

# 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.***Giving Thanks or Grateful Acknowledgement.*

Having siblings and other relatives in both Canada and the USA as well as many friends we are often asked at this time of the year if we here in Australia celebrate Thanksgiving Day a national holiday in both those countries commemorating the first celebration of it in 1621 by the first settlers in Massachusetts for their bountiful harvest.

Our answer has always been that indeed we do have thanksgiving but we do it on a daily basis not just once a year and then go on to explain the scriptural reasons for our thanksgiving or giving thanks as the Bible calls it.

We have the first example in Ezra 3:11 when the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid, it says that the priests and Levites sang together by course in praising and **giving thanks** unto the LORD.

Then we read of the ten lepers who were healed by Jesus out of whom only one returned and fell at His feet **giving thanks**, Luke 17:16.

We are instructed that among the saints there should be no filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient but rather **giving of thanks**. Ephesians 5:4.

We are called to be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, **giving thanks** always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:19-20.

And we have further instructions as to **giving thanks** in Colossians 1:12 and 3:17, 1 Timothy 2:1 and Hebrews 13:15.

Taking those verses from both Old and New Testament and their instructive nature in respect to thanksgiving and meditating upon them we come to the conclusion that thanksgiving is a very vital part of our relationship with God.

Yes, it is nice to remember something ceremonially and perhaps to even have some sort of celebration but I believe we would please God much more if we remember that thanksgiving daily as part of our life in Christ, we cannot possibly be thankful enough for the gift of His only begotten Son and His Son's gift to mankind on Calvary.

Let us celebrate Thanksgiving every moment, every day during all of life.

*J.v.L*



## Danger of Obedience Without Conviction

*From a message by Brother Lamar Garman*

*French Creek Mennonite Church 2012*

*Conclusion of message*

4]. Fourthly a danger of obedience without conviction: It opens one to deception.

Does it? Surely it does. It opens one to deception.

[First Kings 13](#) gives the account of the disobedient prophet who came out of Judah to Bethel, to decry by the word of the Lord the atrocities of Jero-boam and we know what happened, he was deceived, even though we would say he was a well-meaning man and wanted what was right but somehow he really didn't have the conviction that what the Lord said is how it was and he had to do that wholeheartedly, somehow it lost that conviction and he opened himself to deception.

In one of our foreign mission churches the ministry received a letter sometime ago from a local sister there and she said that she is no longer going to wear the Christian woman's veiling, she just doesn't have conviction for it, she is not going to wear it any longer, and it seemed like a bolt out of the blue. Here we thought this sister was firm in the faith and had conviction for what she was doing but then the ministry found out later that she said that; "Well she really didn't have conviction for the Christian woman's veiling for years already."

And because she lacked that firm conviction for such a crucial element for Christian women she opened her self to deception and she lost out in it. Well it opens one to deception if we do not really have conviction for what we believe.

[1 John 3:7](#) says: Let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

5]. Fifthly the danger of obedience without conviction: It leads to a hypocritical life.

It leads to a hypocritical life and let's turn to Matthew chapter 23 to see what Jesus said about a life like that, speaking to the scribes and Pharisees of His day.

[Matthew 23:23-28](#), noticing that we need to live above hypocrisy, being open, being firm in what we believe:

<sup>23</sup> Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. <sup>24</sup> *Ye* blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. <sup>25</sup> Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. <sup>26</sup> *Thou* blind Pharisee, cleanse first that *which is* within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. <sup>27</sup> Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness. <sup>28</sup> Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

And we would say that these people knew exactly what the law demanded of them outwardly and they kept that and sometimes to exactness. Now notice and I want to emphasise this, Jesus did not condemn their outward display of piety in fact in verse 23 He said: Don't leave that undone. Then we would say: What did He condemn then? Well He condemned them because they were not allowing the Spirit of God to work in their hearts, had not really allowed the Spirit of God to work in their hearts. Remember our text verse: The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. [2 Corinthians 3:6](#).

Hypocrisy is a terrible sign of trouble in the heart. Yes it is, hypocrisy is a terrible sign of trouble in the heart.

I have an account of a Christian man who knew that he was slipping into a life of hypocrisy, he had been living a true life but by carelessness and departing from God's ways, he knew that he was slipping into a life of hypocrisy and then the thought came to him: Well there was one thing that he could do and that is that he could pray the Lord's prayer.

So he began to pray: "Our Father which art in Heaven." As soon as he uttered the words he was convicted of his hypocrisy in calling God his Father.

When he added the petition: "Hallowed be thy name;" He said it almost shocked him, he saw that he was not sincere, that his words did not at all express the state of his mind, he did not care to have God's name hallowed. Then he uttered the next petition: "Thy kingdom come." Upon this he said he almost choked, he saw that he did not want the Kingdom of God to come and that it was hypocritical of him to say so and that he could not really say that it was expressing the sincere desire of his heart.

And then came the petition: "Thy will be done in the earth as it is done in heaven." And he said his heart rose up against that and he could not say it. He was here brought face-to-face with the will of God.

Well we need to realise that if we are not truly sincere in what we do and what we believe we may be found in hypocrisy when we are brought face-to-face with the will of God. May we humbly say: Yes Lord, thy will be done, thy will be done in my life.

6]. A sixth danger of obedience without conviction: It causes a lack of appreciation for the church.

Does it? Yes it does. If obeying the discipline of a scriptural church seems like drudgery it is because we do not have the rock solid conviction that church standards are designed to safeguard me spiritually and make it easier for me to get to heaven. Do we really believe that?

We must believe that with all our hearts that through a scriptural church and the restraints that we have put upon us, the restraint of the flesh and the excesses of the world, they are designed to safeguard us and make it easier for us to get to heaven.

If we do not have that conviction we will feel like: Oh well, the ministry is picking on me again! Or, I can't do anything right or I can't satisfy them. A young person said that very thing to me one time he said: "It seems like I just can't satisfy the Ministry!" And my response was: "You just try us, just try us, do what you know you ought to do, love the Lord with all your heart and give evidence of that in your daily life and you just try us and see if we won't be satisfied."

Sure we will be satisfied and we know that we will have a sincere appreciation for the church if we really have conviction for truth

7]. A seventh danger of obedience without conviction: It robs one of peace and joy.

If we don't really believe what we practice it may well rob us of peace and joy.

In John 13 Jesus said in relation to the ordinance of feet washing: If ye know these things happy are ye if you do them. [John 13:17](#).

But the obverse is also true isn't it? If we know what the Bible commands and what the church requires of us and we do it grudgingly, not willingly, we won't be happy and joyful and spiritually satisfied.

No we won't be.

Sometime ago I was reading of a young Christian, maybe you read the account too, he had some music tapes that his parents did not appreciate and the church didn't appreciate, Oh they met the standards of the church technically but it wasn't the kind of music that really builds appreciation for sound soul stirring Congregational singing and he was listening to this kind of music and conviction came upon him because of it. He knew that his parents wouldn't be pleased with it and that the church wouldn't appreciate it and it began to rob him of peace and joy in his life and it affected other areas of his life, he was no longer relating well to his brothers and sisters in the home and his relationship with his parents wasn't what it had been before and finally he realised the root of the problem that there was something in his life, that he didn't have the kind of conviction that he should have - and he dealt with it. He got rid of that music that he knew would not be appreciated and that peace and joy of the Lord returned into this experience again.

[Romans 14:22](#): Happy *is* he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

8]. In the eighth place the danger of obedience without conviction: It could lead to a works religion.

If we don't have the conviction like we need to have for what we do it can lead to a works religion.

And we get accused of that sometimes don't we? Some people say that: "Well you have a works religion!"

But we do not allow that to intimidate us, we go to James chapter 2 verse 17: Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead. [James 2:17](#).

Our good works will be the outgrowth of the result of a faith in Christ and Bible-based conviction, if we lack those convictions many inconsistencies may well spring up in our lives and we could justify the label of a works religion and we want to be careful that others cannot accuse us of that justifiably.

It makes me think just now of many years ago there was a Christian here in the States from Africa, he was a relatively new believer and he was trying to find his way in the Christian life and visited in one of our conservative communities and as he was sitting on the front porch with a local family he saw a conservatively dressed individual come down the road and this conservatively dressed individual was smoking a cigar.

And this Christian from Africa said: "There is a carnal man."

Something did not look right, he saw an inconsistency there that caused him to think that that person smoking that cigar surely must be a carnal man.

Well we know that obedience without conviction could lead to a works of religion only and trying to work out our own salvation by works outside of the saving grace of the Lord Jesus.

Now how do we avoid the dangers of obedience without conviction?

I have a few remedies here for this dilemma and one is: Obey from the heart.

Obey from the heart, love the Lord Jesus.

Let's go to Romans chapter 6 and read a few verses there to look at one of the remedies of this dilemma.

[Romans 6:16-17](#) reads like this: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? <sup>17</sup> But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you."

We are to obey the Bible and recognise the authority of the church because of our deep love and devotion to God for saving our soul and redeeming us from sin. We need to obey from the heart, from a heart of love to God for His goodness to us.

Another part of the remedy to this dilemma: Obey even if you don't understand.

Now that might sound like a paradox, we are talking about the danger of obedience without conviction, but truly there is a blessing we believe in obedience even if you don't fully understand.

Perhaps a young person, sometimes one new in the faith cannot really comprehend all the implications of what we as a scriptural group practice and live and espouse, but as they obey that, as they endeavour to continue to grow in conviction there is a obedience, there is blessing in that kind of obedience.

Abraham is a vivid example of one who obeyed even when he couldn't understand what was required of him.

When God told him to offer up Isaac do you think he understood? No, he did not understand, he didn't understand. He moved ahead as commanded. Yes, but how could he do that? ([Hebrews 11:8-19](#))

Well Hebrews 11 tells us that it was his firm faith in God, that God is in ultimate supreme control of his life and that God, because of His promises, is well able to raise up his son from the dead. You see he had that kind of faith in God that even when he didn't understand it he moved ahead in faith.

Well when we don't understand we need to pray for our convictions to grow for that which is right; "Lord I believe, strengthen thou my unbelief." I believe that needs to be our prayer.

And we would say too that we need to search the Scripture and to pray that the Lord will shield us from apostasy and that we appreciate the discipline that we have in place in a church and realise that our discipline is based on the Scriptures.

I appreciate in our discipline booklet the fact that there are scriptural references given throughout why we do what we do and as we study that and read that it helps our conviction to grow for the right way.



One more remedy: Obey with conviction because our eternal destiny hinges on it. Obey with conviction because our eternal destiny hinges on it. And let's go to [2 Timothy 1:3](#), I thank God, whom I serve from *my* forefathers with pure conscience, - obedience.

And then verse 12 in the middle of the verse: Nevertheless I am not ashamed for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.

[2 Timothy 1:12](#).

There we have conviction.

Do you have that kind of conviction this morning that because you live the way you do, because you are trying in all humility to please the Lord and you are living in obedience to Him, do you have the conviction for that? Yes, this is what the Lord expects of me, this is what the Lord requires of me. And if I'm faithful to what is required of me the Lord is well able to see me through, well able.

I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.

When we come to the point of leaving this world we can know that all is well, we know that we need not stand before the Judge of all the earth in fear and trepidation because we have had the sin question taken care off, our sins have been forgiven through the blood of Jesus, our faith in that, and because we have lived a life of firm conviction and obedience all will be well in that day.

We need to have that kind of conviction.

Well in conclusion now: May we be convinced that there is great spiritual danger in half-hearted, lethargic, non-committed obedience and if we sense any reservation to wholehearted, loving obedience we must do as [Revelation 3:19](#) commands: Be zealous and therefore and repent.

If we have a sincere desire to have that kind of conviction that we need to serve the Lord acceptably He will give us that conviction, He will help us to grow and He will up us to serve Him in a way that will be a blessing to ourselves and glory to our great God.

## DEFEATING THE DEVIL

*For in that He himself hath suffered being tempted,  
He is able to succour them that are tempted.*

Many times as we relate experiences and happenings in our lives, we emphasize the power Satan has. We refer to the evils of the world and the spirits of darkness that seek to overwhelm us. While we dare not underestimate the power of the devil, because the effects of his work are very evident, we want to look at ways in which he can be defeated. There is no force too powerful, no stronghold too strong, and no temptation too severe that it cannot be defeated by God's power.

Hebrews 2:18 quoted at the beginning tells us that Jesus, through His suffering and temptation, is able to aid and relieve us in our time of temptation. We see the evidence of God's love to man in that He did not leave us without a positive and effective way to deal with the enemy of our soul and the Gospel of Matthew explains what happened to Jesus in the wilderness.

**Matthew 4:1-11** <sup>1</sup> Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. <sup>2</sup> And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. <sup>3</sup> And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. <sup>4</sup> But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. <sup>5</sup> Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup> And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. <sup>7</sup> Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. <sup>8</sup> Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; <sup>9</sup> And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. <sup>10</sup> Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. <sup>11</sup> Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

Jesus, the Son of God, "was made flesh, and dwelt among us" John 1:14. This placed Him in a position where He was subject to Satan's tactics and also to the normal feelings of pain, hunger, and thirst that humans experience. The fact that He is the Son of God enabled Him to endure these afflictions without becoming defiled. The prophecy given in Genesis 3:15, "Thou shalt bruise his heel," indicates God's plan in allowing Christ to be tempted, tried, and tested. It was a part of the sacrifice needed for man's salvation.

The devil approached Jesus in a challenging way: "If thou be the Son of God." Did Satan actually imagine that Christ would question whether He is God's Son? His challenge indicates the desperation he feels as he attempts to gain followers. At times Satan also approaches us with this challenge: "If you are a child of God, you would or would not do certain things."

The temptations Jesus faced are typical of our own temptations. Our need for food, desire for possessions, and a selfish personal security that we may seek in our heavenly Father's protection are all areas with which we are well acquainted. It is touching to know that Jesus allowed Himself to be tempted in these areas and that He is able to feel for us in the hour of temptation!

Jesus used the most effective tool against the wiles of the devil: the Word of God. God's Word has authority and power that far surpasses any power we may possess of ourselves. Satan knew Jesus had come to "destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). He surely felt defeated as Jesus quoted scriptures directly applying to each temptation. Jesus then felt the comfort of ministering angels around Him, just as God's children today feel the comfort of the Holy Spirit after a battle won against sin and evil.

The psalmist as he expresses himself in Psalm 119:9-11 asked a question of himself and then gives the answer that he found and it is an excellent example for us to follow as well. He says: <sup>9</sup>Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed *thereto* according to thy word. <sup>10</sup>With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. <sup>11</sup>Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

It is obvious from the psalmist's words that he had also experienced the power of the Word in his life. When the commandments of the Word are sought and followed, they have a cleansing effect on the young and old alike, and when hidden in the heart, they are always available for us as the need arises.

The two examples give of Jesus and the psalmist, give us the hope that we can defeat the devil and live a victorious life. Temptation has become a part of life since the fall of man, especially for those who are sincerely trying to do the will of God. Temptation in itself is not a sin, but sin is born in our hearts only as the lust within us is fed by that which Satan suggests. There are times when we feel guilty for the fact that we are being tempted, and we may think we have sinned; otherwise we would not have these temptations. The evil one would like to suggest that our situation is unique and no one else struggles with these things as we do. May God help us to accept the fact that the temptations we face are common to man (1 Cor. 10:13).

God has a great storehouse of grace and power available to those who want to live overcoming lives. First, we need to believe that God will not allow us to be tempted more than what He can help us bear. Faith in God will always cause the devil to flee, because he sees the source of our power and knows he is no match for God. Our own strength is nothing compared to the power of God, which moves into our heart when we reach forth in faith and claim His promises. The writer of the song, "I've Enlisted in the Service" (Christian Hymnal, No. 180) aptly describes the result of a living faith in God with these words, "When the shield of faith he sees, then he always quickly flees."

Although the power of God is great, there are steps we must take to overcome temptation. James 4:7 says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." This is a positive statement that holds great promises. Do we sometimes feel that Satan will keep coming back anyway, so why put forth an effort to resist him? This verse says he will flee—not maybe, or probably, but he will! Young people, God has grace for you as well as for everyone else. Even though Satan's temptations seem to be tailor-made for each situation and well suited to your own temperament, the promises of God

remain.

How do we resist the devil, or temptation? Is it a battle only in our heart, or does it take some physical effort or resistance? Many temptations come only in our thoughts. We must deliberately exclude these thoughts from our minds and then be sure to fill our minds with good, edifying thoughts. This causes Satan to feel unwelcome when he knocks at the door of our minds for entrance.

While it is needful to overcome temptations, there is also a time when we are able to prevent them. Jesus said in the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation" (Matthew 6:13). We may know that if we go to a certain place or look at certain things, we will face a severe temptation to purchase something that is not legitimate for us, or to fill our minds with some of the filth of the world. If we allow ourselves to go in this way, we lose a certain amount of power over temptation. Let us commit ourselves to avoid the way of temptation and to deny our flesh and its desires, and God will surely give us the victory.

The psalmist recommends hiding the Word of God in our hearts. When our minds are young and not burdened with many cares of life, may we take the time and effort to read, study, and memorize parts of the Scriptures. Just as Jesus used the Word to defeat the devil, so can we also take the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17) and defy the one whose intent is to steal, kill, and destroy.

It is a blessing to know that we can feel the comfort of the Holy Spirit as we are yielded to the will of God. Although we cannot eliminate temptation, we can have victory and experience the abundant life in Christ Jesus. We can look ahead to that eternal victory over sin and Satan and be among "them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name ... And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God" (Revelation 15:2-3).

The power of God to overcome temptation is evident from some examples in the Scriptures. Daniel stood firm in his convictions against the influence of the king and that which would defile him. Today we also need to purpose in our hearts as Daniel did, not fearing man and what he will do,

but rather fearing the God of heaven. Sometimes we may need to sigh an extra prayer when we are required to go to a place where we know the temptation will be severe. God will honour a purpose such as this, providing the necessary grace and power. Later in his life, Daniel again withstood the opposing forces as he prayed three times in a day to his God, defying the decree the king had signed. His actions resulted in spending a night in a den of lions. Even here his spiritual strength was evident, for the king told him, "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee" (Daniel 6:16).

As people observe us, may they also see the evidence of the power of God in our lives. We need the same full assurance that Daniel had. We need to be fully convinced that our God is able to deliver us. One of the most effective witnesses is when young people, although beset by temptations of the world, purpose in their hearts that they will not defile themselves. This provides hope to those despairing because of failures.

Some points to consider as we go through life and face the attacks of Satan. Most importantly we need to be sober (serious in our Christian walk) and ever vigilant because of your adversary the devil who goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

How do we count it all joy when we fall into divers (various) temptations as James 1:2 speaks of?

Should we be concerned if we are continually tempted in the same areas? If we find we are what is stopping us from having the victory in Christ?

Does Satan ever feel defeated? Will he ever stop tempting a person because he feels defeated?

When we get to heaven, will we remember the temptations we faced on earth?

The Scripture has all the answers for these questions and many more.

May we thank God for each time He has given us the victory. As He receives our praise, He will continue to give strength for each temptation.



MARANATHA

## *Assurance*

*Are you sure you are among the chosen few  
Who enter glory when life on earth is through?*

*It is not enough to have a warm feeling  
After hearing a sermon that's appealing  
Or sign a decision card or raise your hand,  
Affirming you believe God's salvation plan.*

*Your life will be changed and your heart made anew  
If the Holy Spirit is indwelling you.  
From each and every sin you will turn away  
And seek to obey whate'er the Scriptures say.*

*Your affections will be upon things above.  
Your motive t'wards others will be to show love.  
Your supreme desire will be to do God's will,  
And though you lose all for Him, you'll serve Him still.*

*While none of these things can save you from your sin,  
They provide assurance you've been born again.*

*—Perry Boardman*

## LOYALTY

We probably all have a good idea of what this word loyalty means but as we look at this word loyalty we can use some other words to describe what it means, it helps us to get a better picture of what it means to have loyalty or to be a loyal person.

The dictionary meanings include allegiance, constancy, fidelity, devotion, trustworthiness, reliability, dependability, steadfastness. These are just some of the other words that we can use to describe this one word loyalty.

Now the Scripture does not contain the word loyal or loyalty but does use various expressions and description that describe loyalty as above, the word Fidelity occurs just once in the Bible in Titus the 2nd chapter where are given various instructions to servants, aged men and women, young women and young men in many areas of life including living according to the doctrines of God and finishes the instructions off by saying in verse 10 that they are to show all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

The word fidelity comes from an old English word which was used to describe the allegiance or loyalty sworn to a feudal lord by his servants or tenants and that word is fealty which comes from the Latin fidelitas from which we get our English word fidelity. In Titus 2:10 there is no Greek equivalent for fidelity but rather the expression used is faithfulness in displaying the teachings of the Saviour and the translators used the word fidelity here to express the sense of being found trustworthy or loyal to the way that God wants us to live and that we will not bring shame or reproach on the name of Christ by claiming to be His disciples but not walking in His way.

Now of course we can swear allegiance or loyalty to anyone, a person or a cause, but we as Christians when we were born again and submitted voluntarily to the Lordship of Jesus Christ we in effect transferred our loyalty, our allegiance to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, yes it was Jesus that made this possible for each of us through His death on the cross and the shedding of His blood and we can read in Colossians 1:13 that God the Fa-



ther is the one who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son. But before that could happen we had to take that step of promising allegiance and promising to be a loyal follower of the One who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (1 Timothy 2:6). He saved us from death and destruction and sin and then to show the world that we have made that transition from the kingdom of the world, Satan's domain, to the Kingdom of God, we made some vows or promises at the time of our baptism did we not?

How many recall taking that step of promising allegiance and to be a loyal follower of Christ when the questions were asked at the time of baptism if you were truly sorry for your past sins and were willing to renounce Satan, the world and all the works of darkness, your own carnal will and sinful desires. Do you recall promising by the grace of God and the aid of His Holy Spirit to submit yourself to Christ and His word and faithfully to abide in the same until death?

You see when you answered “Yes I am” to those 2 questions what you were doing was promising your loyalty to Christ. From that moment on He became your Lord and you became His servant.

Now we all know that being a servant means submitting to the authority of another and in this case we have submitted to the authority of Jesus Christ, we are his servants and let us not forget that He is our perfect example of being a servant, as you read the epistles you will notice that the writers of those epistles all called themselves servants of God not just because they were doing God's work back because they were modelling themselves on Christ who made Himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: Philippians 2:7.

Both the Apostles and Jesus himself had much to say about servants and Jesus himself reminds us that no servant can serve two masters, in other words we cannot have divided loyalty, it is not possible as Christ himself points out in Luke 16:13 when He says:

No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye

cannot serve God and mammon.

You see people sometimes talk about conflicting loyalties and I do not know how that can be when we look at the definition of the word loyal, remember one of the definitions used at the beginning to describe loyalty was faithfulness and the dictionary tells us that it is remaining faithful to a country, person, ruler, government, or ideal, and again that word loyal is derived from the Latin word *legalis* or legal which has the underlying idea of faithfully carrying out legal obligations. I don't know about you but to me the making of the promise, either verbal or written, means a commitment and obligation to keep it no matter the cost and this brings us to the 2nd part of this subject of loyalty.

We have already mentioned that there is a cost involved in being a loyal to a person or a cause and there is also a cost to following Jesus.

Let's look at Luke 9:57-62 where we see the loyalty of people tested.

Prior to this conversation of Jesus with the three men mentioned in this passage this chapter tells how Jesus sent His twelve disciples away on a ministry journey after giving them power and authority over all Devils and to cure diseases, He sent them to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick and He told them to take virtually nothing with them and that is what they did, He was their Master and they were His servants. It says that they departed and went through the towns preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

I believe that in this they showed a great sense of loyalty and faithfulness and reliability and steadfastness as they went out as Jesus had instructed them. It is also the chapter in which we are told about the feeding of the 5000, it also is the chapter in which Jesus asks His disciples: "Whom say the people that I am? and when they answered him He asked them: But whom say ye I am?"

I believe in all of this He was testing their loyalty to Him and then He goes further and tells them about the suffering that He will undergo but that those who will come after him or want to follow him or we could say be loyal to him that they will need to deny themselves and take up the cross daily. So we see here that there is a cost to loyalty.

In this short passage we now have Jesus steadfastly setting His face to go

to Jerusalem and after first passing a Samaritan village that did not receive Him, Jesus and the apostles went to another village, we do not know if it was a Samaritan village or not the Scripture does not say, but let us read this passage from Luke 9.

Luke 9: 57-62: <sup>57</sup>And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain *man* said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. <sup>58</sup>And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head. <sup>59</sup>And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. <sup>60</sup>Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. <sup>61</sup>And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. <sup>62</sup>And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Now here we have Jesus talking to three different people, two of whom declared that they wanted to follow Jesus (verses 57 and 61) and one whom Jesus called - verse 59.

Let's notice what the first man said: Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. (vv.57)

Does that sound like a commitment, does that sound like a declaration of loyalty?

Is that the type of language that we use when making a promise? - I will.

Jesus answer is rather unexpected and perhaps even puzzling at first glance but perhaps Jesus is making it clear to this man that the future as far as the physical realm is concerned is uncertain and that he needs to weigh this up before committing himself to follow Jesus where ever He goes.

Do you and I know where Jesus is going to lead us? Yes we know our reward is in heaven if we remain faithful and loyal to Him, but what is our expectation of life here on earth whilst we're journeying on that highway to heaven which is not a highway of comfort and ease but a narrow way fraught with trials and tribulations and testing times of our loyalty. I am sure most of you have read John Bunyan's Pilgrim's progress and is that not

a good description of life here?

Does this response of Jesus to the first man that the animals have places to live but He has not frighten us off from making a commitment to loyalty to Christ because we prefer our creature comforts?

I don't know if the first man followed him or not but I'm sure that he would have given it a lot of thought to it after considering the reply that Jesus gave him.

Now we come to the 2nd man the one to whom Jesus said Follow me. (vv.59) But the man didn't really want to follow Jesus, he felt he had more important things to do. Now I'm not saying that burying his father was not important but Jesus called him and we must realise that when the Master calls we as His servants answer or should answer: Yes, Master.

No hesitation, no excuses.

This reminds me of those whom heard the word of God in the parable of the sower and the seed, they hear the word And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. Mark 4:19.

That is what seems to have happened to this is 2nd man the word became unfruitful because he wanted to go and do something else which was more important to him.

And now we have the 3rd person who like the first man said I will follow you, but then he added a qualification to it, After I have gone and said goodbye to my family. (vv.61) He did not want to make a decision to follow Jesus at that moment and is that not like many who hear the call of salvation and say: "I'll be ready tomorrow!"

The problem with that is that we have no guarantee of tomorrow the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 6:2: "I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

And by the way that word succoured there means to help, aid or relief and isn't that what Christ is doing when He calls us to himself, calls us to follow Him?

Loyalty to anyone or anything calls for commitment, a commitment that is voluntarily, a commitment that is made for life and we see from this pas-

sage in Luke 9 that we have read and the other gospels that many in Jesus' day volunteered or were called to discipleship. But many fell short of commitment.

Is that not like many today?

In this passage these three men that Jesus spoke to can also be looked at as being prospective disciples of Jesus.

First here was the *eager disciple* (Luke 9:57) who volunteered to follow Jesus anywhere—till Jesus warned that discipleship might be uncomfortable.

Secondly there was the *reluctant disciple* (Luke 9:59) who, when commanded to follow, wanted to wait until his father had died and been buried! Jesus rejected the excuse. "Go and proclaim the kingdom of God." There is no evidence that this reluctant disciple obeyed.

Thirdly there was also the *someday disciple* (Luke 9:61), who wanted only a little time before making a final decision. Just to say good-bye to the home folks. Then, someday soon, he would follow. This too was unsatisfactory.

You see, what Jesus seeks is the *now* disciple (Luke 9:62). Jesus wants the person who will put his or her hand to the plough and, without looking back, move straight out to do God's will.

I came across this little illustration in seeking direction for this message and the writer said this:

"The figure of the ploughman is succinct. As a teen, I ploughed with an old one-horse hand plough, settling the reins around my shoulders, grasping the handles firmly, struggling to hold the blade level and steady, to make an even furrow. As the first furrow was cut into the virgin ground, I picked out a pair of marks at the far end of the field to line up carefully. If I looked back, the plough wandered, and the furrow snaked off across the field. Only by looking ahead, with eyes fixed on my guiding marks, could I do my job."

This is what Jesus asks of us. To fix our eyes ahead, on Him, and not to look back. We are to take the plough, *now*, and commit ourselves to His task.

You cannot have conflicting loyalties, you cannot serve two masters. Jesus tells us that.

If our loyalties to other things conflict with our allegiance to God then we are fooling ourselves, we are not fit for the kingdom of God. (Luke 9:62)



## LIVING WITHIN OUR MEANS

The term "keeping up with the Jones" is surely older than our present-day stresses. We are a people who are closely associated, both spiritually and socially. This is a blessing we enjoy as Christians. However, even in this fellowship, Satan has been too successful in causing us to do that which the Apostle has said is not wise: "But they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" 2 Corinthians 10:12.

On the other hand, we are living in a time when, more than ever before, there are many convenient and luxurious items offered by our merchants. We have begun to accept as necessity many items our parents or grandparents did without.

As we consider our topic, may we, first of all, embrace the principle that "our means," whether ability or inability, is not the criteria by which we find direction for our standard of living. We believe in a biblical teaching of self-denial and also in an indwelling Spirit who guides us in all things.

Today we have lost the vision of frugality, and it will need to be restored. Why must there be two vehicles when a young couple could, and often should, be satisfied with a used pickup? What about the new house we want to build or buy? Does it have to be so spacious, completely finished

and furnished with full plumbing and complete kitchen? Couldn't some of these things wait and be added later as prosperity will allow? Wouldn't some of the used and possibly well-worn furniture set aside by the parents be alright for a few years in the new, unfinished home of the children? These are but a few of the many areas that could be considered. A young couple getting started needs to work together toward common goals. Both must be willing to deny themselves and have patience to recognize the open door.

How many times have we found that we were happy and thankful until we saw someone who had something better? Possibly we were invited to our "contemporary's" home for supper, and my wife noticed that they had just purchased an item or two that seemed very nice. Or I found out during the conversation that my brother had ordered a new pickup. Then the test is on. Will we allow envy to displace our joy? If we do, our thankfulness and contentment will leave us. When this happens, our hearts are left with a void that will need to be filled. When we seek fulfillment in material possessions, our financial means will never be great enough. Thus we find ourselves in a condition where we are money-denied instead of self-denied. When a person is money-denied, he begins to think and operate in a way that is nearly the opposite of being self-denied. He tries to figure out ways and means to justify and obtain that which he has been denied of. Thus he many times goes beyond his means and makes debts that are unjust and very difficult to live with.

Are we as parents too ready to encourage our children to take advantage (or disadvantage) of the liberal credit system of our day? Possibly, we ourselves are already enslaved and, therefore, not able to teach our children the way of self-denial. Some seem to think that loan opportunities are too good to be passed up, almost like an outright donation, and that they must be taken advantage of. Let us not disregard the "precipice" that looms ahead for the unwary.

Frugality is often disdained by those who need it most, because it re-proves them—they know that they should practice it. But they are unwilling to humble themselves to that point and often think, "What will the others think of us?"

The Church does not have the solution to how to obtain a lot of money to cover our deficits, but it does have the answer to how to make our existing funds go farther. The answer is self-denial. If that had been practiced earlier, including in our homes where we received our training, much of the present grief we may be in today could have been avoided.

Living extravagantly can become an addiction, just like so many other evils. It will take special grace and repentance and the help of the Lord to curb it. We may also need the help of others to deal with the problem. Those looking on can sometimes see our need better than we can. It is much more pleasant to live a self-denied life, within our means, than to live high for awhile and lose everything.

We will need to accept the fact that abilities and opportunities differ and not all will have equal financial means. It is no disgrace to be poor, but it is unethical to live above our means. In reality, this is a type of hypocrisy. If we find ourselves materially poorer than others, let us not be embarrassed or intimidated. After all, our happiness is not determined by these temporal things.

Let us challenge ourselves to live within our means and graciously hold up our heads with a free conscience.

Will we have the grace and humility to say, "I can't afford it"? It is better to be a small success than a big failure.

Pretending to be rich may keep us poor.

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*"But God said unto him, Thou fool,  
This night thy soul shall be required of thee:  
Then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"  
Luke 12:20*

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