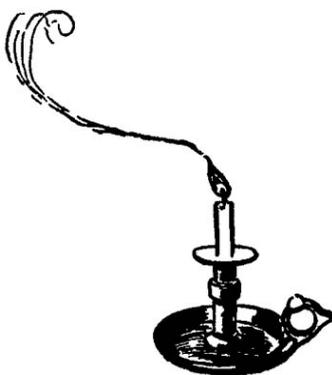


THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

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

Matthew 5:15

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For A Conservative Mennonite Perspective

From The Editor's Desk

In this issue we complete the 2 part series on “Living Sacrificially“ and by such God honouring lives we can be and are witnesses to the power of His grace, abundant grace, that is at work in our lives and brings us that peace and joy that only the presence of God’s Holy Spirit in our lives can bring.

The world often looks on and marvels how it is that the true Christian, the born again believer, can endure hardships and sufferings of all sorts and yet remain calm and at rest in the midst of all those things but we know that Scripture explains clearly how that is. Ephesians 4:18 says, “Having the (their) understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” and in the case of those who once knew God there is this very sad description in Romans 1:21, “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”

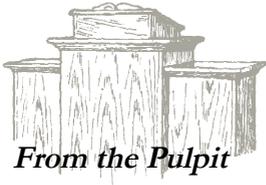
Romans 1 is indeed a very sobering chapter written by Apostle Paul and although we have the encouragement in verses 16 through 17 that the just shall live by faith we have the dire consequences of unbelievers especially from verse 18 through to the end of the chapter.

I believe it is good for us to read through those verses from time to time to remind ourselves that living in accordance with the Word of God brings a reward both in the here and now through being able to have that peace that passeth all understanding and which shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7) and an eventual crown of righteousness which is laid up for us (2 Timothy 4:8) but that the opposite will only bring condemnation.

We see that portrayed in Romans 8:1 which says, “*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

We can say with confidence that the opposite is thus true of those who are not in Christ Jesus, who do walk after the flesh (or live in fleshly desires) and not after the Spirit.

Dear friends let us be those for whom there is no condemnation and help others by our example to also come to that place. J.v.L



From the Pulpit

Living Sacrificially (Part 2 of 2)
From a message by Brother Kevin L Kreider
Denver Mennonite Church Winter Bible School 2011

I would like to move now into practical expressions of this principle of sacrifice which is sacrificial living or living sacrificially.

Verse one of Romans 12 he says that you present your bodies and that is our first point presenting our bodies.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says that we are bought with a price therefore glorify God in your body, first of all body, and in your spirit which are God's.

One writer raises this question: Why does the Scripture say present your bodies as a living sacrifice? And I think the answer is somewhat simple and self obvious, it is simply that through our physical body and we all see each other tonight in a physical sense, it is through the physical body that the spirit is expressed and we are to present these bodies first of all to God as an evidence of what is inside of the heart matter.

It is through the actions of the body that the spirit is expressed.

Think with me of yourself and of your conversation, it is through the physical mouth the words coming out that the spirit is expressed, it is through the conduct the way you responded today, the way you will respond tomorrow, the efforts that you pursue and the way you pursue them through your life and conduct that the spirit is expressed, it is through the carriage of our body that the spirit is expressed whether it is haughty or whether it is humble, it is through the covering of the body, the clothes that are used or bought, the trimmings, it is through these things that the spirit is expressed.

These are the actions of ideologies and values which we would say finally are from a believe in God, it is how our belief in God is being expressed in everyday living.

We are responsible brethren and sisters for the expressions given of sacrifice or lack of it, whether it is honouring, whether it is proving what is

that good and acceptable and perfect will of God or whether it is self gratification and lifting ourselves up.

2]. Secondly living sacrificially is when simple obedience is better than sacrifice.

And you remember in *1 Samuel 15:22* where Saul previously to this had said when asked about the lowing of the oxen, the noise of the cattle when Samuel said, What meaneth the bleating of the sheep? And Saul said well the people saved of the best, they did it to sacrifice. And Samuel said "Behold to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken then the fat of rams."

Saul thought that if the use was right the method by which it was obtained was not so important but the fact of the matter is that God had commanded obedience, God had said that Amalek was to be destroyed utterly, and they were disobedient, and so disobedience was not be remedied by sacrifice, wilful disobedience was not remedied by sacrifice and saying that this will fix it up. *(The end does not necessarily justify the means)*

Brethren and sisters sacrifice, living sacrificially and the spirit of disobedience are incompatible, they do not fit together.

Did you ever hear of sweet disobedience? Maybe for children it's a little bit like saying: "I love you mother" but then pouting and saying "I don't want to do the dishes." You know that type of thing, that sort of sweet disobedience, we are giving a sacrifice to cover up something that is deeper.

Well brethren and sisters maybe it affects us in this way but somehow we think because we gave liberally and gave our fair share in the last church wide offering that then we can excuse or maybe we can just give ourselves a little bit of liberty in relation to church regulations or we think that if the Ministry talked to us about something we can sort of justify ourselves and say: Well we are doing pretty good in this area over here.

It does not go together. Living sacrificially is living obediently.

We develop the attitude of sacrificial living when we give up what I want or would like because maybe it is church direction, maybe it is other direction or we know a better and safer way than our own. Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice, *(Hebrews 11:4)* and I believe one of the reasons that it was more excellent was because it was in obedience to divine direction and apparently Cain's was not in obedience to divine direction and Cain's was

not accepted. God said if thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted? (*Genesis 4:7*) and apparently it was disobedience.

Our children should learn early that obedience is better than saying "I'm sorry" and we want to pick that up a little bit later.

3]. Thirdly living sacrificially will direct our giving.

Our giving and concepts of sharing and brotherhood assistance. Brotherhood assistance is built solidly on this doctrine. Turn with me to *Romans 15:26-27* and notice how the brethren were glad to share, I think it was a sacrificial sharing it says here: For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. Verse 27, notice this, it hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are.

When the church wide offering came around did you have that spirit and that feeling "it hath pleased them verily to share" Living sacrificially will cultivate that attitude.

Acts 11:29 the disciples according to ability decided to send relief to their brethren. We say give till it hurts and in relation to practical sacrificial living we say that this becomes painfully practical, not necessarily to the flesh but more so to the attitudes of the old man and of the carnal nature, it becomes painfully practical.

The widow woman gave sacrificially, she gave of her living while many others were casting of their abundance and I think she gave of what she could have used to live comfortably on, maybe she did with a little less salt or sugar or whatever application you want to make, what she could have used to purchase some of the necessities what we would say the necessities of life she was willing to give, she cast in of her living, (*Luke 21:4*) I think that is a right application of her living

1 Corinthians 16:2 says: Let every man lay by him as in store as God hath prospered him.

I think when large offerings come around whether it is a congregation or a district wide offering I think it is right for us to calculate what our fair share is and to endeavour to give as we are able to that. I think it is also right to remember that there are others who are not blessed nearly as much as we are and we should endeavour to give more than our share, right with that it is correct to understand that there are times when we cannot give as

much as we would like but I think those times are probably very few for most of us.

Our standard of living should be simple and frugal so that we do not get the idea that when things are hard and maybe we are facing challenges financially or things are not going as well for us that we don't get the idea that the church owes me something. We should be living simply and frugally so that we know how to face hard times.

4]. Fourthly living sacrificially is encouraged by others who are doing the same.

There is a verse in Psalm 50 and this is in relation to others sacrificing, the Psalmist writes: Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. *Psalm 50:4.*

I think we understand that the reason that we receive encouragement from others as we observe their lives, and I think it is the kind of encouragement we want to give or the kind of encouragement that we enjoy in noticing and receiving, is when we see others we know that they could live a bit better than what they actually are, they could re-do the house, they could update the equipment in the barn, but it is serviceable, it is practical and they say we do not need to. In fact we are not going to because it is very practical, it is very serviceable and we have a goal that is beyond the higher class and beyond leaving a good impression of the household things, there is a goal beyond.

You see we are giving up that which is pleasant to gain that which is for the eternal perspective, we are looking beyond ourselves, we are looking down the generations of time to our great grandchildren should the Lord tarry and beyond and so sacrificial living is encouraged by others who are used to sacrifice who are familiar with living that way
Living simply and frugally for the purposes beyond our time.

Sometimes we hear this concept being expressed that I hope my children don't need to start out where I started out but that they can start out on a higher, a better footing financially than what I did.

I don't think that is a good concept.

It is true that times change but the level of sacrifice both physically and spiritually, those two run together, the level of sacrifice we want to encourage is full wholehearted sacrifice.

5]. Fifthly in living sacrificially *Hebrews 13:15* says: Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.

And I think the continual praise to God is an evidence of a sacrificial living, of living sacrificially, brethren and sisters not just when we feel like it but grateful and thankful all the time. You know we are pretty hard on our children when they are grouchy and complaining and we say, You want to count your blessings. Well if we want our children to count their blessings we had better do the same, we had better count our blessings and be unselfish and be thankful ourselves.

The loss of gratitude to God is one of the first steps to apostasy and it will be one of the reasons that we give in justification of pleasing ourselves and of disobedience, loss of gratitude to God is one of the first steps to apostasy.

The sacrifice of continual praise to God does not give me time to dwell on my own hurts and pains and troubles but rather it is lifting my focus above myself to God. That is one of the challenges in humanistic philosophy that all of the things that have hurt me have made me what I am, brethren and sisters we can rise above that by giving a sacrifice of continual praise to God.

6]. *Psalm 40:5-6* is the sixth point we would like to make.

In verse five the mid part of that verse: They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would be clear and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered - that is speaking of the blessings of God - verse six: Sacrifice and offering thou that didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

The mid part of verse six there, mine is hast thou opened, my point is this that sacrificial living is love in service. It seems to me that the Psalmist is saying here that there is something better yet than sacrifice and offering than just bringing a sacrifice and just bringing an offering. He is saying mine ears hast thou opened, and I often thought that was God working in our lives to make us willing to hear what He had to say, I believe that is an application, but I think it goes deeper than that, I think it refers to the Old Testament love servant who was told that now he may go free but he said: I love my master, I love my family and he said I will serve you for ever.

And what happened? They went to a post of the house, a doorpost as I understand it and they took an awl and they pierced his ear and this was not a

selfish piecing of the ear like people do today but it was a physical mark of the commitment that that servant made, the love servant made when he said, I will serve you for ever, mine ears hast thou opened. (*Exodus 21:1-6*).

And that is what God is looking for, he is looking for our delight to do the master's will, my will is to do his will.

So young brother when you are asked to teach Sunday school class or asked to have devotions your response is simply – “I’ll try to do my best, I’m willing to do what I can for the work of the Lord.” And your response when peers or friends would push the borders of church regulations your response is that “I will stand firm and clear with the church, I will leave my testimony for Christ and the church, I won’t yield to the pressures” and you are sacrificing your own ego and your own self image in the eyes of peers, sacrificing what you think maybe is desirable for the sake of that which is stable, that which is true.

And young sister when your plans need to be changed because a busy mother needs some help because her children are sick you say, “I’ll be glad to go and help, I will go and help.” And the response is not necessarily a response of feeling but it is a response of commitment to what is right on your part, and that applies to all of us.

This sacrificial living is not so much a life that is governed by feeling but a life that is governed by our choice to choose what the Father, what God would want us to do, what the Bible teaches us to do and what a scriptural church has made application to.

Fathers that sacrificial love and giving that will take the time to witness to that neighbour that maybe has just been a little bit hard to get along with and he called and wanted help again and you think he ought to be able to help himself, but you go and spend time and help the best that you are able, it is not always that we can help, but cheerfully help so that others see that our ears are bored through, and that is living sacrificially, giving up ourselves because of God.

7]. *Proverbs 21:3* says this, this is my seventh thought, I'll just use this verse as the thought: To do justice and judgement is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.

Now what does that mean? I think maybe a very simple application of this truth is that it is better not to do wrong than to offer the sacrifice of "I'm sorry for the damage done," but to do justice and judgement is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.

So we would say that God is not looking for the sacrifices necessarily, he is wanting the sacrifices to be avoided, in other words the bringing of those sheep that were an atonement for the sin there in the Old Testament, but to do what is right that is what God is looking for and so we teach our children to say "I'm sorry" when they do wrong but we also help them to realise that that doesn't fix up the wrong that was done, it doesn't mend the broken window when the snowball was thrown towards it, that doesn't fix the broken window back in one piece, it just doesn't do that.

Or young man, young brother when you are driving just a little carelessly on slippery roads and you want to see a little how much your vehicle could do and you ended up with a bent fender and just going home and telling dad "I'm sorry" does not fix up the fender.

Or let's take it a bit further as we go through life as parents and we conduct our homes, our businesses, our families in a way that we come through and our children somehow don't come out for God because we just pleased ourselves a little more, we weren't as fully supportive of what was right and of the church and after our children don't turn out right then we say "Well I'm sorry"

Does that fix up the damage? No. To do justice and judgement is living sacrificially, there are plenty of times there will still be enough areas where we will need to say that it is in spite of us that our family or our church has come through for God.

Sacrificial living lives justly to gain a desired end, a planned end.

I would like to turn yet to Philippians chapter 2 and verse 17, Paul writing here to the brethren and sisters at Philippi says: Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

Philippians 2:17.

Sacrificial living is a service of faith, it is an offering which produces joy and effects which brings joy. It means that all of life has the goal of building up and being a service to the faith, our faith, faith in God, all of life is wrapped up in that goal, that's foremost, that is primary and all of the things must serve that goal.

It means that we give up worldly ambitions to promote the faith.

It means mothers that the sewing projects get setback because of the value that we put into winter Bible school. The time it takes to comb the girls and get the family ready and to come to Bible school, the evenings that are taken up.

It means brethren that we do not complain about the time that it takes to study for or the time to travel to church meetings or for work.

It means that we give up a lifestyle or an employment opportunity where we could have done better financially, maybe we could have earned \$20,000 more per year, but we have chosen a simple service vocation focused family oriented or for the benefit of the family when we could have done better financially. It is a service of faith, it is building up the faith.

It means that we choose a lifestyle, a vocational lifestyle that will help us to our goal.

We live simply and frugally and separated to preserve spiritual values, it may mean we will spend more for that which will promote what is right like paying our school taxes but yet funding our own private schools. It costs us more brethren and sisters but it is for the cause of promoting what is right.

Or take it to another level it means that we will buy simple plain clothes even though the garage sale item would wear a long time and be cheaper. That may be all right but maybe it means that we take time, more time to fix up the garage sale items so that it communicates a goal and that others looking on don't think that we fit into society and that we don't think that the pattern that we dress our children in is unimportant, there is a goal in view..

It means that we will be willing to give up some conveniences for the purpose of making sure we are not swept along on a wrong course, like maybe it is the latest farm or business technology, maybe it is professional advertising, maybe it is the protection of insurance or maybe it is the Inter-

net conveniences. If we cannot do business without the Internet it surely sounds like end-time business pressure.

It cultivates the attitude of "I'll try" the surface of faith cultivates the attitude of I'll try and I'll do what I can rather than I can't or don't feel like it or I just plain don't want to.

There is a story of a little girl who lived by the railroad track and she noticed that something was wrong with the track further down the line and she ran down to the Telegraph office called the lineman the signal station and she said that the track had something wrong with it and he said the train has passed I cannot stop it. He said can you flag the train? And she said I am little but I'll try.

And you know the train was saved, she stopped the train but she could have come up with a lot of excuses probably and there was some sacrifice that was required for her to try to flag the train.

But that is the spirit of self sacrifice, of a living sacrifice. I'll do what I can. I'm glad to do what I can for God.

A person living sacrificially as a service of faith is glad for the disciplines and regulations of Bible school because, I'm thinking of Numidia and Ashland Bible Schools, because we see these as a help to promote Bible study and faith. Selfishness views discipline and regulation as restrictive.

We are interested in the service of faith

Well more could be said living sacrificially involves prayer. Prayer changes and moulds our will more than it forces God, more than it obligates God.

Living sacrificially is willing to spend time in prayer, intercessory prayer, and it takes time and an interest in others.

Fasting is giving up what we enjoy and offer in the interest of others spiritual needs or the needs of a spiritual nature.

Turn with me yet to Psalm 51, this is a closing Scripture and then I would like to read just a short poem, *Psalm 51:16-17* ¹⁶ For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: (is the Psalmist saying that God does not want sacrifice? Let's read on) Thou delightest not in burnt offering. ¹⁷ The sacri-

fices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

God desires the sacrifice that is of a heart nature, remember that I said the most valuable sacrifice that we can give is our own will.

I'd like to read a poem in relation to that and I think that my concern is that when our hearts are yielded to God then our life will be expressing that.

MY GIFT.

Laid on the altar all that is mine, Lord divine,
Accept this day my gift for Jesus sake.
I have no jewels to adorn thy shrine,
Nor any world famed sacrifice to make.

But here it I bring within my trembling hand
This will of mine a thing that seemeth small.
And only Thou dear Lord canst understand
That when I yield Thee this, I yield Thee all.

It hath been wet with tears and filled with sighs
Clenched in my clasp till beauty it hath none.
Now from my footstool where it is vanquished, it flies
The prayer ascendeth: Let Thy will be done.

Take it over Father, e're my courage fails
And blend it so with Thy own will.
That even if in some desperate hour my cry prevail
And Thou giveth back my gift still.

It may have been so changed, so purified,
So fair have grown, so one with Thee,
So filled with peace divine I may not know
Nor feel it as my own but gaining back
That my will may find it Thine.

Brethren and sisters, a willing living sacrifice is the only sacrifice that pleases God and finally truly satisfies ourselves and gives to us meaning and purpose in life.

The Nature of Christ's Kingdom

*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink;
but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

Romans 14:17

This verse should instruct and inspire us to gain a better understanding of and appreciation for Christ's kingdom and a greater insight into it

The nature of something is its "inherent character or basic constitution," its essence, disposition, and temperament. As citizens of the kingdom of God, is the nature of that kingdom clearly apparent in our lives?

Let us look at some scriptures that give us the words of Jesus as He describes the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 13:31-33 ³¹ Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: ³² Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. ³³ Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Matthew 13:44-45 ⁴⁴ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. ⁴⁵ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:

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

Matthew 20:25-28 ²⁵ But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. ²⁶ But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; ²⁷ And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: ²⁸ Even as the

Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many

In a miraculous way, the wise men of Matthew 2 knew that the One whose star they had seen in the east was born King of the Jews. As we recall how Jesus went about doing good we may sometimes forget that this humble, quiet Man is a king. He did not muster an army to confront the alien Roman rule of His homeland, as His followers so much hoped He would. He showed no interest in the throne in Jerusalem or in assembling a government to rule there. Indeed, He told Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" John 18:36. As He humbly preached the gospel to the poor, gave sight to the blind, healed the sick, fed the hungry, and blessed the children, He personified the very nature of His kingdom—love, joy, and peace—in every way.

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

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

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

plete surrender and commitment by faith to God, the owner of the field and of the pearl.

The leaven and the mustard seed are clearly portrayed in the growth of the kingdom since its beginnings in the New Testament era. Hearts were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, and three thousand people were added to the faith through their efforts. Before He went back to heaven, Jesus gave His disciples a far-reaching commission to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to every creature. As the mustard seed germinated, rooted, and grew, and as the leaven was stirred into the meal, His followers took the good news of salvation to much of the known world. As the fires of persecution scattered the believers, the faith went with them and became the seed of the church.

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

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

Jesus never ignored the needs of the hungry, the requests of the sick, or the prayers of the sinners. He did not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. Why does 1 Corinthians 13 teach us that charity is greater

than faith and hope? It is because God is love. It is His nature, His "inherent character" and "basic constitution." He is our King, and as He reigns in our hearts, it must be our nature, also.

How often do we become judgmental or critical of our brethren? How often, in discharging the responsibilities in the kingdom, does our zeal overtake us and we do not portray the nature of Christ? How often do we lean on our own experience, opinions, or abilities when God would be pleased and our brethren blessed if we would give ourselves humbly, unselfishly, and patiently in the manner of our King? How does the world know that we are His disciples? Do they take notice of us that we have been with Jesus? Do they know because we love them as Jesus loves us? In dealing with our brethren, and in meeting the physical and spiritual needs of humanity, we can labour tirelessly and efficiently, but if our efforts are not permeated with and motivated by the true love of God, they are nothing. That is because we bypass the nature of God and His kingdom.

All kingdoms have kings and subjects, but in greater or lesser measure they are maintained by fear of law and judgment. Although some are benevolent, many are motivated by greed and selfish ends. They are defended by weapons and soldiers, and often war is deterred by compromise, threat, and political manoeuvring. It is the nature those kingdoms.

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

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

MARANATHA

GRACE

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

Grace is God's unmerited favour. It is the Divine influence upon our heart. It is undeserved, we cannot earn it, buy it, give it away or trade it for something else and it is for all people so that they can make the decision to believe and have the faith that they can come to God in true repentance confessing our sins and trusting in the shed blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse us from all unrighteousness – when we believe that God will do what He says in His Word, 1 John 1:9 – that is having faith in God and through having that faith of believing Him and believing His promises and His power to cleanse us from our sin then He will exercise more grace toward us in the forgiving of all our sin and that is then salvation.

We are saved because we believe and through the free gift of His grace and through the free gift of His grace we exercise that faith and believe and are saved and forgiven.

Ephesians 2:4-10 ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵ Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) ⁶ And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus: ⁷ That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: ⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:8 - For by grace are ye saved, through faith – and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

Through repentance and belief in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ and the power of God you are now brought into a state of salvation, your past sins are all blotted out, and you are made partaker of the Holy Spirit; and then you can or should have a hope full of immortality, that is assurance of salvation, you must not attribute this to any works or merit of yours; for when this Gospel reached you, you were all found dead in trespasses and

dead in sins; therefore it was God's free mercy to you, manifested through Christ, and God gave us the chance to belief through His grace and, having believed by the power of the Holy Spirit, we have received, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise; so that this salvation is in no way because of ourselves, but is the free gift of God; not of any kind of works by us ; so that no man can boast as having saved himself or even contributed any thing towards it. And only our choice to believe Him glorifies God.

By grace are ye saved, through faith in Christ. This is a true doctrine, and continues to be essential to the salvation of man to the end of the world. But how are we to understand, faith or salvation as being the gift of God? This question may be asked: Is not faith the gift of God?

Yes, but it is first through the gift of God's grace that faith can be produced; but God's grace or the power to believe, and the act (or doing) of believing, are two different things.

This is the true state of exercising faith:

God gives the power – Man uses the power God has given,

And that brings glory to God:

Without that power no man can believe. With it, any man may be saved.

And every man according to Scripture is given that choice. God wants it that way and He has made a way for that to happen as we read in John 3:16-18 ¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. ¹⁸ He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

We see here that it is man's choice to believe or not and we also see the result of not believing in verse 18 – he is condemned.

God does not believe for us or have faith for us but gives us His grace so that we can personally make the effort or choice to believe – no one can do it on our behalf.

God never believes for any man, God does not repent for him: we have to do that. The penitent sinner, through this grace from God is given the power or ability to choose to believe for themselves. We may not believe straightaway; the power to believe may be present long before we use it,

why otherwise the solemn warnings which we meet everywhere in the Word of God, and the threats against those who do not choose to believe? So the ability to believe must be there if we can choose not to believe.

They believe not and so are not established in faith. They choose not to believe that repentance will lead to God's grace and forgiveness and salvation and so miss out on being saved.

We read many times about that call of God to people – the Scripture says “whosoever” meaning any one and every one, not just a select few as some people try to tell us.

Read Matthew 7:24, Matthew 10:32-33, Matthew 12:50, Mark 3:35, Mark 8:24-25, Luke 12:28, John 11:26, John 12:46, Acts 2:21, Acts 10:43, Acts 13:26, verses to help a bit more in our understanding of this “whosoever.” We see from this that God has given man the choice and He does that by giving them His grace to make that decision to believe

Now also look at this verse from the book of Romans, Romans 3:24 ²⁴ Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Being treated as if we are righteous. We cannot be regarded righteous or treated as being righteous by any merit or effort of our own, or by personal obedience to the Law of Christ– in other words not by our works. When we have come to God in repentance and we believe in faith that He will forgive us our sins as we confess them then we are treated as righteous or justified freely by or through His grace as this verse says, it is a mere favour from God to us, not because we have a right to it or deserve it but it is a gift.

This is the essence of the gospel. And to show this, and the way in which it is done, is the main design of this Epistle to the Romans.

Romans 3:22 says that the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ, is “upon all who believe,” who are all “justified freely by His grace.”

And then it goes on to say in verses 23 and 24 of Romans 3, For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ²⁴ Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ²⁵ Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, (the blood of Jesus Christ) to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past,

through the forbearance of God; (propitiation means briefly that God is satisfied with the sacrifice of Jesus to pay for our sins, His sacrifice reconciles us with God if we have faith in His blood).

We see the work of God's mercy and grace at work here because He could so easily demand that we pay the price for our sins, But no, He is so full of mercy that He continues to exercise His grace to all so that they may make a choice to follow Him.

The Old Testament speaks a lot about people finding grace in the sight of God and it is the same for us today, we too find grace in the sight of God and the rest is up to us.

John 1:14 says the Word (Jesus) was made flesh and dwelt among us and that He is full of **grace** and truth.

John 1:17 says that Moses gave the law but **grace** and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Acts 15:11 says that the Apostles believed that through the **grace** of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved.

Paul also says in 1 Corinthians 15:10 that by the **grace** of God I am what I am.

And I believe the same is for us when we come to Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, He will then help us to become what He wants us to be and we know that sometimes the way is not easy, that is why Jesus speaks of taking up our cross daily and following Him. Luke 9:23. I suppose very often it is not easy but we know that He will help us through.

So we can see that:

1. Grace is a gift from God.
2. It is that gift of grace that allows and helps us to make a choice to believe in Jesus Christ.
3. It is that gift of grace that allows or helps us to realise our sinful condition.
4. It is that gift of grace that helps us to decide to come to repentance before God.
5. It is that gift of grace that enables to us having the firm believe or faith that Jesus Christ is the One that is the justifier of him which believes in Jesus Christ and that brings us to salvation.

6. It is that gift of grace, amazing grace that saves a wretch like me, a sinner like me from the penalty of sin which is eternal death.
7. It is that gift of grace that has brought me to where I am today and keeps me in His Kingdom here on earth whilst I wait for that call to come to home to be with Him forever more.
8. The grace of God will never fade away but we can reject it and be lost forever more.



RESURRECTION

“If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins”
1 Corinthians 15:17

The power of the resurrection gives hope to the believer, the hope of a blessed eternity with the Saviour.

When Jesus was crucified, the disciples saw what happened. It happened so fast that they almost forgot that He had said that it was necessary that He should die at the hands of men, to be crucified, (Matthew 26 verse 2) but that He would rise again. A few times in His ministry Jesus talked to His disciples and said what would happen. “The day will come when the Son of man must be taken, and He will suffer and die and be crucified, but I will rise again.” Always when He spoke of His suffering He also said that He would rise again.

The book of Acts begins with “what Jesus began both to do and teach” and then explains what happened after the Lord was taken up, His ascension into heaven.

We are inspired by the fact that Jesus rose again. The resurrection opens up unto us something that the world does not experience.

We would not expect them to understand, but to us it is what enables us to choose to be those who are of the power of God of whom Jesus said, “the

world seeth me no more; but ye see me.” “They will soon forget all about me, but ye shall see me. And because I live you shall live” John 14:19. Jesus is the One who has gone through death for us and “become the firstfruits of them that slept” 1 Corinthians 15:20. Through Him, we too are able to rise unto the resurrection of life and we shall receive eternal life. Jesus said, “because I live, ye shall live also” John 14:19.

The power of life is with God and Jesus had that in His hands.

It must have been a shock for the disciples when they discovered that He had given His life and life had gone out of the body, and now there was a dead body on that cross. They marvelled that He was already dead. The fact is that Jesus had all power from His Father (Matthew 28:18). Jesus laid down His own life and He took it up again (the resurrection), God was at work. Men were not. Men can only bring forth death, but Christ and God are able to bring forth life.

The angels at the empty tomb asked this question of His disciples, “Why seek ye the living among the dead” (Luke 24:5) and then gave this answer “He is arisen He is alive as he said.”

We follow One who is the living Lord and not one who is dead.

We follow One who is just as alive today as ever, and more powerful than ever. He is now seated at the right hand of God. Because of His resurrection we have an intercessor. He is alive and interested in us.

The fact of Christ’s resurrection is the central truth and foundation of the Christian faith. It is important that we believe with an unquestioning confidence in it. We have statements from the Apostle Paul’s expressions in 1 Corinthians 15 — the resurrection chapter. Paul endeavoured to help us understand the experience of the resurrection as it is. Jesus made it possible. The resurrection is a central and a foundational truth by which the Christian faith is founded, and for which we live as we follow the Master. We need to embrace it without questioning and without a loss, but rather with confidence.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:17 “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.” “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits” 1 Corinthians 15:19-20.

It is central and the foundation for the Christian Church in New Testament times as long as time shall last. Verse 23 says, “But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” That is talking about you and me as believers, we belong to Christ by choice.

Jesus’ resurrection was necessary for the fulfilment of Scriptures. Luke 24:44 says, “All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.” Jesus told this to those two men on the road to Emmaus.

The resurrection is necessary for the forgiveness of sin.

“If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins,” Paul says. Finally, the resurrection was not only that He gave His blood and was called the perfect “Lamb of God” (John 1:29), to be able to die and to have His blood shed for the remission of our sins. If Jesus had just died and not risen from the dead that would have been the end and we would not have any hope beyond death. Paul says, “then you would still be in your sins.” You would still be guilty before God. Today, we can experience redemption and be delivered by the power of God over sins that plague us continually. Finally, one day we can be with those that shall be taken up and be in the presence of the Holy One and in the place where Jesus is today.

We have that explained to us in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, verses 13 to 18.

The fact of the resurrection helps us to be justified before God.

Paul says in Romans 4:24-25 “But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” Jesus stands in the presence of the One who was just. He became the “justifier,” for us in the presence of God. He satisfied the just demands of that. Therefore, today He is there interceding for us. It is a hope — our offences have been removed and we stand justified in the presence of God.

The resurrection experience and truths are necessary so that we can have a blessed hope.

In 1 Corinthians 15:19–23 we have these words, ¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. ²⁰ But now is Christ

risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept. ²¹ For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

This shows to us that sin came through man into the world. We have a fallen nature that was passed down to us from the first man Adam. Jesus Christ came into the world in the form of human flesh and lived among men. By man came the sinless Man (Jesus) who could provide redemption and salvation. Now He has given Himself so that we can be free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:2 ²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

The resurrection is the proof of Jesus being the Son of God.

The resurrection is proof that He was the Son of God according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead. This verse we have in Romans 1:3–5. The apostle Paul says, “Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; (4) And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

His resurrection broke the bars of death – we can and will live with Christ forever once we become His followers.

Many today fear death because they have no hope beyond the grave. They fear of death because they face the unknown with guilt on their conscience. Believers can go freely claiming the powers of God and the resurrection of His power working in us and making us new creatures in Christ. If that reality is true and our spirit witnesses with His Spirit “that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16), we can go through this life with confidence.

To believe in the resurrection of Christ is part of our confession of faith. Paul said in Romans 10:9, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead. . .”

We are following One who is alive.

His resurrection to the children of God means that we have a living advocate with the Father today.

We have one by the throne of God today making intercession — an advocate. Jesus Christ the righteous is my advocate today to help me in my Christian experience. It is He to whom you can come daily, and need to come daily, and keep the records clear between you and our Lord. He is there seated today at the right hand of God for me and for you if you are a child of God. 1 John 2:1

The resurrection for us believers means a new body for eternity.

This is one of the glorious things that follows. Finally, this old body wears out and we have no more use for it. We look for the time when we can receive a new body and we will have a body like His glorious body. You could take time to read in 1 Corinthians 15:35-50 all about the various bodies that are for their purpose in their special sphere and effectiveness. Our body will be raised a spiritual body. That is what we are talking about. Again, as our faith stands, it does not stop at the grave. We look for a new body and we look for a new heaven and a new earth — raised up with a new body.

The resurrection means that we are brought to stand before the great Judge of all the earth and justified, uncondemned.

We are cleansed of all sin and unrighteousness because of the sacrifice of Jesus and most importantly His resurrection.

The resurrection message also tells us of a future coming event for both believers and non-believers.

There will be a resurrection of all men. We already read that in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. Those were the sons and daughters of God and they will live forever with the Lord.

There will be also a resurrection of the unjust, those who chose not to follow Christ and rejected Him in this life, they will also be resurrected but their final destination is the lake of fire and they will suffer a second death, a spiritual death, away from the presence of God forever. We see that in Revelation 20:12-15 ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is

the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. ¹⁴ And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵ And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

May the Lord keep us safe until that day when He will bring us all together with the other saints into His heavenly home and our place of rest for all eternity.

Stay strong in the Lord brothers and sisters for the Word says that even though we shall be hated for His name's sake the promise is that he that endureth to the end shall be saved! Mathew 10:22.

What a glorious promise and encouragement that whilst we dwell in this mortal body in a corrupt and dying world that our final redemption draweth nigh. Luke 21:28.

Wait on the LORD: be of good courage,
And he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.
Psalm 27:14.

Nor say not thou, I will recompense evil; *but* wait on the LORD,
and He shall save thee.
Proverbs 20:22.

He which testifieth these things saith,
Surely I come quickly.
Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.
Revelation 22:20



What Was It Like?

Noises mingled on a hill
Pharisees mocking,
"He saved others, himself He cannot save'
Christ spoke grace to those who put Him there;
To the thief beside Him
And for His mother.
What was it like?

Listen to those last sad words,
As He cries out,
"Oh, God, why have You forsaken Me?"
The man on the middle cross is crying.
God forsaking His Son?
Jesus pierces the darkness with earth's loneliest question.
What was it like?

Supernatural darkness hung;
People wonder,
"Where is the sun; why this noonday night?"
On the cross Jesus gave His life
so that a temple sacrifice
is no longer needed.
What was it like?

God allowed it, even planned it,
And Jesus said,
"Treat Me as you'd treat a lamb"
Even though it broke
the heart of God.
His blood washes away my sin.
*So I don't have to go through condemnation,
desolation, and darkness.*
By Sister Anita

Near the Cross

Jesus, keep me near the cross,
There a precious fountain
Free to all, a healing stream
Flows from Calvary's mountain.

Refrain

*In the cross, in the cross,
Be my glory ever;
Till my raptured soul shall find
Rest beyond the river.*

Near the cross, a trembling soul,
Love and mercy found me;
There the bright and morning star
Sheds its beams around me.

Refrain

Near the cross! O Lamb of God,
Bring its scenes before me;
Help me walk from day to day,
With its shadows o'er me.

Refrain

Near the cross I'll watch and wait
Hoping, trusting ever,
Till I reach the golden strand,
Just beyond the river.

Refrain

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