

# 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 Anabaptist Perspective

## From The Editor's Desk

*“Watchman, what of the night?” Isaiah 21:11*

Apathy means amongst other things to be indifferent, unconcerned, to show a lack of concern or interest, to be lethargic and if we have that tendency in our life toward the things of God, our spiritual life and final destination then we are in very dangerous territory.

Charles Spurgeon commenting on Isaiah 21:11 wrote:

“What enemies are abroad? Errors are a numerous horde, and new ones appear every hour: against what heresy am I to be on my guard? Sins creep from their lurking places when the darkness reigns; I must myself mount the watch-tower, and watch unto prayer. Our heavenly Protector foresees all the attacks which are about to be made upon us, and when as yet the evil designed us is but in the desire of Satan, he prays for us that our faith fail not, when we are sifted as wheat. Continue O gracious Watchman, to forewarn us of our foes, and for Zion’s sake hold not thy peace.

“Watchman, what of the night?” What weather is coming for the Church? Are the clouds lowering, or is it all clear and fair overhead? We must care for the Church of God with anxious love; and now that Popery and infidelity are both threatening, let us observe the signs of the times and prepare for conflict.

“Watchman, what of the night?” What stars are visible? What precious promises suit our present case? You sound the alarm, give us the consolation also. Christ, the polestar, is ever fixed in his place, and all the stars are secure in the right hand of their Lord.

But watchman, when comes the morning? The Bridegroom tarryes. Are there no signs of his coming forth as the Sun of Righteousness? Has not the morning star arisen as the pledge of day? When will the day dawn, and the shadows flee away? O Jesus, if thou come not in person to thy waiting Church this day, yet come in Spirit to my sighing heart, and make it sing for joy.”

Let us be like a true watchman, alert, concerned about an approaching enemy, ready to sound the alarm not only for others but also for our own safety of soul. Jesus had much to say about watching as do the writers of Epistles, let us take heed therefore and not become apathetic. *J.v.ℒ*



*From the Pulpit*

The Spirit of Apathy – conclusion

*Wilmer Eshbach*

*Orchardville Mennonite Church 2004*

Spiritual apathy frequently expresses itself outwardly.

Have you ever tried to talk to someone who is in a semi-twilight zone in between wakefulness and being asleep? At times you get rather startling responses because they are really just about half out of touch. It is an example of apathy, an apathetic response and at that stage it is highly unpredictable what may be forthcoming.

You know we are very naturally self-centred and self is characterised by mood swings and emotional responses and self-serving reactions and when everyone is allowing his spiritual sensibilities to be lulled to sleep by the devil's opium, the spirit of apathy, his reactions are extremely unpredictable.

Are you that presently and perhaps finding it increasingly difficult to appreciate your spouse?

Well take spiritual inventory of your own condition before you try to fix him or her.

Are there flare-ups or at least feelings of disgust happening frequently toward a brother or sister?

Are you spiritually tuned up today or are several of your spiritual cylinders dead because of a blockage in your intake that stops the flow of spiritual strength?

Do you feel that the Deacon is taken too much on himself or the Bishop is mishandling the administration of the church?

Why do you feel that way, because he is too concerned about your soul or is it because you feel he is too hard on self?

You know one can very quickly develop an attitude toward an alarm clock even though its function is entirely legitimate and even determined by you when you are in a sane frame of mind. But you know in the world of sleep

it administers pain in fulfilment of its function and if it fails the painful results are far greater than the sounding of that alarm clock at the proper time.

When one is afflicted with the spirit of apathy it frequently produces erratic behaviour but brethren and sisters let's not allow our emotions and our feelings and so on to cause us to react erratically because we are indifferent about our souls welfare. So quickly it can happen.

In the fifth place the spirit of apathy frequently endures vexation within the perimeter of the comfort zone.

And I'll try and explain that as I move on and discuss this point but I notice here in verse 17 in chapter 14 that at the wedding reception at that first marriage, I guess it doesn't say Samson got married more than once but anyway after they were married him and his wife were having their seven-day wedding reception it says she wept before him the seven days while their feast lasted, **Judges 14:17**, What a wedding reception.

Can you imagine what Samson was putting up with and tolerating that whole time, why did he not deal with it and take care of it?

I think maybe it is an illustration to us of a spirit of apathy.

The Scripture says just Lot vexed his soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.

Why didn't Lot do something about it?

Well I believe he was too apathetic, he is simply didn't get around to fixing the problem, the result was that he lost his wife and most of his family in the destruction of Sodom, he was a bit too lethargic to take decisive action. In fact Lot even offered his daughter to the wicked men of the city that awful night, he must have been asleep or at least partly so.

Maybe I could illustrate this thing of accepting vexation within the comfort zone a little bit like this: Have you ever been asleep in bed and woke just enough to discover your cold but not enough to come to the conclusion that if you get up and get a comforter to cover yourself with you can go back to sleep and sleep good the rest of the night and so you just endure being cold.

You know that's a spirit of apathy at work. You are just so sleepy you can't get yourself to get up and get more covers and so because you are so

sleepy you endure that vexing condition rather than deal with it and enjoy the benefits.

Someone suggested skipping or skimping on your private devotions should make you feel uneasy. a little like going to bed with your shoes on, something is wrong!

It is a vexing condition it just does not feel right.

Children when they are disobedient to their parents just can't feel comfortable around their parents until it is dealt with there is a vexing condition there.

Youth find embarrassment and an estrangement between them and their parents when they do something they know that is unacceptable.

Even in society how frequently have I heard individuals who are in trouble with the law berate and criticise the law enforcement officers and when that vexing awareness is put up with and tolerated it frequently leads to deception and even a sweep of destruction.

Brethren and sisters if there are vexing circumstances in your life that can be taken care of by the grace of God and the work of God, wake out of your sleep of apathy and deal with it and go on in the peace and grace of God.

That brings us to the next consideration of what is the spirit of apathy? And the spirit of apathy leads to a sleep in destructions way.

I see this in chapter 16 a very familiar account but it says here in **Judges 16:18-19:**

<sup>18</sup> And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand.

<sup>19</sup> And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.

You know after a bit he succumbed fully to the enemy's sweetness.

He was holding out for quite a while he was just putting up with this vexing pressure to tell her wherein his great strength lay but finally he succumbed to the enemy's sweetness.

It's a little like a child trying to stay awake you know his head bobs and he gets back up straight and his eyes roll and finally he gets them back open and after a bit he just comes again and falls asleep and for our children we are glad to see that.

But while Samson slept on the enemy's lap his strength and vitality were shorn from him and he was not even vexed by it, he wist not that the Lord was departed from him it says in verse 20. That is a heart breaking scenario.

Yes the vexing that the Lord brings to a troubled conscience because of tolerating and accepting something that should not be within your comfort zone of acceptable comfort and activity and condition finally it was silent, even that vexing was silenced and he was simply asleep.

The spirit of apathy leads one to a sleep in destructions way.

I think I've shared this example before but I'll share it again, I remember a brother sharing with me from 35 years ago when he decided because of the church situation that he was a part of that he was to leave that for the safety of his family he said "I told my wife I'm going to leave now and shed our tears now and then 20 years from now when our children are grown and walking in the ways of truth we can rejoice when other parents are weeping because their children have gone to the world.

But, Wilmer he said, those parents never even wept and their children are in the world today but the parents just adjusted right along with it and they think everything is all right."

It was a sleep in destructions path.

I remember one of those fathers, some of you would know him, I remember one of those fathers telling me once he was showing me the picture of his children that I'd gone to school with and they were very apparently living in the world as part of the world he said: "They are Christians, they are not Christians like you folks but they are Christians and we are glad for that."

Well I would say their lives no doubt would be better if they had ascribed to Christian principles but at the same time they had accepted unscriptural practices as normal and they were not vexed by it they were accepting it as normal healthy Christianity.

Apathy about spiritual things leads to sleep in destructions way.

As one said he was so busy he had little time for spiritual matters and finally he moved to the place of having no interest in spiritual matters.

And that is just the way the spirit of apathy works, tolerating inconsistencies leads to defending wrongdoing, accepting lack of submission and respect for authority leads to open sarcasm and rebellion.

The spirit of apathy towards the Scriptures and the commands of God leads to complete confidence in disobedience.

Some say “Oh I appreciate and believe the scriptures but all these other details I just can’t handle them.”

Beware, it sounds like you are partly asleep, it is the little foxes that spoil the vine and the grapes are tender and easily blighted. So frequently we have seen departure by incremental steps to a sleep on the lap of the enemy and then we hear: Oh what glorious liberty, what blessed freedom, what a loosening of the bands!

But there is one more glaring fact in the life of Samson that I can simply not ignore and that is the seventh answer to what is spiritual apathy.

The spirit of apathy leads to a grinding existence in the prison house of sin.

That is here in verse 21 where it says: But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and down in with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house, **Judges 16:21**.

At that point in time Samson’s eyes were opened but his liberty was gone.

For just a little while when we hear people take that course we hear it sounds like liberating cries of freedom but gradually and yet so rapidly the cries change from liberating cries to despairing cries of lost freedom. And that has happened repeatedly, a sleep in enemy territory leads to a rude awakening in the enemy’s concentration camp.

Certainly the blessings of a godly heritage that has been despised gives way to the empty husks of the world’s swine sty.

I am impressed and I have shared it before with how rapidly those that despise the disciplines of the gospel and a scriptural church life pay the bill that accompanies it, divorce and remarriage, undisciplined children and association in the drug culture and the rejecting of the non-resistant way of life.

I can hardly believe how rapidly they move from a state of apathy to a state of despair because of the apathy. All the difficulties and dilemmas and the stresses of the world are now faced by those who should not even be close to them but because of following a course of indifference towards things that really matter they find themselves there.

Well what is the answer to this problematic spirit of apathy?

In the first place a daily commitment to the Lord and duty.

Notice verses 21 and 22 and I take this from the opposite side little bit I guess of what was happening I already read verse 21 weary did grind in the prison house but verse 22 howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven, **Judges 16:21-22**

Yes Samson had a long road back and I believe we consider a subject of this nature to avoid getting to that place so we do not need to travel that long hard road back.

I firmly believe that to avoid getting to the place of spiritual sleep or to get back to being awake this is so critical that we have a daily commitment to the Lord and duty.

I remember one young man saying I have not been having my private devotions, I know it is terrible he said but I can't get concerned about it, I can't get an alarmed about it.

He needed an IV and quick, he was about to expire. The one he was sharing it with prescribed a dose of immediate and consistent private devotions. When one is in that condition the best remedy that I would know to prescribe is that very thing, well get busy and have it once, start reading your Bible as you read the Scriptures it will bring to you and awareness of how critical it is that you do so.

So in the first place a daily and consistent commitment to do what is right or you will be grinding for ever in the prison house of despair.

Do what is right because it is right whether you feel it is urgent not, whether you feel like it or not, it is the right kind of therapy to wake you up. You know hair grows at an imperceptible rate you cannot see it growing but it grew on Samson, every day it grew; it says the hair of his head began to grow again.

I realise that his strength was from the Lord but part of that was obedience to the commandment of God to let his hair grow and so as Samson obeyed the Lord, maybe he had no choice to let it grow he probably didn't have any cutting equipment but he simply let it grow and the Lord honoured his commitment with success.

In Romans chapter 13 I will read a few verses and it tells us here, verse 11, **Romans 13:11-14:**

<sup>11</sup> And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: for now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed.

<sup>12</sup> The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

<sup>13</sup> Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

<sup>14</sup> But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*.

Be diligent to walk in obedience to watch and saying no is the first remedy to this problematic spirit of apathy.

In the second place cultivate a recognition of the enemies of the cross.

In **Judges 16:26-27:**

<sup>26</sup> And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.

<sup>27</sup> Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines *were* there; and *there were* upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.

The Apostle Paul said in **Philippians 3:18-19:** <sup>18</sup> (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the en-

emies of the cross of Christ: <sup>19</sup> Whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is* their belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

If we are going to overcome this problematic spirit of apathy we must cultivate a recognition of the enemies of the cross. This pleasure mad society is not a friend to grace, this lack serious lifestyle pursuing crowd among whom we live is the enemy of maintaining a pilgrim and stranger outlook on life.

The desire to fix yourself up fancy is the enemy of a meek and quiet spirit, that spiffy pickup, those nifty gadgets, that laptop computer, those intriguing capes, that exciting book will it help you want God or is it a handicap you cannot afford?

Cultivate a recognition of the enemies of the cross.

Delilah, though so sweet and appealing was Samson's enemy and if he would have just recognised that before.

I wonder if she was in the house that day when he pulled the pillars down? It doesn't matter.

You know brethren and sisters that neighbour or that cousin or that acquaintance you enjoy may even be that enemy, not literally but in their focus and outlook and so cultivate recognition of the enemies of the cross.

In the third-place cry out to the Lord to deliver you from this sleep of death.

Notice again and we are very familiar with this story, verse 28, **Judges 16:28:**

<sup>28</sup> And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

It requires divine surgery, divine illumination to see the issues clearly and to deal with them accordingly.

Spiritual apathy gives one cross eyed blurred colour blinded vision. Employ the Lord's grace He will enable you as none other can to understand and deal with this problem. I am impressed with the seemingly impossible task of trying to explain issues to someone who is blinded to it all willingly

resisting it, it is nearly impossible to try and explain the logic behind a position but I am equally impressed with the ease with which one understands the dangers and issues at hand when they are spiritually awake and inclined toward the Lord.

Cry out to the Lord to deliver you from this sleep of death that your eyes will be opened and that you will understand the issues in your true place.

And in the fourth place in the last one that I have how do we deal with this problematic spirit of apathy?

Give yourself wholly to the task at hand. You will not be able to do it in your own strength but as you cry out to the Lord and then employ His grace and you can have the victory.

I notice that here in verse 29, **Judges 16:29-30:**

<sup>29</sup> And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.

<sup>30</sup> And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines.....

And he bowed himself and leaned against the pillar because he was still half asleep? Not at all.

He bowed himself with *all his* might; and the house fell.....

Yes give yourself wholly to the task developing your passion, may that be our passion, may that be our all consuming passion of our life to give ourselves wholly to the task of working and walking in communicating with the Lord that we can be His own blessed children.

Identify with the right cause and people.

Samson was through with befriending Philistines, he identified wholly and at the root of his passion without apology and with no desire for compromise he was standing with the God of Israel and the people of Israel and the Philistines were his enemies. That took a shift, that took a shift.

And you know sometimes we have to do that with some of our acquaintances some of our associations if we have been a bit too apathetic about our walk with the Lord.

Yes I believe here in this case Samson was more fully awake, his vision more unclouded, his energies more alive at his death than at various times in his life.

Well may the all consuming passion of our life be that we would clear ourselves of this awful malady and I think of that in relation to the scripture in second Corinthians 7 and again it is a familiar scripture but I will read it in closing, the Apostle Paul is commenting on the Corinthians response to his letter of reprimand (found in 1 Corinthians) and he says in **2 Corinthians 7:10-11:**

<sup>10</sup> For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

<sup>11</sup> For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves,.....

Samson cleared himself for all time and I believe we will see him in eternity as one that stood and identified with God and His people against those that were the enemies of God and to the cross, *what* clearing of yourselves. He had had such a muddled mix up with them but he cleared himself

.....yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

<sup>14</sup> ..... Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

<sup>15</sup> See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

<sup>16</sup> Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. (**Ephesians 5:14-16**)

May the Lord give us grace as we pursue God's will as we pursue the all consuming passion of our lives.

Shall we kneel for prayer.



## Christian Ethics V Situational Ethics

*From a message by Mast Stoltzfus*

*Millerstown Mennonite Church, 2001*

We would like to think a little bit about Christian ethics and what people sometimes call situational ethics. If you ask people, “Is it right, or is it wrong to do thus and thus?” They say, “Well, it depends on the situation.” That is true to a certain degree.

There are some things that we would not do as a normal matter of course but depending on the situation we would. We do not normally shovel snow on Sunday. However if we need to in order to get the car out and go to church we will do that. Nevertheless, some people say on matters that are explicitly spelled out in the Word of God that even those depend on the situation. They say that they know that divorce and remarriage is not God’s will but “Perhaps I was not the one that instigated the divorce. Perhaps I did all I could to save the marriage. Therefore, because of that I am not responsible for this violation of this commandment.” That is what some people say. “I know I should live alone for the rest of my life but I cannot. I cannot stand the loneliness and I want to be happy.”

What code of ethics do you act upon? What do I act upon? Do I act upon Christian ethics, or do I act upon whatever the situation calls for? We will look at a familiar story. You are probably familiar with this passage. We will go through 1 Samuel and pick out a number of verses that illustrate to me David’s view of ethics and what was right or wrong, and whether the situation changed what was right or wrong or not.

Sometimes we say, “If there was ever a time when it would have been right for David to strike back at Saul it would have been during one of those times when he had Saul at his mercy finally. We will go through and look at some of the times when Saul did what he could to get rid of David for no cause at all. 1 Samuel 18:11 it seems like is the start of all the trouble. After David had killed Goliath and they returned, the women came out and were singing praises to Saul and David. They sang, “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1Samuel 18:7). Verse 8 says, “And Saul was very wroth.”

Then, verse 9 says, “And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.” Verse 10 is his first attempt to take David’s life. David had done nothing wrong. He had done a great thing for the army of Israel by the help of God. Now, he was there “playing” before Saul. It says he “played with his hand,” to cheer him up “as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul’s hand. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice”

Verse 30 again underscores the fact that David was guiltless. He was not worthy of being pursued like this and hunted like an animal. The Scripture says, “David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul.” It said “that his name was much set by.” 1 Samuel 19:9 contains the account of Saul’s his second attempt to take David’s life with his javelin. David returned, which would have taken a lot of courage I would think after he had “close call,” as we would say, before and was playing for King Saul again.

Again, Saul did his best to smite him to the wall but, “he slipped away out of Saul’s presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night” (verse 10). Then, it seemed Saul became more intense in his efforts. He “sent messengers unto David’s house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning” in his bed, but it did not work.

We want to catch a couple of the high points. 1 Samuel 23:5–9 says, “So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. <sup>6</sup>And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand. <sup>7</sup> And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars. <sup>8</sup> And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men. <sup>9</sup> And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod.” Notice in verse 7 that Saul said, “God hath delivered [David] into mine hand.” How far from understanding God’s will could a man get? “He is mine now,” Saul was saying. “Guilty or not he is mine.” In verse 9 David sought direction from God.

Again, here was an attack by, not only Saul, but he brought all the people of war down to get David to take his life. Then, verse 14 says, “And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds.” After this it seems that he took to living in the wilds or somewhere out in the wilderness where he would not be “cornered” as easily. He was “in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day.” This was every day. It seems to me that the king of Israel would have had much more important work to do, but, every day he was out in the wilderness chasing David, hunting him.

Let us go to **1 Samuel 24:1-7** And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David *is* in the wilderness of Engedi. <sup>2</sup> Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. <sup>3</sup> And he came to the sheepecotes by the way, where *was* a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. <sup>4</sup> And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily. <sup>5</sup> And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. <sup>6</sup> And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he *is* the anointed of the LORD. <sup>7</sup> So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on *his* way.

In verse 4 his men were saying “Here it is. God prophesied. Here is your chance. God is giving your enemy back into your hand.” If Saul could say that God had delivered David into his hand then surely David could have said that God had delivered Saul into his hand. Probably most of us can remember that story from our childhood and being fascinated with how that must have been for David. He surely heard Saul and his men coming to the entrance of the cave. I am sure they were as quiet as can be and Saul laid down and went to sleep. David crept up and could have easily taken his life.

I am not sure where the guards were, or if there were no guards. Nevertheless, it does not seem like Saul was very worried about retaliation from David. David's men said, "If there ever were a time, here is your chance now." You know, "Get back at your enemy." That is one thing that people of the world and even we struggle with sometimes in regard to non-resistance. We say "Surely, it is not right to kill or to harm another person." However, a lot of people would draw the line and say, "Unless" depending on the situation, "Unless they come and they intend to harm you. Then, you have a right to retaliate." People say, "You mean to tell me that if someone would come and harm your wife and children you would stand there and let it happen?" We say, "Yes, we would." We would do our best to keep it from happening but we would not use force. We would not retaliate. We would not harm another person in defence of ourselves, or ours.

*Those are Christian ethics, not situational ethics.*

David would have had the right, if he had been like most people today, to cut more than Saul's skirt. If he had acted on the principles that most people operate on, he would have taken his life. Then, he could have been king instead.

Are we like David where we, the things that know are right, are right regardless? Or, do we say that they are right "unless," or "depending on the situation?" I think for most of us, we understand and believe divorce and remarriage to be wrong regardless. That is not a situational ethic. That is a Christian ethic. It is the Bible code of ethics. We believe it is right to seek peace. Let us remember that it is right to seek peace always and not "unless," or "if," but it is always right to seek peace.

*Let us remember too that feelings of bitterness are never justified.*

Is that right? It is never right to feel bitter. Human nature would say, "I know my feelings are not exactly right, but . . . in this situation I am justified in feeling the way I do." That is how we tend to feel. We tend to justify ourselves.

*Some principles to consider: The principle of simplicity.*

Often exceptions are made for that. People say that yes they want to live a simple life, but there are some exceptions made, let us say at a wedding.

Perhaps you can have a few more frills than what we do normally because after all this is a special day.

*Sometimes carnality is excused in young folks because of the situation,* “They are young folks and we expect more spirituality later.” What does the Scripture say? “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Romans 8:6). Does that apply to everyone or does that apply only to the elderly or the middle aged? It is a blanket. It covers us all. Therefore, it does not depend on our age. It does not depend on who we are. Rather it is a Bible code of ethics. Carnality is wrong regardless of whom it is found in, what age they are and what status they have.

*Modesty.* Is that something that depends upon the situation? Many people would say “Yes. It is.” They would have their times when they go swimming or go to the beach where modesty is “thrown to the wind.” They would say, many people would say that in the home the standard of modesty can be different from what it is going abroad. That is not true. Let us remember that modesty is a Bible principle that applies to life and covers it all

*Reserve.* Sometimes when we face hard circumstances we tend to let down our reserve. When we are mourning or sorrowing we may allow or permit some things that we would not at other times. What code of ethics is that?

*Respect.* Sometimes when a person in position of authority acts in a manner that is unbecoming of his office whether it is the President, or a police office or whoever it is, we say “Well, he does not deserve our respect. He does not deserve to be respected.” We justify ourselves and we say that we ought to respect those in authority. Then, we say, “unless,” or “but.” Again, respect for authority is a Bible command that applies to every area of life. It does not matter what the President does. It does not matter how the policeman behaves himself. Regardless, we are commanded to respect. We cannot condone the things that happen and we cannot respect all the actions.

I remember my father telling me once, “We need to respect them for the office.” If we cannot respect them for the things they do, we do respect them for the office they hold. They are placed by God. Let us always remember that. That is not something that depends on their behaviour. It is a blanket principle that covers all of life.

*Business dealings.* Sometimes we say that we have good ideals as to how we think things ought to be done. However, when we are right in the middle of it and it seems so much to our advantage we might just bend the rules a little bit because of the situation. Let us not succumb to that. Let us teach our families that the principles of right and wrong are principles that cover life. They are not principles that merely depend on the situation or circumstance.

God means what He says. David's respect for Saul because he was the Lord's anointed was something that went with him all his life, even after Saul's death. He mourned for him and was very respectful. Let us be that way too where our principles of right and wrong, our code of ethics is not something that changes with time and with circumstances if we let it change or if we make exceptions there is really no stopping place.

Let us remember Satan often whispers (I think) to us and to many people. "Somehow I am an exception." He must. We can probably all think of people who have a very good knowledge of what the Bible requires of holiness and of purity and all of that. Yet, they live in direct contrast to it. How can people do that? It seems to me that the only way we, or anyone, can know the Bible and live in violation to it and go through life that way is if we somehow think that either hell is not real — it is not as bad as what God has said — or that somehow we will escape — somehow we will be different — our situation will be a bit different. We will be the exception. It seems to me that is the only way that we could go through life like so many people do.

When God commands, when He makes rules, when He gives commandments, they must be universally applied. They must be in our lives every day. Jesus said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14). He did not say "most of the time, when it is convenient." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4, 20) is a true statement. Let us never think that we can somehow get around that or somehow break the command of God because the situation called for it.

I wonder what would have happened if David had listened to his men's advice? It seemed like good advice I am sure because of the situation, and

circumstances. I wonder what would have happened if he had used his spear or his sword and would have slain Saul? We do not know. It seems to me that he was blessed richly for his respect and for his sticking to principle regardless of the situation. That is how it will be for us. If we stick to principle and stick to it unwaveringly regardless of the situation, then we will experience a blessing.

Again, I would plead with all of us as parents that we teach to our children to act on the principles of right and wrong and not to make a lot of exceptions, not to have a lot of “ifs,” “buts,” “unless,” or “well, it depends.” Rather, we know what is right. It is always wrong to lie. It is always wrong to steal. It is always wrong to run down another’s character. It is always wrong. There are no exceptions. May this encourage us. May we remember David and his determination to stand by the truth and to live by it. We will be blessed.



### **Faith that Worketh by Love**

*Junior Stutzman Fryburg Beachy Fellowship*

Peter says in his first epistle 1 Peter 1:2, 3, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. (3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

Do we feel the thankfulness as Peter expressed himself in honour and praise to God? Are we thankful that He hath begotten us? Are we thankful that we can be born again as new believers in Christ? This is through God’s abundant mercy that He works in us. This lively hope is worth more than the whole world, for it cannot be bought with gold or silver. It cannot be obtained except through the New Birth. The New Birth is the work of God, which is through His great love and compassion. This is why Jesus was sent down here, because of God’s great love and compassion. Out of pure grace, God works in us through the Holy Spirit, so that we can live a victorious life through Jesus Christ.

We ourselves are no match for Satan. This is where we depend on our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to guide and direct us and to lead us into life everlasting.

The topic that I was assigned we find in Galatians 5:6b where it says, “faith which worketh by love.” Let us read Galatians 5:1–6. This is in the transition period when they changed over from the Mosaic law to the New Testament dispensation of grace. Paul makes it clear in these first couple of verses, when we talk about the law and the act of circumcision, that grace from Jesus Christ simply do not mix. They are two and totally separate. **Galatians 5:1-6** <sup>1</sup> Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. <sup>2</sup> Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. <sup>3</sup> For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. <sup>4</sup> Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. <sup>5</sup> For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. <sup>6</sup> For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

We are glad that we have this opportunity today to live on this side of the cross under the dispensation of grace. We have appropriation for our sins. We can come to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, if we do make mistakes. This is not our goal, but in man’s human frailty, things like that happen. This is why I say again that we are glad that we are living on this side of the cross under the new dispensation of Grace.

In verse 4 Paul says that “whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” Falling from grace is to use the impossible ground of justification by the law. It means, “to leave, abandon, or fall away from grace.” The only basis of justification is through Jesus Christ. We do not depend on the law but through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

I had the privilege of accompanying my mother, after my father had passed away, to a doctor not close to home. As he examined her, he asked her this one question. Nothing was said about religion before or after, but he asked this one question, “What do you base your salvation on?” I was always glad for the answer, and as time goes on it gets more dear to me my

mother replied: “On the shed blood of Jesus Christ.” As time goes on and I look back and I get older that is precious to me.

Galatians 6:14 says, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” This is talking about three crosses. Three crucifixions are in view. First is the crucifixion of Christ. His sacrificial death on the cross provided our salvation. Second is the crucifixion of the world, its pleasures, honours and treasures. Anything that hinders us from full blessings must be rejected. Third, we as believers are crucified and are no longer responsible to the world’s temptations.

The first cross speaks of the basis of our salvation. The second deals with the results of our salvation, and the third points to living out that salvation from day to day. God forbid that we should glory in anything but the cross of Christ where He went to pay the ransom price for our sin.

An example of “faith which worketh by love,” is the account of the stoning of Stephen, the first Christian martyr in Acts 7:54–60. If we want to read the full account of that we need to start in Acts 7:2. Verse 54 says, “When they heard these things.” Stephen preached to them about how their fathers had dealt with the prophets. Then he said, “As your fathers did, so do ye” (verse 51). He was presenting their deeds. In our day and age, plain criticism usually hurts. However, when someone has constructive criticism, we need to have a listening ear — when it is there for our benefit.

“When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.” They were irritated, or they were in a rage. Stephen was filled with faith and the Holy Spirit to deliver God’s message faithfully without fear and favour. In exchange for his love for his people, and his faithfulness in delivering the message that God had given him, he was rejected and hated by the Jews. At that time they did not accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. This is the way it is with some of the Jews. Yes, I think there are some that have probably been converted, but many of them do not accept Jesus as their own personal Saviour. Verse 55 says, “But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up

stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.”

Many times we hear that Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God interceding for us, and this is right. However, here it tells us that Stephen saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Today, we do not see Him with our actual eye, but with our spiritual eye. We cannot see Him, but we know that He is there. How do we know? The Scriptures tell us so. Stephen knew the peace of God. Instead of being disturbed and frightened by his enemies, he fixed his eyes on heaven and actually saw what believers today see by faith. He saw the glory of God and Jesus standing. I would imagine He was standing with outstretched arms to receive Stephen. He knew what would befall him.

“<sup>56</sup>And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. <sup>57</sup>Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears.” They did not want to hear any more. Stephen was “Look[ing] up stedfastly into heaven.”

Here too is a lesson for us and the present day Christians. We should be looking up as we read in **Colossians 3:1-4** <sup>1</sup>If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. <sup>3</sup>For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. If we are dead unto sin, and have risen with Christ, seek those things which are above. We set our affection on things that are above not on things below that tend to hinder us and draw away from our goals that we need to have.

When they cast their stones, they laid their clothes at a young man’s feet whose name was Saul. Saul took an interest in Stephen being stoned because he was there to persecute the Church. However, I think after Saul saw the glory of God on Stephen’s face, that he never really forgot that. This probably had a lasting effect on him. When he was on his way to Damascus and the bright light shone around him and he was on the ground he said, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6) Again, if we talk about “faith which worketh by love,” Paul’s life journey, his missionary journeys would be enough to talk about. I do not intend to go into that.

“And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (verse 59). The touching part of it is in the last verse where it says, “And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Why would it make special mention here that he “cried with a loud voice?” Did he need to do that in order that God would hear him? I do not think so. I think God would have heard him in the faintest whisper. He wanted all his persecutors around him to know that he was praying for them. “I do not hold anything against you or against anyone. ‘Lay not this sin to their charge.’”

What did Jesus say when He was on the cross? “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Is this what I can say when things do not go exactly the way I expect? Or, when someone says something about me? I was talking about criticism. Can I accept it that way? These words probably played an important part in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. These probably stayed with him for the rest of his life.

In closing let us turn to Philippians 2:12 “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” This gives us a clear picture of a father with his sons or daughters, whatever it might be. I have said it before. “Faith which worketh by love.” This is a natural illustration of teaching our children. Sometimes we see this. I am not saying I succeeded in all things. I did not. If we can get the children to obey willingly, in our presence, we can have that confidence that if we are absent, they will want to obey also, even if we are not there to see them. There again it is, “Faith which worketh by love.”

Why would it say, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling?” We know that we are not on a merit system, where our good works outweigh the bad. That is not the way it is.

**Ephesians 2:8-10** says, <sup>8</sup>For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: <sup>9</sup>Not of works, lest any man should boast. <sup>10</sup>For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

That is the answer to it. “Work out your own salvation in fear and trembling.” After we have received the New Birth, then it is like it says

here, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Or, we might say, work in them.

If we have attained that and achieved that New Birth then good works will follow. Good works do not make a Christian, but a Christian produces good works, “that we should walk in them.” “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). That is the reason that we should walk in them — for “his good pleasure.” “Do all things without murmurings and disputings: <sup>15</sup> That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; <sup>16</sup> Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. .” **Philippians 2:14-16**

Many times we see in different instances where people look at it as “our church standards” and they live in bondage. Sometimes I think it proves itself that certain people do live in bondage because of the lack of the love that they have to God and to the Church. In contrast it is not bondage if it is “Faith that worketh by love,” because the people love what they are doing. They want to do it.

It is like a natural illustration. If you see a buggy go by with a horse in there, he is willing to go. He is riding the bit, the next one they keep needing to push and push. That gives the two opposites. “Faith that worketh by love.”

If we have a love to God, to Jesus and the Church, then our church standards are not a bondage to us. Again, let us say, “Faith which worketh by love.” May God bless.



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