



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)

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Taking Joyfully the Spoiling of Our Goods

You may turn with me to Hebrews 10:34 where this message title was taken from. "For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." We do believe in private ownership of goods and as you notice the text here does say, "the spoiling of your goods." That is one of the thoughts that

came to me as I studied this.

We have in the book of Acts an account of the Early Church where it says, "Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common" (Acts 4:32). Of course, that has been the Scripture basis for some of the community type Christian settings (particularly the Hutterites) where they say that the possessions really were not

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their own, but everything belonged to the Church as a community of goods.

It is true that we need to remind ourselves that all that we have is God's and we are only stewards of what God had given us. Yet, it is not totally wrong to say that these are my things and the "the spoiling of your goods" — of our things. They are our responsibility. We remember that ideally all that we have is God's. In reality we are the stewards of

that. Another thought from the verse as we have it here in our Bible is that he talked about the spoiling of our goods. This could also give the idea of plundering of our goods which would imply more that it is purposely done by enemies — that our goods are destroyed by enemies on purpose. I think the context here tells us that this is what is implied or alluded to here because it is speaking about persecution that they endured.

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I will read a few surrounding verses Hebrews 10:32–39, “But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; (33) Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. (34) For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. (35) Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. (36) For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. (37) For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. (38) Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. (39) But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”

As I thought of this, I thought of Job. We are all familiar with Job and that account. His goods were plundered by the Chaldeans and Sabeans. However, there was also the wind and the fire from heaven which were acts of God. In this manner Job was

brought to his destitute condition. God allowed it, but it was done through the plundering and spoiling of his goods (or the stealing of his goods) by the Chaldeans and the Sabeans, as well as by an act of God. *We do not need to only speak about enemies destroying our goods. We will think further about our goods and possessions being taken from us in some way or another.* Nevertheless, Job’s response is certainly a lesson for us. He said, “the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21).

We do not find him in despair. We do not find him complaining. He did have his complaints, but we are told that we are to take joyfully the spoiling of our goods. I will interpret it to say that Job did that. Even though he had his moments of grief almost to despair and he complained about his ever being born, and so on, but overall his testimony was, “the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” That, I think, is taking it joyfully. I do not think that we need to think that this means acting like the lame man who was crippled and went “walking, and leaping, and praising God” (Acts 3:8). I do not think it is that kind of joy that

is required of us when we take the spoiling of our goods in a right way.

In contrast Job's wife, as you know, did not look at it the way he did. She said, "curse God, and die" (Job 2:9), but Job said, "shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (Job 2:10). *Maybe the evidence of our taking joyfully the spoiling of our goods really is evidenced by what we say or, at least, how we act and respond to tests such as this.* Job is certainly a wonderful example for us. I believe that if he were mentioned in Hebrews 11 it would probably say something like this, "By faith Job, when he was tempted by Satan endured." He certainly did. That is the example that we want to take from him. Hebrews 10:38 says, "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back." Let us not draw back in tests such as this.

1) *Our faith, or trust in God can help us to take joyfully the spoiling of our goods as Job did.* It was his great confidence, and his great trust in God that he could endure the way he did and praise and put confidence in God.

If Job could do this, why not us? Why could not we take joyfully the spoiling of our goods if

Job did? We have some advantages that Job did not have. 2) The better things that we have. We recognize the book of Hebrews is sometimes called "The book of better things." I would like to look at that. If we go through the book, we can find the word "better" thirteen times.

However, I want to only look at the chapters here surrounding these verses beginning with Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10:3 says, "But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." This is comparing the Old Testament sacrifices with Christ's sacrifice. Now see verse 10, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Hebrews 9:23 mentions "better sacrifices." "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." A) *One of the things that we have better than Job had is better sacrifices.* Why should we not be able to take joyfully the spoiling of our goods?

Hebrews 10:9 says, "Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." He is talking about the testaments here — the Old

Testament and the New — the old covenant and the new. In Hebrews 8:6 we have that mentioned, “But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.” B) *We have an advantage over Job with a better covenant and better promises.*

We have that listed also in Hebrews 10:16, 17, “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; (17) And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” Is that not a better promise? So here is the third thing that we have here. *We have better promises than Job ever had.* Yet Job, in his faith, could foresee that his redeemer would stand someday on the earth [Job 19:25]. He believed that. We however, have even better promises than that.

C) *In Hebrews 10:12, we have a better Mediator.* Job looked for a mediator. He wanted a “daysman” (Job 9:33) to stand between him and God. Hebrews 10:12 says, “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.” In Hebrews 9:24 we have that stated, “For

Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” He is a better mediator. We have another advantage that Job did not have — a better mediator.

D) *We have a better access.* Hebrews 10:20 says, “By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” This is a better access right to God and to His throne. We have that in Hebrews 9:8, “The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.” Job probably lived even before the first tabernacle and before the days of Moses and sacrificial system. Again, Job did not have the access that we have to God. Yet, his faith was strong and secure.

E) *In Hebrews 10:21, 22 we have a better priesthood.* “And having an high priest over the house of God; (22) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” We have a better priesthood than what Job could ever have known or thought of. We find this in

Hebrews 7:26–28, “For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; (27) Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. (28) For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.” Thus, we see that we have a much better high priest.

Hebrews 10:14 says, “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” Do you think that Job could say that he was perfected forever? However, that is us. That is one of the better things that we have. Therefore, if Job could live faithfully, how much more we? Also, in Hebrews 10:32 it says that we are “illuminated.” “After ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions.” We have the knowledge and the light of the Gospel in a way that the Old Testament saints never had.

We see that also in Hebrews 10:33 “Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.”

We have light in contrast to what the Old Testament saints had. We are illuminated. We are an enlightened people.

Therefore, we have such a great advantage over Job and yet he was so faithful and lived by faith. We are a perfected and a sanctified people. We should be able to take joyfully the spoiling of our goods. James 1:2 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.” With the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ, we have, what is available to us a strength that should make us ashamed if we are not able to live up to the faith of the Old Testament saints.

3) I have been looking at the word *knowing* in the text verse. “knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance” (Hebrews 10:34). What do we know? There are two things that we should know. Notice Hebrews 10:30, “For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.” Should we not be able to take joyfully the spoiling of our goods if we know Him that says, “Vengeance belongs to me?” Human nature is, as soon as something is done against us, to get even —

revenge. However, we know something that should help us be able to take joyfully the spoiling of our goods.

In Romans 12:12 we read that familiar verse that is similar to verse 30 where it tells us about heaping “coals of fire” on those who do evil to us rather than seeking revenge. We allow God to work out His will and purposes and sit back and not worry so much about the spoiling of our goods if that should happen. We should “have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:6).

Psalm 37 is a Psalm where he tells us we should not fret — “fret not” (Psalm 37:1). I will read a few verses from Psalm 37:1–11. This should be a great help to us because of what we know. “Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. (2) For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. (3) Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. (4) Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. (5) Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. (6) And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. (7)

Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. (8) Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. (9) For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. (10) For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. (11) But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”

Those are some of the things that we know. Knowing what? One of the things that we know is that God is able to do far better than us in restoring and taking care of those who would persecute us, plunder us, or whatever it may be. The second thing that we know is found in Hebrews 10:34. “Knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.” Let us stop for a minute and get a perspective. How often do we think of our heavenly substance? The word substance there is the same word as the word “goods” earlier in the text. In the Greek it is derived from the same word — spoiling of your substance and spoiling of your goods.

However, we “have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.”

It is always easier to lose something if you have two of something. It is always easier to lose the bad one or the lesser one and not lose the good one. However, if you lose the better one and all you are left with is the lesser one that is not as easy, is it? When we think of a better and enduring substance in heaven should that not help us to take joyfully the spoiling of our goods — “a better and an enduring substance” in heaven. We need to believe this.

What is this enduring substance that we have in heaven? Jesus said, “In my Father’s house are many mansions” (John 14:2) or many dwelling places. It is a much more enduring substance that we have. In 2 Corinthians 5:1 Paul refers to it as “an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Remember, if our house should be destroyed by an act of God, by evil men, by accident, or whatever it is, we have “an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Sure, the earthly losses may be great but it is the least. It is not the better of the two that we are losing. We have “an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” — “a building of God.”

We do have some responsibilities ourselves as well because of the things that we know. One of them is that Jesus said, “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where . . .” they cannot be spoiled (Matthew 6:20). They will not be spoiled there. Of course, if we are not laying up treasures in heaven and then our earthly treasures are spoiled, we will mind the loss, will we not? Therefore, we need to get busy laying up treasures in heaven “where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” All the other things that can cause the spoiling of our goods will not need to be of concern.

Jesus said that if we lay up treasures in heaven that is where our heart is as well. “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21). Therefore, it should not be so hard to lose the earthly things if our heart is not in them but is in heaven. I thought of Stephen as he was dying. He said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56). It seems like he was, he took the spoiling of his body even as he was being killed. He took it joyfully. We have many, many accounts in *The Martyr’s Mirror*, of martyr’s who endured great

suffering but they did it with what seemed like real joy. I am sure that this was their confidence. It was their testimony to the authorities and to the enemies who destroyed them, that they “have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.” Whatever you can do to me that is really nothing compared to what I have, “an house not made with hands.” “I do not need this body anymore if you want to burn it.” It is like one girl who gave her testimony in *The Martyr’s Mirror*. It said basically “Go ahead. If you want to broil me on the grid iron or pour boiling oil over me that is fine.” She could say that because she had “a better and an enduring substance.” She had “an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

We wonder sometimes if we would have that much faith. The Lord provides the grace sufficient for that kind of trial. I am sure that most of us have had trials of the spoiling of our goods to a lesser or greater extent. We have endured and we probably have often encouraged each other by our response in times like that. Maybe a house was destroyed by fire or some other valuable, or even living in areas where there are acts of God — floods, tornados, hurricanes and so on, where all that a person has is destroyed.

Recently, there was a house in our area that was burned. The elderly couple who lived in it got out but they were not able to take anything with them. I was at the hardware store the other day and the elderly lady came in and said, “I need a screwdriver.” I would have liked to tell her “You do not need to come to the hardware store to get a screwdriver, I have plenty of extras I could give you,” but I did not want to say that in front of the storekeeper. Sometimes the loss can be very great. It is the spoiling of our possessions.

We are not to lay up for ourselves treasures on earth. I suppose that it would be right to say that if we are engaged in laying up for ourselves treasures on earth, then we probably will not be able to take joyfully the spoiling of our goods, because we are not doing what God wants us to do. James 5:1–5 says, “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. (2) Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. (3) Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. (4) Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your

fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. (5) Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.”

We have a number of practical things listed here that will help us to not weep and howl, but to take joyfully the spoiling of our goods. He mentions here that these people heap treasures on earth instead of giving as the Scriptures tell us. In Luke’s Gospel he records that Jesus told the multitude, “Sell that ye have, and give alms” (Luke 12:33). Certainly, if we do that we will not have much left to lose, will we? Yet, we do believe, as we said, in some personal possessions. We need to remember that Jesus admonished us not to store up excess here on earth. If we have excess, we sell it and give alms. There are plenty of needs in the world today. Let us not store up for ourselves because there are losses. The loss of things that we should have given away before will probably be a blemish against us.

God will hold us responsible for allowing them to be in a place where they were able to be destroyed. “Sell that ye have, and give alms.” As I prepared

this, I was thinking of an example. We know the new Washington gold coloured dollar coins just came out. One of our daughters bought a roll of them at the bank for \$25. We thought maybe each one of the children would like to keep one. There is the temptation, “Why not keep the whole roll.” They are in mint condition and maybe in a few years they might be worth quite a bit more. That is the kind of thinking that we need to be careful of. Sure, we could store them away somewhere but that is not what we are to do. We are not to lay up treasure on earth. In a case like that we should sell them and give alms.

Yet, since we have plenty it is so easy to store it up here on earth and keep it for later. We do make investments in some things. It is hard for me to answer some of these questions. This topic I do not know really how to answer it, but anyway we will look at some more thoughts.

Another thought that I noticed in James 5:4 is that he is criticizing the employers who do not pay their employees as much as they should. That is something to think about. An employer who has a productive business should be very generous in sharing his profits with his workers because that will give them the responsi-

bility of selling what they have and giving alms. Certainly, a business may be profitable, but how profitable would it be without the workers? Most businesses require workers to do the work. Therefore, as employers, it is important for us to share with our workers the profits that we do not really need. He says that they are, “kept back by fraud.” I am not saying we have become fraudulent. It is simply where it becomes a little selfish. It is important. Our employees, those who work for a living, who are hired by others, need the opportunity to also have extra to learn how to lay up treasures in heaven.

Maybe you think “Well, some people they will simply squander it. If I give them more money, more wages they will simply squander it. That is true. Some will. On the other hand, those of us who maybe have prosperous businesses need to be careful. Let us share with others.

Then, in verse 5 he mentions about living “in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton.” I think that means we are spending too much on ourselves. We are living too prosperously, too affluently and we will need to give account for it. God is not pleased with it. “ye have nourished your hearts,” with your earthly things.

If we do that and then our goods are spoiled, I do not think we will be able to take it joyfully. However, if we have given, shared, and laid up treasures in heaven, I think that we will be able to take joyfully the spoiling of the things that remain, and the things that we really do need, even if they are things we really do need.

Jesus said, “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). That is voluntary. We need to do that voluntarily. If we are selfish and keep for ourselves then the spoiling of our goods may make us despondent, or we may even have a nervous breakdown because of the loss of all our goods. I think that is what he is speaking about here in James 5. Let us “be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. (8) Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5:7, 8). Let us live that way.

We need to be rich toward God. We have the example of the rich young farmer in Luke 12:16–21 who tore down his barns and built greater. Then

came death totally unexpected. We want to avoid that kind of spoiling of our goods. Of course, his goods were spoiled after he died because he was not there to care of them anymore.

I would like to think of theft and vandalism. I think that the true meaning of spoiling here is theft and vandalism, when our possessions are stolen or damaged purposely, purposely taken from us, purposely damaged. In our book, *The Doctrine of Nonresistance* there is the statement, “If we are the victim of theft or vandalism, we must respond with a Christlike attitude of suffering willfully and joyfully.” I think we believe that. We approve of that statement. We need to learn. We may go home and find that our house has been vandalized and some things, the valuable things that people like to steal, have been taken. We do not have some of the modern electronics and things, these thousands of dollars of television things, and the screens, and so on that are so prevalent today. However, there are a few things that thieves might still want to take from our houses and especially if they find money.

How should we respond? I think this is what you really wanted to know when you assigned this topic. Would you

call 911 immediately, first thing, and report to the police what has happened? I simply want you to think with me. I thought maybe the best thing to do, to take joyfully the spoiling of our goods, was to simply put things back in order and go to bed and get a night of rest. Then, in the morning you could call the local police and say “Our house was vandalized last night. If it is of any interest to you, if you want it for the record, I thought at least we should notify you.” I thought maybe they would say, “Well, no do not touch anything. Leave everything like it is. We want to come and take fingerprints and all of that.” That is how they would do probably.

You will need to answer for yourself. Have we have been too quick sometimes in looking for pity from the authorities by calling them in right away and letting them see all the damage that was done and all the spoiling of our goods? What about if we were robbed or held up at gun point? This happens. I recently read an account from Nicaragua, how they were robbed at gunpoint one night and had to all lay on the floor on their bellies for a period of time while the robbers went through all their wallets and through their house. The robbers were not satisfied that they did

not find more money. The brethren there were trying to think of all the money that they had. I came up with the thought, if we are held up in our homes we probably should not try to hide things from the robbers. If they are coming for money and we have it, give it all to them. It may be that you save your own life especially if they have guns and they are holding you up.

Therefore, would it not be better to joyfully give them the things they want and leave the consequences in God's hands? Let us not forget we are told, "resist not evil" (Matthew 5:39). The basis for all our teaching on nonresistance are the teaching's of Christ, "resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." "If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also" (Matthew 5:40). "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain" (Matthew 5:41). Therefore, if the robber comes to the house and wants all the money that is there, I think maybe we should go ahead and give it to him even if it is the Sunday church offering that we are holding to take to the bank the next day. Maybe we need to simply give it.

Also, we are to love our ene-

mies. If the robbers are our enemies we are to love them. We are to bless them that curse us. We are to pray for them that spitefully use us and persecute us (Matthew 5:44). In the book *Coals of Fire* there is the story of preacher Peter back in the 1700's. One night the preacher was awakened by these noises on his roof and sneaked out the door and saw three men on the roof throwing the thatch off his roof. It was a means of persecuting him for his Anabaptist teachings. He did not even let them know that he saw them but he went in the house and told his wife to wake up and prepare a meal for these hard working men that were outside. After she had the meal ready he went out and he invited them in. According to the account they did come in. Sheepishly they came in and he did not let them run off but he coaxed them to come in. They ate a meal and as soon as they were done out the door they went and back. After a while he heard the thatch being put back on the roof.

We cannot experience blessings and testimonies like that if we do not do it God's way. Another thing that we might think about is that we have been taught in this land, and we get this from our society, that we

have so many rights. We have the right to this, and the right to that, and people have rights and the government should support them, and the government should take care of us. The writers of the Constitution said we have the “right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” We know that those are not rights that men can give. Those are rights that come from God and man cannot take them away. They can take our physical life, but not our eternal life. They can take our liberty but not our spiritual liberty. They can take our possessions but they cannot truly take our inward joy and happiness.

Again, in *The Doctrine of Nonresistance*, “Our sight must always be set on the one right that no earthly power can take away, ‘the right to the tree of life’ (Revelation 22:14).” That is one right that no earthly power can take away. Also, I often think of a commentary on 1 Corinthians 13:5 “Charity . . . seeketh not her own.” We have things that we consider our own. We have a right to certain things. One writer of a commentary on 1 Corinthians 13 says, “But the greatest right of all is the right to give up our rights.” When we have true charity — true love in our hearts for men — we have a love that will enable to give up

the right to our rights. Therefore, when we think of the spoiling of our goods we know we have some rights to them, we also have the right to give up that right.

What does God expect of us as good stewards? In 1 Corinthians 7:6 Paul says, “I speak this by permission,” and then he says, “not I, but the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:10). Then he said, “But to the rest speak I” (1 Corinthians 7:12). Then he says, “I have no commandment of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:25). I cannot really give you. We have the principles. They are clear, but how to put them into practice we do not always know. For instance, pulling the keys in our vehicles and locking our doors.

In our area I do not believe there are any of our families that would not lock their doors securely at night. Yet, we know that the people break into homes. We have had quite a bit of that in our area where people have broken into houses at night when the people were sleeping. Robbers broke in and kicked the doors down. They came in whether they were locked or not. We have that story of the unbarred door where the Indians spared this one couple. They were planning to scalp them but they spared them because their door was unlocked.

They saw them sleeping peacefully and they turned around and left.

What about alarm systems? That is another question we face sometimes. How much can we use alarm systems and still say that we can take joyfully the spoiling of our goods? We once had an alarm system at our business that was hooked to the police station so that whenever it went off it called the police first and then it called us. Finally that was simply not compatible with taking joyfully the spoiling of our goods, so we disconnected the wire to the police station. We still had the alarm system call us at our houses and we would go see what was wrong. It was usually the wind or something else that set the alarm off. Nevertheless, to what extent should we have alarm systems?

Many years ago it was the discussion on whether it was right to have lightning rods on the houses. There were people who were very much against that because they thought it was a lack of faith in God to put lightning rods on your house to protect yourself. Well, certainly to have fierce, ferocious guard dogs around is not very consistent with our non-resistant testimony.

This verse does not say that we are to invite the spoiling of our

goods. That is why I think it is justifiable to take some precautions like pulling the keys in our car, locking the doors, or putting lights on at night. Having dusk to dawn lights that light up at night to make it less attractive to people who might want to sneak in and steal — some of that may be permissible. But we do not want to make it an unusually attractive or unnecessarily attractive for people who might want to spoil our goods.

That is why I think our homes should be simple. If our homes, buildings, properties, or vehicles give the evidence of money and wealth, it will attract the attention of those who would spoil our goods. Maybe it even attracts God's attention and He may bring some things some times. A simple life as strangers and pilgrims will go a long way in bringing God's blessing on us and keeping us from some of these calamities that come upon us.

Finally, the thought that came to me last of all is that most of all in the spoiling of our goods there should no anger be evidenced in our lives. We should not be angry, disgusted, or allowing self-pity. Those three thoughts came to me. If we have that kind of attitude, anger or disgust or self-pity at the spoiling of our

goods then I do not think we can say we are taking the spoiling of our goods joyfully.

I trust that these thoughts will at least set us to thinking again. Maybe we have some things that

we could change. Maybe we should seek the Lord's will in some of these areas. Most of all let us remember that we "have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."

The Significance of the Anabaptist Stäbler (Staff bearers)

One of the things that has been impressed upon me in this study is the blessedness of the heritage that we have. The psalmist refers to this in Psalm 16:5, 6, "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. (6) The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." Certainly, we should be doing what the psalmist said he would do, "I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel" (Psalm 16:7).

I would like to, also in the beginning give credit to one of the books where I found much help on this subject: Leonard Verduin's book entitled *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*. Other resources, as well, were drawn from. I found Verduin's book very interesting and helpful on this subject.

I) The historical background and setting that where the Anabaptist Stäbler functioned and served. Then II) Drawing

from that knowledge and those details some of the significant factors that we need to recognize in relation to the Anabaptist Stäbler.

Who were the Anabaptist Stäbler? If you are like me you might be saying "I did not know that there was such a thing." I must admit that this term was new to me. The term *Stäbler* does not refer to a specific group of Anabaptists, such as some specific leaders or a congregation somewhere or a geographical setting of Anabaptists. It was rather, one of the many derogatory terms used by the reformers for the Anabaptists, in general (we might say). The term indicates one of the fundamental differences between the reformers and the Anabaptists and it was a key factor in the persecutions that the Anabaptists endured. Thus, this was merely one of many derogatory terms. I am sure that we have heard a number of the other terms like *radicals*, *heretics*,

sacramentarians, communists, and wiedertäufer would be the “rebaptizers” or the “Anabaptists.” We have heard the term used in referring to them as *winklers*. That is an interesting word. It is a German word that means, “people who gather in some corner, or out of the way place.” That actually was used to imply an unauthorized, clandestine, or illicit gathering of the Anabaptists. The *winkle* preaching would be a little like calling it “hedge preaching.” These are some of the terms that were used. The term *Stäbler* was also a derogatory term applied to the Anabaptists.

Now, this term *Stäbler*, as indicated in the title of the message, means “staff bearers.” The root word *stab* means *staff* and when you add the suffix *Stäbler* it becomes *little staff*. The Anabaptist *Stäbler* then, were people who carried a little staff. This staff was not a staff bearing an ensign, nor did it refer to them as torch bearers. Rather, it referred to a harmless staff such as shepherds carry. They were the *Stäbler*, the staff bearers.

“Why did many Anabaptists carry this little staff and why was the reformers’ reference to them as Stäbler a derogatory reference. What is involved here? The carrying of the harmless lit-

tle staff by the Anabaptists in the 16th century seems to have been a way they had chosen to distinguish themselves from their sword carrying and sword wielding opponents in the Roman and Reformed churches. How many of them did this (carried this little staff) we do not know. However, the practice was common enough that it became a mark of a heretic. That term was often used to identify one who was an opposer of the Reformation movement.

Here would be an illustration of how it was a mark of a heretic. On one occasion a man was asked to bear witness whether he knew if there were any Anabaptists in that community. He said, “He had met them often enough, when with their little staff they were on their way to their preachings or whatever it is they do.” Therefore, that was used as an identifying feature to identify them as heretics. It was used as a witness against them.

Why was carrying a sword such an issue to the Anabaptists? Why did they carry the little staff instead of carrying the sword? We know also this was one of the things by which Anabaptists were at times identified. They were checked whether they had a sword and maybe in those cases they needed to check because

they were not wearing the staff. Why was carrying a sword such an issue with the Anabaptists? Why were these staff bearers so despised and persecuted by the reformers?

To answer these questions, go back with me in time, more than a millennium before the Anabaptist Stäbler. The teachings of Christ and the apostles clearly separated Church and State and clearly condemned the use of the sword for believers. It was Jesus who said, “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence” (John 18:36). It was also Jesus who said to Peter in Matthew 26:52, “Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” It was Paul in Romans 13:4 who said of the State, “For he is the minister of God to thee for good. . . for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”

Therefore, this was the teaching of Christ and the apostles that was followed in the apostolic Church. However, by the 4th century A.D. there had been a serious decline in the Church and a

departure from the evangelical faith. This opened the door for Constantine to make Christianity the religion of the State. Obviously, this was an unequal yoke of the Church and State. It was a marriage that never should have been. The use of the sword in the name of the Church which came into the Church at this time was one of the fundamental errors that went along with this unequal yoke and this marriage that never should have been. It was a compromise. The Empire accepted “Christianity,” and the “Church” also accepted Roman law and the Roman state.

The sword of “steel” is basically a weapon of force. It is an instrument of coercion. This unScriptural marriage of Church and State brought the technique of coercion into the affairs of the Church. The cause of Christ, at the same time lost the dimension of voluntarism which is ever native to Biblical Christianity. Is it any wonder that the Anabaptists had an aversion to the carrying of the sword? They chose something else to identify themselves for being in opposition to the sword which represented, to them, this union of Church and State, and the coercion that had taken the place of voluntarism.

What followed, and what

always will follow such a union, was that the masses were compelled to make a profession of Christianity. All preliminary conditions for Church membership were abandoned except baptism which was made mandatory. Since baptism was supposed to be the instrument of regeneration, the membership, in theory, consisted or regenerated persons. That is quite “slick” how they had that figured out, was it not? However, in reality as Verduin says in his book the number of believers had not changed. Only the tares had become more numerous. Infant baptism was introduced, which means that the Church could no longer be called a body of believers. Scriptural church discipline ceased to be practiced. The consequence of this great decline in faith and practice was that the Church all but lost what was yet left of the apostolic standard of life and practice.

State church officials tried to use Scripture to defend this coercion, or to make coercion “theologically respectable,” as Verduin says. For example, they used Luke 14:23 much and strongly, where Jesus said, “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” Well, it was a misuse of the Scriptures

obviously. The inevitable spiritual decline and darkness that followed prevailed for a thousand years and reminds one, when you read about it, of the words of our Lord in Matthew 6:23 when He said, “If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

I would like to emphasize in this connection is that the State church jealously sought to expose and to remove any and all persons and groups who chose to resist the forcing of the masses into the Church. The term that is used, I think, to identify that is *Christian Sacralism*. They did not want any options. Everything was to be one inside of the State church. Here again, the sword came into use in finding, removing, and persecuting those who chose to resist the forcing of the masses into the Church. The Anabaptist Stäbler, while they entered the arena at a later period, knew this history all too well to appreciate the sword. Therefore, they became staff bearers.

Was the term Stäbler unique in its application to the Anabaptists? Or, were there others to whom this term was applied? It was not unique. In fact, Verduin says, “Not one of these ugly names” (that I referred to earlier used by the Reformers

to designate the Anabaptists) was new. One of them was coined in the 16th century. All were old terms of contempt, reproach, and public disgrace. Most of them were very old terms.” These names, had been in development for ten to twelve centuries. The reason was that the State church from the time of Constantine had her opposers and dissenters. Although the torch of truth had burned low at times, there were, nevertheless, those who risked their lives to oppose the coercion of the State church with all its subsequent evils.

From the start, the exchange of voluntarism for coercion was unacceptable to true followers of Christ. Some of the groups prior to the Anabaptists actually also had this name applied to them. The Donatists were one of these groups. Verduin says that the Donatists may have been the first Stäbler — the first staff carriers. They are said to have carried a harmless cane which interestingly they called their “Israel.” I do not know what the explanation of that is, but it seems likely that carrying this little cane instead of the sword represented to them that their faith was in the strength of God and not in the arm of flesh. Therefore, the Donatists carried a harmless cane.

They too were considered

heretics and experienced great persecutions for their faith by the Roman church. I realize they are skipping over others that could be mentioned. The Waldensians were another group of Stäbler prior to the Anabaptists of the Reformation. Verduin says of the Waldensians that “they taught men not to confess their sins to any save to a cane carrying cleric.” There we see the Waldensians identified with the Stäbler.

The Bohemian brethren were influenced greatly by the Waldensians. One state official said of the Bohemian brethren in anger, “I highly disapprove of these vain Pharisees wandering around with their staffs who display their righteousness.” Therefore, it seems that the Bohemian brethren were put in this category also of staff bearers and Stäbler.

The Reformation and the Anabaptist Stäbler. Persecution of the Christian sects dissenting from the creed of the State church continued until over half a century after the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation, led primarily by Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin was, on the whole, a movement away from Rome and back to the Scriptures. Originally this movement stood for the vital restora-

tion of primitive Christianity. As such, it captured the loyalty of men who were to become the Anabaptist leaders, or some of the Anabaptist leaders like Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, George Blaurock and others. Actually, under the teaching of men like Zwingli, these men caught the vision and the fire for a believers' church. They identified with the Zwingli reformation with zeal.

From the writings of both Zwingli and Luther it is clear that in the earlier years of their reformatory labours they defended the principle of voluntary church membership, the need for Church discipline, and the independence of the Church from the State. However, their initial beliefs and aspirations did not hold. Therefore, a dilemma arose. They found themselves in a dilemma. Verduin says it this way, "A dilemma resulted from the fact that the reformers were torn between two loyalties. On the one hand was a loyalty to the New Testament Scriptures, which know no church other than the believers' church — a church based on personal faith.

On the other hand was a loyalty to what the Dutch call, (and I am not sure that I can pronounce the Dutch word) but is it something like this *hethistorichgevor-*

den, it means "a loyalty to that which had come about with the passing of time." It refers to all the years and what had unfolded in the state churches. These reformers were influenced by all of that and they had a certain amount of loyalty which they were torn with. What had developed is that the Church was construed so as to include all in a given locality. That is what had come to be the known under the State church approach. Everyone in a given locality was automatically a part of the Church. It is the coercion idea. Therefore, the dilemma that they were facing as Verduin puts it, "Only by repudiating this history" (twelve whole centuries of it) "could one escape from the dilemma, unless he was prepared to repudiate the New Testament." That was the dilemma.

To attempt to repudiate the New Testament was an escape that neither the reformers, nor the Anabaptists were willing to take. Therefore, this was the other escape, the repudiation of *hethistorichgevorden* (what had come about in the passing of time). Rejecting it was a radical step, too radical except for the radicals who took this way out and so came to stand alone as the "step children" of the reformers — the Anabaptist Stäbler. We will look

at that reference to step children of the reformers shortly.

What did the reformers do? We know what the Anabaptists did. They chose to repudiate a Church/State system, and the coercion, the sword that had entered into the Church and all of that. What did the reformers do? It was through obvious compromise that the reformers consented to take the course of establishing State churches, thereby making a similar mistake to Constantine's centuries earlier. Verduin calls this mistake, "the second marriage." We talked about the first marriage of the Church and State in Constantine's time. Verduin calls what the reformers did as the second marriage of Church and State. In this process they made themselves competitors of the Roman church and enemies of their own children, their own step children — the Anabaptist Stäbler.

A little bit about this reference to the Anabaptists as step children to the reformers. I am not exactly sure where that term comes from, but Verduin uses it in referring to the Anabaptists. He said that there are maybe two reasons to substantiate such a term. One would be because by their step parents (the reformers) they were treated like step chil-

dren are said to be treated sometimes. Also, it is because they were children of this second marriage. They were the step children of the reformers.

Another term that Verduin uses to identify the Anabaptists in the Reformation, he refers to them as the "second front." In another quote from Verduin he says, "From the out start, the reformers realized . . ." that the opposition that was shaping up on the second front (or within their step children). "That this opposition was going to be formidable. In fact, Zwingli expressed the opinion that the struggle with the Catholic party was but children's play when compared with the struggle that was developing at the second front." The first front of the reformers was the battle with the Roman church. The second front was with their step children. This, Zwingli said, would be of a much more serious nature.

What did the Anabaptist Stäbler do? When the parting of the ways came, they were disappointed by the halting and the shifting back and forth of the reformers. Finally, it became obvious that the reformers were taking the State church route. What did the Anabaptist Stäbler do? These early Anabaptist leaders in the true Stäbler tradition

went about to organize a church as they thought it should exist — by voluntary association according to the Scriptures.

I will quote several of these Anabaptists Stähler, Anabaptist leaders. According to Felix Manz “Their ambition was to bring together those who were willing to accept Christ and obey His Word and follow in His footsteps, to unite with these by baptism and to leave the rest in their present conviction.” I think that where he says “those who are willing to accept Christ,” we see voluntarism. When he says, “to leave the rest in their present conviction,” they are saying we must turn away from this thing of coercion. Felix Manz’s convictions and his efforts in all of this brought for him his death in the Limmat River.

George Blaurock expressed true restitutionist vision in these words, “To gather by ourselves, as Paul has said it.” When we think about gathering by ourselves, we know that such a church cannot be a church of the masses. Due to Blaurock’s position, he was a hunted man.

Pilgrim Marpeck put the issue of voluntarism and coercion thus, “By infant baptism, men coerce people to enter the kingdom of God and yet there should be no coercion there. All they have

eternal punishment awaiting them, who seek to sustain the kingdom of God with recourse to civil power. The magistrate has no assignment touching the kingdom of God.” Hans Denck said, “Let everyone know that in matters of faith, things ought to be done on a voluntary basis without coercion.”

The Stähler did not carry the tool, the instrument of coercion. They carried the little staff. We know what followed. We know that Luther had said that this was the kind of Church that he wanted, but he said, “I find not the people to have such a church.” In contrast, the Anabaptists said, “This is the church that meets the Scriptural requirements and they had the people. There were those who rose up to champion the cause.

I quoted to you from Anabaptist leaders. What was the conviction of their followers? Verduin tells the story of, I believe, eighty young men who were appointed to the galleys. They were apprehended and condemned. They were appointed to the galleys to servitude. While they were waiting for the galleys to arrive and to be placed on the galleys, they spent their time by drawing up a statement of their faith. Among other things, they said in this statement of faith,

“Where has God commanded His child saying, ‘Child, go into the whole world, teach all nations, him however who refuses to accept or to believe your teaching, you are to catch, torture, yea strangle until he believes.’”

We can see that what the Scripture represents was drilled into their heart and into the very fabric of their conviction. And when a church official, or state official tried to get them to recant before they were sent to the galleys, they quoted the Scripture that I referred to earlier from Luke where Jesus said, “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:23). Their ready response to him was that by Jesus’ Word and His judgment, He constrains men to come in. Thus, we see that they were schooled in this. It was a conviction that was next to their heart. It was right a part of their heart beat and their heart throb.

We know that in the story that follows these men were like the writer to the Hebrews tells us. We look at Hebrews 11, to take the step that they took, to repudiate the State church and coercion and all of this it cost them, many of them, their very lives. In Hebrews 11 we recognize this is talking about Old Testament

saints, but there is much that sounds like what the Anabaptist Stähler went through. Hebrews 11:32–38, “And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: (33) Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, (34) Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. (35) Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: (36) And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: (37) They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (38) (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”

Let us turn our thoughts to more specific rehearsing of some of the significant factors as it

relates to the Anabaptist Stähler. What did their refusal to carry the sword result in? How do these principles touch our lives today? Everyone of these points is very applicable to us today. 1) *The principle of voluntary church membership.* Remember, I said in the beginning that these little staffs that they carried were not staffs bearing an ensign or a banner. They were not staffs bearing a torch. However, I think we would say that in reality these men became torch bearers for the true evangelical faith and voluntary church membership. Verduin made a statement something like this. He said, “Christianity grows alien to its essence when it is made into a law for those who have been merely born instead of reborn.”

When we look at how to apply this principle to us today, we must be unapologetic about believer’s baptism. We must be diligent in our work of instructing and examining applicants for church membership. This is not something to be done carelessly or indifferently, because it is so foundational and fundamental to the Christian faith and to the success of the Church. We must be unapologetic about church discipline and holiness of life. We must be unapologetic about closed communion preceded by

realistic church counsel services, where we answer for ourselves and where issues are addressed.

We must be unapologetic about divisions because of Him. I am not advocating divisions. We try to work to not have divisions. Nevertheless, we know that one of the things that gets thrown in the face of those who want to maintain the faith is a reminder again and again of the divisions and the schisms. Years ago, it was said of our church group that this split will give splinters. Well, that happened, and as we look back we try to discover where we might have done some things differently. Nevertheless, we must not be apologetic about the fact that sometimes there will be divisions because of Him. I believe that relates directly to the concept of voluntary church membership.

2) *Separation of Church and state.* Again, Verduin says, “The Stähler believed that the Church of Christ is by definition an element in society, not society as such.” I think that relates to this thought of the importance and the significance of separation of Church and state as it was championed by the Anabaptist Stähler. It was at the very heartthrob of why they did not bear the sword but instead carried those little staffs. And I believe today we

must continue to keep the lines clear between Church and state. These things have a way of becoming fuzzy with time. Let us be careful that we are not dictating to government by becoming involved in government office, voting, lobbying and so forth. We are in the world but we are not of the world.

We need to “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mark 12:17). We need to be careful also in keeping the lines clear by not getting tangled into the government handouts. There is pressure on our farmer brethren in relation to agricultural handouts from the government. There are pressures upon our schools to receive educational handouts. There are pressures upon our young parents to receive health care handouts and there are pressures to receive government insurances in other ways. We must keep the lines clear between Church and state and not get tangled in government handouts.

Another truth or necessity that comes into this category of separation of Church and state is that we must not hesitate to take our parental responsibilities and to teach our families the same. I am thinking of the fact that the child belongs to the parents and not to

the state, not to the government. We must not be apologetic about that. May we pray that God give us grace to know how to relate that we do not capitulate, and that we do not give in where we ought to stand.

3) *Biblical nonresistance.* Anabaptists did not carry the sword. They chose to identify themselves with the despised Stäbler — staff bearers. Verduin says it was an opposition to the sword. That might be a way to describe it. However, we need to, I believe, in our time presently, re-fortify our people on Biblical nonresistance as it relates to non-participation in military service in any form.

I was taken aback some several years ago at Bible school. I taught the class on nonresistance and I was disturbed by what seemed to be lack of comprehension of the part of a number of young brethren on this thing of noncombatant service. The conviction was not there like it should have been. We need to fortify ourselves in this principle of Biblical nonresistance and non-participation in military service in any form. We know from studying history how many Mennonite men there were who when they were under the pressures in the army camps they gave into that pressure and chose

the route of noncombatant service.

Another area of Biblical non-resistance is to be harmless in our relationships to our fellow men and not aggressors in legal proceedings. Certainly, the Anabaptist Stäbler were marvelous examples of this, were they not, being harmless in their relationships to their fellowmen?

Another area of Biblical non-resistance is the need for prayer for government rulers and an attitude of submission to government leaders and respectfulness. Also, we pay our taxes, understanding that it is the government's responsibility for what they do with those monies. There is also the non-swearing of oaths, the avoiding of jury duty and so forth. We follow the suffering Christ, of whom Peter says "When he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:23).

4) *We see significance in the Anabaptist Stäbler in their willingness to be separate from the world and from religious profession.* This was demonstrated in their daily life. It was demonstrated in the stand that they took that brought persecution upon their heads. It was a willingness that was grounded in their under-

standing of Biblical principle and the need to stand for what the Bible says. There was a willingness to be separate for the sake of Biblical principle.

Also, a part of this willingness was that we see the Anabaptists as men who knew the Scriptures, and they could defend it because they were keeping the Scriptures. I fear sometimes that there are some among us in our churches who maybe can, shall we say, make a reasonable explanation of a passage of Scripture while at the same time it seems that they are not able to understand how to apply it in their own lives. The Anabaptist Stäbler were willing to be separate in their daily lives by applying the Scriptures. They were willing to be radical, and called names. Beyond that they were willing to give themselves.

5) *The significance of the Anabaptist Stäbler is seen in the course of religious liberty that they charted that has touched the world.* There are many liberties that we enjoy in this land. I pondered various times how it is that we have so little persecution when there are believers in other parts of the world who are suffering intensely for the faith. The conclusion that I come to is that it relates directly to the religious liberty that these Anabaptist Stäbler championed. That has

come to this country. Another very interesting fact is that the Protestant reformers who chose to go the state route, eventually they all came around, did they not? Therefore, we have all of those churches in this country alongside of the Mennonites. There is the freedom and liberty that we know. That even has touched the Reformed churches.

Truly the Stäbler became the torch bearers of freedom of conscience, religious liberty. It is too easily sometimes that we sing “Our fathers chained in prisons dark, were still of heart and conscience free. How sweet would be their children’s fate if they like them could die for Thee.” A lot more could be said about that.

6) *I would like to emphasize is that the Anabaptist Stäbler are significant because of their ability to stand.* In Ephesians 6, where Paul gives the Christian armour, there is something there that is interesting to notice. He says, “take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (14) Stand therefore” (Ephesians 6:13, 14a). That is where we really need to get to — to the place where we will stand for it. They stood for it, no matter what the cost was. The cost was their lives for many of them, even unto

blood. The Hebrew writer says, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, (2) Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (3) For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. (4) Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Hebrews 12:1–4).

I wanted to point out one more thing in relation to religious liberty and then I will close. What the State churches coerced upon the people amounted to a situation where they had no options, unless they took a similar course to the Stäbler. Today we know freedom in this land. There are freedoms and liberties in many parts of the world. If persecution would return to our land in our days, are we prepared to take our stand? We are warned, “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life” (Revelation 13:8). The

Anabaptist Stäbler, we believe today certainly represent men whose names are in the book of

life. May we learn from them and follow in their steps.

Scripture References

	Job	14:2	8	10:3	4
1:21	3	18:36	18	10:9	4
2:9	4			10:10	4
2:10	4	3:8	3	10:12	5
9:33	5	4:32	1	10:14	6
19:25	5	7:56	8	10:16, 17	5
	Psalms			10:20	5
16:5, 6	16	12:12	7	10:21, 22	5
16:7	16	13:4	18	10:30	6
37:1–11	7	13:8	28	10:32	6
	Matthew			10:32–39	3
5:39	13	2:6	7	10:33	6
5:40	13	7:6	14	10:34	1, 6, 7
5:41	13	7:10	14	10:38	4
5:44	13	7:12	14	11:32–38	24
6:20	8	7:25	14	12:1–4	28
6:21	8	13:5	14		
6:23	19			James	
26:52	18			1:2	6
	Mark			5:1–5	9
12:17	26	5:1	8	5:4	10
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12:16–21	11	6:13, 14a	28	5:7, 8	11
12:33	10				
14:23	19			1 Peter	
14:33	11			2:23	27
	John				
		7:26–28	6	Revelation	
		8:6	5		
		9:8	5	13:8	28
		9:23	4	22:14	14
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From the Previous Issue:

The Leaven of Anti-Mennonitism

From a message by John Risser

June 12, 1988

Indian Creek Mennonite Church

The Leaven of Anti-Mennonitism

From a message by Harold Good

Sunday, January 13, 2002

Centerville Mennonite Church

Youth Book Reprint

Andrew Dunn: An Irish Story *continued*

He was particularly affected by such texts as the following: Jesus said: "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." [Luke 5:31] "Aye," says he, "I understand this. If we had not been sinners we should not have needed a Saviour," Again, "I am not come," said Jesus "to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." [Matthew 9:13] "O how comfortable! I am a sinner; He came to call me among others." Again, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "Yes," cried Andrew, in a transport of admiration, "this is love indeed! That God should send His Son upon such an errand." But, recollecting himself, "Alas!" cried he, "what reason have I to be delighted with this news? How do I know that I have anything to do with it?" Such passages as the following used to wound him to the very soul: that the wicked "shall go into everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:46) "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God?" (1 Corinthians 6:9). "God will render unto every man according to

his deeds. Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil" (Romans 2:6, 9). When he read such passages as these his heart would sink within him, for he well knew that he had been a sinner, and that God might justly punish him with everlasting destruction. "O wretched man that I am!" he would cry, "who shall deliver me?" In this state of mind, either elevated by hope or depressed by fear, he continued some weeks.

His Family Aroused.

Andrew had a family, consisting of a wife, a son, and two daughters; his son about eighteen, and his daughters, seventeen and fifteen. It was impossible that he could conceal entirely from them the feelings of his mind, and they would often ask him the cause of his concern. At first he used to put them off with some evasive answer; but upon their growing more inquisitive and importunate, he would say: "O my dear wife and children, there is much more in religion than any of us have been aware of. The Testament tells me I am a sinner, and this is what makes me uneasy."

Andrew was much loved by his family, who at first thought that he was a little beside himself, and were greatly frightened; but, upon seeing that he appeared quite rational in every other respect, they endeavored to comfort him by saying, "That though, to be sure, he was a sinner, yet he was as honest a man as any of his neighbors, had a good heart, and never missed his duties."

"Poor comfort," cried Andrew; "poor medicine for a wounded conscience! If you have no better consolation for me than this, O spare me the pain of hearing what only inflicts a deeper wound! Can you tell me how I shall get rid of my sins?"

"Aye, to be sure," cried his wife; "go, my dear to Father Dominick, and confess to him, and he will give you absolution, in the twinkling of an eye."

"Give me absolution!" replied Andrew, heaving a sigh; "this might do in the days of my ignorance, but I require a different kind of absolution now. God only, my dear, can forgive sins; and Father Dominick has no more power to forgive sins than

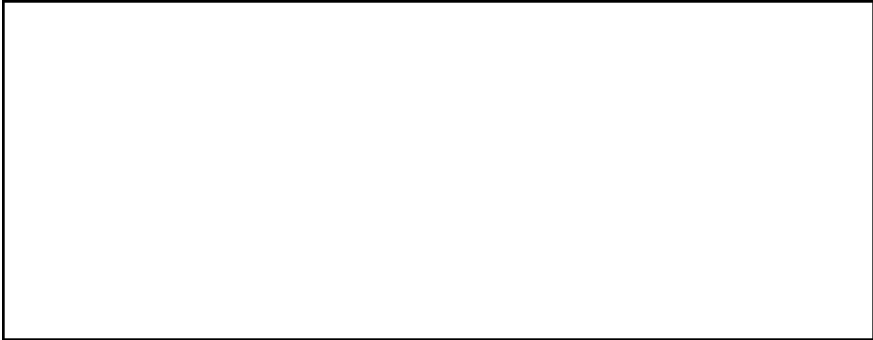
you or I."

One day he took up the Testament and read in the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke. When he came to that part where the poor prodigal says, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son," [Luke 15:18, 19] he fell upon his knees, and applying the passage to himself, he cried out earnestly for pardon through Jesus Christ. Casting his eyes upon the Book, he was struck with these words, "When his father saw him he had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him;" [Luke 15:20] and immediately recollecting another passage which he had read, "The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin" (1 John 1:7), his heart was melted by a view of the love of God in sending His Son to save sinners; and, casting himself as a sinner upon the mercy of God through Christ, he found himself at once in possession of comfort he had never before experienced.

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Personal Evidence of Ichabod





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