

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

It Happened in September

When the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.

Ezra 3:1

It was the Seventh Month, September by our reckoning, and the Israelites were still filled with the wonder of all that God had done to return them from Babylonian captivity back to Jerusalem — charged by the king of Persia himself to rebuild the Temple of the Lord. This was truly astounding in every way.

We are told that they assembled “as one man all the people assembled in Jerusalem with a unified purpose.” This singular moment not only harnessed the great potential of a vast assembly of focused individuals, but it also unleashed a mighty revival in the city — and ultimately in the nation.

As we read Ezra’s account of what happened, three things stand out at the forefront of this historic move of God.

First, **they rebuilt the altar**, which had been destroyed by the Babylonians years earlier. This symbolizes “seeking first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness.” The Altar is where we worship. It is where we experience God’s presence, hear His voice, and find the power to do His will.

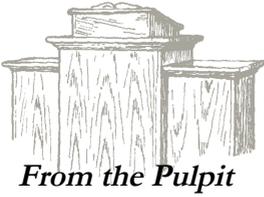
Second, **they rekindled the fires** of morning and evening offerings. This symbolizes prayer. They began their day, and ended it, in conversation with God. Obviously, the conversation lasted all day long. Did you know that God wants the same thing with you and me? He wants to walk with us, and talk with us as we move about the various affairs of our daily lives. He wants our lives to be ignited with the passion that comes from personal friendship with Him.

Third, **they renewed their faithfulness to God’s Word**. This symbolizes obedience; they had long forsaken the ways of the Lord, but now were returned to true devotion and faithful allegiance. “You shall now the Truth,” Jesus said, “and the Truth shall set you free.” We can find the freedom Jesus gives by renewing our commitment to the Word of God — seeking His face, hearing His voice, and doing His will.

This is the lesson we learn from Ezra’s revival in ancient time; and it serves as a pattern and a promise for us today. They sought His face, heard His voice, and did His will — and a revival transformed their land. And it happened in September.

What will this September hold for you and me?

J Ryle.



THE WEALTHY CHRISTIAN
From a message by Brother Wilmer Martin
Decker Lake Mennonite Church 2009.

From the Pulpit

We are thankful that Jesus Christ can empower us with a right attitude toward life and may we always look to Him for that.

This evening if I was to ask you, how did wealthy people become wealthy, what would your answer be?

If you were to tell me in maybe one sentence or maybe one paragraph how wealthy people became wealthy what would your answer be.

Anybody know?

A. They make that their goal.

Yes all right.

Q. What else?

A. Work harder.

It is part of it, I have observed people who worked hard but they were never wealthy.

Q. What does it take to be wealthy?

A. Learn how to save.

That's the thought I was trying to get at. The power of accumulation.

You put \$100 in a savings account and next week you put another hundred in and the week after another hundred and each week another hundred and you start to accumulate something of value, you become wealthy.

And this evening the scriptures tell us how to become wealthy believers and it is through the power of accumulation.

There is a passage that speaks directly to that and it is in second Peter chapter 1.

We would just like to observe what it takes to be wealthy and I think sometimes the reason why there are so many poor Christians about, spiritually poor Christians is because they don't know about the power of accumulation and they are not sure what to accumulate, they don't know what the results the value of accumulation are and I would like to read second Peter chapter 1 the first 11 verses and I want you to be looking what it is that we are to accumulate.

2 Peter 1:1-11 ¹ Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: ² Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, I'm going to stop there, that word "the knowledge of God" and the knowledge that we will see later in this passage I understand have two different meanings.

The knowledge of God has the understanding, an experiential knowledge, not simply a head knowledge of God, I know Brother Clarence here by name, I know Brother David back there by name but I know Brother David a little bit better than I know Brother Clarence, I visited with him this afternoon that's why.

And I know my wife even better than I know these two men.

The knowledge of God is the kind of knowledge of knowing somebody, you know how they think, you know what they like and all of that.

That is the knowledge of God that he is talking about here.

There are lot of people that claim to know God but when you really get into a conversation with them about their knowledge of God they are not sure how God will think about this or they not sure what God would say about this or what God would say about that.

Do they know God?

Most of you men know what your wife likes and doesn't like, most of you know and some of you may still be learning, but that is the kind of knowledge that we are talking about here with God, we know God what He approves of and what He disapproves of.

That is the kind of knowledge that we are talking about.

Continuing in verse three:

³ According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

Here again we have the word knowledge, that knowing what God likes and what God does not like.

Verse four:

⁴ Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. ⁵ And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; ⁶ And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; ⁷ And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. ⁸ For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁹ But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. ¹⁰ Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: ¹¹ For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Now did you notice how we become spiritually wealthy?

I would like to focus our attention on verse five, six and seven, And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith.

Faith is the first hundred dollars in your savings account, faith is where it begins, faith in believing that the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse us from our sins that takes faith.

And there are a lot of people who believe that their sins have been forgiven, they believe that and that's where they stop.

And what does he say we are to add to our faith, somebody tell me what does it say? Virtue.

Do you know what virtue is?

How would you define virtue this evening?

And I think sometimes that is the reason why we have spiritually poor Christians, spiritually poor Christians.

What are you to add to your faith when you say we are to add to your faith virtue?

Let me take you to an illustration in Matthew 14.

I understand that the word virtue there is defined by the word manliness, will let me tell you just a step further the thought of courage, add to your faith courage.

Matthew 14:22-30 is a very familiar account to us,

²² And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. ²³ And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. ²⁴ But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. ²⁵ And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. ²⁶ And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. ²⁷ But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. ²⁸ And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. ²⁹ And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship,

There was the step of faith that Peter took. By faith he believed that when Jesus said, Come, that it was the Lord Jesus Christ and notice what happened.

And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

Did he have courage or not?

What happened?

³⁰ But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

Courage turned to fear and fear caused him to begin to sink.

Add to your faith courage.

The scriptures tell us the Apostle Paul said I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me, **Philippians 4:13**.

Through the courage that the Lord Jesus Christ gives us we can do all things.

Add to your faith courage.

That could be dangerous. Some people have faith and they have courage and they go charging out into the world, they are going to take it on, they are going to win.

And I think that's why he gives us the second thing that we are to add to our faith, we add to our faith courage and then he says once you add to your faith courage then he says I want you to add knowledge.

Now this knowledge I'm going to define differently than the knowledge that we looked at earlier.

I understand that this word knowledge here has more the idea of prudence, add to your courage prudence and what does that mean?

Well if you were to look for the definition of prudence it is the ability to regulate oneself by the exercise of reason.

The ability to regulate oneself by the exercise of reason.

I'm just going to make it a little simpler than that for you; it is the ability to have spiritual common sense.

Prudence is common sense.

And so this knowledge that we are to add to our courage is spiritual common sense, so as we have faith and we have courage mixed in with spiritual common sense and you won't go out and do things that are contrary to what God, the laws of God.

You know some people they can go out and exercise faith.

I remember working with a man who was going to go into the ministry and he was going to a seminary to become a minister, he had just gotten married and I said, How do you plan to provide yourself?

Faith is going to provide for me.

Really? Isn't that interesting?

You see he had faith and he had courage but he was lacking some spiritual common sense, God does not expect us to go out here and say, Lord give me my breakfast tomorrow morning. No. He expects us to work and to labour and to provide for our own.

Spiritual common sense, it is part of the Scripture, whosoever provides not for his own is worse than an infidel (**1 Timothy 5:8**) and to go out and simply say, Well I'm going to expect the Lord to provide by faith shows a lack of knowledge and it makes people spiritually poor.

So let's add to our courage prudence, spiritual common sense.

Now this thought of the exercise of reason can get us into trouble, people can reason away the grace of God that is why he gives us the next characteristic it has to be a part of the accumulating of spiritual and that is temperance.

I came across this saying and I like it, Temperance is reason's girdle and passion's bridle.

Do you know what a girdle is, it is like a belt, in Bible times they wore a loose gown and they took their girdle and wrapped it around to pull everything together.

We are to exercise temperance, it is reason's girdle, our mind can take us out on a limb and get us into trouble but if we exercise temperance, if we put a girdle around our reasoning and keep it within the confines of the Word of God there is safety, temperance, our knowledge, our prudence needs to be brought into subjection by the girdle of temperance.

Now passion's bridle.

Let's look at the other side of temperance, passion, I think it is right to be passionate about something, the Apostle Paul was a man of passion, he was all for what he was doing, he was interested, he was committed to it, but you know passion needs to have a bridle, we can get unbalanced and we can get off on the deep side of things.

Temperance is passion's bridle; it is also the bridle when passion becomes a lust. We learn to bridle that desire and bring it into subjection like the bridle on a horse is control because there is something there to steer it with. Temperance is a bridle.

Add to your faith courage, prudence, and bring your reasoning into subjection, bring them together, bring your thoughts together, don't let them all go in different directions.

It is an important part of acquiring spiritual wealth.

Now to this temperance we are to add patience.

Let me give you an illustration of patience; let's go to second Samuel chapter 23, a very vivid illustration of one of David's mighty men and how he exercised patience.

The thought of patience is the ability to endure unto the end, endurance, and notice the endurance of this man had here in:

2 Samuel 23:9-10: ⁹ And after him *was* Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, *one* of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines *that* were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away: ¹⁰ He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword: and the LORD wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil.

The picture that is there is that when you take a hold of something and you are so determined that your muscles lock up and David's hand clave to his sword. Add I don't know if you've ever had that experience that you were so intent on something that your muscles got tight and you almost had to pry your fingers loose. That was the endurance that this man had for what he was accomplishing.

Add to your temperance that kind of endurance; the kind that makes you stick with it all away to the end, patience is what we need to add to our faith.

That is what gives us the true spiritual wealth.

There are a lot of people who stuck at some of these things but then they get weary in well doing, they get weary in well doing.

You know sometimes we focus on what motivates us and that is the reward, and if we are only doing things for the reward our endurance is going to fail, we have to have a motive greater than reward for that.

Add to your patience godliness.

Do you know what godliness is tonight?

I believe it is a God consciousness, every day we are conscious that we are under the all seeing eye of an Almighty God.

There are a lot of religious people today whose consciousness of God is only enlightened on Sunday mornings, a lot of people like that.

It is important that as born again people that if we truly want to be spiritually wealthy that we are God conscious every day of the week, every hour of the day, God conscious.

Add to your faith godliness, that is in direct contrast to the spirit of the world, that love of the world and attractions of the world, but rather that we have a love for God and a consciousness of God.

Godly reverence.

As these things begin to accumulate in a person's life what effect does it have on those about them?

He says when we finally get to this state of the accumulating then we are to add that godliness brotherly kindness.

What is brotherly kindness?

Do you know what it is?

I would like to simply say that brotherly kindness is the ability to look at our brother as our equal.

Do you do that?

Is there anyone here in this audience that you do not look to as your equal or better than your equal?

How do we determine that?

Here is how I would like to help you think about how you evaluate your brother and your sister.

As I think about Brother Fred here does my mind can go in different directions? I'm standing on a platform so I am looking down at him, but I want to tell you this evening brotherly kindness is when I think about Brother Fred and I can look at him as my equal, I look straight across, I admire him, I look up to him.

If there is anyone here in this congregation that when you think about them your mind just tends to just go a little bit this direction, Well, you know that's family.

That is not brotherly kindness.

You will never be truly spiritually wealthy if you allow or tolerate any of that kind of mindset we you kind of look down, I never say a word, never say anything bad about them but you tend to look down at them.

That is not brotherly kindness.

You will lose your spiritual wealth, your accumulation process stops right there and you no longer begin to accumulate.

I want you to think about the next time you think about a brother or sister; does your mind go this way or that way? And if you detect your mind going the wrong way what are you going to do about this?

Well our brother talked in the devotions about praying without ceasing and you know as I go throughout my day there are times when thoughts enter into my mind and I have to simply say, Lord forgive me; forgive me for entertaining a thought like that.

And if I find my mind thinking down, looking down on somebody in the congregation Lord forgive me for thinking a thought like that.

Brotherly kindness is the kind of love that is exercised equal to equal; we are equal with our brother.

If you remember last night I read that passage about the King, the King was supposed to meditate in the word of God so that he would not feel lifted up above his brethren.

And so if you find yourself thinking in those channels spend a little more time in the word of God and if you start to meditate in the word of God you will discover that there is nobody below you in life, there is nobody under you.

Are you willing to do that?

You know that it is easier for me to tell you that here this evening than for me to live it out daily that takes some diligent effort to think right about ourselves and about our brothers and sisters.

Brotherly kindness.

Now following brotherly kindness is charity.

And so he broadens, he broadens what happens.

You cannot claim to love all men if you cannot even love your brother.

The scriptures say that you if claim to love God but you cannot love your brother whom you can see you're a liar, you're a liar (**1 John 4:20**) and so if we cannot exercise brotherly kindness then charity to all men will be lacking but if we have learned to exercise brotherly kindness within a congregation of believers what happens as we relate to those who are outside of

the congregation of believers? Well we are then able to express love to them also.

And remember this it is not what we say but is what people feel, it is what people feel. People will be able to feel the warmth and the love of a person, and it doesn't matter what you are saying they can feel the chill.

You know I had a friend who told me he said: My dad loves to invite company to make them feel uncomfortable.

Well you can imagine how I felt the next time I went there. He enjoyed that, he got pleasure out of seeing how uncomfortable he could make his fellow brethren feel when he invited them to his house, they lived very fine and they had nice things, but he found enjoyment in that.

That is not love.

Love is the ability to make others feel comfortable, to make feel them loved and wanted and accepted in life.

And you know if we have a problem with that what we need to do is finally understand that this brother or sister here was created in the image of God just like I am and I am no better than them.

And so the bum of the street was also created in the image of God, right? Absolutely.

He has just as much right to the throne of God as I do, he has just as much right to salvation as I do, whether he chooses to do that or not is not for me to decide.

I cannot say I will love you if you choose to love God!

No, I need to love him as another person created in the image of God.

And I want you to think about that the next time you see the bum on the street and you think, I'm glad not him.

Will just remembered that you were created in the same image as him and the opportunities that you have at the same that he has.

Yes you might have made a choice and praise God that you did but he also needs to make the choice and he will feel the love that you have for him or the scorn that you have for him by the way you relate to him.

If these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we come back to this word knowledge again and this word knowledge here I understand would be the same word that we looked at in verse two, he gives us an entrance into the person of God as these things are in us and they are bounds and they grow, they draw us to a closer understanding of the God of heaven.

One last thing I would like to point out.

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.**

I'm afraid there are too many Christians tonight who are a little like the ball players when they hit a ball and they run to the plate and somebody throws it to first base and you know what happens, the runner slides into the plate and falls on to the ground and reaches out and touches the plate and he is safe.

And that is a concept they have of heaven, somehow they've just got to stumble into heaven and they are just can barely make it!

That is not put this passage is teaching, this passage is teaching that if we do these things and we give diligence to make our calling and election sure we will never fall, we will never fall and there is an abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven, and so it is like the runner crossing the finish line in all full energy into the Kingdom of heaven.

And I would like to project to this audience here this evening that each one of us can be empowered with the power of Jesus Christ that we can run full force into the kingdom of heaven, not stumbling and bumbling along and just barely making it in.

God wants each one of us to be filled with His power and His energy to finish the crossing the line running into the abundant entrance that He has prepared for us.

Tonight we do not need to be a wandering sheep, we all know that we have been wandering sheep but God has made the provision through Jesus Christ that we can find rest in our souls, spiritual rest and that we can grow and become spiritually wealthy.

Remember Lot's Wife

Lot dwelt in the wicked city Sodom with his wife, two daughters, and sons-in-law. Lot was a righteous man. He feared God (2 Peter 2:7, 8). "But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD *exceedingly*" (Genesis 13:13). The wickedness all about Lot vexed his righteous soul.

One day Lot received two visitors who were strangers to him. They were angels sent from heaven who told him to take his family out of the wicked city of Sodom. He was to act fast because God would destroy the entire city the next day. Judgment day had come for Sodom.

Lot tried to convince his sons-in-law that judgment would fall on Sodom and that they should get their families out of town. They laughed at their father-in-law and refused to believe him.

The next morning, the angels became urgent. They literally took Lot, his wife, and two daughters by the hand and led them out of the city. God told them to flee for their lives and *not look back*. Then the fire of God fell from heaven and destroyed all the inhabitants of Sodom (Genesis 19:24, 29).

Verse 26 says, "But his wife *looked back from behind him*, and she became a pillar of salt." Jesus told His audience in Luke 17:32, "Remember Lot's wife."

Why?

1. Lot's wife had been mercifully and miraculously delivered from Sodom. She experienced an "initial salvation." She had come far enough to escape the fire that fell from heaven and destroyed her hometown. God Himself had come to her rescue. She had an "eleventh hour" opportunity to be saved.
2. We are to remember Lot's wife because she disobeyed God's Word — and lost it all! She came so far, was so near to safety, and then stopped and *looked back*. She turned into a pillar of salt. What a terrible tragedy — saved yet still lost. She was delivered from judgment by the mercy of God, yet she became the object of His divine wrath.
3. Lot's wife could not resist the backward glance — just one more look at sinful, wicked Sodom. Although the angels had delivered her, most of her family, her friends, her possessions, her heart's treasures were back in

Sodom. Oh, if she could just see them one more time. But God had said, “Don’t look back!”

4. Lot’s wife did not believe that God really meant what He said. She must have reasoned like people do today: “God is love;” “He is merciful;” “He forgives;” “He is not willing that any perish.” She presumed upon the mercy of God; she disobeyed; and was turned into a pillar of salt.

What Can We Learn?

1. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). If we wilfully disobey and refuse to repent, we will lose our salvation. Presuming on the grace and mercy of God will incur His wrath.

2. Our old friends and relatives can be a powerful attraction. If we love our family more than Christ, we are not worthy of Him (Matthew 10:37). Compromising to please carnal friends will bring us to judgment.

3. The world with its entertainment, pleasure, and celebrations can tempt us to secretly desire to be involved. Sodom was noted for bizarre partying, sensuality, and every imaginable evil. When God in His mercy delivers us from such wickedness, we should never look back. The true Christian must let go of the world, not only outwardly but much more in his heart (1 John 2:15–17).

4. God’s will is that we go forward in faith. We are to keep our focus on Jesus Christ, our Captain and Leader (Hebrews 12:2). We do this when we repent of our sinful past. To repent is to turn away from the sins of the flesh and spirit and the various allurements of the world. Faith seeks to please God (Hebrews 11:4–6). It does not stop halfway with the thought that we can have both God and the world. Romans 14:12 says, “So then *every* one of us shall give account of himself to God.”

Listen to the call of God. “And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities” (Revelation 18:4, 5).

Remember Lot’s wife!

—*Brother Luke.*



Where is Our Worship?

The following is an allegory I read, which conveys the burden of my heart. "Satan called a worldwide convention. In his opening address to his evil angels, he said, 'We can't keep the Christians from going to church. We can't keep them from reading their Bibles and knowing the truth. We can't even keep them from conservative values. But we can do something else!

"We can keep them from forming an intimate, abiding experience with Christ. If they gain that connection with Jesus, our power over them is broken. So let them go to church, let them have their conservative lifestyles, but steal their time so they can't gain that experience in Jesus Christ.

"This is what I want you to do, angels. Distract them from gaining hold of their Saviour and maintaining that vital connection throughout their day.'

"How shall we do this?' shouted his angels.

"Keep them busy in the nonessentials of life, and invent unnumbered schemes to occupy their minds,' he answered. 'Tempt them to spend, spend, then borrow, borrow.

"Convince the wives to go to work and the husbands to work six days a week, ten to twelve hours a day so they can afford their lifestyles. Keep them from spending time with their children.

"Over stimulate their minds so that they cannot hear that still small voice. Don't let them have time to study God's Word or ground themselves in the true faith. This will jam their minds and break that union with Christ.

"Fill their coffee tables with magazines and newspapers. Pound their minds with the new. Invade their driving moments with billboards. Flood their mailboxes with junk mail, sweepstakes, mail order catalogues, and every kind of newsletter and promotional offering free products, services, and false hopes.

"When they do meet for spiritual fellowship, involve them in gossip and small talk so that they leave with troubled consciences and unsettled emotion.

"Let them be involved in soul winning. But crowd their lives with so many good causes that they have no time to seek power from Christ. Soon they will be working in their own strength, sacrificing their health and family unity for the good of the cause.'

"It was quite a convention in the end. And the evil angels went eagerly to their assignments, causing Christians everywhere to get busy and rush here and there.

Has the devil been successful at his scheme?
You be the judge.

While you are thinking about the above, let us consider what Jesus said would happen before His return. "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:34-36). Another translation uses weighed down for the word overcharged. The above allegory and these verses render the same thought. Are we not living in a time where one finds himself quite overcharged with the daily things of life? "We are always so busy" and "I feel a lot of pressure" are very common expressions we hear.

Often the question, "What are we talking about when we talk about a drift in the church?" is heard. While there may be more than one area of drift, let us consider this question: Do I have an intimate, abiding relationship with the Lord? When one notices the day's activities preoccupying the mind and one is constantly under pressure, how is it possible to have a warm relationship with God? Isn't this at the very foundation of the drift?

The church at Ephesus was highly successful when it came to outward appearances. The Lord commended them on their patience; their church discipline was in good order. He commended them for labouring in His name. But the most vital point was missing: they had left their first love, that intimate relationship with the Lord. Their love and affections were misplaced. While they did well in the order of the church, they missed the worship and devotion they needed to God. The Lord told them to remember therefore from whence they had fallen, and repent, and do the first works. If they did not, He would come to them quickly and remove the candlestick out of its place.

Where does our motivation in life come from? To begin with, God gave man the freedom to make choices. We choose each day to perform accord-

ing to our thinking. We have our conscious and subconscious minds. The thoughts we dwell on are like seeds in a garden. We will liken that garden to our subconscious mind. The seeds that we plant will sprout, grow, and bring forth fruit. These plants are the motivating forces that bring forth the fruit (action) we see today. The actions and motivation that come from our subconscious mind (or can we say, the heart?) are what really control us.

So if we are overcharged with the cares of life, it is unlikely that the Lord will warm our hearts. The alarming part is that this will be a snare that will come over the face of the whole earth. Jesus said, "For where your treasure is there will be your heart also."



Relationship Fruit

What are the fruits of an intimate relation with Christ? One is a teachable spirit. Jesus said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). A child readily receives instruction and is willing to be taught. Following are four more attributes that reveal one's relationship with Christ.

1] Love—to God and to our fellowman. Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:37-40). This text is mentioned in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In Mark, the scribe questioning Jesus comments that to have that love is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And in Luke, Jesus capitalizes on who is our neighbour. We can readily see by these verses that our love to God is paramount. The second commandment is to love our neighbour, or our brother. In 1 John 2:10, we read, "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him." When I have God's love in my heart, I will not stumble (be offended) at my brother. Jesus says in John 13:35, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Our relationship with God is measured by our love toward the brethren.

2] Truthfulness. This lies behind Jesus' stern denunciation of all deceit, false witness, hypocrisy, and pretence, and, likewise, His prohibition of oaths. Matthew 5:37 records Jesus' teaching on this: "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." While we are living in a society of much dishonesty, and people tell the untruth to suit themselves, our relationship with God will cause us to be careful in this matter, both in business dealings and social affairs.

3] Humble service. Jesus describes Himself as lowly in heart and says that we are to learn of Him, Matthew 11:29. We become slaves to Christ and are willing for any service, Luke 22:25-27. We refer to the account of the Good Samaritan, who went the second mile to help the man who fell among thieves. We offer our services to mankind unselfishly and are willing to do it unnoticed, Matthew 25:37-40. "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time," 1 Peter 5:5-6. An intimate relationship with Christ will cause one to see his depravity and, thereby, humble himself before God.

4] Prudence. "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" Matthew 10:16. When the apostles were about to go forth as sheep among wolves, Jesus counselled them to be not only innocent as doves but also prudent, or shrewd, like serpents. The key to being wise spiritually, or having wisdom, is found in the words of James 3:17: "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

The one with a close relationship with Christ will be defenceless, harmless, and non-resistant. He will have a lamb-like nature.

Brother Errol



Judgment and Separation

*And as it is appointed unto men once to die,
But after this the judgment.
Hebrews 9:27*

We cannot fully comprehend the reality and finality of Judgment Day. The poet writes of "the crashing of ages, When time and eternity meet" ("Eternity," Christian Hymnal, No. 296). Every eye shall see the Judge, and all will receive their just and eternal portion. What a day that will be! Then, as Jesus said, He will separate the tares from the wheat and the sheep from the goats.

We try to remove such thoughts from our minds. Yet, they are too insistent to ignore and too powerful to deny. For many, the temptation is to procrastinate rather than squarely face the facts, and so they reason away the absoluteness of God's Word.

With the passing of each day, this event comes closer. Its coming is inevitable and imminent. "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" Luke 21:28.

Let us heed the biblical warnings and act accordingly, and the blessing will be ours. Instead of fear, we will live in the joy of the promises of what this unparalleled event will bring.

Jesus has told us "Watch." Do we understand what that means? Our apathy can be a result of thinking that we will receive a clearer warning of His coming than we already have. Scripture in the words of Jesus gives us clear warning as we read here in Matthew 24:42-51: ⁴²Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. ⁴³But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. ⁴⁴Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. ⁴⁵Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

⁴⁶Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. ⁴⁷Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. ⁴⁸But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; ⁴⁹And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and

drink with the drunken; ⁵⁰ The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and in an hour that he is not aware of, ⁵¹ And shall cut him asunder, and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In life it is often said, "Had I only known." Who of us will be saying this on Judgment Day? The faith that pleases God is believing Him because He said it, not having to know when and why. Such faith produces constant vigilance and obedience.

The Lord expects His children to be good stewards. They are required to be faithful, for they must give account. A vibrant church has faithful homes where fathers and mothers fill their God-given places. Not only are the temporal needs met, but spiritual nurturing is of utmost importance. The eternal goal is kept in view. This, of course, is done by attending to the Word of God and to prayer. Family devotions are consistent and warm. Respect for authority and for each other is taught. There is a season of opportunity and then it is gone. Too many parents live with regret for their past indifference. Young parents, take heed! The eternal destiny of our children is at stake. By word and example, let us be diligent in this day of grace.

May our lives never resemble that of the evil servant. When we become self-centred and proud, we lose the vision to fulfill our duties properly. This holds true for ordained servants as well. All will give an account of their stewardship. The time is known only to God. We must be ready, lest our end be with the unfaithful!

In the parable of the wheat and tares, Jesus obviously was not speaking about the church's authority to discipline.

Matthew 13:37-43 ³⁷ He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; ³⁸ The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked *one*; ³⁹ The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. ⁴⁰ As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. ⁴¹ The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; ⁴² And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then

shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

He certainly would not have minimized His teachings as stated in Matthew 18:17.

We know the church is a visible body and is to be kept pure and biblically sound with her doctrine intact. The field is identified as the world, meaning the world in which we live. It is not the church.

"The tares are the children of the wicked one" Matthew 13:38. Originally, God planned only one kingdom for this world. Satan is responsible for planting another one. It has always been Satan's scheme to copy the true kingdom that he might deceive mankind. Tares could be false Christians, void of the Holy Spirit, yet possibly having many good works. Self-righteous people, or those who speak much about love but lack godly works, also could be likened to tares.

The weeds and the wheat share the same soil, sunshine, and rain. Sometimes they are in the same family or religious group. In many respects, they interact in everyday living and commerce. They will not be separated, except in a spiritual sense, until the judgment when that which offends and is not of God will be cast into a furnace of fire. "Every plant, which my heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up" Matthew 15:13. Then the righteous will shine as the sun in that eternal, heavenly kingdom.

Fellow pilgrim, we cannot miss it! May we hear with spiritual ears.

The New Testament has much to say about Christ's return. The subject of His second coming is addressed on an average of every twenty-seven verses. Jesus gave many warnings and insights. The words "watch" and "be ready" stand out above the rest.

At the judgment bar, Christ will be the judge. He said, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" John 12:48. His eyes, like a flame of fire, will pierce the heart and reveal its contents. No sin will remain hidden, every thought will be known, and every word will be brought into account. Imagine all of the unsolved mysteries of crime and sin that will come to light. All liars will be revealed, for there is nothing hid that shall not be made known. No advocate will be there to defend the sinner. It will be forever too late to turn. The tares will be separated from the wheat!

The Word of God which we can know today is His revealed will. By this

same Word we will be judged. Now His judgments are mixed with mercy, but then mercy will be forever past. God is true and His judgments are righteous and impartial. There will be no excuses for ignorance and disobedience.

How terrible is the thought of being eternally separated from God and all that is good. Talent, money, or name will mean nothing on that day. Having our sins covered with the blood of Jesus is all that will matter. You will either be saved or lost, and that for all eternity!

The authority to loose and bind in a disciplinary program as outlined in Matthew 18:15-18 has been committed to the church. May she be true to this doctrine, for it is a redemptive work. Without it the church would become defiled and lose her identity. May we praise God for His wonderful grace.

Let us allow the Word to judge our lives, having our sins "open beforehand, going before to judgment" 1 Timothy 5:24. Otherwise, tragically, they will follow us to the final judgment.

May all of us young and old heed the warnings of this lesson. The testimony of our faithful life wherever we go could make the difference between someone being saved or lost. Also, as Psalm 19:9-11 states, in the keeping of God's judgments there is a great reward.

It is imperative that we be ready. Always remember that God earnestly desires our salvation, but it is up to us. Let us respond to His love.



Refuge

A Puritan prayer

O Lord, Whose power is infinite and wisdom infallible,
Order things that they may neither hinder, nor discourage me,
Nor prove obstacles to the progress of Thy cause.
Stand between me and all strife, that no evil befall,
No sin corrupt my gifts, zeal, attainments.

May I follow duty and not any foolish device of my own.
Permit me not to labour at work which Thou wilt not bless, that I may
serve thee without disgrace or debt.

Let me dwell in Thy most secret place under thy shadow,
Where is safe impenetrable protection from the arrow that flieth by day, the
pestilence that walketh in darkness, the strife of tongues,
The malice of ill-will, the hurt of unkind talk, the snares of company,
The perils of youth, the temptations of middle life,
The mourning's of old age, the fear of death.

I am entirely dependent upon Thee for support, counsel, consolation.
Uphold me by Thy free Spirit, and may I not think it enough to be pre-
served from falling, but may I always go forward,
Always abounding in the work Thou givest me to do.

Strengthen me by Thy Spirit in my inner self for every purpose of my
Christian life.

All my jewels I give to the shadow of the safety that is in Thee,
my name anew in Christ, my body, soul, talents, character, my success,
my wife, children, friends, work, my present, my future, my end.

Take them, they are Thine, and I am thine, now and for ever.

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