

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 are times in all our lives when we face discouragement, times when we get weary, so weary that all we want to do is give up, find a quiet spot and just watch the world go by. Perhaps the Prophet Elijah felt like that after his encounter with Ahab and Jezebel, the battle was intense and he may have wondered what the future held for him.

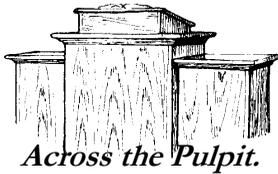
It sounded like he had grown battle weary. Bro. Allen Weaver made these comments in a message on “The Perils of Battle Weariness”

“When we think of being battle weary, we think of a people who are discouraged. It makes you wonder sometimes why people get battle weary. I think sometimes people get battle weary because we make the Christian life sound so rosy. You know, you come to Jesus Christ and all your problems will be solved. Then, they come and they accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and there is a struggle. Some people have the idea that when we are a Christian we should not have any struggles anymore. However, I believe that it is a good sign that we are in the will of the Lord when we are struggling. When there is no struggle I believe it is evident that we are in the will of Satan. When we turn our back on Satan and we want the will of the Lord to be done our life that is when the struggle and the battle begins.

The battle begins when we turn our life over to Jesus Christ. Therefore, do not get weary in the battle because that is a sign. Our Lord was here. He faced the battle, but He did not get weary in the battle. All the people of God, throughout Bible times, faced the battle, but it was when they became discouraged in the battle and gave up that it became a peril. It is the peril of battle weariness.

The battle that we are facing is not a physical battle but it is a spiritual one. However the danger of weariness is equally as great as it is in a physical battle. Do not be weary. Do not get tired of the battle because there is coming a day when we will reap “if we faint not.” (Gal. 6:9) Certainly, we do not want to faint and lose out and miss the blessings of heaven.

However, it does not need to be. We thank the Lord that it does not need to be. He made it possible that every one of us can come through victorious. It is not our battle. It is the Lord's battle.” (1 Sam.17:47). Let us recognise Satan's tactics of discouragement and dissatisfaction with our Christian life and be overcomers, Christians living in victory. *J.v.L.*



Across the Pulpit.

Lessons From Elijah's Discouragement

From a message by Lamar Garman

Given at Valley View Mennonite Church

For a message from the Word of God we would like to go to 1 Kings 19. There is a prophet there, Elijah by name that we would like to learn some lessons from. In the devotional reading we noted that: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:15-16

The brother said that we are a people of need. And we are, and needs bring discouragement into our lives at times if we allow them.

We read from James 5:17 that "Elias [Elijah] was a man subject to like passions as we are." This morning we would like to look into the life of Elijah and we will notice that he was a man of like passions — same emotions as we have. He was tempted to discouragement because of the situation that faced him. And he was discouraged, he asked the Lord to take away his life because he said "It is enough."

Well, we know that we do become discouraged at times but we dare not allow discouragement to be the ruling force in our lives. If we do we know we cannot be any use to the Lord. A discouraged person can become a defeated person. And a defeated person will certainly be of no value in the program of God.

I believe the psalmist had the same problem. In Psalm 42:11 he said, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?" That is what discouragement does to us. It causes us to be disquieted inside. It causes an emotional upheaval within us and we cannot be effective in the work of the Lord as He would have us to be.

This morning we would like to look at an example of a discouraged prophet. In 1 Kings 19:9 God asks Elijah a question. He said, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" I believe we can liken that to our discouraged state. If we find ourselves in that I believe God is asking us, "What doest thou here?" It is not where He wants us to be. He wants us to look to Him and find courage, strength and help in time of need.

Turn to 1 Kings 16 and we will see just a little bit of the background here what led up to Elijah's discouragement. 1 Kings 16:29, "And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years." Now, this setting took place about probably about 900 BC, and we see that there was a new king came to rule here in Israel. His name was Ahab.

Verse 30, "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him." Now, not only did he do evil above all that were before him but he did something else in verse 31–33.

"And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethanal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. ³²And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. ³³And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him."

Well, it was at this juncture that Elijah came on the scene. He came on the scene in a dark and evil time, a time of Baal worship, a time when the rulers were encouraging the people to no longer worship the true God of Israel. But they were encouraging the people of Israel to worship Baal. It was a very evil time.

First Kings 17:1 says, "And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." The account goes on there, you know it well how Elijah was told to run and to flee and hide. Apparently his life was in jeopardy. And God told him to go hide. He went and hid by the brook Cherith there. And the ravens fed him. And when the brook dried up why he was commanded to go to the widow of Zarephath. And he dwelled with her. She sustained him there. And going on to the end of 1 Kings 17, we have Elijah healing the widow woman's child when he had died. He brought the child back to life again.

Well, in 1 Kings 18, about three and a half years later then Elijah again came back to Israel. He came back. And what did he find? Well, he found the same conditions that were present when he left about three and a

half years earlier. The people were still serving Baal. And it says in verse 4, “For it was so, when Jezebel” (this wicked woman) “cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.)” You see, serving God was a dangerous thing to do. And Obadiah took prophets of the Lord and hid them because their lives were in jeopardy.

As we go on through 1 Kings 18 Elijah finally met Ahab again. Ahab said, “Art thou he that troubleth Israel?” (verse 17). And Elijah said, “I have not troubled Israel; but thou” (verse 18). And we come then to the contest on Carmel, how Elijah called for all the prophets of Baal there. And how they built an altar and Elijah commanded the prophets of Baal to call to their god to send fire. And of course, you know, nothing happened. And then Elijah called on the true God and God immediately sent fire down. And after that He commanded that the prophets of Baal be killed. And he killed the prophets of Baal. He said, “Let not one of them escape” (verse 40).

Now, you might think that sounds perhaps a bit cruel but I came across a little article, I believe it was in *Halley’s Bible Handbook*. There was an archeological note there. It points out the evil and the sinfulness of Baal worship, “The Oriental Institute excavating at Megiddo (which is near Samaria) found in the stratum of Ahab’s time ruins of a temple of Ash-toreth, goddess wife of Baal. Just a few steps from this temple was a cemetery where many jars were found containing remains of infants who had been sacrificed in this temple. Prophets of Baal and Ashtoreth were official murderers of little children.”

That points out the sinfulness and evil of Baal worship as it was known in that time. They sacrificed infants in their worship and it was an abomination in the sight of God. And I believe that is why God commanded Elijah to destroy the prophets there.

Well, that brings us to 1 Kings 19 now. Jezebel heard about what Elijah did, how he slew the prophets of Baal. Read 1 Kings 19:1–18. So, you see there the setting that caused Elijah to be discouraged, to be downcast in his spirit. This morning, from this account, we want to notice some facts about the cause of discouragement in Elijah’s life and how God wants us to deal with discouragement. The feelings of discouragement like this can wreak so much havoc in our lives and we need to deal with them. God

wanted Elijah to deal with feelings of discouragement and He wants us to deal with those feelings.

1) We want to notice a number of those factors and how God wants us to deal with discouragement. 1) First we want to notice is that discouragement may come in times of stress. Elijah was in a time of stress. We cannot deny that fact, just think of all that Elijah had just gone through — the contest on Carmel there. It must have been an emotional thing. First of all he had prayed for rain and it did not rain in Israel for three-and-a-half years. That must have been an emotional thing for him seeing all that suffering that was caused by his praying that it would not rain for three-and-a-half years. It must have been an emotional, a trying, stressful time for him. And then how he caused the prophets of Baal to be killed. It must have been a stressful thing for him.

And now, on top of it all comes a death threat. And Jezebel says [in essence] “You only have twenty-four hours to live.” Well, it was a real stress for him and it caused him to flee for his life. Now, whether it was right for Elijah to flee for his life is debatable. We will not discuss that this morning. I have never been tried that way. And many of you probably have not been either. I do not know how it would be if someone would say that I only have twenty-four hours to live.

Not too long ago, I heard of a local businessman who answered his phone one day and an irate customer at the other end of the line said, “I am on my way with a shotgun, will you be there for a while?” Well, the man was scared and we can understand that. But that is a little of what Elijah faced here. And it caused stress in his life. And it caused him to be discouraged.

Now, we recognize that out of this peculiar set of circumstances why Elijah became discouraged and he was following the direction of the Lord. He did all that he was commanded to do. But it brought about a peculiar set of circumstances that caused him to become discouraged. And from that we recognize that sometimes doing the will of the Lord does bring persecution. We need to be careful that that persecution does not cause us to become discouraged like it did for Elijah.

1 Peter 4:14 tells us, “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.” So, we need to be careful that if persecution comes our way because of our following God’s Word and doing His will, if persecution comes because of that we

need to be careful that it does not bring discouragement and depression to us like it did to Elijah.

B) *Still thinking about discouragement that comes in times of stress. This stress came upon Elijah because he was doing what God wanted him to. And we realize too that sometimes stress comes our way because of other situations beyond our control. It might be illness. It might be the loss of loved ones. Those are stresses in our lives. We cannot deny that. We need to be careful that they do not cause us to be discouraged to the extent that we become depressed and thereby become un-useful in God's program.*

I would like to read a few verses in James 1 telling us to deal with these outward circumstances that come upon us. James 1:2-4:

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

We realize that outward trials do come upon. They will come upon us but we need to be careful that we do not allow those stresses to become a discouragement to us to the extent that we lose our joy.

Well, I believe that we should respond to stresses in life like I heard recently a brother who had one of his company trucks involved in a serious accident. And it was a real stress in his life. He said, “I’m trying to analyze why the Lord allowed this to happen to me.” And he said, “My prayer is Lord, show me what you have in this experience for me? What are you trying to teach me?” I believe that is how we should view the stresses of life when they come to us. We should ask, “Lord what do you have in it for me? What are you trying to teach me?” And then as the Lord reveals to us what He is trying to teach to us that we accept that and we are profited thereby.

C) *Now, right along with the thought that stress can cause us to become discouraged I believe comes the responsibility that we are very careful that we do not bring stresses upon ourselves because stress can bring discouragement. But you know even though there are many stresses that come upon us that we cannot do anything about there are certain times that we might bring stress into our own experience by our own actions. Of course, we recognize that one way we could do that is by not following the commandments of the Lord and yielding to temptation and falling into sin. Sin*

brings stress. We recognize that. We know that people who are not doing God's will are people that are stressed because they are not following the way of the Word. They are stressed people.

Not too long ago I heard of a person that made no profession of serving the Lord, he wanted to do his own thing in his own time. He never married. He was probably about thirty-five years old and he wanted to be a free man. He wanted to do what he wanted to do when he wanted to do it. He just lived for himself. He did not want any stress in his life. But you know, that man needed to be committed to the hospital for a heart condition because of stress. Well, you see, sin does bring stress in a person's life.

Well, other examples of bringing stress into one's life. I believe that if we abuse our physical bodies, it might be by improper diet, by unsafe working conditions, things like that, we can bring stress into our own lives. I think we need to be very careful to do work safely, so that we do not bring stress into our own lives by illness or injury because of our own carelessness.

Another example of bringing stress into our own lives I believe would be because of wanting to be rich. We overextend ourselves financially. If we go out and borrow a lot of money unwisely just because we are trying to get ahead in life it could cause stress to us. Those are just some areas that we need to be careful of that we do not bring stress into our lives because we recognize that stress can bring discouragement.

Well, we know that we cannot eliminate all stress from our lives and neither would we want to. I believe that some stress is probably healthy but we want to do what we can to control the stresses in our lives so that we don't become discouraged overly much.

2) *Another thing we want to notice from the life of Elijah about discouragement is that discouragement may come after spiritual victory.* Elijah had just won great victories for the Lord. And the devil was not content to let Elijah to rest in those victories, he brought him discouragement.

I am sure you all have heard ministers say already that after they bring messages that sometimes Satan tempts them to be discouraged. You may have experienced the same thing already. Maybe after you have had devotions or after you taught Sunday school. One brother recently told me that after he teaches Sunday school he thinks of all the things that he should have said or he could have said. Well, those things, I believe can be discouraging to us. When we are doing the Lord's work I believe Satan is not

happy with that and he tries to bring us discouragement. I believe we need to ask the Lord to bless our feeble efforts as we endeavour to do His work, and if we feel that we have done some good for the Lord that we also be very careful then that we take no credit to ourselves, recognizing that as we do the Lord's work Satan will try to bring us discouragement.

3) *Another factor now about discouragement that we see in the life of Elijah is that discouragement hinders association with those we need.* Notice that in verse 3 in 1 Kings 19 again. Elijah, it says, “went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there.” Now, we do not know but it is quite plausible that if Elijah had taken his servant along for someone to associate with, someone to communicate with, that he would not have fallen into this discouragement and distressed state that he found himself in. We need the association with other believers to help us stay up.

When we become discouraged it is natural for us to become quiet. We do not talk to others like we should. And that is where we go wrong. When we are discouraged we need each other. That is exactly when we should be talking and communicating with others and asking the advice and counsel of other people. We need each other and we have a responsibility to help each other.

There are a few verses in 2 Corinthians 7 that point out so clearly how we need each other. It was the Apostle Paul writing how that he was encouraged by the help of others 2 Corinthians 7:5-7: “For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. ⁶Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; ⁷And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.”

You see how the Apostle was encouraged by other people, by other believers. And that is what we need to do too. If we find ourselves in a discouraged state why we need to seek the help of other people and ask the advice of other people and surely through that why the Lord will make a way for us to lift us up out of that discouragement.

4) *Another factor about discouragement we see in the life of Elijah is that discouragement may cause self-pity.* Notice that where Elijah says in verse 4, he asks the Lord to take his life. He says, “I am not better than my fa-

thers.” It seems that we can see a little self-pity there. We do not want to be too hard on Elijah because we recognize that he faced circumstances that many of us never face, maybe never will and he did have a very stressful time. But it seems like maybe he is just pitying himself just a little bit. He felt that he had more than his share of trouble and he asked the Lord to take away his life.

It seems like Elijah felt that no one understood, like no one cared and that he was just tired of living. Have you ever heard anyone say that? Well, I have. I trust none of us have ever felt that way. But we know that if people begin thinking that they have it so much worse than anyone else ever had it, it seems self-pity can set in. And we know that when a person takes their eyes off of God, off of trying to help other people, and dwell too much on themselves self-pity can set in very rapidly.

In verse 10 we see how Elijah seems to be overly concerned about himself. He says, “[they] have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.” It seems like Elijah was overly concerned about himself. You see we dare not do that. We need to be concerned about others and not overly concerned about ourselves. And then, we will not be pitying ourselves.

5) *Another factor about discouragement is that it may cause us to complain.* Yes, it seemed like Elijah complained about his lot. Sure, he had a hard lot. He did. But I still do not believe that he would have needed to complain about it because the Lord is sufficient. The Lord will make a way for any circumstance in life. And I do not believe Elijah would have needed to complain. But is it not true that we are so quick to complain if we become discouraged?

Some time ago I heard of an incident where a person was very despondent and he just complained about everything it seemed, even though he had a lot going for him, he could not see good in anything. He just complained about everything. Well, his complaining nature was being related to a person that was a paraplegic in a wheelchair, paralyzed from the waist down and the paraplegic was known not to complain about his life. He had a hard time. He could not do things for himself. He was paralyzed and in a wheelchair but he did not complain about it. But when the paraplegic heard about how this other healthy person that had a lot going for him, was

complaining about everything the paraplegic said, “Well, that man should just come and sit in my place for a while.”

When we are tempted to complain I believe that we should think of those who have it worse than we do. There are people who have it worse than you and I do, no matter how hard we think we have it there are people that have it worse. And we need to be careful not to complain about our lot in life. We need to remember to be thankful for the small things in life.

One Friday night my wife and I were in the nursing home at And as we were walking along the hall there we asked one of the residents there how she was doing. She was a person who did not have too much going for her from our point of view, and she could have complained about a lot of things. But her response encouraged and inspired me, she said, “Well, I am trying to be thankful for the small things in life.” You see I think that is the way we should be. We should try to be thankful for the small things in life and then we will not be tempted to complain and to become overly discouraged about situations that face us.

6) *Another thing we want to notice about discouragement is that it may make us feel like giving up.* That is what it did to Elijah. Notice in verse 10 he says, “I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts.” Yes we know that he was very jealous for the Lord and for His cause but it seemed like he felt that it was no use anymore. He said, “I have been,” just like he was not concerned for the Lord’s cause anymore. It seemed like he was tempted to give up. It seemed like he was indicating that he had been concerned but he was no more.

The results just were not favourable and felt like “calling it quits.” Have we ever felt the same way? Have we? Well, I believe I must confess myself that perhaps I have. But we cannot do that. We cannot feel like giving up because there is a lot of work to be done. And when Elijah gave up and he ran for his life and hid in his cave of discouragement the Lord’s work was not getting done anymore. That is how it is in the natural labours if we are discouraged.

Sometime ago I heard of a person who was discouraged and was not getting his natural labours done anymore. He sat in his rocking chair rocking away, work was outside waiting on him, he was not getting it done. One afternoon his wife went away, when she left he was sitting in his rocking chair, when she came home later in the afternoon he was still in his rocking chair. And she asked her husband: “Well, what did you get done this af-

ternoon?” He said, “I just sat here in my rocking chair.” You see, he did not get the work done that needed to be done.

And that is how it is with the Lord’s work too when we are discouraged and we feel like giving up, the work will not get done. The work was not getting done that God had for Elijah to do and the work will not get done that God has for us to do if we allow ourselves to be in a discouraged and downcast condition.

II) Let us notice yet some ways that Elijah overcame this low point in his life. God had ways for Elijah to overcome his discouragement. God has ways for us to overcome discouragement that might come. *The first one we want to notice is that Elijah reflected on his conditions.* God asked him . . . [“What doest thou here, Elijah” (verse 9)? “Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD” (verse 10).]

God saw through his discouragement. It seemed in fact, that he stood before the Lord. In verse 11 and 12 we see how God told Elijah to stand before Him and how the Lord passed by, how a great wind passed by that rent the mountains and broke the rocks. But it says, “but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire.” But the Lord was not in those powerful manifestations. Where was the Lord? Well, it says, “and after the fire a still small voice.”

How does a still small voice come to us today? Well, the still small voice comes to us today through the Holy Spirit and through the Word of God as we read God’s Word. And as we listen closely to what God is telling us we will hear that still small voice. And as we listen and we obey that still small voice we will overcome those feelings of discouragement that come to us from time to time. We need to take time to listen to that still small voice. If we are not taking time to read our Bible we will probably not be hearing that still small voice. If we find ourselves in discouragement it is all the more important for us to read our Bibles and listen to that still small voice that God is speaking to us with.

He does want to meet our needs. But for us to have our needs met we need to listen to that still small voice.

2) *Another way that Elijah overcame discouragement is seen in the fact that he got back to work.* Verse 15 “And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus.” God was saying “Get back to work. You cannot hide in this cave of discouragement. Get back

to work.” Well, what did Elijah do? He did that, he got back to work. He got his mind off of himself and off of his problems. He was lifted out of his slough of despondency like *Pilgrim’s Progress* talks about. That teaches us, I believe, that if we are discouraged we must get our minds off of ourselves. We must look for opportunities to help others, we cannot just wait for those opportunities to happen but we need to look for opportunities to do good to other people, help other people — get our minds off ourselves. Try to do something special for someone around us. Then, as we cause happiness and joy to other people by helping them we will be lifted out of our own depression, then happiness and joy will be radiated back to us and we will be helped to overcome those feelings of discouragement.

3) *Another thing we see that Elijah did to overcome his discouragement is that he fellowshiped with other faithful people.* Verse 18 where God revealed to him that, “Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.” I believe that revelation must have been a real encouragement to Elijah. It must have been. Well, we recognize that as we fellowship, as we associate with other faithful people it helps us to be encouraged. It helps us a lot. We need to seek out the counsel and the advice of loved ones. If we find ourselves in a depressed or a despondent condition let us not be satisfied with that but let us seek to lift ourselves out of that by the help of God and by the help of others. Other people do want to help us to be happy and rejoicing in the Lord.

III) *Last of all now to help us out of despondency and discouragement, we need to look to Jesus.* For that one I would like to turn to Hebrews 12:2-3. We recognize that God has done so much for us through Jesus. Jesus suffered so much for us. And we need to look to Him for His example.

“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. ³For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”

I believe what that is telling us here is that we can easily become faint and weary, despondent and downcast if you please, but if we look to Jesus and consider what He did for us, how He suffered for us, it will help us to have courage and strength and buoyancy of spirit. We need to learn from the example of Jesus, looking to Jesus as our example.

In closing, I would like to read the words of a song that sometimes we sing. The story is told of a certain minister in a New England town many years ago. He was feeling very, very discouraged and he went to his prayer room, his name was Washington Gladden, and these were the words that he wrote in his discouragement.

“Oh Master let me walk with Thee
In lowly paths of service free.
Tell me Thy secret, help me bear
The strain of toil, the fret of care.

Help me the slow of heart to move
By some clear winning word of love
Teach me the wayward feet to stay
And guide them in the homeward way

Teach me Thy patience still with Thee!
In closer dearer company
In work that keeps faith sweet and strong
In trust that triumphs over wrong.

In hope that sends a shining ray
Far down the future’s broad’ning way
In peace that only Thou canst give
With Thee Oh Master, let me live.

May that be the heart desire of each one of us. As we desire to walk closely with the Lord I believe we will be lifted out of our discouragement, out of our despondency. May we ever strive to serve the Lord faithfully with joy and gladness.



THE SPIRIT OF HOLY VENGEANCE

Listing the fruit of true repentance, the apostle Paul includes, "yea, what revenge!" (2 Corinthians 7:11). This is a potent principle. All who are God's children have been born again through "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). Consequently, there is a spirit of holy vengeance that is peculiar to the body of believers. This spirit actually helps establish their identity as being "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God" (Romans 6:11).

There is a carnal spirit of vengeance that is of the flesh. It is a brother to hate, which is a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:20). The apostle Paul pleads, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19). Of this unholy vengeance, true Christians should have no part. When the Apostle spoke of the revenge connected with sorrow for sin, he was only borrowing the sense of retribution very common to the natural man to illustrate a spiritual truth.

What Paul calls "revenge" is a strong feeling of disgust and retaliation in the inner man toward the devil and the old sinful man. The eyes of a repentant person are opened as to how his soul has been used and misused by the devil. He sees how his old flesh has caused him so much trouble. Most importantly, he begins to understand how the works of his flesh have grieved the Lord, whom he now loves. Thus, as his heart is changed, he experiences a complete change of feelings about sin. He comes to have no further sympathy toward the old man. Rather, from deep within arises a determination to step on the old man, despite his cries for life.

This holy vengeful spirit is exemplified in the Old Testament. The Amalekites attacked the Israelites in the wilderness after they had escaped Egypt. That was a despicable act, considering the weariness of the children of Jacob. But "Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword." The Lord was so incensed with Amalek that afterward He said, "I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." God said He would "have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Exodus 17:8-16).

After many years, Joshua was chosen to head the children of Israel. Before his death, Moses charged Joshua with this instruction: "Remember what Amalek did unto thee ... How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast

faint and weary; and he feared not God." Do we not catch a note of vengeance in Moses' spirit that corresponded with God's feelings, pointing forward to the true spiritual nation in Christ Jesus?

Now let us note how Joshua was to do. "Therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about ... that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it" (Deuteronomy 25:17-19). What vengeance!

Amalek symbolizes the old flesh that allies itself with Satan. Having repented and forsaken the way of sin, God says to us, "Remember what the carnal man did to you. Do not forget it. Blot him out!" As a result of repentance, a part of God's deep feelings of revenge against the enemy of the soul becomes resident in the spirits of humble Christians.

Hundreds of years after Joshua's time, Saul was set up as the first king of Israel. It wasn't long afterward that the Lord brought this matter of the Amalekites up again. God said, "I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not" (1 Samuel 15:-3).

The sad default on Saul's part in obeying God's command is well known. Rather than taking utter vengeance on Amalek, he permissively spared the king's life, along with much cattle. Considering God's strong feelings against Amalek, it is no wonder that the Lord pronounced such a dire judgment on Saul. Saul's lack of sharing God's feelings cost him the kingdom (1 Samuel 15:28).

At that time, Samuel told Saul that the Lord had given the kingdom "to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou" (v. 28). That "neighbour" who was "better" than Saul was David. God said of him, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will" (Acts 13:22). David, in contrast to Saul, felt like God did, and this pleased the Lord.

Years later David penned these forceful words: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies" (Psalm 139:2-22). It is clear that David's strong feelings related to the fact that these men hated his Lord. He could not bear it when men spoke evil of, or resisted, his beloved Shepherd (Psalm 23), the One in whom he delighted and on whom he meditated day and night (Psalm 1:2).

Similarly, the holy sense of revenge has its source in true love and loyalty to Christ. Such a person sees his flesh as that which hates Jesus and despises His government of the heart. For this cause, the new creature in Christ doesn't hesitate to step on the old man. If one's feelings of revenge do not have this basis, they are only indicators of self-righteousness and are in themselves abhorrent to God.

Some critics have found fault with David's strong expression as being unrepresentative of the heart of God. But when one looks at this in the context of the great conflict between God and Satan, and thinks in terms of the "enemies" being fleshly spirits, then David's spirit is praiseworthy.

Immediately following David's expression of vengeance toward God's enemies, he pleads, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me" (Psalm 139:23-24). Let us not miss the point here. These verses are connected with the foregoing ones. David is asking God to search him lest there should be any remnant of a carnal sympathy for "Amalek" within him. He wasn't challenging God to see if He could find anything wrong in him. He just didn't trust himself, knowing his natural inclinations.

If the spirit of holy vengeance would be more alive among us, our struggles with pride, self-will, and worldliness would be put in a different perspective. Would a true child of God coddle and flirt with the confirmed enemy of his Saviour, of God? (James 4:4. The vengeance that the spirit of repentance produces does not readily caution against taking "too close a stand" against the things of the world. It rather is blest to see old carnal "Amalek" discomfited and punished.

"Amalek" still lives today. But God's word exhorts His hosts to not be discouraged. We remember "the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." Let us pray with David for God's searchlight to shine among us, lest there be any of Saul's spirit tainting our view of the way of salvation.



DISSATISFIED CHRISTIANS.

All Christians should be dissatisfied and desirous of more. Of course, that dissatisfaction must relate to the right subject and motive. A true Christian always desires to be more like Jesus. Wanting to please his Lord better, he continually prays for grace unto sanctification so he will favor his Master more and more.

But that doesn't mean that a believer is in bondage and never at rest in Christ Jesus. It just means that as he learns to know Jesus better and experiences His grace more, his admiration for the Saviour grows fonder. He wants to be more and more like Him.

The question of what motivates believers is discussed often. Is it the fear of judgment or the anticipation of heaven? It is undeniable that the fear of hell and the prospect of heaven are powerful motivating factors. They move persuasively upon one's will. But those elements alone can actually be selfish, relating only to one's welfare. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit especially employs these motives to bring sinners to salvation. Once one is a Christian, these motives continue to be valid. But there now is a motivation that is even more honourable.

The earnest desire to be more like Jesus, our Saviour, is a motivation more noble than any other one. Such a desire says we esteem Christ worthy of imitating. This honours Him. We want to be like Him because He has captivated our admiration and won our loyalty. Obviously, such a one is not ashamed of Jesus or of His teaching. This desire to be more and more like Him is, perhaps, the highest and purest form of worshipping the Saviour.

In natural life, do we not wish to be more like those whom we admire because of their virtuous and noble ways? That is speaking in a very human sense. Considering the subject at hand, there is an added, divine aspect. Wanting to be like the Suffering One defies the thinking of the natural and carnal mind. But the following aspiration of the apostle Paul points out how he felt.

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Philippians 3:10). That a man would so crave to be like Jesus that he would want to suffer with Him unto death is beyond human logic!

The Apostle knew Jesus so well, but he still had a longing to know Him better. It was as though Paul was driven from within by his love for the

Lord. He was in awe when he thought of how merciful Christ was to him. The full realization of being like Jesus was his aim. He said, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (v. 11). Doubtlessly, the great Apostle was never satisfied in life, always looking forward to the redemption of his body at the resurrection, Romans 8:23. Then, at last, he would be like his Lord in the fullest sense.

It almost seems disrespectful to take an illustration from the ungodly realm of the world's entertainment. But the way people worship and idolize sports and movie figures today is striking. Celebrities become as "giants in the earth" Genesis 6:4, and one can sense the intense craving of many, especially youth, to be like them. The spirit of the world seduces people to this type of idolatry. This scene tells us that the spirit of man is capable of a fascination that motivates one unto imitation. In the world, all this only excites the flesh and results in eventual disappointment and heartache. But what would happen if believers would allow the Spirit to provoke in them a craving to be more like Jesus? That is exactly what the Spirit will do for those who truly believe in Jesus.

Christianity today is, at the best, anemic. In many respects, it has lost its moral compass. Where a sense of right and wrong does still function, the power to maintain that standard is lacking. There isn't the compelling motivation of being more like Christ to offset the suffering that would result if a stand were to be taken. In contrast, the compulsion to be more and more like Jesus actually moved Paul to desire to suffer with the Lord, being conformed to His death. He called this a "fellowship" (Philippians 3:10). Nominal Christianity does not know this bond of love.

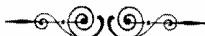
The Church of Jesus Christ is not immune to the spiritual anemia that afflicts churchgoers in popular Christianity. The gospel that gives one a dissatisfied spirit, possessing him soul and body, is not always appreciated. A mind-set can develop that is like a man freezing to death. There comes a point where he can't resist falling asleep, and he doesn't want to be bothered anymore. Spiritually, some have succumbed to this death-dealing lethargy. In a worship service, they may sing, "More and more like Jesus, I would ever be; More and more like Jesus, my Saviour who died for me." But they sing with their lips only. Seldom, if ever, will the penitential tear fall for having come short of that mark. Scarcely will they persevere in prayer, craving, because of love of His excellency, to be more like Him. They really don't want their complacency to be disturbed.

Sometimes it may be questioned whether such fervent desire to be like Jesus is realistic Christian life. True, the essence of Christian life is not in being emotional about Christ. It is in faith in Him. Neither is Christian living a "flower-strewn pathway." But why would one be satisfied with a life of spiritual drudgery when he can experience Christ being his all in all? When one is so anemic that there is scarce desire to be more like Jesus, God has a "blood" transfusion for such a one that revitalizes the life of Christ within. Talk with the sainted elderly among us and ask them whether Jesus has not become more and more precious to them. Some will tell you, "He's so real to me!"

Of particular burden is the spiritual vibrancy of our youth. If they see in us fathers and mothers the desire to be more like Jesus, perhaps they will want it also. As a certain song says, "You cannot build a barrier that love will not tear down" (Loren Burns, "Surrender Road"). The potential for the church's future is tremendous if our youth have the dissatisfied spirit we are talking about. Where the spirit of wanting to be more like Jesus prevails, what a motivation it is for Bible reading, spiritual conversation, and denying the flesh!

The church Jesus founded is two thousand years old now. He said He would build the Church upon the truth that He was the Christ, and even the gates of hell would not prevail against her, Matthew 16:16-18. That speaks of a mighty preserving power. Part, if not the greater part, of that power is through the Holy Ghost imparting the spirit of wanting to be more and more like Jesus. That spirit has preserved a remnant of true believers all through the centuries. Thousands so craved to be like Him that they bore their cross even unto death, and in that way, they suffered and died with Him. If we lose that spirit, we will have lost the essence of the true faith. The "gates of hell" will surely prevail against anyone who does not have that spirit.

May the bonfires of revival in the congregations blend together in one mighty flame of that holy, dissatisfied spirit. Then Jesus will be formed more and more in us. When we desire to be more like Jesus, we surely crave the sanctification and cleansing of His Church also, "that in all things He might have the preeminence" Colossians 1:18.



WISE OR FOOLISH?

The Bible is called the "Book of Wisdom." It is so called because God, its Author, is all-wise. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Colossians 2:3. The Scriptures reveal God to us inasmuch as He has seen fit in this present life. In the Scriptures, wisdom and knowledge are spoken of simultaneously. To make wise decisions, one must have the knowledge of the facts surrounding a situation or problem. To know about God would be knowledge, but to know Him by having Him in our heart through the new birth and walking in obedience, following the Holy Spirit, is true godly wisdom.

Having a personal experience with God gives us a living faith. This makes us wise unto salvation and gives us an anchor for the soul, sure and steadfast, Hebrews 6:19. Again and again the Scriptures speak of the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom, Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10.

In Deuteronomy 4:6 Moses told God's people that if they would obey the Lord's statutes and judgments, the world about them would behold this wisdom, and God would be glorified. Jesus said that He would reveal Himself to those who would keep His commandments, and this also would reveal their love for Him.

Godly wisdom and true humility go hand in hand. Moses, the man of God, is a wonderful example of true humility. God revealed Himself and His will to Moses more clearly than to anyone else we have record of in the Old Testament. But we have this record of him that he was a very meek (or humble) person, Numbers 12:3.

How often have we found that, when we took our own way instead of God's way, very soon we could see the wisdom of His way? And how often there has been a bitter reaping, even in financial decisions. We then can see the wisdom of seeking the counsel of our brethren. In James 1:5, we are told that if we ask in faith for wisdom, we shall receive it, and we might be told to go to our brethren for counsel.

We have a very important scripture in James 3:17: "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be in-treated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." We notice that in the foregoing verses, James was speaking of the evil spirits of envy and strife. These spirits are earthly, sensual, devilish. They dare not be given room in the heart of a true Christian. James says that where

there is envy and strife, there is confusion and every evil work. It was said by one of our ministers that if all envy could be removed from among us, we would have very few problems.

But the wisdom from above rejects all these spirits and strives to be pure, peaceable, humble, teachable, merciful, and fruitful, without partiality and hypocrisy. Ministers and deacons especially need these qualities to guide their flocks aright and to prove those coming into the church, to prove holy matrimony and God's will in our ordinations. In Church discipline, much wisdom is needed to keep the church pure. It is needful to understand the various conditions we deal with. We need godly wisdom to prove the spirits we face and discern the proper time to act, not too fast or too slow. In all this, the love for souls must burn within us so that our discipline will be redemptive.

Godly wisdom is so very needful in our homes in order for father and mother to fill their rightful places. True humility is again very necessary to detect what is transpiring in the hearts of our children. Satan is very busy planting evil seed in their hearts. It takes godly wisdom, prayer, and watchfulness to counteract these devices. The cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches can cause us as parents to neglect the most important things, and we have seen very sad results. Child training is a very important scriptural teaching, and someone has said that obedience is the great lesson of life.

We believe that we are living in the last days of time. It appears that the world is fast approaching the day when Jesus shall return to claim His own and to hold Judgment. Will we be of those who watch and pray and obey? Those who will resist the temptations of our day and maintain true godly wisdom until the end will be saved.

We now come to the awful thought of being foolish. On the great Judgment Day, we will either be wise or foolish. It will be the great contrast of the ages when every knee bows and every tongue confesses. No price will then be too high to pay, but it will be too late, Revelation 14:11.

In scriptural language, foolishness is first spoken of those who reject God and His great plan of salvation. Psalm 14:1. The world is turning to atheism and evolution more and more. To even consider taking the way of the world is foolishness with God and is sin. Proverbs 24:9. The plan of salvation is a wise and marvelous plan, but to talk of a Saviour who died on the cross is foolishness to the world. "For the preaching of the cross is to them

that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" 1 Corinthians 1:18.

"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." 1 Corinthians 1:22-25.

Then in verse 27 of this chapter, it says that God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. He has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty. The apostles did not preach in the power of man's wisdom, but they preached the plain and simple gospel. That was more powerful to change the lives of men than all the powerful oratory of the world. Through this preaching, a great spiritual kingdom was established. Napoleon, the great French conqueror, is said to have commented that he could not understand how a lowly man like Jesus could establish a world-wide kingdom that stood through the centuries when great leaders and military men of the world saw their kingdoms fall. Yes, it confounds the mighty. We who have seen ungodly sinners converted and completely changed understand this, but the world does not.

We will need to be willing to be called foolish by the world. In 1 Corinthians 4:13, the apostle Paul says they are the offscouring of the world, but they are precious in the eyes of God. The gospel that the world calls foolish would save the human race if they would accept it. The world does not understand the blessings of a humble Christian, for they seem foolish to them. But the awful reaping of a worldly life also seems hidden from them.

The world also sees as foolishness that we do not approve of its system of higher education. Education is a highly honored god of this world, but it does not bring righteousness to mankind. It belittles the plain teachings of the Scriptures and has brought false doctrine into many churches. Jesus chose humble fishermen to be His apostles, and they accomplished more than any twelve men in history did. No, "not many mighty, not many noble, are called." 1 Corinthians 1:26. May we always keep the vision of a humble Christian life and see the awful folly of choosing the perishable things of this world. May we cling to the Bible, the Book of wisdom and salvation, rejecting the foolishness of this world and determining not to be a foolish virgin when Jesus returns.

Another area of foolishness that we should not overlook, and the Scriptures speak about it, is jesting and joking. The church has always taught against foolish talking, as Ephesians 5:4 teaches us. We are living in a very foolish, entertainment and comedian loving world. These things absorb much time in people's lives, and God is crowded out. Radio and television also employ this area extensively. Are we allowing these things to taint us as the people of God? Are we taking liberty in these things and perhaps excusing them under the guise of humor? The dictionary places jesting and joking in the same category. Joking is meant to be foolish or fool someone, and jesting is to momentarily deceive or mislead. The people of God are to be known as friendly and happy people, but not foolish. They should know us as taking life seriously and having a spiritual outlook on life.

In 1 Timothy 3, ministers and deacons are especially counseled to be grave and sober. Grave means not being foolish. Sober can include this, but it involves much more. Would this not include loud laughing? The Scriptures warn us against idle words and careless speech. Matthew 12:36-37; Colossians 4:6.

May we all keep ourselves in the love of God and our lamps trimmed and burning.

Will it not be an unspeakable tragedy to be found foolish on Judgment Day, especially for those who at one time were among the wise?

Brother Paul.



*Remember only doers of the Word are blessed,
'Tis well to hear it and believe, but to do is best.*



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