamiliar and incomprehensible at the outset that is not your fault. These are not everyday expressions of ordinary language, nor are they terms used by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures.



Seasoned Speech (Part 2)

Matthew S. Garman., PA

Choice Silver

"The tongue of the just is as choice silver" (Proverbs 10.-20)

"When Brother Joseph speaks, people listen." Brother Harold was recounting a meeting twenty-five years before when Brother Joseph had spoken one sentence that moved the committee to action. Why were Brother Joseph's words so weighty? Because his words were thoughtful and few.

The value of a commodity usually rises in proportion to its scarcity. If we want our words to be as valuable as silver, they cannot be as plentiful as iron. The less we talk, the more we listen, and the wiser our words will be when we do speak. The less we talk, the more we think, and the more astute our words will be.

As currency, silver is valuable as a medium of exchange. Words also serve as currency—they are the medium of exchange of things. Words can be used to exchange ideas, instructions, inspiration, knowledge, and truth. We can also be used in the exchange of foolishness. Such words are nearly weightless. Spoken lightly, they fly about as a handful of feathers thrown into wind. But words chosen thoughtfully are weighty with valuable cargo.

Silver is valuable for its usefulness. For thousands of years, silver utensils and vessels were valued for their durability and beauty. Today silver is used in the electronics industry because it is an excellent conductor. Godly speech is useful in helping men know how to live on e, and invaluable in preparing men for eternity. Sometimes the most useful words are those are not pleasant to give or receive. "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head" (Psalm 141)

The words of the just are compared to choice silver. Choice means "tried and true." This silver is chosen because of its excellence. When does silver

become choice silver? Very little silver occurs naturally in its pure form. Usual it is found in ore mixed with other elements. The ore is smelted through a process using high heat to separate the silver. The silver then is further refined to remove impurities.

What about our speech? Does it need to be refined to become as choice silver? The word just, which means "righteous," implies a cleansing from all that defiles. Words proceeding from a regenerated heart will always be pure and true.

But there may be further refining needed to remove some dross from our speech. Idle words should be purged from our conversation. Slang words will decrease the value of our speech. Flattery, empty and worthless, will not stand the heat of the refining fire. Complaining also falls far short of the silver standard.

Every word should be tested, tried, and found true and pure before it passes our lips. Then our speech will be choice—valued by man and God.

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SNAPSHOTS.

Brief excerpts from a historical perspective.

ANABAPTIST MENNONITE VIEWS OF THE WORK OF GOD IN MAN.

Anabaptists were one and all agreed that the process of salvation begins with God's gracious act in Jesus Christ. There can no longer be any question about this. Once Luther's formulation on faith and works is seen as one way of several to set out the problem, our minds can be more open to consider the Anabaptist view.

Anabaptists, too, believed that man is saved by grace and not through any merits of his own. But they were equally certain that man was not saved in spite of himself. God has graciously provided a way of salvation, but in order to benefit from it man must freely choose it for himself. This implied that man could choose, and it was a rejection of the Protestant doctrine of the bondage of the will. The will was set free by God's grace and then man could choose to do the good that God desires for man.

They also rejected the doctrine of predestination, understood as the sovereign designation of some to salvation and others to damnation. To Ana-

baptists this appeared to charge God with evil and to rob man of the liberty to make choices for or against God.

The emphasis on man's ability to choose and the rejection of predestination inevitably assigned to man a function in the process of salvation. God's grace "goes before" but man could resist it or he could surrender to it. By surrendering and choosing he was contributing to the process. This process is the human experience of the cross which everyone must endure to be saved.

Anabaptists simply refused to accept Luther's separation of works from faith, or action from confession. Works, they argued, were a part of faith, and without them faith was not faith. Much Scripture even in the New Testament called for evangelical obedience and if God called for it, Anabaptists argued, it must be His will and it must be possible to do it. Works were the outward expression of faith and not simply the fruit of faith as Luther said.

This same emphasis emerges in several discussions of Christ's work on the cross. Christ, it is argued, made atonement for the sins of the whole world, but it could become operative only if there was obedience which was expressed in works of faith. Thus there was no effective atonement or justification without obedience.

Balthasar Hubmaier, circa 1525

The Samaritan must come—that is Christ—who brings medicine with him, wine and oil, and pours it upon the wounds of the sinner. Wine represents man's repentance for his sins, and the oil anoints his sores and mollifies them. Christ says: "Believe in the gospel which states clearly that I am the physician that has come into the world to make the sinner righteous and godly. The gospel teaches also that I am the only gracious, reconciling, interceding mediator and peacemaker with God our Father. He who believes on me shall not be damned but has eternal life."

Through such comforting words the sinner is quickened, comes to himself, becomes joyful, and entrusts himself to his physician. He commits and entrusts his sickness to the physician, surrenders as much as a wounded man can, and calls to him for healing. The physician helps, advises, and promotes whatever the wounded man cannot do in his own strength so that he can follow his word and commandment.

Now all the teachings which diagnose diseases and point to the physician are only "the letter that kills" before they are believed. But in faith God

makes them to live, wax green, and bear fruit. Thus by faith, water became wine at the wedding. One must put on the rough coat of John the Baptist before one can receive the soft, mild, and meek lamb, Jesus Christ. Then a man surrenders himself sincerely from the heart and purposes to lead a new life, according to the rules and teachings of Christ, the physician, who has made him whole, and from whom he derives his life. So Paul acknowledges openly that it is not he that lives, but Christ that lives in him. Christ is the life in him. Outside of Christ, he confesses that he and his works are vain, of no account, and an accursed sinner.

Faith alone and by itself is not sufficient for salvation. This article will first be tested in the writings of Paul. With the heart man believes to righteousness and with the mouth confession is made to salvation (Romans 10). Now we do not wish to be mouth Christians only, to boast and say: "O yes, we believe that Jesus Christ suffered agony and death for us." Rather, faith must express itself also in love to God and the neighbor. Thus John teaches us when he says: "Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and truth. By this we shall know that we are of the truth." (1 John 3). Faith must be active in love (Galatians 5). Therefore faith by itself alone is like a green fig tree without fruit, like a cistern without water, like a cloud without rain.... O, we wish to be good evangelical Christians; we boast about our great faith, but have never touched the works of the gospel and faith with the smallest finger.

Therefore we are, as stated above, nothing but mouth Christians, ear Christians, and paper Christians, but not action Christians. About these St. James severely admonishes us in his Christian and useful epistle when he writes: "What does it profit, my brothers, if a man says he has faith but has not works? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them: Go in peace, be warmed and filled, without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. You have faith and I have works. Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. You believe in the one God; you do well. Even the devils believe and shudder." (James 2). I confess this article with all my strength: that faith by itself alone is not worthy to be called faith, for there can be no true faith without the works of love.

Whoever denies the free will of man and says that "free will" is nothing but an empty and useless term without any reality, the same slanders God

as a tyrant. He charges God with injustice and gives manifold cause to the wicked to remain in their sins. Indeed, he overthrows more than half of the holy Scriptures. The proof of this article: If man were robbed of his free will God could never justly condemn the sinner for his sins. For He condemns him for reasons about which man can do nothing. God forbid! Moreover Christ would be robbed of His just accusation which He will bring against sinners on the last day saying: "I was hungry and you did not feed me. I was sick and in prison and you did not come to me, etc." (Mathew 25). Certainly sinners could excuse themselves with good reason and say: "It was impossible for us to feed and visit You since we have no free will. Indeed, because of Your eternal foreknowledge and judgment we must go with the devil into eternal fire in order to fulfil Your eternal foreknowledge." It follows moreover from this destructive teaching that man may justifiably put his guilt on God and say: "My stealing and my robbing was not my fault but God's will which no one can resist." (Romans 9). Without His will I could not have done it. Because of my will I had to do it because it is bound and imprisoned. Through this error all those Scriptures would be overthrown which speak about willing and doing....

Pilgram Marpeck, circa 1542.

God is a God of order and not of disorder, and he has firmly united his own omnipotence to his will and order. It is not as the predestinarians and others say, without any discrimination, that God has the right to all salvation and damnation. He has, certainly, but not outside of His order and will, to which His power is subordinated. Otherwise, one may claim His divine power on behalf of all as, indeed, Satan and his prophets are doing. Wherever the omnipotence and might of God serves their purposes, they imperiously and indiscriminately use it, without the will of His Father, as Luther does with the sacrament, child baptism, infant faith, and such like. Whenever they find themselves at their wits end they save their theology by appealing to the omnipotence of God. There is no sharper nor more deceitful article of false teaching than to use and preach the power and omnipotence of God outside of the order of God's Word.

Further, it is the greatest blasphemy against God and the word of His truth, by which He has ordered all things in heaven and on earth, in which order they shall remain in eternity, For God Himself is the wisest order in and through His Word, that is, Jesus Christ His only begotten from eternity. Whoever manipulates the omnipotence of God outside of this order

is a deceiver and seducer. Again, whoever establishes, commands, or prohibits any order outside of the divine order and omnipotence he denies God's power and glory.

WHAT FAITH IS.

Faith is not the empty illusion that those men think who only bear it about with them in their mouths, and know no more about it; who think that Christianity is in words only, and therefore hold and regard each and all as Christians, no matter how they live, if they but confess Christ with the mouth.

True and well-founded faith, however, is not of men but a gift of God, and is given only to those who fear God. Therefore Paul says, "Not every man hath faith." For such faith seeks that which does not appear, and grasps the invisible one and only mighty God, and makes us at one and at home with him, yea of his nature and character. It dispels all wavering and doubt, and makes our heart hold surely, steadfastly and firmly to God, through all tribulation.

Therefore it makes us certain and well assured of all God's promises, just as—to speak in parables—a man who takes an object in his hand and holds it, as long as he does hold it, is certain that he has it. In the same way faith grasps the promise of God which is invisible, and cleaves and holds to the same as though it saw it.

Therefore faith is a real divine power, which renews man and makes him like God in nature, makes him living in His righteousness, and ardent in love, and in keeping His commandments.

In order to make no one uneasy, we want to say why we give or ascribe such power to faith. This we do because faith is God's gift, and given to men that they might thereby seek and find God; who, when He has been found, stirs up and works all things in them through faith, so that in believers, in proportion to their faith, nothing takes place save what God works in men, as Paul says, "Not I, but the grace of God," and again, "Not I live now, but Christ lives in me."

Thus faith is also given victorious strength, as it is written, "And our faith is the victory that overcometh the world," as indeed God does in us through faith. Thus faith does and works all things, and makes man pleasing to and loved by God.

FROM WHENCE FAITH COMES

According to the words of Paul, this faith comes from a diligent hearing

of the preaching of the word of God, which is proclaimed by the mouth of God by means of those whom He sends. Here, however, we speak not of the literal, but of the living word that pierces soul and spirit, which God has given and put in the mouth of His messengers. The same word makes wise unto salvation, that is it teaches to know God; and from the knowledge of God faith springs up, grows and increases, and with faith knowledge. These entwine and grow together and lead man to God, and plant the same in God, so that he that has such faith lives and walks in God, and God in him.

The more zealously we hear and receive the word, the more knowledge grows. The more knowledge grows, or the more we know God, the more do faith and trust in him grow. And the more we believe in him, the more he shows himself to us, and gives himself to us to know. Where, however, such faith which does all this in man is not present, there is no faith but an empty delusion and darkness, by means of which men betray and deceive themselves. We have now made confession of our faith, and want next to give a faithful account, according to the grace God gives us, of what we teach.

Peter Riedeman circa 1542.

CONCERNING REMORSE

Now those who seek further counsel as to how to free their souls from the eternal destruction and death into which they are led by sin; desiring to free themselves from their sins, which are the snares of the devil, and partake of the grace of Christ—such we teach, together with John, the preacher of repentance, Peter and the apostles, that they must repent. But he who would truly repent with all his heart must first feel real remorse for his sin. But if he is to feel remorse for his sins he must first recognize how wrong, evil, harmful and destructive they are. Without this, remorse and repentance cannot endure—still less can he receive grace. For true remorse follows the recognition of sin. The man feels real repugnance, hatred and horror of his sin, yea, real loathing of himself for having so long obeyed it, for having suffered himself to be guided and controlled by it and led away from the God for whose sake he has being.

CONCERNING REPENTANCE

Thus remorse leads to true repentance, that is real humiliation and abasement before God because of the transgression. For repentance means to humble and abase oneself before God, and to be ashamed before Him be-

cause of one's vice; which shame brings a real turning point, so that the man runs with haste, calls, cries and prays to God for forgiveness and grace, and begins at the same time to bring the flesh into subjection, to slay and kill it, to break it in name of the holy Trinity, that is, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and are diligent by the grace of God to observe all that Christ has commanded us (Mt. 28;20).

Menno Simons circa 1552.

Those who accept this announced Christ by a true faith which, according to the doctrine of Paul, was given us of the Father unto wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and deliverance, are in a state of grace for Christ's sake and have God as their Father; for by faith they are born of Him. He forgives them all their sins; has compassion on all their human shortcomings and weaknesses. He turns them from the curse, wrath, and eternal death. He accepts them as His beloved children, and grants them Christ Jesus together with all His merits, fastings, prayers, tears, sufferings, pain, cross, blood, and death. Besides this, He grants also His Spirit, inheritance, kingdom, glory, joy, and life. And this we say, not by our own merits and works, but by grace through Christ Jesus. As Paul says, "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:4-10.

Since then they believe God's Word which says, "To be carnally minded is death, If you live after the flesh, ye shall die, and adulterers, fornicators, drunkards, the avaricious, the proud, and all liars shall not inherit the kingdom of God," and since they believe that He will save none contrary to His Word; that He will judge in accordance with His Word, that He is the truth and cannot lie, as the Scriptures testify; therefore it is that they sincerely fear the Lord, and by that fear die unto their flesh, crucify their lusts and desires, and shun and abhor the unclean, ungodly works which are contrary to the Word of the Lord.

Besides this, they acknowledge the abundant grace, favor, and love of

God toward us as shown in Christ Jesus, and therefore they love their God in return, for He first loved us as John says. And they are ready by this love to obey in their weakness His holy Word, will, commandments, counsel, doctrine, and ordinances, according to the talent received. They show indeed that they believe, that they are born of God and are spiritually minded; that they lead a pious, un-blamable life before all men.

They have themselves baptized according to the commandment of the Lord as proof that they bury their sins in the death of Christ and seek to walk with Him in newness of life. They break the bread of peace with their dear brethren as proof and testimony that they are one in Christ and His holy church, and that they have, or know no other means of grace and remission of their sins, neither in heaven nor on earth than the innocent flesh and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ alone, which He once by His eternal Spirit in obedience to the Father sacrificed and shed upon the cross for us poor sinners. They walk in all love and mercy and serve their neighbors. In short, they regulate themselves in their weakness to all words, commandments, ordinances, Spirit, rule, example, and measure of Christ, as the Scripture teaches; for they are in Christ and Christ is in them; and therefore they live no longer in the old life of sin after the earthly Adam (weakness excepted), but in the new life of righteousness which comes by faith, after the second and heavenly Adam, Christ, as Paul says, “I do not now live, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20. Christ says, “He who loves Me keeps My commandments.” John 14:15.



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