

# 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.**

These past weeks the Lord has again impressed upon my heart the need for each of us to take our place in proclaiming the message of salvation and especially in this country of Australia where multitudes have not the knowledge of the Gospel and those who do have it and profess it in the main do not live it but preach another Gospel as mentioned by Brother Paul in Galatians 1:8-9.

On meditating on Psalm 67 which starts with *“God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; and seeking some inspiration from the commentaries this Psalm was seen as a prayer to God by the Christian “That thy way (God’s way) may be known upon earth.” v.2*

God deals mercifully with us his saints, and then we make that way known far and wide, and thus the Lord's name is made famous in the earth where ignorance of God is the great enemy of mankind but if we show/proclaim *“Thy (God’s) saving health among all nations,”* or, *His salvation* we are doing what He has called us to.

This salvation message all peoples need, but many of them do not know it, desire it, or seek it; our prayer and labour should be continually that the knowledge of salvation may become as universal as the light of the sun. We need to thank God with all our heart for His grace and mercy toward us while we were yet sinners. Once we have come to know God's way and experienced His salvation our thankfulness and joy should be such that we desire others to be saved also and have that peace and rest that only the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit can bring to any person.

Each of us can be a witness unto those around us by our life, our words, and our actions. Even though we may not have a Scriptural brotherhood at this time the Lord will bless us if we remain faithful remembering it is He that gives the increase.

Let us all be like Paul and Apollos, they planted and watered but did not consider themselves anything and why? Because it was God who gave the increase as He does yet today. 1 Cor.3:6. For that to happen I believe we must remain faithful to the labour that He has given us in His vineyard.

Let us therefore continue to encourage and lift each other up in the tasks to which He has appointed each one of us no matter how insignificant or unrewarding it may seem at this time. God sees the overall plan and He has chosen us to be a part of that.

Let us continue to pray for each other and serve Him so that we may hear His voice say to us on that final Day: Well done thou good and faithful servant enter into the joy of thy Lord.

JvL.

*WHY HONOR MOTHERS?*

To honor our fathers and mothers is one of the Ten Commandments Exodus 20:12. A thousand years later the apostle Paul added the additional comment that it "is the first commandment with promise." The Apostle then said what that promise was, "That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." Ephesians 6:2-3. To honor mothers is more than just merely a nice thing to do.

The question posed by the title could be answered promptly, "Because God commanded us to do so." But why did He do so? God does not command anything that is optional or inconsequential. The fact that He has commanded children to honor their mothers tells us that motherhood has a great importance that must not be overlooked.

Most, if not every, culture and society regard their mothers with respect. There is a certain natural law that mandates this, enforced by the obvious fact that all people owe their lives to a mother. A society that would not respect mothers could not continue for long. If nature teaches all men that it is befitting to give due respect to mothers, Christians will reverence their mothers with an added dimension. To discredit motherhood, which some elements in the world are doing today, is an affront to God and invites disaster.

In their folly, men claim that humans evolved over millions of years from lower forms of life, but they will never explain the powerful emotional and spiritual feelings a mother has for her child. These emotional and spiritual ties are part of God's signature upon motherhood. After six thousand years of human existence, those feelings remain indelibly printed upon mothers, for the welfare of mankind.

Some might argue that this natural bond between a mother and her offspring is observed in the animal kingdom as natural instinct. But only a human mother experiences the inescapable wondering about her child's after-life. That is more than instinct.

Altruism (unselfishness, regard for the welfare of others without consideration of reciprocation) is universally respected and commended. A person cannot be justly accused of having an ulterior motive in any given proposition when he or she has no thought of what they will get in return. There is perhaps no better example of this than that found in true mothers. However, it must be said that there are mothers today who are bearing children for selfish reasons. They are appropriating that which the Creator

designed for godly purposes to the advancement of their ego or even for financial considerations.

Let us, then, confine our thinking here to godly mothers, those whom are dedicated to God's plan and purpose of motherhood.<sup>1</sup> Timothy 2:15.

Sincere Christian mothers-to-be view the prospect of bearing children as being in the context of God's will. The strong natural desire to have children is elevated to a nobler plane by heartfelt conviction that it is God's will that Christian wives bear children. <sup>1</sup>Timothy 5:14. They are conscious that God is to be honored by their offspring. When such God-consciousness prevails, purely selfish considerations are excluded. Such an attitude in Christian wives (and husbands) pleases God. It deserves commendation and encouragement.

To suffer pain and agony unselfishly for the sake of another's life is always considered praiseworthy. A mother descends into a valley of pain and distress in order to bring forth a new life. In one sense, she jeopardizes her life in giving birth to her child. Children, of course, do not understand these things until they are older. But as they grow older and their minds mature, eventually coming to this time in life themselves, they begin to understand what it meant to bring them to life. That price, paid unselfishly, dictates that children respect and honor their mothers.

There is no image of a mother more touching than of one prevailing in prayer for her children. Likely there is a "half that has never been told" in regards to many mothers' earnest, even agonizing, intercession at the throne of grace for their offspring. Who knows how many children's beds have been marked with the indent of Mother's elbows and moistened by her tears? An unknown poet's words give us the picture:

... I went my way unheeding,  
 Careless of the life I led,  
 Until one day I noticed  
 Prints of elbows on my bed.  
 Then I knew that she had been there,  
 Praying for her wayward boy,  
 Who for love of worldly pleasure  
 Would her peace of mind destroy.  
 While I wrestled with my conscience,  
 Mother wrestled still in prayer,

Till that little room seemed hallowed  
 Because so oft she met Him there.  
 With her God she held her fortress,  
 And though not a word was said,  
 My stubborn heart was broken  
 By those imprints on my bed.

Children who break the heart of their Christian mother by disobedience and turning their back on their mother's faith ignore the cost of their mother's travail to give them life. God says it will not go well with those children.

True mothers, of course, will be quick to lament their failures and shortcomings, and they will minimize the sacrifices they have made. That again shows a spirit that is worthy of note. Mothers who are bearing the heat of the day with a growing family should take courage, realizing that God uses weak vessels. It is likely that deep within their children's hearts there is a deep appreciation for them, although it should be more readily expressed.

Words alone do not fulfill the commandment to honor one's mother. The real essence of this matter is found in children living respectable and responsible lives. Perhaps the best honor a mother can receive is when she is told, "I met your son (or daughter) the other day. He was so courteous and respectful." She is honored when her older children are consecrated brothers and sisters filling their place in the kingdom. Then she is able to believe that all her sacrifice and effort have not been in vain.

The generations of mothers who are now rearing their children are pivotal in the preservation of the faith that we hold precious. Their children must catch the vision of the genuine faith and practice if the Church is to hold the line against the pressures of worldliness. No one is more naturally qualified and better positioned than mothers to touch the hearts of their children. Mothers, perhaps more than anyone else, can instill in the oncoming generation conviction and willingness to bear the cross for the sake of the truth. To meet that challenge, mothers will need to have a heartfelt burden for the welfare of Zion.

Together we say, God bless and reward our mothers for all they have done.

*A reprint by courtesy "The Messenger of Truth" 2003.*

**MINISTER'S CORNER**

## An Easter Meditation.

## “Behold the Lamb of God”

Part 2. Concluding a message by Nevin S. Weaver.

In the last issue Brother Nevin finished with these words and then continues with a call to us to be a non-resistant people and further seeking the One who is The Lamb of God.

He was as the lamb is “before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). He willingly gave Himself. No man took His life from Him.

Jesus also calls us, His followers, to be defenceless. He commands us in Matthew 5:39, “resist not evil.” He calls us to also be defenceless. We read many accounts in *The Martyr's Mirror* and in Church history of the defenceless Christians. Why were they defenceless? They were following the Lamb of God. They were following the pattern that Jesus established.

II) *Who was this Lamb?* John said, “Behold the Lamb of God.” 1) *In Revelation 13:8 it speaks “of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”* Who was this Lamb? He was the one who was promised many years ago to Eve in the Garden of Eden when man sinned. In Genesis 3:15 we read of the Lord God coming into the Garden in the cool of day and He called to Adam and said, “Where art thou” (Genesis 3:9)? Adam said, “I was afraid . . . and I hid myself” (Genesis 3:10). Then God said, “What is this that thou hast done (Genesis 3:13)? Then, He cursed the enemy, the serpent, “Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life” (Genesis 3:14).

Then verse 15, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” God was prophesying here of One who would make an atonement for man's sin, One who would bruise the serpent. We will look at that a little bit later. Who was this Lamb? He was the one promised from the very beginning of time that would bruise the head of the serpent.

2) *Who was this Lamb?* *He was the one through whom “all the families of the earth [would] be blessed” (Genesis 12:3; 28:14).* In Genesis 12:3 God told Abram “I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” Psalm 72:17 says “His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him

blessed.” Who is in focus in these two verses? It is speaking very prophetically of Jesus. God told Abram through, “thy seed will all the families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 28:14). It was the prophecy concerning the one, the Lamb of God that would come some day yet in the future.

3) *Who was this Lamb? He was the one of whom the prophets prophesied would come.* We have many prophecies concerning Jesus. They wrote in great detail by the inspiration of God concerning His birth, where He would be born, His work, what He would accomplish, His death, how it would happen, His resurrection and ascension. We find those prophecies scattered throughout the Old Testament especially in the book of Psalms. We have many prophecies of this one who would come. Who was this Lamb? He was the fulfilment of all those prophecies. In Jesus’ coming to earth as a babe, and various times throughout His life, we have Jesus saying, in my own words, “This was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets.”

4) *Who was this Lamb of God? He was the one the Old Testament sacrifices pointed forward to.* The rivers of shed animal blood could not atone for man’s sin. They only covered man’s sin until the perfect sacrifice could be offered. Hebrews 10:4–7 reads, “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. (5) Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: (6) In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. (7) Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.” Again, speaking of Christ.

The Old Testament sacrifices and animal blood only covered man’s sin. It did not do away with it because God required perfect blood. Animal sacrifices were perfect in one sense but not in the way that met God’s requirement for sin.

5) *Who was this Lamb? He was the co-Creator of heaven and earth.* Notice what it says in John 1:1–3, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) The same was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” The co-Creator of heaven and earth. He had perfect knowledge of the tendency of man, His creation. Yet man did not perceive who he was. I would like to notice now John 1:10, 11, “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew

him not. (11) He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” The co-Creator of heaven and earth was come down to earth. God revealed part of Himself to mankind.

6) *Who was this Lamb? He was the source of all life both physically and spiritually.* Through Him is the only way to eternal life. While on earth He had the power to bring dead men to life because He was the source of life. He was with God when God “breathed into [man’s] nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7). I was speaking of the beginning of physical life. In 1 John 5:12 John writes, “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” This is speaking of spiritual life.

John 1:12 says, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” In the beginning of time, Jesus, the Lamb of God was with the Father and breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life. We have physical life. Then, here Jesus came to earth as the Lamb of God to provide spiritual life — the fulfilment of God’s plan.

7) *Who was this Lamb of God? Verse 14, He was “the Word . . . made flesh.”* He was God revealing Himself in a new way through Jesus Christ. One time, in John 14:8 one of Jesus’ disciples said to Him, “shew us the Father.” Jesus answered, “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). He was the Word made flesh. Colossians 1:15, referring to Jesus says, “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” Who was this Lamb? He was Word of God made flesh. He was the image of the invisible God. Jesus said “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

Jesus, as part of the Godhead, demonstrated to man some of the divine attributes such as love, mercy, and holiness that characterized the eternal Father. Jesus’ personality and His character can be described by paraphrasing part of 1 Corinthians 13. Jesus is patient, and kind. He is just and not boastful. He is not arrogant or rude. When Jesus was here on earth He did not insist on His own way but allowed even His enemies, even sinners, to have their way with Him. He was not irritable or resentful. He did not rejoice at wrong, but rejoiced in the right. Jesus bears with all the imperfections of His disciples. He believes in His saints no matter how weak they are. He always hopes for their perseverance and His love for them endures



through all their days. “Charity suffereth long, and is kind” (1 Corinthians 13:4), and patient and so forth. Jesus’ character is described

8) *Who was this Lamb of God? He was “the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).* He was the greatest gift that God ever gave to mankind. Galatians 4:4 says, “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” He was the only begotten Son of God. God’s timing is always perfect. He had been preparing man to receive this gift. The Old Testament Law revealed man’s helplessness to help himself. He needed something or someone beyond himself to meet the needs of his soul.

III) *I would like to look at the mission of the Lamb. Why did He come?* His birth, in Luke 2, was announced to the shepherds. They said, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11).

1) *What is His mission? Why did He come? He came to be a Saviour.* Saviour means “to be a deliverer.” What was He to deliver from? He came to deliver man from the bondage of sin. Sin has blighted the human race ever since Adam and Eve yielded to the serpent’s temptation in the garden of Eden. The sinful nature has passed upon all men.

Man is doomed to die because the verdict of sin is death. Ezekiel 18:4 says, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Notice the finality — death. All of us are doomed to die. Why did He come? To provide salvation. Man is helpless to help himself. He needs someone to span the gap between sinful man and a holy God. Jesus does that for us today.

In Matthew’s Gospel, when the angel was speaking to Joseph about Mary, the angel describes Jesus, “for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). There is the reason why He came. There is His mission. It was not to save people in their sin, but from their sin. There is a great vast difference between the two.

2) *Further, what is the mission of the Lamb? The mission of the Lamb is to make an atonement for sin.* The sacrifice of His life and the shedding of His perfect, sinless blood met the requirements of a holy God to remove man’s sin. Matthew 20:28 says “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” There we have the purpose, the reason for His coming.

Jesus' death opened the way for man to come into the very presence of God. 1 Peter 3:18 says, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." Why did He come? To die was the ultimate reason why Christ came. His atoning work of redemption was for Old Testament saints as well as the New Testament saint. All men are redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus.

3) *Why did He come? To bruise the head of the serpent.* In Genesis 3:15 (we read that verse before) God promised one who would do this. Jesus death on the cross dealt the serpent a death blow. 1 John 3:8 says, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Not only did He bruise the head of the serpent but he also crushed it. He rendered him powerless in his grip of mankind. He broke the grip of the serpent upon mankind. Jesus came to earth to make an atonement for man so that man can be reconciled back to God.

4) *Why did He come? He came to be a light.* John 1:5 says, "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." Verse 9 says, "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Why did He come? He came to be a light. He came to give a light to those who sit in the darkness of sin. The sin of man places man outside fellowship with God. Matthew 4:16 says "The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." Notice Jesus came to provide light to those who sit in the bondage of darkness of sin. He came to give hope to the hopeless to those who accept His person and work. Jesus said in Luke 5:32, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

5) *Why did He come? He came to minister.* I would like to read Matthew 20:28 again, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" To minister means, "to be an attendant, to wait upon, to serve." We see that throughout Jesus' earthly life. We see Him constantly giving a life of service to mankind. He met the physical needs and the spiritual needs of mankind as He moved among men. Those who were open to Him accepted Him, and He was able to work His work. However, for those who refused Him, He was not able to.

I would like to read Luke 7:22. This is the account when John sent his disciples to ask Jesus, “Art thou he that should come? Or look we for another?” (Luke 7:20) “Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.” Notice His mission there in a nutshell — why He came. His purpose was to seek and to save that which was lost. His message was “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17).

Further it did not stop with repent. He showed us how to live. He left “us an example” (1 Peter 2:21–23). how we should live. “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” Jesus came to give us an example how we should live. We can tell someone something. They may not understand, but if you show them then there is no question. Jesus did that in His coming to earth. He showed us by example. He demonstrated by example how He wants us to live.

He showed us by example how we should serve others. He gave himself constantly for the benefit of others. He was a man of compassion. Many times the Bible tells us that He had compassion on individuals when He saw their suffering, He saw their illness, He was moved with compassion. He was a man of selflessness, a man of mercy, a man of truth whose words could not be gainsaid.

Today, we are without excuse. We have His Word teaching us and His example showing us. “Behold the Lamb of God.” Where do we behold Him? We behold Him as He moved among men. Finally, we behold Him as He hung on the cross completing the plan of God shedding His blood so that we might be redeemed, so that we can have forgiveness of sins and finally hope of eternal life beyond this life.

My desire is that those who stop to behold the Lamb of God may see beyond the physical man to the great plan of God and to the great cost of our redemption. May we come away with a deeper appreciation for our salvation and a burden to reach out to others around us. May others also may learn to know this Lamb of God. May the Lord bless.

***THE NEED OF CONVICTION.***

The words conviction and convince parallel one another. To be absolutely convinced of a matter is conviction. Being thoroughly convinced of Scriptural principles (and relating that to everyday living) is the same as saying that one has convictions on those matters.

Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit would come "he [would] reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." John 16:8. Where the King James uses reprove, other versions say convince. The Holy Spirit "will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." Adam Clarke comments thus, "He will demonstrate those matters so clearly as to leave no doubt in the minds of those who are simple of heart; and so fully as to confound and shut the mouths of those who are gainsayers."

There is a great need today of being convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. This is said in the personal sense. The apostle Paul said, in regards to issues of that day, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Romans 14:5. Peter wrote, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus ... make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." 1 Peter 5:10. The unwavering stability that the apostles speak of is aided by the Spirit teaching and guiding believers into truth, resulting in convictions. John 16:3.

Winds of every persuasion and idea will toss one to and fro, Ephesians 4:14, unless he is anchored by firm convictions. Masses are drifting, drifting toward the great abyss of hell. If one is just drifting along, he is not drifting toward heaven. To gain heaven's harbor will require heartfelt convictions based on the principles of the Word—a purposeful set of the sails.

What is conviction, and what principles operate behind the scenes in coming to a state of being convinced?

God and Satan agree on one matter. That is that each will not infringe on the will of man; it is left free-standing. Satan has the advantage of man's fallen nature influencing the will, but God counters with the grace in Christ Jesus and the drawing of the Holy Spirit. Finally, though, every decision is of man's free choice.

A sinner comes under the subtle impressions of the Holy Spirit, which, at the first, is often not recognized as such. He grows discontented with his or her life of sin. That burden grows until he feels he cannot go on without relief. His sins rise up and accuse him constantly, and he cries out to God in

desperation. This condemnation is the work of the Holy Spirit.

At some point, he comes to the conclusion that there is no other way but to turn to Christ, the One who died for Him. He is convinced. Yes, there is in fact another way; he knows he can go on in sin. But in his heart, he is so utterly convinced of his sin, his utter inability to correct his life, and his absolute need of Jesus' sacrifice that he doesn't see any other recourse. In his mind, there is no option but to flee to Calvary, so he makes a decision to turn to God. That is the power of conviction.

In all this persuasion, God has not violated the agreement with Satan to not force man's will. This sinner must say yes to God, which he will do because he is completely convinced. Let us notice particularly the work of the Spirit, which so thoroughly convinces the sinner that he sees no alternative. Certainly, a sinner under conviction knows he can reject it all and continue in his former way. However, the conviction is so strong that that option is no longer viable in his mind. He says, "I must go to Calvary." What marvelous grace!

If the Holy Spirit can so convince a sinner of sin, righteousness (in Christ), and judgment, He likewise can fully persuade (Rom. 14:5) the new believer of Scriptural principles that relate to walking in Christ Jesus, Colossians 2:6. The behind-the-scenes working is the same as being convinced of the need of salvation. God will not impose on the free moral agency of any believer. But through the Holy Spirit and the Word, a compelling reasoning takes place regarding Scriptural principles. The Holy Ghost is guiding "into all truth." There comes a point where, in all honesty, one is so convinced of the truth that he can see it no other way without transgressing the Word of God and his conscience. That is conviction—whatever the subject or issue may be.

Let it be noted that the doctrines of the Word, or the principles of the faith, become superfluous if they do not translate into practical everyday living. If Jesus' teaching about not resisting those who take advantage of us has no practical application in our walk of life, we indirectly say that Christ was just beating the air with His words. The same is true of His teaching that His kingdom is not of this world. John 18:36, and that believers are not to be "of the world" (John 17:14). We must also include the apostle John's well-known warning about not loving the world or the things of the world 1 John 2:15-17. Convictions bring about a visible and discernable application of these truths.

What are the ingredients of convictions for the practical application of the principles of the Word of God? Where is the foundation?

The Sydney Harbour Bridge spanning the harbour in Sydney, Australia, is a magnificent structure. Like all other mighty bridges, the beautiful structure is so engineered as to transfer the weight of the structure itself and all the weight of the load placed upon it down to bedrock. A suspension bridge cannot be hung in the air. Likewise, convictions relating to Christian living must be able to transfer the weight of obligation and duty back to a Biblical doctrine or scriptural principle of the faith. This is the foundation.

Some have said that they have no conviction on certain matters of non-conformity, for example. The question is, why a sense of duty or obligation to keep oneself unspotted from the highly esteemed things of the world. Luke 16:15, does not transfer right down to the solid, unshakeable Scriptures already quoted? There is a possibility that one's structure of faith, while trying to span the mighty gulf between God and man, is faulty (see James 2:20-26).

For the Holy Spirit to foster convictions in one's heart, he or she must have a love for the truth. The Apostle Paul spoke of the dire consequences of those who "received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11. A lack of conviction foiling the application of the faith may be due to unwillingness to bear the cross. Also, Peter speaks of people who were willingly ignorant. 2 Peter 3:5.

The voice of conscience is not necessarily conviction, but it could well be the beginning of conviction. When the conscience, which relates to something heard or perceived, speaks, one is morally obligated to stop, look, and listen. He needs to come before the Lord and inquire whether there is a scriptural basis for his feeling. Here honesty is required; the Holy Ghost will not force the issue. One must also be open to the light of the brotherhood, which is the wisdom of the just. Luke 1:17.

Blessed is the liberty one enjoys when, in his heart and mind, the life he or she lives is traced back to the foundation of the Word. That is conviction, redounding to God's honor and glory. As a man thinks in his heart (convictions), so is he. Proverbs 23:7.



*The Purpose and Value of Church Discipline.*

Edited from a message by David G. Burkholder

Last month's issue explored the scriptural basis for the purpose of Church discipline and in this portion Brother David looks at the value of Church discipline to us individually and collectively as a brotherhood of believers.

**Part 2.**

Some values now of church discipline.

Naturally the first value we might mention is when people are salvaged through the activities of church discipline.

But I think the most noble part of church discipline is not only in helping the erring but in helping to keep the right on the right path. You know that we recognise that as individuals we have the potential of losing the way in being sidetracked but if we are respond to the protectionist measures that God has built into the exercise of church discipline then the church can continue right, but the value will ultimately lie in whether church discipline is appreciated and accepted or not.

You know if people don't like church discipline it is not going to work. If we would be a group of people who have a negative response to church discipline it would not work when it is exercised and consequently we would lose the benefits of it but I think, even beyond, that the greater value lies in the spiritual experience and the spiritual practices that a church discipline represents.

Now in our church discipline we spell out and clarify issues of what the church expects but behind that it is always intended to be a spiritual experience that we are expressing. The church discipline is simply designed to give a proper expression of a spiritual experience and so if we would just live by the letter of a particular discipline, it could be sound, it could be just as straight as a gun barrel but just as empty, because without the spiritual power, without the spiritual experience we would only be fooling ourselves about having church life.

And so the value of church discipline is found when we truly experience the freedom that it is intended to bring to us, so for us the value is found when we experience its accomplishments.

You know we are not just talking about when a situation is corrected by church discipline and that people have really changed their minds about a situation. You know sometimes the church is forced to take disciplinary ac-

tion on various situations and then of course there is a limitation to which people or individuals can determine whether a person really believes it in his heart and has changed his mind or not, but God knows. The value of church discipline will only truly be discovered when individuals have truly changed their minds and have allowed it to come into agreement with what the discipline was intended to do.

Now thinking of how to achieve the purpose and value of church discipline.

You know unless we experience it, it doesn't matter how good it is and so I would like to share my burden on how it can be achieved, how can we now fulfil and experience what a church discipline is intended to do?

Well the first is that we must be committed to truth in the sense that we are accepting the scriptures and it is our desire to not add nor subtract to the Word of God. But in the formulation and practice of a church discipline it is simply our desire to practice to truth, we have no other defence but what the scriptures have to say. And so I would like to suggest that maybe, maybe we could help ourselves as we would think about a discipline that we think of it as a discipline of the Bible rather than just as a discipline of the church.

Now we certainly are not pretending that the practices that we have are the only practices, but we certainly do need to believe that these practices have their foundation in the scriptures and so we are simply applying principles of the Word of God and so it is a discipline that the scriptures have set forth for us.

You know for us to experience the purpose and value of church discipline means that we have a sound platform on which we are sincerely trying to apply the Word of God.

The second step to finding and achieving this purpose and value is that as a brotherhood we must have a very serious concern about our own salvation and the future of the church.

My impression is that if people are really serious about their relationship with the Lord they are going to appreciate church discipline, they are going to appreciate the fact that the church cares enough to have set up guidelines that will keep us on the straight and narrow way, and so we need to be con-



cerned about our soul's salvation enough that if we need help that we want help and even though the help might hurt that we are still more concerned about our salvation than about whether it hurts not.

You know sometimes, and certainly since the fact the church administrators are human as is the congregation and it might well be that the way it is gone about might not be the best way and sometimes people in their sensitivity about how church discipline is administered they become bitter rather than better, but if a person cares more about their soul's salvation than he does about being hurt a little it is going to make a difference.

Now if you were in a burning building or in a very dangerous kind of situation and someone would come along and maybe in their haste might end up hurting your arm while they are helping you, what would you do? Say: Let me go! No, you see the interest in being saved would be more urgent than whether it hurts a little and you can say: Well what is the parallel?

It is the sad truth that that there have been people who have become embittered because of the administration of church discipline and I'm not saying here or pretending that administrators then have the right to be hurtful or rude, I'm not saying that at all, what I'm begging for is that when we have the right kind of concern about our spiritual welfare we are not going to be quite so sensitive about everything else being just right.

But for us to experience the purpose and value of the exercise of church discipline it means that we are going to care more about our own souls than our feelings being hurt perhaps.

Often when discipline is administered it sees us look around and say: "What about this person? It is not fair." And it probably isn't, but is that what ought to really matter, is that what ought to matter? Or should our soul's salvation be that important to us so that we can appreciate church discipline because of what its intent is? Bringing us back to a right relationship with God and our brethren.

Then also there is our concern for the future of the church.

We can concern ourselves so much in trying to do everything exactly right that we are afraid of doing anything, and again that would have disastrous results.

And so let's appreciate and be concerned about our salvation, let's recognise the value that a church group can provide, where there is that common concern about and for each other, that we can find our way in it.

The third step in fulfilling the purpose and value of church discipline is when the brotherhood lives up to the spirit of the discipline.

Now again we are coming back to the fact that the church, her intent is to appropriate spiritual truth to daily living. But now why should we be living the spirit of the discipline?

I was told of a man from a local college who was assigned to write a thesis and took on himself for some reason or another, to write that thesis on the plain churches and so he went around to various churches and didn't tell anybody what his intent was, but he would ask them questions like:

“Why do you do this and why do you do that?”

Well I'm told that some of the answers he got were:

“Well if I don't do it I'll be excommunicated.”

That is all the reason he could get out of them, “If I don't do it I'll get disciplined in some shape or form.”

But to live by the spirit of a discipline is to want do it because it is right, to do it because it is a right way.

Again I am making room for various applications but certainly if the church is applying something that is a right way we ought to be doing it because it is right, not because we must, and again it is going to make all the difference to how we feel about it, it is going to make all the difference to how successful it is because of we only do it because of consequences we have only bought a little bit of time and certainly are in a very dangerous situation.

And not only doing it because it is right but we doing it because we make it our personal conviction, and I say we should make it our personal conviction.

Sometimes people say:

“Well, if I had had personal conviction then I'd do it.”

I suspect sometimes that people when they say that are making pretty sure that they don't get personal conviction. But I believe that in a church life that's scriptural I believe that we ought to be such that we have confidence in the judgement of the brotherhood, that we are ready to make something

our personal conviction because it has been the conviction of other spiritual brethren.

And so again: If we are going to experience the value of a church discipline, then we must be ready to live within the spirit of that discipline, then that also means that we must be willing and ready to accept the direction and guidance of the brotherhood.

It certainly is our desire that as a brotherhood we will grow and continue on with an appreciation for church discipline that is administrated with biblical principles, but most of all church discipline that lives in the true spirit of the gospel and freedom in the Lord Jesus.



#### **Power Challenged - Part 4.**

*Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied (1 Sam. 17:45).*

The term power struggle brings to mind individuals struggling for a position of power or authority. Generally, these individuals are nearly equal in power or there would not be a struggle.

In this lesson we are studying "power challenged." Satan's forces are deceptive, but they cannot compare to the power of God. God is all-powerful. When Satan is checked by God's power, he resorts to lies and deception. Satan also tries to influence our choices. If an individual chooses darkness over light, he has then joined Satan's battle against God. Satan uses these individuals, through their own lustful pursuits, to challenge and intimidate the followers of God. May we learn from this study how we may tap into God's power to confound the enemy.

#### **Acts 4:1-22.**

And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, <sup>2</sup>Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the

dead. <sup>3</sup>And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide. <sup>4</sup>Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

<sup>5</sup>And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, <sup>6</sup>And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. <sup>7</sup>And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this? <sup>8</sup>Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, <sup>9</sup>If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; <sup>10</sup>Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. <sup>11</sup>This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. <sup>12</sup>Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

<sup>13</sup>Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. <sup>14</sup>And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. <sup>15</sup>But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, <sup>16</sup>Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. <sup>17</sup>But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. <sup>18</sup>And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup>But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. <sup>20</sup>For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. <sup>21</sup>So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.

The clashing of powers between Satan and Christ began long ago in heaven. Lucifer was cast down to the earth and became the "prince of this

world" (John 14:30). God's power was challenged in the Garden of Eden, and man, God's creation, fell. After that, Satan attempted to draw all followers of God to his side, and many followed him. One wonders if he actually believed he could secure God's kingdom as his own.

Then Christ appeared on the scene, and a tremendous battle ensued between the two princes. Christ, through His sufferings and death and by the power of His resurrection, bruised Satan's head. Now Christ's work was complete. Everything went as planned, without an error. The grave could not contain Him. Death was defeated! The ransom was paid!

Jesus' disciples realized that in these truths lay tremendous power, but how could they explain it and offer it to needy humanity? They obediently waited in Jerusalem for the infilling of power Jesus had promised. When they were filled with the Holy Ghost they began to tell the wonderful story of Jesus' power over sin and death.

Now it all made sense—spiritual sense. The disciples could not contain themselves! They must tell the news. They realized that each person who heard was already being convicted by the Holy Spirit within his own heart. And so, unwaveringly, the disciples told the news.

The forces of evil immediately challenged this spiritual power. Now that Christ was no longer on earth, Satan would challenge His followers to the bitter end. Many people were willing to help Satan with his plan. Those who loved darkness rather than light and chose to release Barabbas, a violent man, and kill Christ who is love incarnate, would do almost anything to hide the darkness in their souls.

Those who were the rulers of the Jews, the priests, elders, and scribes, tried to keep the truth hidden. These men, supposedly men of wisdom, attempted to put to naught the clear evidence of the miraculous power of Christ. The desire to justify their evil deeds overwhelmed their ability to think clearly and to reason according to truth.

Peter and John, on the other hand, having accepted their personal guilt and having been forgiven, were overwhelmed by God's love and mercy. Having witnessed Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection, they now had power to speak when challenged and power to accept imprisonment and even death for the cause of Christ.

This study should cause us to take a broader view of today's challenging forces, to understand our personal and mutual needs, and to band together. Christian life is not going to get any easier.

We often hear the questions, "Why don't parents see what is going on and make their children behave? Why can't they say no to the youth more often?" Others watch the youth, wonder why they act and speak as they do, and question their spirituality. Some may watch the middle-aged people with their busy lifestyles and become convinced a covetous spirit has captured them. Finally, to some, it may appear the leaders do not have their eyes open and are laying down on the job.

We do not need factions within the walls of the church in these challenging times! We need one another as we fight principalities and powers and rulers of darkness. In life we are all affected by circumstances that touch us, and sometimes we may feel that we are pawns in a monumental chess game. Each of us, however, has the power of choice. We can decide on which side we will be. When we have made the decision to be on God's side, His power is available to us. This decision also unites us with all those who have chosen God's way, and we benefit from the grace and power of God in their lives. Has anyone been disappointed in the power he has felt when totally offered up to God?

The fields are ripe and ready for harvest. What is hindering our power to reach lost souls? We realize that to be prepared for this great harvest we must yield our lives to God. Jesus is a perfect example of humbly yielding Himself, even to death. As the disciples yielded their lives to Christ, it resulted in a powerful testimony for the truth.

There is a spirit of man in every person that, if honestly listened to, can discern if all is well and at rest (1 Cor. 2:11). That spirit detects if Christ has been accepted within and is in control of one's will. When this happens the Holy Spirit gives grace to speak, not of oneself but of Christ, lifting Him up for all to behold.

One of the greatest dangers in our day is the environment in which we live, which is hostile to spirituality. Affluence and ease of life are probably more prevalent than ever before. Satan, from the beginning, has challenged God. Proud, selfish natures have existed since the fall of man. Reasoning and fear have always been tools of the evil forces, and men who have given themselves to darkness have been employed to persecute the Christians. Nevertheless, spirituality is challenged in our day by an environment that encourages, perhaps as never before, self-will and independence. It provides a greenhouse effect for lovers of pleasures and lovers of self. The power of God is needed in our lives today.

We need:

- Power to open our lives and have them cleansed of impure deeds and spirits.
- Power to resist reasoning when ridiculed and told we are wrong.
- Power to control our thoughts when teetering on the brink of depression.
- Power to believe there is joy in the journey when we seem to be alone.
- Power to avoid self-pity when all seems to go wrong.
- Power to be humble in an honor-seeking world.
- Power to resist self in a world that offers ease and excitement.
- Power to resist fear when nothing feels secure in this life.
- Power to retain hope and purpose when our loved ones die.
- Power to carry the gospel to a lost and dying world.
- Power to stand against the evil forces even to death.

Throughout history, Satan has been allowed to persecute and afflict Christians, which in turn has kept them watching and praying for the end of the world. In this time of affluence and pleasures, what keeps us ready for the end? What is the demonstration of the power of the resurrection in the Christian's life today and why do so many Christians fail to use and show the power of Christ in their life today?

We have been delivered from the power of darkness (Col.1:13) and we are encouraged to live in the knowledge that God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. 2 Tim.1:7 and God expects us to be His ambassadors, His representatives, His messengers to bring the Gospel to those whom know it not.

*Adapted from a series of 6 lessons by Gospel Publishers Moundridge Kansas.*



*The Way.*

*Thou art the Way; to Thee alone  
From sin and death we flee;  
And he who would the Father see  
Must seek Him, Lord, by Thee.*

*Thou art the Truth; Thy word alone  
True wisdom can impart;  
Thou only canst inform the mind  
And purify the heart.*

*Thou art the Life; the rending tomb  
Proclaims Thy conquering arm;  
Those who put their trust in Thee  
No death nor hell shall harm.*

*Thou art the Way, the Truth, that Life;  
Grant us that Way to know,  
That Truth to keep, that Life to win,  
From whom joys eternal flow.*

*Anonymous*

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