

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

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

Matthew 5:15

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For A Conservative Mennonite Perspective

From The Editor's Desk.

Recently we came across a short song that in the past has been an encouragement in our Christian life.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
 Look full in His wonderful face,
 And the things of earth
 Will grow strangely dim
 In the light of His glory and grace.

There are time in our Christian experience as in all of life that life seems aimless and we start to wonder where it is all leading, we may even have the sense of being on a treadmill and just getting nowhere fast but then we re-discovered this encouraging verse and it became somewhat obvious that one of the reasons for our negative thoughts is because we have failed to keep our eyes on Jesus, we have not continued to look into His wonderful face but instead looked at the things of earth or self.

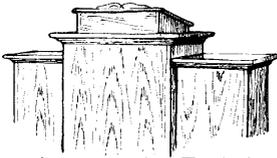
No wonder that His light has grown strangely dim to us, we have not allowed the light of His glory and grace to fully envelop our vision. This is not saying that we are being drawn away by the things of earth but rather that we have failed to appreciate the riches that Christ has for us.

Philippians 4:19 tells us that our God will supply all our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus and there are many other verses in the epistles that speak to the riches of Christ for the believer.

Colossians 3:2 encourages us to set our affection, our thoughts, our priorities, our love, on things above, that is the heavenly and not on things on the earth.

Allowing ourselves to continue to entertain negative thoughts instead of coming to the Lord in prayer to seek the times of refreshing that shall come from the presence of the Lord.

It is so easy to drift instead of labour at rowing as is spoken of in this month's main message. God's Word also gives us direction for all of life and we need to stay close to Him or we may find ourselves with an empty religion, having an outward form but no inward power, peace or rest in God. Apostle Paul also acknowledged his need for refereshing by the brethren. Let us pray for each other to have that refreshing also. *JvL.*



Across the Pulpit.

Rowing or Drifting.

*Adapted from a message Brother Lowell Eby,
Dohner Mennonite Church, 2009.*

I'm not sure in relation to this subject whether this is a statement in that we are either rowing or drifting or whether this comes to us as a question, to you and I personally, am I rowing or drifting? Are you rowing or drifting? Or maybe the question comes to us in our family setting, or is it in our congregation or in our church groups or conservative groups in general, are we rowing or are we drifting?

Or are we talking about boats out on the lake?

I suppose all these may be suggested in this title this evening. I asked Brother Matthew the week before last when I talked to him if he understood that I was a farmer, not a shipmaster or a fisher or anything like that, likely there is no one here that has been out on the water less than I have been because I have been out on the water very little and so I really know very little about rowing or drifting, except I've had a little experience and I think I at least somewhat understand the thought of rowing or drifting sufficiently that we can find inspiration this evening.

I hope that maybe you have pondered this title, this subject, a bit before you came this evening, I do not know what your thoughts were, maybe they were somewhat different to what my thoughts have been but I hope the spirit could attend to what I have to say this evening as to what is the Word of God or the message of God and that you could find some inspiration from that.

We do want to use this analogy of a boat on the water to help us to understand our spiritual lives. I don't think our brethren are talking about the boat on the lake or the river, this evening we simply want to draw some lessons from this thought of whether we are rowing or drifting.

By way of an outline I simply have four questions that we want to consider.

Firstly: What does this title suggests to us?

Secondly: What can we learn from Jesus disciples' in relation to this?

Thirdly: Why drifting is serious and

Fourthly: How can I row effectively?

So the first question we want to answer is: What does this title suggests to us?

Rather briefly in relation to this first of all I think this title suggests to us that we are either doing one or the other. I think that it means there is no in between; we are either rowing or drifting. And so whether the title this evening is a statement or a question I think either way we need to understand that it is one or the other, we are either rowing or drifting, one or the other.

And very closely associated with that, secondly, the title suggests to us that these two are opposites. Not only one or the other but they are opposites and so that means to us that this thought of rowing or drifting is not a matter of speed whether we are drifting or whether we are rowing, I think we need to see this as being opposites, we are either rowing in one direction or else we are drifting in the other direction. They are opposites, there is no mixture.

And though there seems to be from our perspective a bit of a grey area sometimes we wonder maybe ourselves whether we are rowing or drifting, sometimes we may wonder in relation to another person in their spiritual life whether they are rowing or drifting but I think we need to understand again that these are opposites and so there is no grey area, we are either rowing or drifting.

And so although that is a bit of a grey area from our perspective there is no grey area to God, we are either rowing or drifting and God knows whether we are rowing or drifting.

The third thing that I think this title suggests to us this evening is that there is a subtle difference between these two.

At times it may be obvious to us whether we are rowing or drifting, it may be obvious to us in another persons life whether they are rowing or drifting but I think most of the times it is somewhat subtle, there is somewhat of a fine line between these two and though we have already said

they are one or the other and they are opposite yet there seems to be a subtle difference, and I think that is at least one reason why our brethren have suggested we talk about this subject this evening because there is that subtle difference.

In the fourth place I think this title suggests to us that there are consequences to whether we are rowing or drifting.

Because, again we are not just talking about the matter of the boat out on the water and so what if we are rowing or drifting, so what if we are going in this direction or that direction, it is not that.

This evening we are talking about our spiritual lives and so there are consequences and so we need to consider this evening whether we are rowing or drifting.

We are considering eternal souls, we are considering eternal destinies, we are talking about eternal consequences and so it makes a difference whether we are rowing or drifting.

And so it brings us to our second question this evening: What can we learn from Jesus disciples in relation to this subject of rowing or drifting?

As near as I can tell this word rowing is only found in the Scripture in this form one time and that is in Mark chapter 6, I invite you to turn there with me, I could stand to be corrected on this but it's the only time I've found that this form of the word rowing is in the scriptures, and so I would like to read a number of verses here in Matthew six and we want to learn five lessons from Jesus disciples in relation to rowing or drifting.

I'd like to begin reading in Mark chapter 6 at verse 45, and this is following the feeding of the 5000, ⁴⁵ And straightway he (Jesus that is) constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people. ⁴⁶ And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray. ⁴⁷ And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. ⁴⁸ And he saw them toiling in rowing; (there is that word rowing) for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. ⁴⁹ But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: ⁵⁰ For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not

afraid. ⁵¹ And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. ⁵² For they considered not *the miracle* of the loaves: for their heart was hardened. *Mark 6:45-52.*

This is somewhat of an interesting account, an inspirational encounter but there is also a note of sadness in this account.

What can we learn from it this evening?

The first lesson that we want to learn from the disciples in this account in relation to this subject of rowing or drifting is the thought here in verse 45 where it says that He constrained his disciples to get into the ship and go to the other side. *Mark 6:45*

The first lesson is that Jesus disciples are headed for the other side, Jesus disciples are headed for the other side.

We are not just in the middle of the world or in the middle of this life, we are in the middle of the Christian life, we are not just going in circles though at times it seems like it. At times it seems like our life is made of circles, there are certain things that seem to keep coming around in our experience and in one sense maybe we are going in circles, but we are not. Life is a moving on and furthermore not just simply moving on but Jesus disciples are headed to the other side.

Which direction you heading in this evening?

Some people are drifting toward the pit of eternal destruction but Jesus disciples are rowing for the other side, we need to decide this evening, or maybe I should say it this way that each of us have already decided this evening which direction we are going. For some maybe it is time to change directions. But Jesus disciples are headed for the other side, Jesus sent his disciples, He told them that they were to go unto the other side.

I'm not sure what is suggested in this thought that He constrained them, it seems like that they maybe were somewhat unwilling to go, that they wanted to stay with Him, I'm not sure, but Jesus constrained them to go to the other side, He wanted them to go, they were His disciples and if they were going to be rowing, if they were going to go the direction that He wanted them to go they needed to go to the other side, and so this evening as disciples of Jesus Christ if we are rowing we are headed for the other side.

The second lesson I learnt this evening from this account is in verse 48 where it says that He saw them toiling in rowing. *Mark 6:48*

The second lesson is that rowing is a labour, it is a labour. We are not drifting if we are rowing because if we are rowing it is a labour.

I had to think of the writer of the poem when he said: We are not here to dream, to drift; We have hard work to do and loads to lift.

Sometimes we meet those individuals who seem so exuberant about the Christian life and are quick to tell us what the Lord has done for them and they seem bubbling over with joy. Well that is good as far as it goes, but I wonder sometimes whether those individuals really know what discipleship is like and what it is all about, whether they are really taking up their cross, because while there is joy in the Christian life, and I hope each one of you are finding joy in your Christian life, but if you are a disciple of Jesus Christ and if you are headed for the other side it is going to be a labour. We need to work at it.

And so I do not want to dampen our joy this evening but let's remember that we are rowing and it is a labour.

Moving on then the reason that it is a labour, the third lesson we want to learn this evening is the next phrase where it says: For the wind was contrary unto them, those winds that are contrary unto us.

And this word contrary means it is the opposite, it is against, it is not conformed, and these two are not in agreement. So when Jesus disciples were headed to the other side and the wind was blowing the other way it was contrary unto them, and so that is why there was a labour for them, otherwise they could have been drifting along. But there are those winds, there were those winds in their experience, and they had to row against those winds.

Let's parallel that now to our Christian lives.

We talked about rowing being a labour and it is because there are those winds that are contrary unto us.

Our generation, unfortunately, is experiencing quite a bit of ease and because of the ease that is around us and the ease that we tend to enjoy we also tend to steer away from conflict and that is why we see so much in our world today of parents coaxing their children into obedience, we find

schoolteachers bribing their pupils into learning, we find Ministry who are only saying what their people want to hear. Why? Because they are steering away from this conflict, they do not want to be in a wind that is contrary unto them.

But if we are disciples this evening and we have decided that we need to lay down our life, ourselves, the old nature, and if we are going to take up the cross of Jesus Christ there are going to be those winds that are contrary unto us.

I remember hearing once they were talking about a family in the presence of a set of grandparents and the grandma finally said: “We understand that there are some things that we wish were different in our children and grandchildren's lives, we really wish some things were different but we want to be careful what we say lest we ruin our relationship.”

Well again it is good to steer away from conflict but finally brothers and sisters, if we are going to be headed for the other side there is going to be some conflict and if there is no conflict in our lives I'm afraid we are headed in the wrong direction, there is going to be conflict in the Christian life.

I'm not suggesting this evening that we need to be stirring up conflict or stirring up trouble, we do want to be peaceful but there will be conflict in the Christian life. There are those winds that are contrary unto us.

But there is a consolation in this and that is the fourth lesson we want to learn here in this account which we find in the first phrase of verse 48 where it says: And He saw them toiling in rowing.

And so that is the fourth lesson we want to learn this evening that Jesus sees the struggles of His disciples, Jesus sees the struggles of His disciples.

I find this very interesting and I'm not sure I can explain that this evening how Jesus saw them toiling in rowing because it tells us here that it was in the night, it began in the evening, and from doing a little reading and arithmetic here in this it seems like this struggle began likely in the evening and continued until the fourth watch of the night, so this struggle must have lasted at least nine hours, so how is it that Jesus saw them and over

several miles away out in the lake and it was dark and also why did He allow them to struggle for nine hours?

I'm not sure if we have the answers for all these questions but we simply want to learn that it says that Jesus saw them, He saw them toiling in rowing and He finally headed in their direction. It seems that maybe He allow them to continue in this toiling, and I understand this toiling here to suggest that they were literally struggling, they were tormented, they were stressed because this wind was contrary unto them, but He allowed them that experience to test them we may say.

But Jesus saw them.

Let's turn to Hebrews chapter 4, we are saying that Jesus saw the struggles of His disciples. Does Jesus see our struggles yet today, this evening?

Hebrews 4 verses 14-16, I like this wording here in verse 14 where it says:

¹⁴ Seeing then that we have a great high priest (and we do) that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession. ¹⁵

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin.

¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. *Hebrews 4:14-16.*

So brothers and sisters this evening though we are headed to the other side and though it is a labour, though there are those winds that are contrary unto us, Jesus sees our struggles and not only does He see them but He understands them, He does understand them, we have that kind of high priest this evening.

Let's go back again to that account in Mark chapter 6.

We have one more lesson we want to learn here in Mark 6, and this is the sad part to me about this account, but the lesson that we want to learn, Jesus headed for His disciples and they were troubled, they weren't sure who it was, maybe He was a distance away, I'm not sure why they didn't recognise Him or whether they should have recognised Him, however that may be, verse 51: they were troubled. And immediately He talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. ⁵¹ And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. ⁵² For they consid-

ered not *the miracle* of the loaves: for their heart was hardened." *Mark 6:51-52.*

And so the lesson that we want to learn this evening is that Jesus' disciples need understanding hearts.

It tells us very plainly here that Jesus disciples hearts were hardened, they considered not the miracle that they had just seen just a few hours before this, out in the desert with five loaves and fishes Jesus had fed 5000 with 12 baskets full left over. And now out on the sea in a windstorm these disciples lacked understanding, they seemed not to realise their rowing, their toiling, their pulling and rowing was no match for the storm but they continued to struggle for these nine whatever hours and didn't seem to know what to do about it.

Just like the disciples couldn't do anything about feeding those 5000, and they came to Jesus here in these previous verses and told Him to send them away because there wasn't food for them, it was suggested, the day was far past and He told them to give them to eat and they said: Should two hundred pennyworth of bread be enough for them to eat? They didn't have what it took to feed the 5000 but Jesus did, He used five loaves and two fishes. That was a miracle. *Mark 6:35-44*

And now they lack the understanding to know what to do in the storm. Their rowing was not going to help them in this situation, they needed a miracle.

And so we do not want this evening to say that it is wrong to be rowing, we are noticing the importance of rowing, but I would like to help us to understand that we need to be doing something more than using our physical strength. We are going to need a miracle if we are going to make it to the other side, we are going to need to have hearts that are mellow and soft and alive, hearts that are beating with the Lord Jesus.

I think maybe it was Jesus desire in feeding them with these five loaves and two fishes and working with these disciples that their hearts could be beating with His and that they would understand that He was not trying to feed them with five loaves and two fishes, He was trying to help them to find spiritual meaning and to understand that no amount of physical strength or no amount of physical labour could bring them to the other side. And while rowing did have its important place, while it is important

as Christians that you and I labour in our life we cannot labour in our physical strength, we need to work out it yes, we need a miracle, we need the kind of miracles that the Lord Jesus works in our lives in our hearts and so we need soft, pliable hearts.

These men considered not the miracle of the loaves, their hearts were hardened. You know would you and I be part of those 5000 that were glad for food, but they didn't seem to see the miracle in it.

Or are we just a part of the 12 this evening who are rowing and toiling and toiling and rowing but don't seem to realise the need of a miracle? God help us to have understanding hearts.

The third question I want to consider this evening is: Why is drifting serious?

We have been implying this evening that it is important to row and it would maybe be nice to just skip over this question but I think we need to consider it. I simply have four reasons why we need to understand the seriousness of drifting.

The first is that drifting is a condition of lukewarmness.

I think as we studied the account there in Revelation 3 this morning we saw where it tells us that they were lukewarm there at Laodicea, they were casual, they didn't really care that much, maybe their attitude was: I'm not that bad, I'm better than some people.

We studied that this morning but I think we need to read it again this evening, Revelation 3, to help us to understand why drifting is serious. *Revelation 3:14-16* ¹⁴And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; ¹⁵I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. ¹⁶So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth...

Is that where you want to be this evening? Do you want to be drifting, lukewarm and to be spewed out of the mouth of the Lord Jesus? Verse 17 ¹⁷Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: ¹⁸I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be

clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. ¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. ²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. ²¹ To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. ²² He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." *Revelation 3:17-22.*

What would Christ's message be to my church or to your church this evening? Would He need to say that we are drifting, would He need to say that we are lukewarm? If we are He will spew us out of his mouth. And so it is serious, drifting is a condition of lukewarmness.

The second consideration regarding drifting is that drifting is very subtle. We mentioned this a while ago but we would like to touch it again that drifting is very subtle, unless there is something to compare it with it is hard to detect, again I don't have much experience of being out on the water but drifting can be so slow and unless there is a landmark or something that isn't moving we likely can't really tell that we are drifting because we are going with the water, it is all going gradually, it is all very subtle. Drifting is very subtle and so we need to compare ourselves with something and so that is why this evening brothers and sisters we have the Word of God, we have a landmark, we have that which has never changed. Let's compare our lives with it this evening brothers and sisters, we need to compare our lives with it so that we know if this subtle condition of drifting is a part of our experience or not.

Thirdly: Why is drifting serious?

Drifting is a bad example to others. We hear people say: Well if he can do that so can I.

All because there were no obvious consequences, no immediate consequences people are satisfied to drift. I know in one sense this evening we are not to consider another's example but to consider our own lives that we are responsible for how our lives affect others, we are responsible for the influence that goes forth from our lives - and so let's consider our example.

Would we really want others to be drifting, would we really want others to be headed where I am headed, would you want someone to be really headed where you're headed for?

Drifting is a bad example to others, let's give them an example that they can follow, an example that will lead them to safety.

And then fourthly: Why is drifting serious? Because drifting is a course with a bitter ending.

It is a course with a bitter ending, there is no convenient stopping place, there's not really any turnarounds, Satan hasn't offered those places to us and usually a person sees no need for a place to turnaround and so they end up at a place with a bitter ending, the gall of bitterness (*Acts 8:23*).

I think we understand that end and I don't think it is where we want to be when we come to the end of our lives.

So brothers and sisters this evening drifting is serious.

So now let's consider the question: How can I row effectively?

What can I do so that I am heading the right direction, so that I end up where I really want to end up?

Turn with me to first Timothy chapter 4.

I'd like to notice five things in this chapter, five ways we can row effectively.

1 Timothy 4:6, and I notice in the side column of my Thompson Chain reference Bible it says: duties of a good minister.

I suppose that may refer to those ordained to the Ministry but I think each one of us need to see ourselves as ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we want to be good ministers we want to be those who influence others for the right, verse six: "6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. 7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself *rather* unto godliness. 8 For bodily exercise profiteth little:"

It has maybe a little profit, it may be good to be rowing some: "..... But godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. 9 This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. 10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those

that believe. ¹¹These things command and teach. ¹²Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. ¹³Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. ¹⁴Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. ¹⁵Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. ¹⁶Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. “*1 Timothy 4:6-16.*”

The first way I notice in these verses that we can row effectively is in verse 12 where it says: But be thou an example of the believers. *1 Timothy 4:12*
We need to be an example of the believers if we want to row effectively.

I can still remember my father saying to me as a young man: If you want to prove that you are a young man, if you want to prove that you are a Christian then you act like a young man.

And he would say it this way: Anyone can spin stones with their car, anyone can do that, anyone can squeal their tyres on the pavement, anyone can tell a dirty joke, anyone can do that, but if you want to prove that you are a young man you will refrain from doing that.

And I appreciated that in my life, being an example of the believers. And so I bring this example to you as youth because it says it here: Let no man despise thy youth but be thou an example.

Anyone can do those kinds of things but if you want to be an example of the believers you live like a Christian, you live like Jesus has asked us and called us to live.

And he says here verse 12 be an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. *1 Timothy 4:12*

Now I'm not sure what all is included in this but I don't think there is much excluded in this be an example of the believers. The way we talk, the way we walk, the way we love, it is all there, it is the way a believer lives, let's be an example of the believers. It is the only way we can row effectively if we are going to be an example, youth be an example of the believers and don't wait until your elderly to start rowing upstream.

It seems that we somewhat have this idea that we expect the elderly to be a bit more sober minded, we expect the elderly to be a bit more godly. Well,

I suppose we understand why, but it needs to be more than that. If we are going to wait till we are elderly to be godly and to be sober it may not happen, we may not live to be that old.

And so again youth, this evening be an example of the believers, been example.

Secondly: How can we row effectively?

Verse 13 says till I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. *1 Timothy 4:13*

I would say it this way; give attendance to spiritual matters, give attendance to spiritual matters.

We are concerned about their physical health and I think it we come together from Sunday to Sunday as brothers and sisters we are concerned about our brothers and sisters in their health, if we see someone doesn't look very healthy or someone is missing we ask them about their physical health, we are concerned about that. But what about our spiritual health?

If we notice someone that is spiritually sick or weak are we concerned about them?

Or maybe we should make it more personal to us this evening, he says here give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Let's consider our own spiritual life.

We take care that we get our proper rest, proper food or nourishment, we care for ourselves physically. Are we caring for ourselves spiritually?

Give attendance to those spiritual matters, if we are going to be rowing effectively we are going to be rowing upstream we need to take care of these spiritual matters, give attendance to them.

Turn to another verse in Hebrews chapter 10 to help us understand this thought of giving attendance to spiritual matters, it says here in *Hebrews 10:24*: "24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is;"

Some people seem to be neglecting these spiritual things, they are more concerned about their physical health and their banking accounts but they forget some of these more valuable things: "... But exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. *Hebrews 10:24-25*

There is a day coming when we will no longer be in this life, there is a day coming when we will no longer have the opportunity to row, where we are is where we will be. And so let's not neglect these spiritual matters.

The next verse here in Timothy four says: *1 Timothy 4:14*:¹⁻⁴ "Neglect not the gift that is in thee,"

And so the third way we row effectively this evening is by exercising the gift in us.

I think likely in these verses this gift refers to the special endowment that Timothy received as an ordained man, again let's bring it to each one again this evening, we each have special gifts that God has given to us, God has placed within each one of us those gifts for a purpose, let's not neglect them. We are accountable how we use these gifts.

And may I ask this evening: Who decides what my gifts are or what your gifts are?

Too many times we like to say: Well this is my gift to do this. Or: This is your gift so you want to do this.

But I think we want to recognise that God is calling these gifts out of us through the church and when the church asks us to do something there may be times that we have a reason to say no but I think most times we need to understand that God is calling through the church for our gifts.

What does he say here in verse 14? Neglect not the gift.

I don't think there really is such a thing as a born song leader or a born Sunday school teacher or a born minister. I understand that some people maybe have more gifts in these areas but these things need to be exercised and used.

And so let's be very cautious when the church comes to us asking us to exercise these gifts that we would not say no, I don't have that gift. Neglect not the gift, it is part of rowing effectively.

Fourthly how can we row effectively?

Verse 15 says: Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, give thyself wholly to them.

That is the fourth way we row effectively we give ourselves wholly towards toiling toward the other side.

Let's just take the analogy of the boat on the water again, I don't have much experience here but can you imagine how effective a person would

be rowing a boat with an oar in one hand and maybe his binoculars in the other, or maybe have the oar in one hand and a fishing rod in the other? I think maybe we know which direction he would be going. Would he not be going in circles? If he was only paddling from the one side wouldn't he be going in a circle? We said a while ago there is no going in circles, we are going in one direction, and so we need to give ourselves wholly. Let's turn to an account in Numbers chapter 32, I think it is important that we take a little time to see the difference between wholly giving ourselves or half heartedly giving ourselves.

Here in *Numbers 32:10-12* we have an account here in relation to Israel, Joshua and Caleb, ¹⁰And the LORD'S anger was kindled the same time, and he sware, saying, ¹¹Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me: ¹²Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: for they have wholly followed the LORD."

Can you comprehend with me this evening how much difference there was between Joshua and Caleb and the rest of the children of Israel and the only difference was that Israel did not wholeheartedly give themselves to God as Joshua and Caleb did.

And so he says here in 1 Timothy 4:15: Meditate upon these things give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all.

I think that helps us to understand that for the most part others will know whether we have really wholly given ourselves or whether we are drifting along.

How can I row effectively? Fifthly and lastly 1 Timothy 4:16 says: Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine, continue in them. That is the fifth way we row effectively, we need to continue in them.

If I were to ask you this evening what the hardest part of living the Christian life is what would you say?

Well, there could be a variety of answers, it could be those trying things in our lives, or those special trials that come to us, those great conflicts, but I wonder sometimes if the hardest part of life isn't just keeping on, keeping on.

It is those day-to-day things, it is that day after day, month after month, year after year that maybe is the hardest thing about a Christian life and so we need to continue on. Continue in them, we keep on, unwaveringly, unflinchingly, not drifting, day after day, year after year.

And what I like in this verse is what follows where it says: Continue in them for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee. And I don't think that means that everyone that hears us, everyone whose life that we touch, I don't think that they all will necessarily be saved, there will be some, but we are responsible to continue on so that we can save ourselves and at least some of them that hear us.

Isn't that what we want, isn't that why we are rowing?

Isn't that why we are resisting the tendency, the ease of drifting?

Isn't that why we are doing that because we want to be saved?

Brothers and sisters that is my desire for each one of you this evening, that you would be rowing so that you can save yourself and them that hear thee.



God Gives Us His Word For Our Direction.

We must remember that our God has all knowledge and all wisdom, and that therefore it is very possible He may guide you into paths wherein He knows great blessings are awaiting you, but which to the short-sighted human eyes around you seem sure to result in confusion and loss. You must recognize the fact that God's thoughts are not as man's thoughts, nor His ways as man's ways; and that He who knows the end of things from the beginning alone can judge what the results of any course of action may be. You must therefore realize that His very love for you may perhaps lead you to run counter to the loving wishes of even your dearest friends. You must learn from Luke 14:26-33, and similar passages, that in order, not to be saved only, but to be a disciple or follower of your Lord, you may perhaps be called upon to forsake all that you have, and to turn your backs on even father or mother, or brother or sister, or husband or wife, or it may be your

own life also. Unless the possibility of this is clearly recognized, the soul would be very likely to get into difficulty, because it often happens that the child of God who enters upon this life of obedience is sooner or later led into paths which meet with the disapproval of those he best loves; and unless he is prepared for this, and can trust the Lord through it all, he will scarcely know what to do.

Until we have found and obeyed God's will in reference to any subject, as it is revealed in the Bible, we cannot expect a separate direct personal revelation. A great many fatal mistakes are made in this matter of guidance, by the overlooking of this simple rule. Where our Father has written out for us plain directions about anything He will not, of course, make an especial revelation to us concerning it. No man, for instance, needs or could expect any direct revelation to tell him not to steal, because God has already in the Scriptures plainly declared His will about it.

For the Scriptures are far more explicit even about details than most people think. And there are not many important affairs in life for which a clear direction may not be found in God's book.

Take the matter of dress, and we have 1 Peter 3:3-4, and 1 Timothy 2:9-10.

Take the matter of conversation, and we have Ephesians 4:29 and 5:4.

Take the matter of avenging injuries and standing up for your rights, and we have Romans 12:19-21, and Matthew 5:38-48, and 1 Peter 2:19-21.

Take the matter of forgiving one another, and we have Ephesians 4:32 and Mark 11:25-26.

Take the matter of conformity to the world, and we have Romans 12:2, and 1 John 2:15-17, and James 4:4.

Take the matter of anxieties of all kind, and we have Matthew 6:25-34, and Philippians 4:6-7.

We only give these as examples to show how very full and practical the Bible guidance is. If, therefore, you find yourself in perplexity, first of all search and see whether the Bible speaks on the point in question, asking God to make plain to you by the power of His Spirit, through the Scripture, what is His mind. And whatever shall seem to you to be plainly taught there, that you must obey.

Extracts from The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life by Hannah Whital-Smith

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."--

Galatians 5:16.

WHEN WE walk in the spirit we shall be led by Him. In the early stages of life we are apt to be headstrong and impulsive, as Moses when he felled the Egyptian. But as we grow in Christian experience, we wait for the leadings of the Spirit, moving us by His suggestion, impressing on us His will, working within us what afterwards we work out in character and deed. We do not go in front, but follow behind. We are led by the Spirit.

The man or woman who walks in the Spirit has no desire to fulfil the lust of the flesh. The desire for the gratification of natural appetite may be latent in the soul, and may flash through the thoughts, but he does not fulfil it. The desire cannot be prevented, but its fulfilment can certainly be withheld.

When we walk in the Spirit He produces in us the fruit of a holy character. The contrast between the works of the fleshly--i.e., the selfish life--and the fruit of the Spirit, which is the natural product of His influence, is very marked. In works there is effort, the clatter of machinery, the deafening noise of the factory. But fruit is found in the calm, still, regular process of Nature, which is ever producing in her secret laboratory the kindly fruits of the earth. How quiet it all is! There is no voice nor language. It is almost impossible to realise what is being affected by a long summer day of sunshine. The growing of autumn arrives with noiseless footsteps. So it is with the soul that daily walks in the Spirit. There are probably no startling experiences, no marked transitions, nothing special to record in the diary, but every year those who live in close proximity witness a ripening wealth of fruit in the manifestation of love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control.

PRAYER

Gracious Lord! May Thy Holy Spirit keep me ever walking in the light of Thy countenance. May He fill my heart with the sense of Thy nearness and loving fellowship. Order my steps in Thy way, and walk with me, that I may do the thing that pleaseth Thee. AMEN.

F.B Myer.

The Remedy for Empty Religion

Various teachings of Jesus were recorded only by Matthew. Before he met Jesus, Matthew was a publican, a tax collector. When Christ called him, he left all his vocational duties and followed Him. Matthew was acquainted with the Old Testament prophecies, for he referred to them about sixty times in his gospel. As he saw them being fulfilled in his Master, he was satisfied that this was indeed the world's Redeemer.

Matthew personally witnessed the dawn of a new kingdom. In this kingdom, each one has heard and answered the call of Jesus, experienced His forgiveness, and is then commissioned to share the gospel with others. Christ has given the keys of the kingdom to His church, along with the authority and wisdom to use them. A childlike, teachable spirit is found in these citizens, and, like their King, they do not resist evil.

There are treasures in the kingdom that can be obtained by diligent searching and placing all other interests aside. Jesus tells us to prepare for His return by using the talents He has given us and some day we will give an account to our Lord. If we do not have oil in our vessels, we will be denied entrance to the marriage feast. Let us not be ashamed to be identified with our Lord but gladly confess Him before men.

It is important to determine whether our religion is alive in our hearts. The Pharisees and Sadducees thought they had the real thing. We like to think the way we believe is right! Each of us needs to look into our own heart and honestly consider if the Holy Spirit is leading our lives. Is there more to our religion than merely appearing pious and holy to the people we meet? Is our relationship with God close enough that nothing is hindering our communion with Him? Do we have an inner calmness assuring us that we are completely the Lord's? Consider what we need to do to have the peace of God in our hearts.

John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, seemingly from nowhere, preaching that people should repent and get right with God. Upon the confession of their faith, he baptized them with water. A man appearing as a prophet, preaching and baptizing, was a great attraction to the Pharisees and Sadducees, considered the most religious people of their time.

The Pharisees always portrayed themselves as pious people when they

were in public. Even the clothes they wore were supposed to portray the piety they thought religious leaders should have. Their robes were sewn to utmost perfection. Their aim was to make an impression of religious fervor before man. They loved to be called Rabbi by the people. They forgot they needed to keep their hearts rather than their forms with all diligence.

When John saw these perfectly dressed religious men, he saw past their facade. He knew that their hearts were far from what their forefathers had believed and taught. He warned the Pharisees that they could not depend on their heritage to save their souls from eternal damnation. They needed to repent of their pride. He knew they acted piously and yet were without compassion for the less fortunate people around them. He urged them to repent and bring forth fruits manifesting a penitent heart.

John preached that the kingdom of God was at hand. Anyone who was not prepared could not be part of the kingdom. The unprepared would be hewn down and cast into everlasting fire. The only way to be prepared was to bring forth fruits of repentance.

When Jesus preached on the mountain, He gave instructions for everyone. He said, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4). The person who has a penitent heart and mourns for his sins will find forgiveness and be comforted. Such a person will be at peace because he knows everything is open between him and God. It is a blessing to live in such a state, and one desires to share this experience with others.

Let us take an honest look at our lives today. Is there any indication that we are like the Pharisees? Are we basing our salvation on the fact that we go to church regularly and dress modestly? Do we do things to appear righteous before men?

The Pharisees believed that putting on an outward show of living by the law, and making no deviations, would make them children of God. They prayed loudly and often in public. They fasted and gave alms regularly. All this was done to bring honour to themselves. They were righteous in their own eyes, even though their hearts were far from God. John told them that God could raise up children unto Abraham from the stones on the ground. There is no value in living the law without a penitent heart.

The tendency to have a form of religion but deny the power thereof is always with us. Simply patterning our lives according to the traditions and ways of our fathers will not save us. The Pharisees were deceived in placing too much emphasis on being in the lineage of Abraham. They also placed too much importance in keeping a form they had developed. This can happen to us, too, when we do not allow the Spirit of God to direct our lives.

Where am I today? Do I come to church because my parents taught me to? Do I study the Scriptures during the week, or do I neglect it? Have I visited any widows or any people with special needs? When was the last time I initiated a spiritual conversation with anyone? When I give to the Lord, whether time or money, am I concerned that I might give too much or that I might not give enough? If I am doing these things because I want to appear godly to my fellow church members and friends, I have lost the vision of the Lord's way. My righteousness will not exceed that of the Pharisees, and I will find myself in the chaff that will be burned with unquenchable fire on Judgment Day.

If my life is led by the Holy Spirit, the urge to pray and to study the Bible will be heeded with pleasure. These are activities I enjoy. Visiting the less fortunate is a pleasure, and I wish I could do it more often. I am concerned that I am not able to give enough to God. I know Jesus was humiliated, beaten with stripes, and nailed to the cross so I could be saved and enjoy peace in my heart. This makes me want to share with others in a humble way.

When I am completely surrendered to God, I experience peace and rest. This makes my religion real, and I long to pass it on to my fellowmen. I will want to be an example to them and will not fight against the leading of the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit prompts me to take care of something in my life, I will do it immediately. It is usually pride that makes it hard to follow the Spirit.

Does my life agree with my claim of having the peace of God in my heart? Is my life consistent with Bible teaching? Is my occupation a Christian occupation? Do my appearance and dress portray modesty and humility? Is my home such as a pilgrim and a stranger should have? I need to be completely honest with myself in all areas of my life and realize that what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination to God (Luke 16:15).

Walking with God

Oh! for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame;
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!

Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His word?

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill.

Return, O Holy Dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest;
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn
And drove Thee from my breast.

The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only 'Thee.

So shall my walk be close with God
Calm and serene my frame.

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