

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

Vol. 6 No.10 - OCTOBER 2009



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

Matthew 5:15

From The Editor's Desk.

Precious Word of God – Dedication and Conforming to God's Will -
Consecration - Meekness and Modesty

These are not phrases picked at random but are the headings of the articles in this edition, each portion can be used independent of the other as spiritual food but as with physical food is beneficial to our bodies in variety so these portions can be beneficial to our spiritual life when combined one with the other.

We seek out the Precious Word of God and in it sincere seekers will find directions for life in Christ (Deut. 4:29, Luke 11:9). Once we find those directions and accept that they apply to us then we need to make a determination of our will to conform to God's will for us even though some decisions may go against our carnal nature and the opinions of others that are not willing to conform to God's will.

By dedicating and conforming to God's will we can and will have that life that is spoken of in the Scripture (John 20:31, 1 John 5:12) and that means consecrating ourselves to Him. The word "consecration" means to dedicate to a specific purpose: to dedicate something or somebody to a specific purpose and for the disciples of Christ, or those desiring to be such, that means dedicating ourselves to His service, His ways and direction alone. It is a single mindedness of purpose that allows for no other influence in our life.

Then the last phrase, meekness and modesty, will come into operation as we realise that it is not our own efforts or works that will lead us to salvation and compliance with God's will for our lives, even though it does require effort on our part there is no room for pride, it is the Holy Spirit which dwells within and directs us (Acts 5:32, 1 Cor.6:19, Romans 14:17).

It is our prayer that as you meditate upon the articles presented that the words of Scripture may indeed be your experience.

Romans 15:13

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.



MINISTER'S CORNER.**CONSECRATION**

Serving the Lord requires consecration. Withstanding the evil inclination of the flesh and shunning the world is only possible by consecration. While the New Testament does not speak directly about the matter, it alludes to the clear Old Testament types of Aaron and his sons' consecration and the Nazarite vow (Leviticus 8; Numbers 6; Romans 6:13,14; 12:1; 1 Peter 2:9). Consecration is not just observed in occasional incidents, but it is a prevailing state of constancy in Christ Jesus. Inseparable from this is fidelity to the doctrine of the Word and the church.

To consecrate is to dedicate irrevocably to a sacred purpose or service. Only God is the essence of that which is sacred in this sense. Consecration then is the voluntary and wholehearted yielding of one's entire self to God and the way of salvation. When one is consecrated, there is a resulting state of grace that honors the holy name of Christ. Sincerity, carefulness, fervency, love, meekness and sobriety are a few marks of consecration.

In contrast to consecration are being uncommitted, lukewarm, and casual. Consecration is not an optional matter, as though one could have a hope of salvation while living a halfhearted Christian life. It is a falsehood to believe that one can "get by" with less, thinking that being consecrated just puts one in a holier class.

Consecration is like justification and sanctification—it is inherent in becoming a child of God. When one is born again, he is, at that time, both justified and sanctified, even though he yet has much growing and learning ahead of him. He has been accepted of God in Christ Jesus (justified), and his heart and spirit are pure (sanctified). He or she is a fit subject for heaven. In that same operation of grace through the Spirit, such a one dedicates himself irrevocably (in the simplicity of his heart) to follow the Lord until the end. He presents himself "a living sacrifice" to the Lord (Rom. 12:1). It is inconceivable that one could hold reservations and stipulations regarding the extent of his commitment and yet receive the new birth.

Often this divine working of consecration is not consciously thought of, especially in younger converts. Consecration is not a ceremony or rite that is performed. It is as the apostle Paul wrote about the true circumcision: it is "inwardly ... that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose

praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:29). The spirit of the matter is what matters.

Re-consecration is a word often heard among us. Some dictionaries do not recognize it as a valid word because it presents a contradiction. When a person consecrates himself, he dedicates himself irrevocably to God's service. If the decision and commitment are of such a firm nature that there is no going back, why would it need to be redone? Granted, we understand what we mean, but it is a telling point. It is inspiring to know that when one has consecrated one's life, that decision and commitment need never be made again. God's grace is sufficient to keep one all the way home, despite faults and failings. In that sense, one's eternal destiny is never in question.

Consecration calls for the exercise of three elements of a Christian's will. We say exercise, because they come into consideration again and again. The will, cooperating with the grace of God, is very much a part of consecration.

1] The first element is one's faith in God. In particular, reference is here made to the proposition of surrendering all rights to one's self determination. To the old man, it is unreasonable to give up control of self to God when one doesn't know what He might ask. Many individuals' consecration is deterred by doubts as to what God will ask of them. The devil is quick to suggest unreasonable and unrealistic scenarios. The future may seem dark and foreboding. But faith in God, anchored in the Word, teaches one that the Father is kind, loving, and understanding. Exercising faith brought Abraham his blessings, and Abraham's blessings can be ours on the same basis.

2] The second element and closely parallel is one's trust in God. Trust in the benevolent Lord assures one that God will never give one a wrong turn. Multitudes have trusted and tried Him and found that His Word is true. He will do what He has said. The Lord is never mean-spirited. He will never ask the impossible and then charge one with failure. For consecration, trusting in His power and promises to make us what we ought to be needs to be exercised.

3] The third element is love for God, or our first love. Consecration is by free choice, precipitated by our love for the Lord. By the operation of the Spirit, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts" (Romans 5:5). Feeling unworthy of His love for such undeserving creatures as we are, "we love

him because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Commitment and dedication to One whom you know, One whom loves you, and One whom you love in return, is not difficult. The true Christian sees his love debt to God and consecration as His just due.

The love aspect of consecration includes seeking the highest welfare of "the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). A consecrated Christian loves the doctrine of the Word, and he or she loves the church of God. Because consecration loves the doctrine and the church, it feels deeply about them. This is a true love, balanced and stable, not radical or giving an impression of being superior. It is humble and meek, yet uncompromising relating to dealing with the flesh.

Strife and confusion, backbiting and faultfinding, and chafing at the guidance of the church of God are evidences that the beautiful vale of consecration needs visiting. The urgent voice of the Spirit regarding the inroads of casualness and worldliness would be answered by consecration. Again, is it optional? Hear what the apostle Peter says, "Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:10-11).

"Consider again, in the light of the various attributes of love, whether we do love God with all our hearts, minds, and souls, and our neighbors as ourselves. The love of God closes its eyes to nothing; it deals with every situation in the light of all the attributes of love as they are in God." —



The Precious Word of God.

Do we recognize all the benefits we receive from the treasure store of the precious Word of God? Man has many questions about life, about where we came from, and why we are here. We are born with a sense of wonder about life and God which the intellect cannot explain. As we delve into the mysteries of the Word, profound truths are revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. The Word provides a foundation, a bedrock on which to base

our lives. Its precepts and promises give us a security that the wisdom of man cannot give. Without the moral anchor of the law of God, man becomes as variable as the wind and the changing seasons. As a child finds a secure atmosphere in a loving home, so can we find solace in the precious Word of God.

[Jeremiah 15:16](#). Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts

[Psalm 119:11](#)

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

[Psalm 119:97-112](#)

O how love I thy law! it *is* my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they *are* ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies *are* my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! *yea, sweeter* than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. I have sworn, and I will perform *it*, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word. Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments. My soul *is* continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law. The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they *are* the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, *even unto* the end.

[Psalm 119:130](#)

The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

[Psalm 119:165](#)

Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

The Word of God is our defense against sin. As it permeates our being it is ever present when temptations come. If the Word abides in our heart it

becomes a ready weapon whereby we may resist our sinful inclinations. Jesus said that man should not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 1:4)

The Word is our love! It is the longing of our hearts! To it we turn in the crucible of life. We find wisdom there in times of perplexity and we find consolation in times of grief. We can find wisdom when we are under duress and do not know which way to go. We joy in its promises, and in these promises we find strength for each day.

The Word is light! It is proof of the Father's love, the essence of His will for man. Jesus is the light of the world shining upon every man on earth (John 1:9). His light reveals to us our need of a Saviour, it reveals to us the Lamb of God, and makes clear to us the path in which we are to walk in life. The Word is inseparable from Jesus because it is Jesus, and in Him we live and have our being.

Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). How blessed it is to hunger for the bread of life, for this hunger is evidence of God's wonderful work in our lives. A man can ever be hungering, ever be filled, and yet be hungering for more.

The light of the gospel reveals the truth of a matter to its fullest. It gives a new perspective to the petty, insignificant issues of life and alleviates the offense and misunderstanding often caused by them. It gives us the eternal view by which our carnal desires are reduced and made manageable. It is the wisdom of the Word that helps us to see our own humanness and makes us longsuffering toward our fellowman.

The Word is the foundation upon which man builds his faith. God speaks to us through the medium of His Word, and the Holy Ghost interprets to us its meaning and application for our day. His will for mankind is revealed by His Word according to His intent and desire. It is the foundation upon which all doctrine is established.

Our world has a vast variety of beliefs and practices, and some allowance must be made for differences of culture, home settings, and lifestyles. Too often, however, man has attempted to dilute the Word of God or even set aside its authority, making allowances for the flesh and yet justifying him-

self. The Bible says, "Now there are ... differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all" (1Corinthians 12:4-6). These differences are within the framework of the will of God. That which is outside this framework negates the Word of God.

The Word of God is unchangeable and is forever established in heaven. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass (Matthew 24:35). The apostle Paul wrote, "For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar" (Romans 3:3-4). In the light of the foregoing declarations, what is wrong when we do not believe the Word of God? When people hear something and they do not believe it, are they not in essence saying that they are being told an untruth? When God speaks, and we disbelieve, are we not implying that God is untrue? Verily, God is true though every man be a liar.

Revelation 21:8 states that the unbelieving and all liars shall have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone. Many people think that hell is reserved for only the vile sinners but the Word of God plainly states that "he that believeth not is condemned already" (John 3:18).

How far does our faith in God take us? What effect does the Word have in our lives? It should affect our doctrine, our daily decisions and practices, and our view of the promises of God—in fact, every area of life. Our faith should affect the way we meet the challenges and opportunities of each day as well as our relationships with one another and with God.

The Word causes faith to come to life. Paul writes, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Jesus warned that the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches could cause the Word to become unfruitful (Matthew 13:22). May we let the Word enlighten us and bring wisdom to our way.

When we stand firm on the Word of God, the evil one and all our adversaries cannot prevail against us. The glory of the truth is that it never needs to be defended, for truth always prevails. Those who love the Word of God do not justify themselves because the Word justifies them. When a man feels he needs to defend his actions or faith, he is not grounded firmly on the bedrock of the Word. This is not to say that we never declare our faith

or speak about it, but that we simply share it with others and leave the rest to God.

Those who have cleansed their lives to walk in God's ways are truly blessed. They can rise to meet each new day with thankfulness and a song in their hearts. They are free from deceit and ill will; they are free from causing offenses and speaking evil. They rejoice with their fellowman in the blessings he receives and are a blessing to those they meet on the path of life.

The psalmist, seeing all the blessings that came from being permeated with the Word of God, had great love and admiration for it. May we "receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save [our] souls" (James 1:21). It shows the way to a blessed life.

Points to Ponder.

1. Does the acceptance of much sin in our society cause us to be lenient toward sin in our lives?
2. Is it possible to find a sense of justification in spending much time studying the Word?
3. How can we encourage more memorization of Scripture?
4. Do we find it difficult to accept and believe the promises found in the Scriptures?



SNAPSHOTS.

Brief excerpts from historical publications.

The Oath

The **Anabaptist** refusal of the oath was based in the first place on the words of Jesus which forbade any swearing at all. That, in itself, would have been sufficient ground for refusal by most **Anabaptists**. The arguments of the Swiss Brethren beginning with the Schleithem Confession of Menno Simons, and of the Hutterites were for the most part a rehearsal of Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount.

However, these statements must also be considered in the context of the Anabaptist attitude toward societal relationships. They stressed truthfulness as a prime prerequisite for the proper functioning of society, and argued that the oath could too easily become the refuge of the lie.

Again there are exceptions to this general position. Hubmaier does not

even discuss the matter, nor do the Munsterites. For them it was evidently not an important issue, or they accepted it without question as part of their view of government and society.

Michael Sattler, "Schleitheim Confession," 1527.

VII. We have been united as follows concerning the oath. The oath is a confirmation among those who are quarreling or making promises. In the law it is commanded that it should be done only in the name of God, truthfully and not falsely. Christ, who teaches the perfection of the law, forbids his [followers] all swearing, whether true nor [sic] false; neither by heaven nor by earth, neither by Jerusalem nor by our head; and that for the reason which he goes on to give: "For you cannot make one hair white or black" You see, thereby all swearing is forbidden. We cannot perform what is promised in swearing, for we are not able to change the smallest part of ourselves.

Now there are some who do not believe the simple commandment of God and who say, "But God swore by himself to Abraham, because he was God (as he promised him that he would do good to him and would be his God if he kept his commandments). Why then should I not swear if I promise something to someone?" The answer: hear what Scripture says: "God, since he wished to prove over abundantly to the heirs of his promise that his will did not change, inserted an oath so that by two immutable things we might have a stronger consolation (for it is impossible that God should lie)." Notice the meaning of the passage: God has the power to do what he forbids you, for everything is possible to him. God swore an oath to Abraham, Scripture says, in order to prove that his counsel is immutable. That means: no one can withstand and thwart his will; thus he can keep his oath. But we cannot, as Christ said above, hold or perform our oath, therefore we should not swear.

Others say that swearing cannot be forbidden by God in the New Testament when it was commanded in the Old, but that it is forbidden only to swear by heaven, earth, Jerusalem, and our head. Answer: hear the Scripture. He who swears by heaven, swears by God's throne and by him who sits thereon. Observe: swearing by heaven is forbidden, which is only God's throne; how much more is it forbidden to swear by God himself. You blind fools, what is greater, the throne or he who sits on it?

Others say, if it is then wrong to use God for truth, then the apostles Peter

and Paul also swore. Answer: Peter and Paul only testify to that which God promised Abraham, whom we long after have received. But when one testifies, one testifies concerning that which is present, whether it be good or evil. Thus Simeon spoke of Christ to Mary and testified: "Behold: this one is ordained for the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign which will be spoken against."

Christ taught us similarly when he says: Your speech shall be yea, yea; and nay, nay; for what is more than that comes of evil. He says, your speech or your word shall be yes and no, so that no one might understand that he had permitted it. Christ is simply yea and nay, and all those who seek him simply will understand his Word. Amen.

Conversation with one Hans Marquart. 1532,

I concede that one may call God to witness concerning what is past or present, but one may not swear.... Further one may promise and pledge faith concerning the past and the present, but never concerning the future. That is because nothing is in our power but everything depends on the will of God. Christ says in Matthew 5:36 that we should not swear by our heads since we cannot make a single hair white or black. How much more terrible it is to swear by the name of God to do something in the future which is not in our power, since we are not certain of life for one minute.

Christ wanted a pure people who had put off all uncleanness. That is why he gave a clear commandment regarding the oath. The faithful were not to swear at all but yes should be yes, and no, no. Thus all who were planted into the body of the church through faith in Christ, would not swear as the children of the world do. Rather they would confess and live the truth without additions with a pure heart.

Peter Riedeman, 1542. Concerning Swearing.

Even as the law was an introduction to the greater grace and knowledge of God, likewise also are the commandments. For this reason God, the Lord, desired nothing else by swearing in the old covenant than to direct and bring men to his name; that they might learn to know him aright, to cleave to give him alone the honour. For God, who is the truth, by commanding his people Israel to swear by his name, means to teach them to speak the truth and cleave to the same; therefore also he forbade them to speak his name vainly or lightly—as though he would say that they be

careful in all that they say to be found servants of truth, that is of God. For this reason doth he also threaten not to hold him guiltless who speaks his name vainly and lightly, that is, who is careless about the truth. That it is true, however, that through the command to swear in the old covenant God has chosen in the new (since the will of God is fully revealed) the speaking of truth and walking therein, or the knowing of God aright and cleaving to him, may be seen from David's words when he says, "The man that swears by God is praised; but the mouth of them that speak lies must be stopped." Who, then, can say anything else than that here "swearing" means speaking the truth and cleaving to the same?

But that by means of the command to swear' in the old covenant, we in the new are to understand to know God aright and cleave to him, is shown by the words, "Unto me every knee shall bow and by me every tongue shall swear saying: Surely in the Lord is my righteousness and strength." This word is thus treated and explained by Paul, "Every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." Here it is evident that swearing in the old covenant means in the new knowing God and cleaving to him alone. Thus, the law is now a guide to a better knowledge and hope; by the which we draw nigh to God.

Now, since the light of divine grace has appeared and been revealed more brightly in Christ, the servants of the new covenant lay no longer upon us the shade but the glory of the light of truth in its clarity. Therefore Paul says plainly, as one who has no veil before his face, "Put away lying and speak every man truth with his neighbour; for ye are members one of another."

If one should say, "But Israel was also commanded to speak the truth, and hate lies, so this is not the meaning." We say, it is true that Israel was also commanded to speak the truth, but since at that time sonship had not been distinguished from the state of bondage, and the spirit of bondage cannot attain the real truth, God desired to show them by means of swearing by his name that there is no other truth, and that he who would walk in the truth must enter through the name of God and be established therein. That is what God desires to teach us by means of swearing in the old covenant.

For this reason Christ says, "It was said to them of old, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy

head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your yea be yea; and your nay be nay- for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." The evil one, however is the devil, who works in men everything whereby God is reviled.

Now it cannot be denied, for it is clear to all men, that God desires from us Christians a true worship performed in spirit and truth and more perfect than the service of the old covenant. Therefore we are not only not to forswear ourselves, but we are not to swear at all. Christ thereby teaches us to give and ascribe honour to God alone, and to humble ourselves before him, as those who of themselves can do nothing; for we can do nothing, not even promise to do something of ourselves—let alone swear to do it. Thus, it is evident that on account of our weakness and unprofitableness we swear not, for we will not rob God of his honour.

Menno Simons, "Epistle to Micron," 1556

The oath serves no other purposes than to make men testify truly. Can the truth not be told without oaths? Do all testify to the truth even when under oath? To the first question you must say yes, and to the last no. Is the oath the truth itself to which one testifies, or does the truth depend upon the man who takes the oath? Why does not the magistracy then accept the testimony confirmed by yea and nay as commanded of God instead of that confirmed by that which is forbidden? For it can punish those who are found false in their yea and nay as well as those who swear falsely.

Menno Simons "Distressed Christians," 1552

We are aware that the magistracy claims and says that we are allowed to swear when justice is on our side. We reply with the Word of the Lord very simply. To swear truly was allowed to the Jews under the Law; but the gospel forbids this to Christians. Since Christ does not allow us to swear, and since the magistracy, notwithstanding, proceeds according to their policy, although contrary to Scripture, and since the Scriptures may not be set aside by man, what shall the conscientious Christian do? If he swears, he falls into the hand of the Lord. If he swears not, he will have to bear the disfavor and punishment of the magistracy.

This is our position and understanding in regard to this matter. Inasmuch as the Lord has forbidden us to swear at all (understand in temporal matters) neither sincerely nor falsely, as was said; and has commanded that our

yea shall be yea and our nay, nay; and since Paul and James also testify to this, and since we know that no man nor commandment of man may take the place of God and his commandment, therefore it is that we in temporal matters dare not affirm the truth in more than yea or nay as the case may be. For thus the Word of the Lord teaches us.

We say, in temporal matters, and for this reason: Because Christ sometimes in his teachings makes use of the word verily and because Paul called upon the Lord as a witness of his soul. For this some think that swearing is allowable; not observing that Christ and Paul did not do this in regard to temporal matters as in matters of flesh and blood or money or property but in affirmation of the eternal truth to the praise of God and to the salvation and edification of their brethren.



AFTER-DEATH LOVE.

Why is it that when we look at someone lying cold and lifeless in a casket, our memory of that person's life changes? This is especially true if it is a brother or sister of like precious faith. Any faults and weakness we may have seen (or imagined we saw) while that person was among the living recedes into the background. We think and speak about the good points in his life, some kindness he did for us or what he did for others. After death is definitely not a time to discuss the shortcomings in his life. We forgive in our hearts any wrong we feel he did to us or others. We may wish he had cleared some things while there was time. We truly hope that he is a sinner saved by grace (as we all must be) and that he will be with the Lord in eternity.

Why could we not extend those good thoughts and forgiveness and hope while he was still among the living? Why could we not extend our Christian love to him before his death? Why was it so easy to speak about his faults while he was still with us? Would it not enhance the love and peace in the church if we had more of an after-death love for all brothers and sisters of like precious faith in this life?

We probably never portray one another as nearly faultless, as obituaries read. A question posed in a Sunday school class was, "How would we write our own obituary?" A few people who had a terminal illness and knew that their departure from this life was near have written their own

obituary. Only the date was left to be filled in by the family. But most of us do not have this opportunity. An obituary is a public notice of someone's death. In your mind, what would you desire to have recorded in your obituary? For me, the statement, "We believe he was ready to meet the Lord," would be the best testimony there is. Any other statements are as nothing if we had this lively hope in our hearts and those around us believed it with us while we were still here in life.

In the mainstream of society, obituaries often contain a long list of accomplishments and good things the deceased person did in life. Often little or nothing is said about a hope of eternal salvation. A "little memorial" of a Christian's life is certainly fitting after his death, but moderation is in order. Sometimes the deceased had requested that his life and achievements would not be the focus of his funeral service. Rather, they desired that salvation would be preached to those who are left behind. This includes those who have not yet accepted the call to repentance and salvation, as well as those who have known the peace of God and the forgiveness of sins but have fallen along the way.

If it is questionable whether the deceased was ready to meet the Lord, we sincerely hope that the Lord will be merciful to him or her. When I was a boy, there was a suicide in the Mennonite community where I was born. At the funeral, the bishop chose his words very carefully. They were something on this order, "Many of you are wondering where I will say his soul is now. I can tell you exactly where his soul is today." He paused again while he had the total attention of the audience. Then he said emphatically, "His soul is in the hands of an Almighty God!" Then he preached to the living.

We may go to a visitation of a deceased person who had lived a sinful life. Yet, the family tells you about all the good he did in his life. They even may say that they know he is in heaven and is better off than he was in this life. However, the words are often spoken without conviction. Going to these kinds of funerals and visitations brings home the words "that [we] sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" (1Thessalonians 4:13).

The most heart-rending funeral we have been to was that of an older man in our community who had no use for Christianity. He had but two "credentials" in his obituary: He was a farmer and stockman and an army veteran. He died while cursing his wife, which the family said he seldom did.

At his funeral, the minister did not extend any false hope. He chose his words very carefully to avoid any hypocrisy. He said, "We will all be called by God sometime, and God has called Ben" (not his real name). That was all he had to say about the deceased. He did not extend any vague hope that Ben went to heaven. He spoke about the hope that the family could have, the comfort they could draw from the Word, etc. Again, he did not say that they had this comfort in their hearts. The saddest part of all took place after the funeral when someone tried to comfort the widow by saying that Ben had gone to heaven. With great sadness, she said, "No, Ben did not go to heaven." We earnestly pray that might not be said of one of us when we die.

It always is in place and easy to speak well of a person after he dies. But let us not use flattery. That can border on the untruth. On the other hand, unkind words about the deceased should not pass our lips. The same should be true when speaking of the living. So speak kindly of those of like precious faith. You never know if it may be the last time you speak about them while they are living.

Brother Eli, Missouri.



Seasoned Speech (Part 5)

Brother Matthew S. Garman

A Flowing Brook

"The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the well spring of wisdom as a flowing brook" (Proverbs 18:4).

Flowing brooks capture the imagination. Where did the water come from? Where does it go? What distant shores will these drops of water touch? The rapid movement and widespread dissemination of water in a brook well illustrate the influence of words.

A negative example of the wide-ranging influence of words is gossip. Why do stories of failures spread more quickly than stories of victories? Our carnal nature enjoys making a sensation by telling a sensational story. Reveling in the shortcomings of others, it tempts us to justify our own weaknesses. How quickly a reputation built on years of careful living can be besmirched! "Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth," that I may not be guilty of the sin of gossip.

Words with an often-underestimated influence are words used in witnessing. Just a few words, loaded with prayer and strengthened by a consistent life, can have an effect beyond our imagination. A prosperous, middle-aged Jewish man was rocked to the core when his oldest daughter became a Christian. After months of study to prove her error, he was less sure than ever of what he believed. A stranger who sensed his spiritual struggle asked him, "Who is your god?" This simple question proved to be the catalyst that opened his mind to belief in Jesus as the Messiah. "The words of the wise are as goads" (Ecclesiastes 12:11).

Words of teaching are words of influence. Mothers use many words in a day's time to answer questions and to mold young minds for God. Fathers ply words to instruct their families in practical skills and in spiritual lessons. Teachers, with much verbal instruction, impart knowledge and wisdom. Ministers employ words in the God-ordained method of preaching to proclaim the Gospel.

Committing words to paper greatly increases their influence. Written words can be read slowly, thoughtfully, and repeatedly. Writing can travel to people around the globe. It also can travel through time—people not yet born can someday be inspired—possibly for hundreds of years. God chose to give His words to men in written form for these reasons. Are we making the best possible use of the tremendous potential of writing?

The stream of words from our mouth does not flow into the sea of forgetfulness. Each word has an influence that affects eternity. May we speak words that we will not be ashamed to have read at the Day of Judgment.

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Dedication and Conforming to God's Will.

Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. [2] And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Are you dedicated to God, conforming to God's Word?

Paul entreats readers of his letter to present their bodies as a living sacrifice to God; it is a powerful appeal and full of implications that we are to give up living according to the world's way and live God's way, not live after the flesh but after the Spirit, which is the way of the scriptures, Jesus said: I am the Way the Truth and the Life (John 14:6) so if we are not walking in His Way we are not in the Truth and we will not have the Life, that is everlasting life with the Lamb in glory.

You and I receive the fruits of God's mercies every day and we need to give Him thanks for those mercies which are new every morning,

“It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.” (Lament. 3:22-25)

We need to render ourselves or give ourselves to Him in ALL we are, in ALL we do and in ALL we have! Surely that is not too much to ask or do in return for what He has done for us and the riches He has given us through Christ Jesus that is the redemption of our sins and a place at the wedding feast of the Lamb.

Our growth in Christ is in the renewing of our mind which the scripture talks about as sanctification or growth in holiness, which is required, indeed commanded by God in Leviticus 20:7: “Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God.” We are to be holy in ALL our conduct which is what that word conversation means in 1 Peter 1:15-16:

“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; [16] Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

The growing in holiness, the sanctification process if you like is the dying to sin and self on a daily basis and sin is also neglecting doing those things that God requires of us, sanctification is living to righteousness more and more, which is the opposite of sin so that we do that which God requires of us. It is a process which is or should be continuous throughout our lives no matter our age or maturity we should always be striving like the Apostle Paul for the achievement of the everlasting price of the crown promised to the saints who enter heaven. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27 and He-

brews 12). It is a process of renewal and the greatest enemy to this sanctification process in our lives and the growth into righteousness is our carnal nature which is desiring to conform to the world and the things therein (Romans 8:7, Ephesians 2:15-16, James 4:4) - this world and the things in it are not the heavenly Kingdom of God that we are urged to be a part of, it is the domain of the evil one and he will do anything to keep us away from God's Kingdom. We should never use this age or the things in it as the template or design or fashion plate to fashion our lives on, only in God's holy word the Bible does one find the right and proper pattern or blueprint for a life which will satisfy the requirements of our God and Saviour.

We need to be wary of forming plans for happiness as though it lay in the things of the world - they will pass away soon enough. We should not fall in with the customs or the ways or the people of the world no matter how attractive they may seem to us or others, we should not walk in the lusts and desires of our carnal nature and consider earthly things more important than the things of God - earthly things will perish but the things of God will be eternal.

As we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives let's not forget that it is a choice we have to make, a conscious decision, some people do not choose to follow God's way but their own. The Scripture is clear about those who follow the easy way, the way of the world. When we allow or invite the Holy Spirit to work in us He begins by changing or clarifying our understanding of the things of God and God's requirements and once we start to have an understanding of those things then we can apply what we understand to our will, our affections and our conversation until there is a change of the whole person into the likeness of God not just in knowledge but in righteousness and true holiness and this perfection will only be achieved when we meet Him face to face and are accepted into His presence.

It is our love for God that should cause us to desire and yearn for this perfection while we are here on earth and this is the only time and place that we can learn to grow on a daily basis into this holiness and righteousness that is asked of us in the Scriptures. If you and I want to be godly and become Christ-like in ALL areas of our lives then we need to give up ourselves totally 100% to God, holding nothing back for whatever reason or excuse which we may think we have.

You may well ask how do I go about this renewal of the mind, how do I grow in holiness and what does Paul mean by telling us not to be con-

formed to the world?

Obviously it is not an easy task otherwise Paul would not talk in verse 1 of presenting our bodies as living sacrifices, we all know that sacrifices usually are painful to the one being sacrificed. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 tells us that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and thus belong to God and it is that which we are asked to offer to God.

In the Old Testament when a sacrifice was offered to God it was killed and offered in its totality holding nothing back. Such an offering was holy and set apart to God and we are asked to do the same with our whole bodies in a spiritual sense no an actual physical death.

Under the New Covenant we do not die physically but as a living sacrifice we perform both a spiritual act and an act of worship, which is acceptable to God and furthermore as Paul puts it is our reasonable service not something which is unreasonable. If you and I desire to be of service to God and I pray that all those whom confess to be Christians do have that desire, we need to offer our total life as a sacrifice to God and in effect that offering becomes a sacred service as were the offerings of the Old Testament sacrifices. This living sacrifice that we are asked to make is or should be the desirable response for all believers as we seek to offer ourselves and our service to God.

Paul having established that we need to offer our bodies as a living sacrifices holy and acceptable to God then goes on to tell us it is a reasonable service and it is reasonable when we consider what God has done and is doing for us individually through His sacrifice on the Cross, the atonement for our sins and the promise of eternal glory through His redemptive work, which He did because He loved us not because we deserved it. Paul then proceeds with his instruction in this matter of offering ourselves as a living sacrifice by saying that we should not be conformed to the world. That is that we should not live according to the lifestyle or example of this evil age Galatians 1:4 tells us that Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil age. Paul commands us to be renewed through the transforming or renewing of our mind, the Greek word for *transforming* is *metamorphosis*, a process of changing from the inside out - it denotes a TOTAL change from the inside out. The key to this change is in the mind which is the control center of our attitudes, feelings, thoughts and actions - as our mind keeps being renewed or transformed by the Spiritual input of God's word, prayer and Christian fellowship.

Let us look at each of these three areas of input”

1] God’s Word. 2] Prayer and 3] Christian Fellowship.

1] God's Word. Romans 10:17 tells us that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God This Word of God, the Bible, the Gospel is given not only to be known and believed but also to be obeyed - it is not a system of notions or ideas but a rule of practice. The beginning progress and strength of our faith is by the hearing of the Word and as we delve into the Word we will start to see how God wants and requires us to live. Hearing the Word of God implies that we actively seek knowledge of it and I believe we need to do that in any way we can that is available to us. A one hour session listening to a sermon and not doing anything the rest of the week is not an adequate response when it comes to God’s holy Word.

God's call on our lives is to be Holy as He is holy and to do that we need to study His Word diligently, reading it for ourselves each and every day of our lives not only from the Bible but also from Bible commentaries and the like by known and acknowledged scholars, by seeking to open our minds to God's word in this manner we allow the Holy Spirit to have an input into our lives through the informing of our minds as to the truths that the Scriptures teach, the truths that we need to apply to our lives if we truly want to be acknowledged as a Child of God and to be seen by the world as belonging to Jesus. How can we expect to know what God requires of us or desires for us if we do not seek the revelations contained in His word? Or are we so comfortable in our so-called Christian practices that we feel we do not need to know anymore of His word or do we not read because we just don't see the need to change or grow in Christ-likeness anymore.

I believe that having that sort of attitude puts us in the same category as the Laodicean church portrayed in Revelation 3:15-16:

“I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.”

We should let that be a warning and a constant reminder to us not to become lukewarm in our faith and suffer the rejection of God on that Final Day and hear those dreaded words: Depart from me ye workers of iniquity.

2] Prayer. Spiritual input through the area of prayer.

There are many scriptures which direct us how and when and for what

we should pray - prayer is the Christians vital breath and we can no more live a Christian life without prayer then a fish can live out of water - fish out of water struggles for a short while then die and it is the same for us if we do not pray, we will struggle for a while and then succumb to a spiritual kind of death. Satan is always hard at work and has I believe no chance or very little chance of getting control of a praying Christian's life but we can see the result of where prayer is lacking or absent altogether that Satan has a great deal of input into those lives. Let us make sure of our daily prayer life, prayer keeps open the lines of communication between God and ourselves, not just for our benefit but also for the benefit of others and most importantly as a means of giving praise and thanks to God, our Creator and Redeemer. Being a praying person also allows the Holy Spirit to enter our lives and give us the directions that God wants for us as we endeavour to follow the pattern laid down throughout the scriptures.

3] Christian fellowship.

Our spiritual input also comes from fellowship and interaction with like-minded brothers and sisters and if we are diligent in reading the scripture and diligent in our prayer life then there will be a natural desire to seek out likeminded believers with whom we can discuss and share our faith in God as well as seek direction and encouragement to make sure that we are not heading in the wrong direction because we have misinterpreted or misunderstood what we have read.

As we associate with other true Christians we will find that we will find ourselves less and less inclined to associate with those not following Christ. The more you read the Scripture, the more you pray seeking guidance through the Holy Spirit, the more you fellowship with true Christians the more you will understand what the scripture means in 1 Peter 2:9 where it says that: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:."

Mathew Henry a highly respected bible commentator says this about 1 Peter 2:9. "Christians are a chosen generation, they make one family, a people distinct from the world, of another spirit, another principle and practice which they could never be if they were not chosen in Christ to be such and sanctified by His spirit."

If we chose to call ourselves Christians then let us live up to what the bi-

ble teaches, all of it, not just the things that suit us.

Let us live up to God's requirements not our own.

Let us be distinct from the world and those around us.

Let us exhibit another spirit, that is the Spirit of God not the spirit of darkness.

Let us have godly principles not the world's principles of loose morals and a disdain for everything or anything that comes from God's word.

Let us exhibit the godly practices and standards required of us in the scriptures.

Let us be the Light of Christ that shines in this present darkness.

Let us show by our words and our lifestyle that we are God's people doing God's will God's way.

JvL.



Meekness and Modesty.

The Scripture has much to say on both these matters, much has been preached upon it and also written.

At first glance perhaps many do not realise that these two go together. Some see meekness as weakness when in fact it is often a witness of the strength of one's character. To remain meek and humble in the face of provocation for one thing or perhaps in the matter of praise for one's actions meekness and modesty of behaviour portrays the spirit of Christ, was He not meek and humble and lowly of heart?

In the matter of provocation we can exercise non-resistance and in the area of praise we can overcome and put down pride, both are areas which our carnal nature can excel in if it is not controlled by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

In the area of modesty the first response of most people is to think about the external appearance of the body, perhaps this is a sign not only of the society in which we live but also our carnal nature which tends to delight and go to the base things of humanity. God's Word directs us to set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth. (Colossians 3:2).

Modesty however is not just bodily appearance but is to be exhibited in all areas of our life. James 2:2-4 rightly points out that we are not to favour the richly attired over one who is not so attired, I believe that this injunction also applies to all other possessions that we may have in relation to worldly goods, God is no respecter of persons nor are we to be partial to others and become judges of evil thoughts.

William Penn had this to say about this subject:

“Meekness and modesty are the rich and charming attire of the soul: and the plainer the dress, the more distinctly, and with greater lustre, their beauty shines. It is said of the true Church, “The king’s daughter is all glorious within.” Let her care (the Church’s), therefore, be of our minds, more than of our bodies, if we would be of her communion.”

Let each of us therefore guard our minds and care for them in this conjoined area of meekness and modesty so that we can be a witness to those around us of the Light of Christ and a testimony of being members of His body the Church wherein there will be no spot or wrinkle on that final day when He calls His bride to the wedding feast. Meekness and modesty begins in our hearts which is also the place wherein lies great wickedness that needs to be and can be overcome through the blood of the Lamb and giving ourselves to the direction and control of the Spirit of God that comes to dwell within at the new birth.

JvL.



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