



The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)
So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

Volume 6, No. 11

Issue # 611

The Intermediate State

The Intermediate state of man — what is the intermediate state? If you ask some people what they know about the intermediate state you may get a blank expression. I trust that we are aware of the fact that in the Eighteen Articles of Faith — the Mennonite Confession of faith (from Garden City) we have a statement on what we believe on the intermediate state of man. It says:

“We believe that in the interval between death and resurrection, the righteous will be with Christ in a state of conscious bliss and comfort, but that the wicked will be in a place of torment, in a state of conscious suffering and despair.”

I believe that. I believe that you believe it. I was impressed to discover how much the Scriptures have to say about the intermediate state of man. This

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is something that maybe as people become older they become more interested in. However, I do not believe we need to be old to wonder what happens after death. This is a question that has perplexed the minds of many, many people through the years. In fact, in the days of Job, Job raised some questions relating to the intermediate state. I would like to read from Job 14 and pick out several verses. In verses 1 and 2 Job says, “Man that is born

of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. (2) He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.” Verse 5 says, “Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.” Verses 7–10 says, “For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. (8) Though the

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Published by Door of Peace Publications/Les Éditions «Porte-de-Paix» a conservative Amish Mennonite/Anabaptist publisher
c/o Keith G. White, P.O. Box 104, Blyth, Ontario Canada N0M 1H0

Cost per Issue \$4.95 + \$2.50 p& h Canada/ \$3.50 p& h USA

root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; (9) Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. (10) But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" Job says. Where is the man after death?

In verse 14 Job says, "If a man die, shall he live again?" These are two questions that have perplexed many people through the years. Where is the man? Where do we go when we die? And, Is there life after death? "If a man die, shall he live again?" These are questions that the Scriptures answer for us authoritatively. These are questions that we cannot find the answer for anywhere else. We must go to the Word of God. I am thankful that we have an authoritative answer to these questions.

The intermediate state, as we have noticed from the article of faith, refers to the place, or the condition of man between death and the resurrection. We know about death. We have loved ones who die and those close to us — neighbours. We know that death is something that faces us all, unless the Lord comes first, but what happens to a person at the point of death.

Before we look at that I would

like to briefly explain what death itself is. Death is portrayed to us in the Scriptures in several different ways, or several different kinds of death. In each of these we see that death is always a separation. Spiritual death is a separation from God. Adam and Eve, when they sinned in the garden, experienced spiritual death. God told them, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). That is what happened. They did not die physically but they died spiritually. There was a separation between them and God.

Physical death is a separation of the spirit being from the body. When I refer to the spirit being, I am referring to the spirit and the soul of man. Man is threefold — spirit, soul and body. The body is what we see. The spirit and the soul are the real you, the real me. We do not see that but that spirit being is separated from the body at the point of physical death. We read in Acts 7 about the stoning of Stephen. It tells us how that they stoned Stephen, "calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). He was at the very point of death. He said, "receive my spirit." Thus, at death the spirit being is separated from the body.

In Genesis 35:18 we read about the death of Rachel, “And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died).” Then it goes on to tell about her death and her burial. Her soul was departing. Death was at hand. Physical death is a separation of the spirit being from the body. James 2:26 says, “the body without the spirit is dead.”

One other type of death that we want to call our attention to is spoken of in the Scripture is the second death. The second death is also a separation, that is, the eternal separation of the ungodly from God.

In order to understand the intermediate state, we ought to look at some Biblical terminology that sometimes is confused among us. We read words sometimes and think we know what they mean and maybe we misunderstand the message of the Scripture because we do not really understand what those words mean. The first word I think we do understand. I want to refer to the term *grave* as it is used in the Scripture. It can mean several things, but generally the word *grave* in the Scriptures refers to the burying place where these bodies go at the point of physical death. These bodies which are made of dust are put into the grave and they return to dust.

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for grave is *qeber* [Strong’s # 6913]. 2 Samuel 3:32 tells us about when Abner was deceitfully slain by Joab and how that David wept and followed after the bier to the burying place. It tells us that David stood at the grave and he wept. He said, “Died Abner as a fool dieth” (verse 33)? He was slain deceitfully. Remember how Joab called him aside as if he wanted to speak a few words secretly with him and he smote him under the fifth rib. David was there. He followed the casket to the grave, the place where the body would be interred and he wept there. In John 11, we are told about Jesus and how he wept at the grave of Lazarus. The grave as we are thinking of it here is the sepulchre — the tomb — the place of interment. It is the place that the body goes. However, this word grave is also translated, having some other meanings in the Scripture, which we will look at shortly.

Let us look into the Old Testament specifically. In the Old Testament in our English Bibles there are three English words that are translated from one Hebrew word. The Hebrew word is *sheol* [Strong’s # 7585]. This word means, “The world of the dead.” It is not referring to

the place where the body goes — this tabernacle that we put off — but is referring to a waiting place, a temporary, an intermediate state — *sheol*. This Hebrew word *sheol* in the Old Testament is translated into three English words and those words are *hell*, *grave*, and *pit*. Therefore, when the word *grave* is translated from the Hebrew word *sheol* it does not mean the place where the body is put, but it means the intermediate state — the waiting place. That is what it is referring to.

Some Scriptures which point this out. For lack of time I will simply refer to what is contained in these Scriptures. The first of these three English words that is translated from the word *Sheol*, referring to the intermediate state, the world of the dead, the waiting place, the place where the spirit being goes, in the Old Testament we are talking now, is the word *hell*. Isaiah 14:15 refers to Lucifer and how he had exalted himself and God said, “Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.”

Then, in Psalm 16:10, we have a prophetic Scripture, speaking of Christ and His death and burial and the fact that the grave could not contain Him, nor could the intermediate state contain Christ. There the prophecy in

Psalm 16:10 says, “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell.” Soul refers to the spirit — the soul being. Was he speaking of a place of punishment? No, he was speaking of a waiting place — the intermediate state. “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

The first part of the verse refers to the spirit being and that the intermediate state could not keep Christ any longer than what God allowed Him there. The last part of the verse refers to the body. “Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” His body was only in the grave three days. It was not long enough for it decay away. These would be two references in the Old Testament where the word *sheol* is translated into the word *hell* and it means the intermediate state — the waiting place — the world of the dead. It does not mean the final place of judgment.

The next word is the word *grave*. I call your attention to one reference in Genesis 37. It speaks of Joseph’s brethren and how they came to Jacob their father and told him the lie. They said that his son Joseph was slain and gave him the coat of many colours which was torn and blood stained and Jacob wept and mourned. He said, “It is my

son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces" (Genesis 37:33). Then, Jacob made this remarkable statement, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning" (Genesis 37:35). Was he referring about being buried? No, he was referring about going to the intermediate state at the point of death. One of the reasons that we know that he was not referring to going into the grave — his body being buried, was the fact that he believed that Joseph had been consumed by a wild beast. There would have been no burial. He was not talking about his body going into the grave. Rather, but he was talking about going down into *sheol*. That is what he was referring to.

The third word is the word *pit*. One reference here would be in Numbers 16 where Korah, Dathan, and Abiram had risen up against Moses. Remember how God brought judgment upon them. It says, "The earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and . . . they . . . went down alive into the pit" (Numbers 16:32, 33). The word *pit* there is translated from the word *sheol*. They went down alive. They went down like that into the intermediate state — the waiting place — the world of the dead. When these three words *hell*,

grave and *pit* are translated from the word *sheol* they always refer to the same place and that is the intermediate state, the waiting place of the spirit being between that interval of death and the resurrection (speaking of the Old Testament now).

In the New Testament these "three-in-one" words are reversed. In the Old Testament we have three English words translated from one Hebrew word. In the New Testament we have one English word translated from three Greek words. These words are *hades* [Strong's # 86], *tartarus* [Strong's # 5020], and *Gehenna* [Strong's # 1067]. These words *hades*, *tartarus*, and *Gehenna* in the New Testament Scriptures are generally translated into the word *hell*.

When you read the word *hell* in the New Testament Scriptures, and it is translated from the Greek word *hades*, it is referring to the same thing that the Old Testament *sheol* referred to. That is the intermediate state — the waiting place, the place of departed souls. In Revelation 1:18 Jesus said, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." He refers here of hell and death. He is referring to *hades* and the *grave*. Hell here

was the intermediate state, and Jesus was saying, “I have the keys to the intermediate state.” Not only does He hold the keys to the intermediate state but He also holds the keys to the grave where the body goes. He holds those keys because He is the one who lives but he was dead and behold He is alive forevermore. The power of the resurrection has granted to Him those keys.

Also, in Psalm 16:10 I referred to that prophecy, “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” That prophecy was repeated after it became history, it was repeated in Acts 2:27. “Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” In the Old Testament reference the word for hell is *sheol* and in the New Testament reference the word is *hades* referring to the intermediate state.

I would like to turn now to Luke 16. This is a familiar portion. Here we see a picture of the intermediate state which was yet in the Old Testament setting. We will spend a little time on this later, but in Luke 16 we have the account of the rich man and Lazarus. It tells us about Lazarus and how he died, “that the beggar died, and was carried by the

angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments” (Luke 16:22, 23). Here it is literally, “in hades” — in the intermediate state — the waiting place of the spirit beings between death and the resurrection.

The word *tartarus* in the New Testament, this Greek word is also translated as hell, and this refers to some place different from the intermediate state. I believe it is a special place prepared for the devil and his angels. The Scriptures refer to it, I believe, as a “bottomless pit” or the “deep.” 2 Peter 2:4 says, “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.” In Luke 8:31 we have the account of Jesus casting those devils out of the Gadarene demoniac and Jesus spoke to the demons “And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.” I am suggesting that they may have been referring to this place — the depthless abyss — the bottomless pit. They did not want to go there. I do not think they were referring to be sent forth into the water. Rather they were referring to, I believe, *tartarus*. Revelation 20:1–3 tells us about how that

angel “bound” Satan and cast him into the bottomless pit and the word there is translated from the word *abyssos* [Strong’s #12].

The third Greek word is the word *Gehenna* which is also translated hell in the New Testament Scriptures. This word refers to the final hell — the final place of punishment for the ungodly. In our articles of faith, number 18, “Of the Final State,” it says, “We believe that hell,” (this is *Gehenna*) “is the place of torment, prepared for the devil and his angels, where with them the wicked will suffer the vengeance of eternal fire forever and ever,” and that is *Gehenna*. In Mark 9:43, 45, 47, Jesus speaks of the necessity and the urgency of our being prepared to meet God and our not allowing anything to hinder us from being ready. In that context He says, “it is better for thee to enter into life maimed [or halt], than . . . to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched.” “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44, 46, 48). It goes over that three times in that portion. It speaks of a place “where [the] worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” It is speaking of *Gehenna*, the final place of judgment and torment for the wicked. Revelation 19:20 speaks of this.

Revelation 21:8; 20:10, 14, 15 also speak of this place.

We want to think about the occupants of the intermediate state, and we want to enlarge a little bit upon this. The Bible teaches us more about the intermediate state than what we have noticed thus far. I trust you will bear with me a little longer. I want to explain some things that I believe are important for us to understand. For the sake of illustrating, you may have in your mind the question, “How is it that . . . ‘But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he’” (Job 14:10)? Or, you may have the question in your mind, “Do the righteous dead and the ungodly dead go to the same place?”

For the sake of illustration, I would like for you to imagine with me several planes here. Let us call this plane “life.” That is what we are experiencing today — life — we are living. We are here on this earth. We have life and breath. We are moving about. We have responsibilities. We are in the land of the dying but we are living yet. That is this plane. Then, we will refer to the plane below it as death and that is the grave. We spoke about the grave as the place where the body goes. In the Old Testament, when a man died and he left this

plane of life, he left it and his body went into this plane which was the grave. This is death. He went from life to death. The body goes into the waiting place, or its waiting place. Then, the bottom line we will refer to here as hell, which in the Old Testament, as I pointed out, was *sheol* — the waiting place. In this upper plane is life where the living are. Below it is death where the body is of those who have gone on to their reward. Then, on this lowest level is hell where the spirit beings wait for the resurrection. This is Old Testament now.

You may say again, “You mean to tell me that here is where the righteous dead are as well as the unrighteous dead?” Yes, I believe that is what the Scripture teaches us. However, I want to quickly hasten on to say that this bottom plain of hell (*sheol* in the Old Testament) was a place that had two compartments. It is a place that we see from Luke 16 that was divided by a great gulf. There was no passing from one place to the other. Also, the Scripture indicates very clearly to us that while *sheol* is a broad term, referring to that waiting place of the departed spirit beings of the righteous and the unrighteous, it was a place that had a division within itself. It

had two compartments. We will refer to the place where the righteous dead (where their spirit was) as the comfort compartment. Picture Lazarus. Luke 16:22 tells us he “was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” Abraham was in the comfort compartment. It was a place of conscious bliss.

We do not believe in soul sleeping — that in this interval that man has no idea as to what is happening — he is completely out of reality. We do not believe that. The body sleeps in the grave and the Scripture refers to them that “sleep in the dust” (Job 7:21; Daniel 12:2), referring to the body. However, the spirit being does not sleep in the intermediate state. Rather, the spirit being of the righteous dead in the Old Testament was in a place of comfort and conscious bliss. What a wonderful picture to look upon. That was the place that Jacob was referring to when he said, “I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning” (Genesis 37:35), because he expected to meet Joseph in *sheol* and to be comforted there.

The other compartment in *sheol*, we will refer to as the suffering section. It tells us also here in Luke 16:22, 23 that “the rich man also died, and was buried; (23) And in hell he lift up

his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off.” There was a great separation. While both of these places are referred to as sheol there was a great separation. He was the rich man in torments, and afar off he saw Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom. Then, it says “he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame” (Luke 16:24). It is a place of suffering. I believe that the rich man still suffers in sheol in the suffering section. He is waiting for the resurrection as are all those who have died, all the ungodly are waiting in that same suffering section of the spirit beings. The bodies of them are in the grave, many of them have long since turned to dust but the spirit beings are still in that suffering in sheol.

“But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. (26) And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence” (Luke 16:25, 26).

Then he continues. This rich man pleads. In the agony of his state (the intermediate state) he pleads, “I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: (28) For I have five brethren” (Luke 16:27, 28). He did not want them to come there. Sometimes people say, “Well, if I get to hell, I will have plenty of company.” I do not think they will want company. The rich man did not. “If only,” he said, “If someone would return from the dead to warn my brethren, then they would surely listen.” What did Abraham say? “They have Moses and the prophets. . . If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke 16:29, 31).

It is good for us to think about where this place is. Personally, I will not be dogmatic on this but I believe the Scripture would bear out that sheol in the Old Testament was somewhere in the heart of the earth. Jacob said, “I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning” (Genesis 37:35). Of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, the Bible says “the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and . . . They . . . went down alive into the pit” (Numbers 16:32, 33). It was down. Ephesians 4:9, speaking

of Jesus says, “Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended,” where? “first into the lower parts of the earth?” On that basis, I believe that this waiting place sheol is somewhere in the heart of the earth.

It does not matter where we stand on this old world, down is always toward the centre of the earth, is it not? We cannot make a comparison with up because up is any direction depending where you are standing on the earth.

Personally, I believe, that after the death and the resurrection, after Jesus ascended back into heaven the waiting place of the righteous dead was changed. I do not believe that it is any longer in the heart of the earth. I believe that there is actually now a greater gulf fixed than what there was here on this occasion. I will refer to a few Scriptures shortly that I think will substantiate that. Jesus said to the thief on the cross who said, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. (43) And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:42, 43). That was still Old Testament. I believe that they went and found themselves together in the comfort compartment of sheol. However, the Scriptures tell us that Jesus

ascended up on high.

We read that in Ephesians 4:8–10, “Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (9) (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? (10) He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)” He ascended far above all heavens. When Satan wanted to usurp the authority, he said, “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north” (Isaiah 14:13). He wanted the position that God had. When Jesus “ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” I personally believe that the waiting place of the righteous dead at that point was changed.

Another Scripture in connection with this, the apostle Paul says, “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven” (2 Corinthians 12:2). Shortly after that he says, “How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for

a man to utter” (2 Corinthians 12:4). He did not tell us what they were, but that he saw the glories and the comfort of paradise — the place where the “spirits of just men made perfect” (Hebrews 12:23), are waiting for the resurrection.

John 20:17 would give us an indication of when this all happened. Remember that when Jesus had risen, one of the women was there in the garden looking for Him. Jesus drew nigh and spoke to her and she thought that He was the gardener. In John 20:15–17, “Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. (16) Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. (17) Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.”

I believe that Jesus had already done what is spoken of in 1 Peter 3:18–20, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us

to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: (19) By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; (20) Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.” It says that He went and preached to the spirits that were in prison. Sometime following that, but before He ascended He had the encounter with Mary.

Ephesians 4:8 tells us, “When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” Coming back to our lines again, there is the plane of life and the plane of death, and below that is hell. I would say that above that all is Paradise. Therefore today, in the New Testament, when an unbeliever departs this life, the body goes to the grave and the spirit being goes to sheol, the waiting place the place of torment. It is a temporary place but it is a place of torment. In contrast, when the believer, the righteous dies, the body does go to the grave, but the spirit goes to paradise, the spirit being, to that place of conscious bliss and comfort.

Let us look at a few more Scriptures. The question may be

on your mind, “What after the intermediate state?” I realize that is not my topic. Maybe I should stop here, but I would like to point to a few more Scriptures because the intermediate state is only a temporary place. There is something coming. There is something to follow, not only for the righteous but for the wicked. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, the apostle Paul says, “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.” He is referring to those who have loved ones who have died in the Lord. The body is asleep in the grave. Maybe they wondered where are our loved ones? What is their state? Paul says, “I do not want you to be left in the dark on this matter. We know where they are.” He says, “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. (15) For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent” (that word means to precede or go before) “them which are asleep. (16) For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of

God: and the dead” (those which are in this second plain) “in Christ shall rise first: (17) Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (18) Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thessalonians 4:14–18).

Now, you may ask, “How does the spirit being and the body that resurrected out of the grave get together?” I believe that is answered here. He says, “even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” When Christ comes, He will bring the spirit beings along from paradise and they will be united with bodies that are no longer corruptible but they are incorruptible. They are changed and made fit to inhabit eternity. They will go before us and “we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.” What about our bodies? Must they not be changed too? 1 Corinthians 15:50 tells us “that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.” “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep.” That is what Paul was saying to the Thessalonians. There will be

some who “are alive and remain.” Therefore, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (52) In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (54) So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. (55) O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? (56)

The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. (57) But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (58) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” (Verses 51–58).

I am sure that this discourse does not answer all the questions about the intermediate state, but it does satisfy a lot of questions that I have had in my mind. I believe that the Scriptures would fortify what we have endeavoured to share with you.

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Voluntary Concept of Church Membership

From a message by Galen Weaver

Sunday, July 30, 2006

Danville Mennonite Church

Voluntary Church Membership

From a message by Duane Miller

Sunday, April 03, 2005

Vineland Mennonite Church

Book Reprint (Continued)

One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study

LESSON 46.

Christian Graces. — Concluded.

IV. Long-suffering.

1. Another name for Christian forbearance. (See Ephesians 4:2, 3; Colossians 3:12, 13.)
2. A natural outgrowth of a peaceable disposition. (See James 3:17.)

V. Gentleness.

1. A description of true wisdom. — James 3:17.
2. A few characteristics of those who are strong in the Lord.
 - a. Wise as serpents and harmless as doves. — Matthew 10:16.
 - b. The lion and the lamb dwelling in the same heart. — (See Isaiah 11:6.)

NOTE. — The power of gentleness is forcibly illustrated in the old fable of the wind and the sun.

VI. Goodness.

1. Not an inherent quality of man. — Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 19:37.
2. What we are, we are by the grace of God.

3. Characteristics of God's people. — 1 Peter 2:9; Titus 2:14; 3:8; Romans 15:14.

NOTE. — When, by the grace of God, His goodness is affected in our unprofitable lives, the same is made manifest in deeds of mercy, deeds of kindness, abstinence from evil ways, and a conscientious regard for duty to self, to fellow man, and to God.

VII. Faith.

NOTE. — Considered in chapter 28.

VIII. Meekness.

1. Christ the example. — Matthew 11:29; Luke 23:34; 1 Peter 2:23.

2. Followed by the apostles. — Acts 5:41; 7:60.

3. To be followed by us. — Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:2; 1 Timothy 6:11; James 1:21.

4. The blessings of meekness. — Psalm 22:26; 25:9; Isaiah 29:19; Matthew 5:5.

NOTE. — No other Christian virtue stands out in more direct opposition to the natural man than meekness.

IX. Temperance.

1. In eating. — Proverbs 23:1–3.

2. In drinking. — Ephesians 5:18; Proverbs 20:1; 23:20, 21; Titus 1:7.

3. In all things. — 1 Corinthians 9:25; Titus 1:8; 2:2; 2 Peter 1:6.

4. A rule. — 1 Corinthians 10:31.

5. Observations.

a. The Bible considers the temperance question in its broadest sense.

b. Alcohol should not be used as a beverage because it is a poison.

c. It is equally as sinful to drink poison as to eat it.

d. Considering the poverty, wretchedness, crime, immorality, etc., etc., that is brought about by the liquor traffic, it is hard to understand how any Christian can support the same by patronizing saloons, signing saloon licenses, or indulging in moderate drinking.

e. The true Christian is temperate in all things.

“Against such there is no law.” The fruits of a divine life flow out

unrestrained. These are attributes of the Christian character, not because of force of law, but because the life of God in the soul is reflected in outward life. To be a freeman in Christ Jesus is the only state of perfect liberty.

1. Name the synonyms for long-suffering; for gentleness; for goodness; for meekness.
2. Do the Christian graces come instantaneously, or by constant growth?
3. Contrast the moral man out of Christ, with the righteous man in Christ.
4. Distinguish between the fruit of the Spirit and works of the Spirit.
5. Does the phrase “temperate in all things” apply to the use of tobacco and intoxicating liquors?

LESSON 47.

The Prodigal Son.

[Luke 15:11–32]

The parable of the prodigal son presents two pictures. The first picture is a true representation of human life. The world is an aggregation of prodigals, wandering away from a Father’s Mansion. God’s kingdom on earth is composed of prodigal sons and prodigal daughters, some of whom are still under the Father’s roof (childhood innocency), and others have once been away from home and have again returned to the fold (the church of Christ). The second picture represents the Pharisees. Many incline to the opinion that this parable was intended as a direct rebuke to them. In the following outline we present the various stages in the career of the prodigal son, together with the interpretation:

- I. Stages in his career. Interpretation.
 1. Childhood Childhood innocence.
 2. Allotment of goods Years of accountability.
 3. Journey to far-off country Drifting into sin.
 4. Riotous living Sinful indulgence.
 5. Famine Immediate result of sin.
 6. Joined to a citizen Pollution with sin, as adultery, drunkenness, gambling, stealing, lying, covetousness, etc.

7. Straited circumstances Wretchedness of sin.
8. Thinks of home Meditation on Father's love.
9. Penitence Sorrow for sin.
10. Journey homeward Seeking God's pardoning grace.
11. The confession Acknowledgment of sin.
12. The father's response Forgiveness.
13. Adopted as a son Adopted into God's happy family.
14. Joy and plenty Abundance of grace and joy.

NOTE. — Four steps to Salvation: Conviction, Contrition, Confession, Conversion.

II. The elder son rebuked.

NOTE. — The same pharisaical spirit is sometimes shown today, when the social and financial standing of the convert determines the degree of warmth with which the convert is received into fellowship by his fellow-professors.

III. Lessons presented in this parable.

1. It is not necessary for children to go out into sin.
2. When they do go out, the sooner they return the better.
3. Sin wins no enduring victories.
4. Money will always buy friends, such as they are.
5. The friends which money buys are the first to desert when the money gives out.
6. The longer the slavery of sin is submitted to, the more oppressive and galling it becomes.
7. Servitude in the house of God is heaven compared with voluntary slavery in sin.
8. God hears the cries that come from the darkest corner of earth.
9. There is pardon for the chiefest of sinners.
10. Our Father stands waiting to welcome the return of the lost.
11. Instead of taking them in as servants, He makes them sons, and heirs of glory.
12. Since the privilege of returning will not always last, sinners should seek the Saviour while He may be found.

1. What circumstances led our Saviour to relate this parable?
2. Who is represented by the elder son?

3. What lessons do we learn from the elder son's attitude toward his brother upon the latter's return?

4. Can men lead lives acceptable to God by endeavour-

ing to lead pious lives themselves, without doing what they can for the salvation of others?

5. Why did not the father allow the prodigal to finish his confession and petition?

Children's Book Reprint *continued* **The Little Woodchopper**

The untiring efforts of their brother William for their salvation were not in vain. One after the other came to the knowledge of their condition before God,, lost and ruined, and not long after received living faith in Christ. From this time on, it was their joy to read the Word of God in fellowship with William and his family, and bow their knees before the God of their salvation and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus the fervent prayers of their father and grandmother were answered, and although neither had received the answer in this scene, yet God did according to their desires in His own good time and way.

William and his wife outlived his brothers many years, and enjoyed the privilege of seeing their children's children grow up, instructed in the truths of God. William often told his grandchildren the wonderful ways in which God had led him in his childhood, and often cried out

with the Apostle:

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!” Romans 11:33.

Now to the young readers of this narrative — may God in His grace lead you to early seek Jesus and His light, that you may be kept from the paths of sin, and to go through this world with Him, as His possession, to the praise of His glorious name. The Lord is ever rich in grace and mercy toward all that call on Him while it is called Today.

“Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation.” 2 Corinthians 6:2.

I will sing of my Redeemer,
And His wondrous love to me;
On the cruel cross He suffered,
From the curse to set me free.

— REFRAIN —

Sing, O sing of my Redeemer!
With His blood He purchased

me;

On the cross He sealed my pardon,

Paid the debt and made me free.

I was lost, but Jesus found me,
Found the sheep that went astray;

Threw His loving arms around me,

Drew me back into His way.

I will tell the wondrous story,
How my lost estate to save,
In His boundless love and mercy,

He the ransom freely gave.

I will praise my dear Redeemer,

His triumphant power I'll tell!

How the victory He giveth

Over sin and death and hell.

Youth Book Reprint

Andrew Dunn: An Irish Story

Andrew Dunn: An Irish Story

**The Remarkable Narrative of Andrew Dunn's
Conversion by Reading the New Testament**

by Thomas Kelly

Andrew Dunn was educated a Roman Catholic, and continued till he was about forty years of age, like his neighbors, taking for granted that everything his clergy told him was true. He was a shrewd, sensible man; but his sagacity, 'till this time, had been exercised merely on the affairs of this world. About the age of forty he began to think of the Gospel of Christ and his own ignorance upon the subject, and he determined to make some inquiries in a matter upon which the Salvation of his soul turned.

First Interview with Father Dominick.

Accordingly he went to Father Dominick, the priest of his parish, and told him that he

wished to have a little conversation with his reverence. "Well, Andrew," said his reverence, "what have you to say to me?"

"Why, please your reverence, I have been thinking for some time

back that though I can strike a bargain well enough with a neighbor, I am nearly as ignorant about the Gospel as a horse or a cow, and this I do not think becoming in me. Will your reverence be so kind as to put me in the way of getting some knowledge in this matter?"

"Why," answered he, "Andrew, I never missed you at confession, nor at Mass, and you are a very honest fellow; what more do you want than this?"

"Why, then, sir, to tell you the truth, if any one was to ask me why I am a member of the Catholic Church I could not tell him, unless I was to say that my father was so before me, and this, with submission, I think a very foolish reason."

"But don't you know, Andrew," replied his reverence, "that you belong to the Holy Mother Church, and that there is no other true Church, and that all who do not belong to her communion are heretics, and will be damned?"

"I have often," said Andrew, "heard your reverence say as much in the chapel; but, with submission, may make bold to ask your reverence how you know all this?"

"Andrew you are the first of my flock who ever dared to ask me such a question, and I do not

understand such liberties! However your question is easily answered. I know it, because the Church says so."

Andrew was a little dismayed at first, but recovering himself, said, "May I make so bold to ask your reverence, how came you to be so sure that the Church can make no mistake in these matters? For your reverence knows that it is but reasonable that a man should be a little inquisitive where he may lose or gain so much."

With an air of triumph Father Dominick answered: "If you will ask questions, know then that Jesus Christ has promised to be with His Church to the end of the world, and this makes her infallible, that is, incapable of error."

"This, indeed, is something to the point," cried Andrew; "and if your reverence will make this matter plain to me I shall be easy in my mind for ever after."

Father Dominick, glad to get rid of him on such easy terms, told him that the promise of Jesus Christ was to be found in the last chapter and last verse of the Gospel by St. Matthew, and having the promise at his fingers' ends, he repeated it over in Latin for the benefit of Andrew.

"All this," cried Andrew, "may be very fine and very good for anything I know to the contrary;

but, please your reverence, I do not understand one word you say.”

“I know that very well,” replied Father Dominick; “we take care, for the benefit of our flock, to reserve the power of explaining such passages to them according to the true interpretation put upon them by the Church.”

“With submission,” said Andrew, “may I beg an explanation of these fine and learned words?”

“Why, Andrew,” answered Father Dominick, “the meaning of them is this: Jesus Christ promises to be with every council that the Pope shall call together to the end of the world; that such council, being the Church, shall be infallible, that is, shall not be liable to error and that, consequently, every one who shall dare to dispute its decrees shall be punished as a heretic here, and that his soul shall be miserable to all eternity.”

“Bless me,” cried Andrew, astonished at what he heard, “is all this contained in the short sentence your reverence repeated?”

“Aye, and a great deal more,” replied he “If I had time to tell it to you. With this passage we are able to confound all the pretenders to religion in the world; it leaves them not a word to say for

themselves.”

Procures a New Testament.

Andrew had learned when a boy to read and write, and being naturally possessed of a good memory was still able to read tolerably well. He used to work frequently at a Squire’s house in the neighborhood, and was taken notice of as a good workman. The Squire’s lady was very kind to the poor about her, and particularly in the two last hard seasons she employed herself with such diligence to procure food for them that she was the means of saving the lives of many who would have actually starved for want of proper food. But she also remembered that they had souls to be saved or lost; and she would, when she visited the sick, drop a word or two to call their attention to their everlasting concerns. She began about this time to buy Testaments to distribute among the poor of all descriptions in her neighborhood. Father Dominick himself was ashamed to make any objection to this charitable deed of hers, although, if the truth was known, he would as soon that she had kept her favors of this kind to herself.

As Andrew was threshing one day this good lady went in to

inquire after the health of one of his children who had been ill, and whom she had gone to visit. After some further conversation, she asked him if he had got a Testament in his house. No, madam,” answered he, “but I wish I had one, and was able to read and understand it.” She immediately brought out a Testament, which she presented to Andrew. He put the Book in his pocket till his work was over, and then walked smartly home, that he might have an opportunity that very night of reading a part of it. As he was on his way he was led to reflect on the value of the treasure he had about him. “This Book,” he said to himself, “contains the words of God. If I was in possession of a book that would teach me how to become rich I should greatly prize it, but this Book will teach me how to be rich for ever. And why should Father Dominick wish to keep it from me? Come what will, I am determined, with the blessing of God, that I will read it.” After he and his family had finished sup-

per he retired to the little room where he slept. That night he read a few chapters, with which he was much delighted, and continued the same practice until he finished the whole.

He was particularly struck in his reading not to find anything like what he used to hear from Father Dominick, not a word of the Pope, of the Mass, of confession, penance and absolution, of saints’ merits, holy days, eating of fish, praying with beads, and suchlike. “What!” cried he, “have I been hearing of these things all my life, and been taught to consider them as everything in religion, and yet I cannot find one word about them in the Testament? Does Father Dominick know this, or has God whispered in his ear that His own Word is not true? Or has He given him a liberty of changing it or of adding to it?” However, though Andrew could find nothing of this kind in the Testament, he found in it things of much greater importance.

Faithful — someone we can count on

Alert — to the family needs

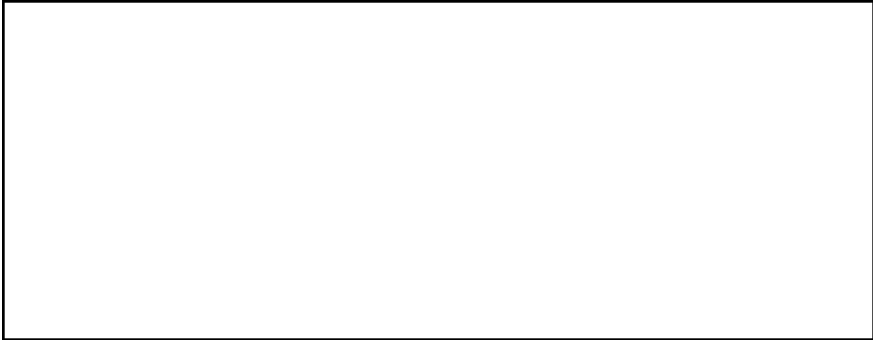
Trusting — in the Lord

Honest — keeping our word

Eternal vision — and goals

Respectful — of God, His Word, and from those in authority

Shelter — shielding our families from the evils about us



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