

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Timothy 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 Anabaptist Perspective

From The Editor's Desk

Greetings in our precious Saviour's name to all. May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ attend your daily walk in the Christian life.

In many countries May is the month in which there is a day dedicated to remembering and honouring mothers and like so many worldly celebrations they are given over to commercial interests and our focus as followers of Christ should be on seeking to please God.

In Scripture the use of the word mother is used also of Deborah in Judges 5:7 and by implication in Judges 4:14 of which Matthew Henry says this in his comments on this verse: "Deborah was a mother to Israel, by diligently promoting the salvation of their souls. She calls on those who shared the advantages of this great salvation, to offer up thanks to God for it." *Matthew Henry Concise Bible Commentary.*

The description of Deborah as a mother to Israel can be applied today to many sisters, married or not, with or without their own children whom God can and does use in His Kingdom work to bring others to Him and it is all of those whom we should also honour because of their devotion and dedication to Christ.

This month we have included some messages especially for our sisters and we believe that many of the points made in those messages may also be applicable to single sisters who are being used by the Lord to act in a motherly role to perhaps their siblings, the sick, orphans and others who may need direction in their life from a godly mother figure.

In the New Testament the expression women is used many times and that designation appears to include all classes of women, married, single, widowed, with or without children and they suffered just as the men did, they also ministered to others including Christ.

We do not need to partake of the world's celebration of this or that person or event but we can and should honour our sisters, be they married or not, for they too have a role to play and a God given function to fulfill in the work of the Church.

Let us respond in a Christ like way to all our sisters whatever role the Lord has called them too and remember how we treat others, including the women in our lives, is something that the Lord will hold us to account for.

J.v.L



From the Pulpit

GOD'S BEAUTIFUL PLAN

*Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain:
But a woman that feareth the Lord,
She shall be praised
Proverbs 31:30*

"As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: He is a buckler to all those that trust in Him" Psalm 18:30. God's beautiful plan instituted so many years ago does not fail. The Lord has planned man's happiness since the beginning of time, and true fulfillment of the inner longings of the soul are realized within the realm of this plan. In order to realize the full measure of His blessings, one must be fully surrendered to the Lord. "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" Matthew 11:25. The real and true essence of God's plan is revealed to the humble heart that daily seeks to follow the plan of his Maker.

We will see the beauty of God's plan when we, with the eye of faith, see the path that has been charted for us here in this world. Our lesson today especially draws our attention to the role of a Christian woman. Her role is vital to the strength and happiness of a Christian home and also to the welfare of the church.

And all of us surely are familiar with the description of that prize above rubies portrayed in Proverbs 31 and here are a few other verses from Proverbs which portray a woman of God.

Proverbs 11:16 A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong men retain riches.

Proverbs 12:4 A virtuous woman *is* a crown to her husband: but she that maketh (*him*) ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.

Proverbs 14:1 Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.

Proverbs 18:22 *Whoso* findeth a wife findeth a good *thing*, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.

Proverbs 19:14 House and riches *are* the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife *is* from the LORD.

The Scriptures portray many beautiful virtues of the Christian woman. The woman desiring to serve the Lord will seek after and pursue these qualities for her life, and her life will portray the virtues listed in the Scriptures. They will be more important to her than her own comfort or desires. A clear vision of life and eternity is required to be able to build a house that will endure the tests of our day, Proverbs 14:1.

The structure of a spiritual house, established on the scriptural foundation of truth, will not be moved by the attacks of Satan. As we want to establish ourselves in God's plan, it is paramount that the Lord guide and direct our efforts. "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" Jeremiah 10:23. Many homes are being built, but few are built by the Lord. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" Psalm 127:1. Some would aspire to the blessings of God's plan without being willing for the requirements stipulated in the Scriptures. The benefits and rewards of the kingdom are realized by the faithful whose first love is set upon Him who holds all things in His hands.

The principles underlying the makeup of the virtuous woman, as taught in the Scriptures, are under attack in our modern world. The Christian home where father and mother each fill their responsibilities as taught in the Scriptures stands as a warm beacon light to the world. This plan for the home, so beautiful and richly given, provides security, warmth, and direction. May we never take God's plan for granted or undermine this beautiful gift by allowing the influences of today's world to enter our thinking and hearts. This modern philosophy promises freedom, happiness, and fulfillment, but cannot deliver it. The heart is left empty and the soul in darkness. Many lines of thinking that are gaining popularity in the world today run counter to the plan of God. A Christian woman will lay down or turn away from anything that will weaken, cheapen, or destroy God's beautiful plan.

The fundamentals of God's plan are founded in the love of God. God gave the best of heaven to purchase our redemption and happiness in this world. The foundation for Christian principles is firm and unmovable. It is important to submit to God's will in every aspect of our lives, and that will open a door for the Christian woman to be filled with the virtues taught in

the Scriptures. God's plan, so richly given, should be handled and respected with reverence. A clear, spiritual vision will move a Christian wife and sister to love God's order and plan. It will not be a matter of having to but rather loving to fit into God's will. This requires self-denial and sacrifice and brings fulfillment and deep inner satisfaction.

The virtues that highlight a Christian woman's life are a hallmark of her faith. Carefulness and purity are feminine virtues that are under attack today. True meekness, compassion, and tenderness become part of a woman's life by the grace of the Lord. Satan would like to mar the beauty of the kingdom by weakening conviction for truth. He would like to defy God's order with doubts in a Christian's heart. May the Lord grant grace that we will be deeply convinced of the truth.

Titus 2:4-5 gives some profound instructions. To be a keeper at home is becoming more and more unpopular in today's world. It is not deemed practical or right in today's society and many women seek employment or other involvements that take them away from home. Some may be at home and not be keepers of the home. It is a great privilege for a Christian sister to be a keeper of the home, and this should be diligently taught in our homes. The many daily duties that relate to homemaking are an integral part of real life. The house needs to be kept neat, clean, and tidy. Cooking, sewing and laundry are routine responsibilities. In past years the woman's role required much physical labor, and the children watched mother build a fire to cook and prepare meals and stand for hours at a laundry tub. Modern conveniences have brought many changes to our life-style, and our daily tasks can be accomplished more quickly and with less effort. Today we hear that it is more practical to buy bread than to bake it. It is cheaper to purchase vegetables than to grow a garden. Is there a possibility that we are losing something of greater value by taking the easier route?

It is important that a mother does not neglect her responsibility to her family. Children need nurture to bring stability into their lives. A mother should not work away from home unless there is a very critical need. May our young mothers never be pressured by their peers to desire bigger, better houses, newer furniture, expensive dresses or seek employment outside of the home to help pay for such things. The result may be neglected families.

By the grace of God a wife or mother can face the day with joy and consider her work an opportunity to serve. Children will draw warmth and security from a devoted mother. She will instill faith and courage in their lives and build character that will sustain them in the future. The greatest gift a mother can give her children is to teach them by example to love the Lord. Unselfish service to God and our fellowman will leave deep, indelible impressions in the heart of a child. Life can be very busy and demanding. It is a challenge to find and take time to give oneself to those things that are important. It is so easy to neglect and miss the opportunities that are important to the nurture of our families. Mother should spend time in prayer and Bible reading. It seems to be a special experience for a child to find Mother praying in secret. Children will become aware of Mother's dependence upon the Lord.

Small children need much time and attention. However, mother's responsibility does not diminish as the children grow older and enter their teen years. It takes grace and wisdom to counsel teenagers as they are caught in the tests and trials of life. Sometimes there are hurt feelings that should not be validated by a parent's sympathy, while at other times a child simply needs to know that Mother knows and truly cares. The role of a mother is a high calling from God.

Grandmothers and older sisters also fill a place in God's order. Some older sisters may feel that their work is over and now they can relax, but there is still much for them to do. Titus 2:4-5 states, "That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." Young mothers sometimes need gentle words of encouragement and instruction. They need to feel the undergirding strength and faith of the older experienced sisters to guide them through times of stress and challenges of motherhood.

Eventually the day comes when Mother's busy, virtuous hands grow old and feeble. Her tasks on earth will diminish. She should trust the past to a loving Saviour and look forward to resting in eternity forever with the Lord. A faithful Christian mother is worthy of our deepest respect and appreciation. The welfare of the church is perhaps more dependent on the

mothers than we realize.

It is not unusual for a mother to face difficult, trying times. Perhaps at such times the light of the Lord will shine the clearest and brightest. A faithful mother can contribute much to help a family make it through difficulties. Many a husband has derived strength and courage from his wife during dark hours of trial. Sometimes a husband searching for direction in the matters of life gleans inspiration from his wife in a way that she may not be aware of. Children tend to feel secure if they can see that their mother is calm and her faith in God is intact.

Whilst the above is meant to encourage our sisters let the brethren and especially those who are husbands and fathers ask themselves this question: What responsibility do we as husbands and fathers have when our spouse especially a mother is overwhelmed with duties of the home?

May God bless each faithful Christian wife and mother.

Brother James



SEND US MOTHERS

Once when Jesus "saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith He unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" Matthew 9:36-38.

How many times through the years these words of the Lord have been the basis of stirring up conviction in the church for more workers for the mission fields! But a look at the record will show that the greatest mission field is right in our homes. This is true in North America and countries around the world. Not minimizing the ingathering in fields far and near, the compelling truth is that by far the most potential for growth lies in gaining the children of our own families.

This inspiring truth, coupled with Jesus' words, dictates the title, "Send Us Mothers." Not excluding fathers, it is undeniable that mothers are equipped by creation, and then by the grace of the Spirit, to be the most proficient laborers in this great harvest.

Yes, the harvest in our homes is plenteous, as the baptismal reports confirm. And the potential for greater harvest grows exponentially with the years. Tracking the marriage notices in this periodical tells one that every year enough new homes are established to constitute several new congregations. If these new matrimonyes carry the vision of the Creator's plan for rearing God-fearing and conscientious children, the increase of the kingdom will be more and more. Thanksgiving and honor for this blessing belong to God.

The church has not been numbers conscious and must not be now. Larger membership numbers are not the reason for the mission thrust throughout the world. In contrast, the emphasis has always been on the worth of the soul, its salvation, and finally, genuineness and solidness of resolve and conviction regarding the faith. The burden and impetus must be rooted in the love for the soul for Christ's sake. And thus, rejoicing to see the baptismal listing of our children must never be based in numbers per se, or in any social consideration, but in Christ Jesus' glory alone.

And what of the laborers needed to bring this great harvest into the Master's garner? Are mothers in short supply?

In the broadest sense of mother, every female of the human race who gives birth to a child qualifies as being a mother. Powerful natural instincts are awakened before and especially after giving birth, which go a long way in making a mother of the true essence. It is heartwarming to see many who are good mothers because they have not denied their appointed role and natural instincts. The importance of the emotional security that a child receives from a true mother is even yet being understood more fully. On the other side of the coin, the damage caused by neglected and deficient mothering is likely not perceived completely either. A thoughtful look into society of every stratum will catch the telltale signs of "crying children." So many children are being sacrificed on the altar of selfish and vain whims and notions. Christians have reason to pray that God would give the nations of the earth more good mothers.

In the mission field of Christian homes, the fact that a high percentage of the children have been gathered into the fold of God is a testimony crediting faithful mothers. Who knows the travail in prayer that mothers endure for their children in order to bring them to salvation? There are the seasons of striving with God for the sanctification of her own soul that she might have wisdom and the right spirit and attitude. In this labor, a true mother comes to know herself more and more. She realizes ever more clearly that she has nothing of herself, that God must do the work. When her adolescent or young teenager breaks through and meets the Lord, she has travailed in birth again. It is as though she, too, has met the Lord anew. Compared to the world, such mothers are few. "Lord, send more mothers."

A mother's defining experience is not exclusively in her children getting converted and being received into the church fellowship. These new converts need nurturing in the Christian walk. They need to be fed the Bread of Life and instructed in the faith. They must be shown the way. They must be encouraged and strengthened as they face the heat and winds of tests and trials. Again not excluding fathers, but in most cases mothers are sooner able to reach into the hearts of children and touch the cords that are sometimes covered on the surface. "Lord, send more mothers into the harvest field."

To be a true worker mother in this harvest field (remember that it is the most fruitful field, and the harvest is ripe) will consume her time—in one sense, all of a mother's time. That speaks of dedication, not halfhearted but wholehearted commitment. Beginning very young, in fact, from babyhood on, the emotional security that is so vital to a child's well-being is not obtained when mothers gad about. Such mothers are restless and need the true rest that only a wholehearted acceptance of God's purpose in their lives brings. In the present concern for young Christians, a certain restlessness and compulsion for constant activity is noted. It would be ignoring the obvious to not consider a correlation with their experience in childhood and adolescence. "Lord, send more mothers dedicated to staying at home and being true mothers."

True mothers carry a witness that is notable and impressive. It speaks for Christ. They have left behind the vanity of trying to keep the image of trim

and prim and youthfulness for the purpose of their high calling. Yet, when they appear in public with their child or children in tow, they are neatly and properly dressed, befitting their station in life. They are not ashamed of being matronly, and even in today's society any reasonable person will afford them respect. Above everything, they can face the world with a smile, knowing that they have God's approval.

The words of truth about true mothers written millenniums ago still are true today: "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her ... Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates" Proverbs 31:28,31.

Brother Gladwin



Dear Sisters,

These concerns were shared by sisters of various age groups and from different locations. Please read the verses below slowly, thoughtfully, and prayerfully. The Word of God is everlasting.

THE CHRISTIAN WOMAN

TITUS 2:5: "To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."

Discreet: careful in speech and action, distinction from others, separate.

Chaste: morally pure, virtuous, decent, modest, simple in taste or style.

Good: behaving well, kind, friendly, doing right, pious, devout, reliable, dependable, good judgment.

Obedient: submission to authority, willing to obey, dutiful, yielding, compliant.

1 TIMOTHY 2:9: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array."

Modest apparel: not vain, humble, bashful, shy, not bold, not conspicuous, not gaudy, humble in appearance, not calling attention to one's body.

Shamefacedness: a sense of what is decent and proper, bashful, shy.

Sobriety: temperance, quietness, seriousness, sedateness, composed.

Costly array: fine clothes, sumptuous, rich, costing much.

Broided hair: adorned.

Gold: extremely valuable.

Pearls: anything very valuable or choice, to adorn, figurative, as "she is a pearl among women."

1 **TIMOTHY 3:11**: "Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things."

Grave: earnest, serious, somber, grave colors, sober (meaning solemn in mood, looks, or behavior), quiet in color, plain or simple, somberly dressed.

Slander: a false report to do harm to the name and reputation of another, spreading of false reports.

Faithful: worthy of trust, doing one's duty, keeping one's promise, loyal, full of faith, trusting, believing.

Simplicity: absence of show or pretense, without adornment, not rich or showy, plain, common, freedom from luxury.

Gaudy: too bright and gay to be in good taste, cheap, showy, flashy, suggests an eye-catching display.

Bold: too free in manner, lacking proper shame and modesty.

Where are we in relation to these scriptures? The dictionary defines sobriety as subdued in tone or color. Does a bright red dress or one with huge, brightly-colored flowers or designs classify as subdued? When extremely large and costly ornamental buttons are added at the neck or sleeve, is that my substitute for jewelry? Is a bell-bottom sleeve shamefacedness? Where is the God-given desire to blend in with humble sisters? Who or what gives the desire to stand out, be different, and add something new? What are our daughters learning from us? Are they learning conviction, or do they catch from us that "everyone else is doing it?" Do we have the courage to tell them that this fabric or that is not suitable? I can't see that adding ruffles to our clothes (or buying socks and sweaters with ruffles) will glorify our Maker. The trend in the world is casualness and comfort. We see this in footwear and dress styles. The most humble-looking dress is one with a button front. There is the verse in the Bible about keeping the old paths, Jeremiah 6:16. Are we rebelling a little at the old-fashioned "Mennonite" look? If so, why?

When others look at me, do they see Christ, or is my outward appearance too distracting?

We hear Spirit-inspired sermons. Am I hearing God's warnings and following in obedience, or am I hearing only? "And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not" Acts 28:24. With prayerful love and consideration,

Your sisters (compiled by a minister's wife)

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The World's Glittering Cup

“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.

What a difference it would make if the poison of the world's cup could be easily recognized by those who are tempted to drink from it. The world employs devious tactics, for behind every temptation and allurements of sin is a deception. The world seeks to distort reality by painting an appealing picture of the cup of sin, magnifying its attractions and minimizing its perilous consequences. Its sparkling contents have allured countless millions to drink from the cup of sin to its dregs, and the grief and sorrow that follow is beyond telling. Oh, that we might be spared!

May we prayerfully consider these truths, for no one, regardless of age, is exempt from sin's allurements. Only with anointed eyes can we see and know the truth and thus avoid drinking of the world's glittering cup.

PSALM 73:1-12

¹ Truly God *is* good to Israel, *even* to such as are of a clean heart.

² But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped.

³ For I was envious at the foolish, *when* I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

⁴ For *there are* no bands in their death: but their strength *is* firm.

⁵ They *are* not in trouble *as other* men; neither are they plagued like *other* men.

⁶ Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them *as* a garment.

⁷ Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.

⁸ They are corrupt, and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression: they speak loftily.

⁹ They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth.

¹⁰ Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full *cup* are wrung out to them.

¹¹ And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?

¹² Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches.

PSALM 73:16-18

¹⁶ When I thought to know this, it *was* too painful for me;

¹⁷ Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end.

¹⁸ Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction.

This psalm is a comfort to Christians experiencing affliction and distress. Obviously, the psalmist's faith was under a great test.

What a comfort it is to know that God is just and good and is able to make all things work together for good to those whom He has cleansed. However, there are dangers for the Christian, who is surrounded by a prosperous secular environment. Why would a Christian be envious at the foolish? At times worldliness does not look foolish to us until we are captured by it. We are wise when we can patiently acknowledge God in all our ways. Conversely, continuing with human reasoning to look at the forbidden thing, even though knowing in our hearts what we ought to do, can be our undoing.

Jesus said of the rich man and would say it today to the worldling, "Remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented" (Luke 16:25). Their apparent freedom from trouble and ease of life is temporary. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" Galatians 6:7.

Behind the designs of the world is a treacherous spirit of pride. The gods of this world, such as fashion, fame, and fortune have enslaved many. Pride causes people of the world to speak boastfully and arrogantly, not considering their accountability to God. The spirit of the world will not hesitate to employ hostility and even violence when necessary to gain its ends

The world's ambitions are often motivated by covetousness and greed—"their eyes stand out with fatness." Many rich men have gained power and wealth by oppressing the poor, but a day of reckoning is coming, James 5:1-6. In the gospel era, financial success is not in itself proof that one is in favor with God, even though the world would teach this. Jesus said, "How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God" Mark 10:24. Should we not rather fear riches than to be envious of those worldlings who prosper?

The high-mindedness of the world questions the authority of God and is revealed through false beliefs such as humanism and evolution. "How doth God know?" is their question. It appears that the disciplines of education and science are driven to prove that the Bible is not true. Also, the religious world is presenting a false Christ and distorting cardinal truths of God's Word, causing many to believe and teach false doctrine, 2 Peter 2:1-3, 18-19.

To the psalmist, the sanctuary of God became a very important place. Here his faith was renewed, and he could see the fallacy of the worldling's life and his tragic end. "Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked" Psalm 91:8. What would have been the outcome if he had not gone into the sanctuary of God?

God's sanctuary is a holy place, providing refuge and protection. Today, His sanctuary is the spiritual kingdom of God within us, which separates us from the world. Through the power of first love and the Holy Spirit's abiding presence, we can in these last days, keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

These words are worthy of our prayerful meditation. Without a revelation from God, we will not recognize the danger of the world's influences upon us. Only by the help and leading of the Holy Spirit can we be separate from the world and remain the people of God.

The account of Jesus in the wilderness temptation sheds light on some basic truths about this matter, Matthew 4:1-10. From this encounter, we learn that Satan and the world are of one spirit and that the world is an active agency of Satan. Prior to our new birth we all were of the world, irrespective of our background. This network of the world and our carnal natures with Satan as king is the enemy of God. This kingdom's primary goal is to bring as many souls as possible into perdition and eternal ruin.

The Bible warns us not to love the world or the things in the world, and whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God,¹ John 2-15; James 4:4. Satan's success in beguiling souls is through the spirit of the world, using earthly things to distract us from the narrow way. We are prone to ignore the dangers and justify ourselves in the pursuit of these vain things. Consequently, we fail to see where we are being led. God knows when these things infringe on our love for Him. By nature, we are concerned about this present life. The less spiritual we become the more those earthly concerns increase. If left unchecked, we prove true the verse that states, "Whose end is destruction ... who mind earthly things" Philippians 3:19.

But like the hook that is so invitingly baited to allure the fish, so the designs of the world are deceptive to us. Sin's consequences must always be concealed to make it attractive, and Satan is a master at doing this.

Frequently, the first encounters of sin deeply impress the mind. This sets the stage for further sinning and a sad reaping! A certain maxim states, "Because of the ecstasy of the moment, the permanent is sacrificed on the altar of the immediate," – and bitter are the tears that follow.

Behind the glamorous displays of the business and entertainment world are pitiful scenes of lives that are mentally and morally broken. Many have said, "This won't happen to me because I know when to stop." Some have thought that a bit of dishonesty, one lie, or a little disobedience would not matter very much. Too late they discovered there was no stopping; like a runaway train, their lives fell into dishonor and shame. Many end up with great disappointments caused by tangles of sin, making them question if even God can rescue them from their awful plight.

The human race is predisposed to different temptations at different ages. In youth, there are desires for vain pleasure, to live in the fast lane, to feel invincible and to argue with sound reasoning. Without the fear of God, the neon lights of the world are attractive; weighty decisions made in this setting often bring regrets. The cry, "If only I could change the past," is heard. In middle age come strong desires to gain this world's treasures and to place undue emphasis on money and profit. Inordinate desires for gain can bring obligations that entangle one for many years, leading to strain on the home and the Christian life. The work of the kingdom of God is hindered. With the elderly come temptations of doubts and fears: Am I saved? What does the future hold? Now that I'm old, will God still remember me? Older folks may become preoccupied with their health. They may find it difficult to release the church position in which they have served so long, and they may struggle granting confidence to younger ones. They may become self-pitying and unforgiving.

The raw world has little or no appeal for most of us. Are we alert enough to identify the more deceptive realms of worldliness? Things of the world seek entrance into our hearts even through legitimate areas of life. While we are careful to avoid forbidden things, we can be lulled into a lukewarm state that distorts our vision of biblical self-denial.

May we take courage and honestly face the challenge before us, for we are in the twilight of time.

The following thoughts are taken from the author's preface of the "Martyrs Mirror"

"These are sad times, in which we live; nay truly, there is more danger now than in the time of our fathers, who suffered death for the testimony of the Lord. Few will believe this, because the great majority look to that which is external and corporeal, and in this respect it is now better, quieter and more comfortable; few only look to that which is internal and pertains to the soul, and on which everything depends....

"These times are certainly more dangerous; for then Satan came more openly ... as a roaring lion so he could be known.... But now he comes as in the night, or in the twilight, in a strange but yet pleasing form....

"It grieves us to the heart that we must live to see these times, and therefore speak in this wise. O Lord, strengthen our faith! ...

Through his [Satan's] instigation, the world now reveals itself very beautiful and glorious, more than at any preceding time, in a threefold pleasing form—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Almost all men run after her, to worship her as a queen supreme; but all are deceived thereby, yea many who have drunk of the poisoned wine of her lusts from the golden cup of her iniquities and deceptions, die a spiritual death....

"Who shall escape these snares? He that would at no time be taken unawares by it must indeed be cautious and watchful. But our very flesh seems prone to it. Here must be fasting, watching, praying, and calling upon God for help. Otherwise there is no escape....

"O that Satan would show himself as he really is, and that the world, too, might come forth without disguise or mask: then certainly no one possessing reason would allow himself to be deceived by them."

Certainly, if these admonitions and warnings were valid then, they are much more relevant and applicable for us, today.

By God's grace, may we heed them as we ask ourselves the following:
What are some of the greatest perils of worldliness facing the church today?
How much have the world's philosophies on child training crept into the church? And:
Would limiting our exposure to the world and becoming more isolated help us keep the faith?



Secure in the Lord

*In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence:
and his children shall have a place of refuge*
Proverbs 14:26

One of man's earliest and most basic desires is to be secure. This is usually first provided through parental care, but later must come from elsewhere.

In what do we place our confidence? The psalmist many times expressed his confidence in the Lord, saying His love was more secure than a father's and mother's care, Psalm 27:10. We must meet certain requirements to live in God's place of security. He has laid a sure foundation, but we must build upon it to withstand the storms and pass the test, Matthew 7:24-28. Are we willing to trust every part of our lives into His care and keeping?

Psalm 91:1-16

¹ He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

² I will say of the LORD, *He is* my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

³ Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, *and* from the noisome pestilence.

⁴ He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler.

⁵ Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by day;

⁶ *Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness; *nor* for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday.

⁷ A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; *but* it shall not come nigh thee.

⁸ Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

⁹ Because thou hast made the LORD, *which is* my refuge, *even* the most High, thy habitation;

¹⁰ There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

¹¹ For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

¹² They shall bear thee up in *their* hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

¹³ Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

¹⁴ Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

¹⁵ He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I *will be* with him in trou-

ble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

¹⁶With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

During the time in which that Psalm was written, God's people were spared many setbacks suffered by the evil nations round about them. When Israel left the land of slavery Moses relayed the promise to them that if they would diligently serve the Lord, "I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians" Exodus 15:26. Other promises given were for good crops, fertile flocks and herds, fame and honour in other lands, and the promise that they would not be overtaken by other nations.

History bears out the fact that when God's conditions were met, not one of His promises failed. The threats and attacks of surrounding nations were easily countered. Even natural circumstances were altered in their favor, as in Moses' time when the sun stood still. For forty years the children of Israel traveled safely through the wilderness. Their feet did not swell; their clothes did not wear out. When they were trapped with the Red Sea before them and the dreaded armies of their oppressors behind, God performed the impossible. His cloud came between them and the Egyptians; to the Israelites it was light, but to the Egyptians it was darkness. This divine intervention continued to lead and protect them throughout their journey. It was a visible symbol of God's security.

God, in His wisdom, saw fit to change this in the New Testament era. No longer did He have a special nation upon which He bestowed special protection and extraordinary blessings. His special people now included citizens of every land who obey God's commands.

His kingdom, no longer literal, became a spiritual realm. It is evident from the lives of the apostles and martyr brethren that they often suffered the loss of all things, including family, health, and life. In spite of this, they did not despair. On the contrary, their trust in God and dependence on His love and mercy were strengthened. The Martyrs Mirror testifies that the children of God suffer fatigue and grow weary and experience sickness, fevers and pain, even as other men. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus promised that the sun would rise on the evil and the good and rain would fall on the just and unjust, Matthew 5:45.

God's promises are for all generations. In a spiritual sense, His protection remains. The apostle Paul lists many powerful influences the evil one uses to overthrow the Christian's faith, yet he states that we can be more than overcomers, for nothing can separate us from the love of God, Romans 8:35-37.

The Psalmist opens with the thought of God's family living in the shadow, or shelter, of the Most High. The thought of God Himself looking down from heaven, guiding an angel here and another there to protect His children is comforting.

Even the young lion—possibly temptations—and the dragon, Satan, shall succumb under this power.

Interesting books have been written which chronicle happenings and events that show that the Lord's hand is not shortened. Divine intervention is no doubt much more common than we realize, but often our eyes are held that we do not see. Certainly there are unseen hands which often shelter us.

Verses 14 to 16 are written as though the Lord is speaking. He is telling someone, perhaps the angels, what He will do for those who truly love Him. He will shelter and help the person who has set his love upon Him. Because of our human limitations, we can do nothing more. Can we do any less?

The Psalmist speaks of something that is the object of an intense search by most people, both individually and collectively. Societies, ethnic groups, and whole nations are striving for security and protection from infirmities, diseases, natural disasters, terrorism, or rival powers, to name a few of the concerns. Much effort and billions of dollars are spent to find protection from these threats. One of the fastest growing industries of North America is insurance. People are seeking protection against lawsuits, loss of income, and loss of possessions.

Weapons of war and trained armies are much in focus in these unsettled times. Patriotism to one's country is highly esteemed in the world today in an effort to become and feel secure. However, the Tower of Babel serves as an example of how easily God can change the outcomes of man's design.

In contrast to this is the scene described by Jesus of a hen gathering her brood beneath her wings. It is indeed an impressive sight to see the mother hen scratching in the dirt for seeds, with the little chicks trying hard to copy her and getting in the way. When danger threatens, however, the hen calls, and the little ones come scurrying from all directions and take shelter under her wings.

As parents, do we find our refuge under Jesus' wings? Do our children see us unashamedly take our troubles to the Master, and thereby learn to go there too? Or do they notice that we worry and fret that our home or meals may not meet others' standards, our health may fail, or what others think or say about us? We need to trust our little ones to God, guiding them tenderly but firmly when they are small so that they will learn to be trusting and trustworthy when they are older. Our example teaches and inspires us all to place our confidence in God.

As we live in Jesus' shadow we can sing with the song writer,

Anywhere with Jesus I can go to sleep,
When the dark'ning shadows round about me creep;
Knowing I shall waken never more to roam,
Anywhere with Jesus will be home, sweet home.



THE CARNAL MIND AND THE SPIRITUAL MIND

The subject of the spiritual mind and the carnal mind is of utmost and vital importance. The one is synonymous with salvation and godliness while the other parallels perdition and ruin. The spiritual mind has an affinity with eternal truth, and the carnal mind is a dedicated ally of self and temporal affections.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" Psalm 1:1-2

"O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day" Psalm 119:97

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" 1 Corinthians 2:16

These words of David and Paul pinpoint the home base of a spiritual mind. In contrast is the carnal mind:

"For to be carnally minded is death ... Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" Romans 8:6-7

"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind" Romans 1:28

Here one sees the nature of the inevitable consequence of the carnal mind.

The first quoted verses point out the object of love, or delight, of the spiritual mind. They also tell us that it is imperative to be spiritually minded. That mortal and finite creatures can "have the mind of Christ" is a wondrous divine mystery. This blessing is experienced only when the Holy Spirit controls one's life.

When speaking of the spiritual mind and the carnal mind, we usually think in the context of the gospel dispensation. But in reality the contrast between the two minds and the consequences of a carnal mind began in the early ages of mankind.

The first world came to have a hopelessly evil mind. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth" Genesis 6:5-7

With two striking sentences God explains why He destroyed the first world. Yes, man's wickedness was great, but their evil works were only the effect of their corrupt minds. The pivotal point in the fate of all living creatures was a tragic reality: God could no longer get through to the minds of those people. There was absolutely no room for godly reasoning in their minds. Note the description of their minds: "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

In the face of this hopeless situation, God had no recourse. For this reason the Lord "repented" of having made man on the earth. When the saturation of their minds with evil precluded any possibility of reform, God, in essence, said, "I'm sorry that man has come to this inaccessible condition." The Scriptures speak of an incorrigible mind. The apostle Paul mentions those that "did not like to retain God in their knowledge, [so] God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" Romans 1:28. We also read, "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" 2 Timothy 3:8

A common element in these two citations from the Apostle's writing is the word reprobate. A reprobate mind is one that has irrevocably shut God and His truth out like the minds of the first world. "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" 2 Thessalonians 2:11

These examples from the Scriptures point out an extreme condition, but still a sobering possibility today. How many in the world's society are sporting on the brink of a reprobate mind God only knows. We do know from the Lord Jesus that "as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man" Luke 17:26. Whether to be spiritually minded or carnally minded is, therefore, not an option if one is to escape damnation on the final judgment.

Many of the religiously deceived fall in the category of being of a reprobate mind. They actually have come to believe a lie because God strove with the resolute set of their minds and finally gave them up to their own thinking. We should note that even though religious, these minds are not spiritual in the true sense. There must of necessity be an element of a carnal mind present before one succumbs to religious deception and a false hope.

A millennium after the destruction of the antediluvian world, God's chosen people were showing traits similar to those of the first world. God cried out to them, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways" Isaiah 55:8. This passage is often thought of as pointing out the vast difference between the thinking of an infinite God and the feeble thoughts of finite humans. But listening for the heartbeat of God in this verse one picks up another thought. There is a distressed, pleading note in

the Lord's voice. He says, "You are not thinking like I am; why aren't you? Your ways are not like mine, but they should be."

The Lord did emphasize the magnitude of variance between His thinking and theirs. He said, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (v. 9). That describes a vast difference—a great cleavage. This wasn't just a matter of an erroneous thought now and then. Their entire manner of thinking had deviated greatly from His. They had a carnal mind and, consequently, had departed from His ways.

The connection between one's manner of thinking and his doing is noticed here. A person's thought pattern influences what he says and does. In fact, it eventually determines what manner of person he is. Solomon said, "For as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he" Proverbs 23:7

On the positive side, thinking like God thinks results in one walking the pathway of holiness 1 Peter 1:15-16. Such is the power of the spiritual mind. There is a law of cause and effect here. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos 3:3

God's call to think like He does is only realized upon true repentance and faith in Christ. After Jesus' resurrection, the promise of the Holy Ghost became a glorious reality. This means God dwells in man and communes intimately with him. Calvary and Pentecost work together to make every true penitent believer a new person, 2 Corinthians 5:17. In this operation of grace one is "transformed by the renewing of [his] mind" and is able to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" Romans 12:2. It is then that it can be said, despite our human frailty, "we have the mind of Christ" 1 Corinthians 2:16.

Although in weakness and with limitations, a Christian thinks with the same set of values God has.



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