



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 3, No. 4

Issue # 304

Forgetting Those Things Behind

I would like to think about something which, in a sense, we generally think of it in terms of being negative, and that is forgetting something. I think that we are all alike. There are some things in life that we wish we could simply forget — erase them from our minds. I wonder if that is not what the apostle Paul had reference to in Philippians 3:13. I would like to use that as our text. “Brethren, I count not

myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.” It is a wonderful gift when we are able to forget some of the things that we need to forget. By nature, we tend to hold on to some of those things that we should forget, and we do not remember the things that we should remember.

I would like to divide the mes-

IN THIS ISSUE

Inspirational

Forgetting Those Things Behind 81

Book Reprint

One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study 97

Children's Book Reprint

The Penny Tract 100

sage into, first of all, three areas. I) Things to forget, II) The danger of not forgetting, and then III) How it is possible for us — the power for us to forget. I think all of us have realized that there are things in life that we would like to possibly change. However, as long as we hold on to the past, there is no change in sight by holding on to it. It is needful for us to forget some of the things in life as we journey on in life together, because there are

so many things that happen — things of the past and things of the present. We need to forget them and then move on. I think that is really what this Scripture is pointing to and depicting as he says that he is forgetting those things of the past and he is reaching forth to go on to the things ahead. I will take the time to read Philippians 3:1–14 and try to make application from most of the passage here.

“Finally, my brethren, rejoice

Vol. 3 No. 4, Issue # 304. The Pulpit Exchange is a compilation of written sermons without commentary, published as often as possible, in the interests of promoting sound preaching in our conservative Anabaptist churches. All sermons have been transcribed and printed with permission. Names are removed so that we can focus on the message and content rather than on a certain speaker or style. (Names will be published in the next issue).

Messages have been selected on the basis of topic rather than the speaker. Messages have been selected from congregations or speakers within the Berea Amish Mennonite Fellowship, Conservative Mennonite Church of Ontario, Conservative Mennonite Churches of York and Adams Counties, PA., Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church, Mennonite Christian Fellowship, Nationwide Fellowship Churches, Ohio Wisler Mennonite, Washington-Franklin Mennonite Conference, and certain selected unaffiliated Amish Mennonite congregations.

We welcome submission of recorded sermons, topics, school meetings, writer's meetings, and special conferences by ministry and laity (where recording is permitted) provided permission has been obtained by the speaker for the recording. Submissions must have a title, the name of the speaker and the congregation responsible for recording (date would be helpful).

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

in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. (2) Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. (3) For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

(4) Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: (5) Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; (6) Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. (7) But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. (8) Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

(9) And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: (10) That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellow-

ship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; (11) If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. (12) Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. (13) Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, (14) I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:1–14).

I) *Things to forget.* 1) *The faults and failures of others.* This is a real “hang up” in life when we hold on to the faults and the failures of others, because we seemingly never can get anywhere. We can never gain an appreciation for the individual whom we cannot forget, when we cannot forget their faults and their failures. As long as I focus on that individual’s failures and faults, more than likely I will not see the good in others. Along with that, while I cannot appreciate that individual, I can never help that individual to become better either as long as I focus on that person’s failures, their “hang ups” in life, and all the little

things that simply irritate me about them. We sort of “ham-string” ourselves in helping someone else unto perfection. The Bible gives us enough teaching that we are each other’s keeper. We are responsible for each other’s spiritual welfare.

2) *We need to forget our past failures and wrong decisions in life.* “If God be for us, who can be against us” (Romans 8:31)? Is it not a subtle form of pride to hang on to some of our failures (not because we think they were so great but) because we cannot accept the fact that we have failed? Consequently, we have a hard time forgetting those things. I think all of us have messed up and still mess up at some time or another. A brother came to me after a ministers’ meeting and said, “I do not know why I said what I did. I wished I would not have been asked the question when I was as tired as I am.” He said something that maybe was not the nicest but, he regretted saying those things. I assured him that we all do make mistakes and say things out of order at times. However he could have gone home and dwelt on that in weeks to come and never get out of the rut to help himself. Therefore, it is a subtle form of pride.

As we look at life, measuring

ourselves by yesterday’s performance, we really can never better ourselves. We must let go of our imperfections, failures, wrong decisions, and things that were said that should not have been said. We simply cannot gain or get on to higher ground. Again, I think it is because of the pride that we have within us that it is hard to let go.

Looking back should only be for short periods of time. It should be momentary at our faults and failures only to learn from them and not to dwell on them. We look at our failures, whether it is a school board meeting that we have come away from, a sewing circle, or a gathering of the sisters where we may have said some things. We can go home and look at it in a short term and say, “Well, I do not want to do that again,” and then move on. Or else we can dwell on that, and dwell on that, and we can never get out of that rut. We should be able to use it as a tool to avoid a repeat but not to dwell. As long as I dwell on it, I can never better myself.

3) *We ought to forget the things of the past that were of personal gain to me.* The apostle Paul talks of that. I am not sure of what all he had reference to. He said, “forgetting those things.” Those things were dear

to his heart and might have been a benefit, but he said, "I forget those and I leave those things behind." One of them, no doubt, was his education. We can look at a job or a career. I know individuals who have left their careers. When they became a child of God they saw this was not the place for them to be, even though it was a benefit to them. They dropped it and forfeited a lifetime pension and other benefits because of those things that were gain. We can dwell on those things of the past, whether it was a job or otherwise and we could say "We were almost there and then we . . ." you know, we had to give it up," and they continue to dwell on it. With financial deals we often can sort of almost hate ourselves, "Well, why didn't I?" Those things may have been gain to us. While an individual is "spinning his wheels," dwelling on the past, he is missing many opportunities that are going by because they are simply dwelling on the past. We are simply spinning our wheels. There might be other opportunities in life, whether it is dating opportunities, ground that we have lost, parental failure, and many other things. We can dwell on those things. Again, we can only dwell on them as a learning experience. If we dwell on them

otherwise, we will never better ourselves. We will stay in that rut. All of us have made enough failures and mistakes in the past that we must let those things go. There is sin, and a number of other things, if we do not let go of them, we can never rise to the challenge of becoming better.

4) *We must forget the highlights of the past.* This is thinking that there is nothing equal to the past experience. This is a real, subtle danger. As long as we dwell on the mountain top experiences of yesterday, we will not find an equal to climb and really what else is there left in life? There is nothing higher to attain to, if yesterday's experience was the greatest in life. Well, it may have been that, but we cannot dwell or live either on the highs of yesterday. We must move on in life.

An example of this is on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter, James and John, the three disciples were there. It must have been a wonderful experience. Peter said, "When there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Peter 1:17, 18). Peter was so emotionally

involved in that. He said, "Let us make here three tabernacles" (Matthew 17:4). It seems Peter would have simply liked to have stayed there. Well, we cannot stay there and neither can we live on it.

One of the interesting things later on in the Scriptures, Peter says, "We were there," and he rehearses the account. Then he says, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy" (2 Peter 1:19), than that emotional experience that we had on the mount of transfiguration. That is one of the Scriptures that blesses my heart as I think of the power of the Word. Therefore, we need to forget some of those mountain top experiences.

I am sure we have heard people say, "Those were the good old days. If only we could have those days back again." What do we have to look forward to? This applies to the young generation and even the older ones. We think of those mountain top experiences as those were the good old days. There were some good things about those days, but sometimes we forget some of the bad or ugly things, or the hardships of those days. It may be true that we have come through some hardships and hard times, and we did not grow up with all the conveniences that we have

today. We may say, "Those were the good old days." Well, we had running water at home and we had to run for every bit of it (and to think that those were the good old days). I did not think that those were the good old days. It is easy for me to look back now and say, "Those were wonderful days. We did not have the pressures of life." Well, they were not all that good. There are a lot of things today that I would not trade for those days. We have church life like we did not experience in those days. Therefore, we tend to not get a proper picture of the whole thing as long as we focus on the past.

Ecclesiastes 7:10 tells us that it is not wise to even to think that the days, which have gone by, were the best because finally where is the grace of God. Where do we have to look for anticipation? If we do not have anything to anticipate of something better, what are we doing here? "Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this." Those were some good days, but there were a lot of things that I could tell you about those days that were not so great. We did not have the teaching that we have today in relation to home and family life,

husband/wife relationships and many other things. We did not have teaching for young people. There was a lot of things that were missing. These are good days. These are pleasant days. Let us not think that these are the best we will ever see. There ought to be much more in focus as we think of good times. Let us not focus only on the highlights of yesterday.

5) *We must forget our own righteousness.* I think this is what the apostle Paul did here. In Philippians 3:9 he says, “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” What all did he mean here? All the good things and all the good deeds that we have done for others. We tend to be good store keepers when it comes to all the good that I have done for so and so, especially, if that individual turns on us. That is when we really recognize how accurately we kept track of others. It is easy for us to forget all the good things that others have done for us in life including the words of encouragement. It is a tendency for us to have a self-righteousness by things that we have done. The apostle Paul was saying that if there was anyone who had

something to glory in, he had about hit the top mark (as it were), “Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless” (Philippians 3:5, 6) What more do you want? He said, “I have scored high.” We must forget things that we have done for others in the past because dwelling on that really creates a problem for us. It seems to hamper us. When we do not get the recognition for something that we thought we would get, or especially if that individual somehow turns on us (or we think he/she turns on us) very quickly all these things tend to arise in our minds. I think that is the test. When something goes wrong, or when somebody wrongs us, the things that we did all of a sudden come back to the surface and we say, “Oh yeah, I remember. I gave that individual . . . I helped them out financially. I baked for her. I did this. I did this.” Those things that come back are self-righteousness. We ought not to have a score of the things that we have done. They have a right to it, but we do not.

6) *We must forget the lack of appreciation shown by others*

when giving of ourselves. Whatever we do, we do it for the honour and the glory of our God [Colossians 3:17, 23]. I am, no doubt, guilty of it. When I do something for someone, and they either give no recognition, or very little, we tend to go away and think that this person really did not appreciate it. This is wrong on our behalf to do so, because for one thing, we have not all been given the same gifts and abilities to express ourselves.

Some can so readily flow out their expression of appreciation. It simply rolls out, and it might altogether be genuine, or it may not be. Then there is the individual who says very little but that he appreciates you came. That individual might give it from the depth of his heart. We should not try to analyze or grade the individual's appreciation on the amount, or the ability to express it. There are those who mean things really well. I know of a dear brother and I am sure he means well. He has a heart as big as a barn and he is a very kind-hearted brother, but you can do things for him and oftentimes he will not say a thing. I could get the feeling, "Did he not appreciate it?" I think he needs to cultivate something, but I do not think it is right for me to gauge his appreciation by a lack of express-

ing it.

7) *We must forget the things that God has forgotten and forgiven.* It comes back to some of the things that we talked of earlier. When we have made failures in life, and we have really blotched our life, there is something, in a sense, that we can really do nothing about it. We need to accept the fact that if God has forgiven and forgotten (which He has) because the Scriptures say our "sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 10:17). That is one aspect of the forgetfulness of God that He does not remember sins and iniquities anymore. We have no right to dabble in the things that He has forgiven. Forgiveness can only offer peace as we accept the forgiveness of God. If we do not accept the forgiveness of God, God really (in a sense) cannot grant it. He can only grant forgiveness as we accept it, and we can only have peace as we accept that forgiveness.

That forgiveness is not based on how we feel, because there are many times I would need to say "God did not forgive me," but "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9), no matter how we feel. It is nice when we get that feeling where His "Spirit itself beareth

witness with our spirit” (Romans 8:16). I would like to say this that His Spirit bearing witness with our spirit is not dependent on our feelings. It is dependent upon truth. God’s Spirit will always line up with the truth and when we ask God to forgive us then we must accept that He has forgiven on the basis of His Spirit bearing witness with our spirit. That is how we claim that we have assurance of salvation when we have lined up with the truth. It is not based on how we feel.

I have seen individuals come up off their knees all aglow because their sins were forgiven and they accepted it. It was sort of an emotional experience. I have seen individuals come up off their knees after responding at revival meetings and there was very little expression. Was there any less forgiveness in that individual’s life? Not at all. We are made up of different emotions. We must accept it on the basis of truth, and not on the basis of our feelings. “Father . . . forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:12), and we must believe that. There are times when the feelings do not accompany the past, and those times are rather empty if we do not claim the fact as truth.

We really put ourselves in jeopardy of experiencing the joy

of the Lord when we base our relationship with God on the basis of our feelings. We need to come back to the fact that if God forgives us, then we are forgiven. If there is nothing too big or too small for God to forgive us, then there should be nothing too big for us to remember. God does not have waste cans where we can go back and pull things out of them. I would liken it to God having compost piles. When we throw it on that pile, it does not take very long and we cannot recognize what was there. That is how we ought to treat things of the past, our failures, and the things that God has forgiven. We do not dwell on those things. It can only make hardships and really hinder our Christian life as we begin to dwell. It can take us back into the awful pit of feeling unforgiven, and draw and pull us down rather than to pull us up.

II) *The dangers of not forgetting the past.* I like Philippians 3:8 where he says, “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss. . .” (now notice) “for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” Oh that we could understand the depth of that statement, “for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” “I count everything as loss for the excellency.” We think of the perfection of

Jesus Christ, the provisions of Jesus Christ, the power of Jesus Christ, and the list can go on and on. 1) *The danger of not forgetting is that it stunts our spiritual growth if we dwell on things of the past.* We cannot rely, or step up, so to speak, to see the excellency of Jesus Christ as long as we dwell on the past, the negative, and things that are behind us. God wants each one of His children to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). We cannot as long as we are dwelling back there.

It is a little like the student who is trying to learn the lesson of today and has his mind on either the failures in the bad rate of yesterday, or has his mind on the lesson of yesterday. He cannot ever learn anything. Therefore, we must lay those things aside of the past, so that we can learn and be able to allow the excellency of His knowledge to teach us. As long as I dwell on the past, I can never attain to the ability that God wants me to have to learn more of Himself and to really see myself for what I am. As long as I am not in the excellency or in the teaching school of Christ, I cannot grow. And along with that, as long as I dwell on the past there is a sense in which I operate by humanism.

Everything is sort of mechanical. I try to rationalize this, “I do this . . .” It is all based on my understanding. The Scripture tells us “lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us” (Hebrews 12:1). God never intended for us to carry the baggage along of yesterday. I wonder if many times the children of Israel did not let the past go. They remembered some of the things of Egypt and they wandered. Their minds were back in Egypt thinking on some of the things that they left behind. They were dabbling in some of those things.

2) *There is the danger of losing our enjoyment of life.* The apostle Paul says, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe” (Philippians 3:1). Brethren, I can assure you that when you have the joy of the Lord it is a safe thing for you to have. It is a powerful thing for you to have when you have the joy of the Lord. Remember again, we can lose the joy of the Lord when we dwell on things of the past. There are so many things in life that can rob us of the joy of the Lord. The Scripture says, “the joy of the LORD is [our] strength” (Nehemiah 8:10).

It does not matter whether it is our bank account, or whatever, it is those things which get us down. When we lose that joy, we lose our ability to focus on the very object of our joy and that is Jesus Christ. We must leave those things behind. If we do not forget the past, it is so easy to rob us of the present joy of today. I think many individuals forfeit the present enjoyment of today simply because of dwelling on things of the past. The Scriptures tell us that we are to “go on unto perfection” (Hebrews 6:1), because “the joy of the Lord is [thy] strength.” The reason it is thy strength is the joy that the Lord is my life. When the joy of the Lord is our strength, we have a fortitude around us that we are protected from the temptations because the joy of the Lord is that He is everything to us. Therefore, it is so important that we maintain that joy by simply forgetting the past.

3) *There is the danger that it simply prohibits our usefulness in reaching out to others.* We simply dwell and focus on ourselves. When we do not forget the things of the past, what is it? What do we focus on? Our mind is like a whirlwind — we simply go around and around on the things of the past — a number of things that have happened in our life

and we have that inward look. Along with that it prohibits others to be useful especially in helping us. Very quickly, we will not even allow individuals who wronged us to help us simply because we cannot forget the past.

Often there are little things that go wrong in church life, for example, interpersonal relationships. There have been some things that have not been the way they should be. As long as we keep dwelling on the past that individual that would like to help us, really cannot unless we do lay aside the things of the past.

4) *The danger of self-destruction.* One perfect example is that of Jonah. When God asked him, “Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death” (Jonah 4:9). We cannot better ourselves, and improve our lives, not even through Jesus Christ, as long as we hold on to some of the things and the hurts of the past. These are the things which Paul said, “For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I” (Romans 7:15). We become bound by yesterday’s failures. It only breeds more defeat, and we can never rise above our own expectation as long as we hold on to the things

of the past. It seems like it is a dead-end street of self-pity. It is a self-imprisonment when we hold on to the things of the past.

5) *There is the danger of an unrealistic evaluation of the problem when we hold on to the things of the past.* I must say this for myself. Things happen in life. When we hold on to the hurts, the injustices and all the things of the past, we are not in a position to evaluate the problem, much less yet find the solution to the problem. Why? It is simply because we dwell on the problem. When we do not forget the past, we are not thinking of the solution. We simply just dwell on the problem and shall I say even more than that? We dwell on the person. Would it not be wonderful if we as God's people could isolate the person from the problem? We can by God's grace, if we forget those things that are in the past. We can look at an individual and love that individual, if we simply forget the things of the past. I think it is unrealistic in many ways not to, as we think of the things of the past and the danger of that. Those things of the past were not necessarily the way we look at them.

6) *The danger of increasing sensitivity to hurts, misunderstandings, hearsay, and . . . the*

list can go on and on. If we do not forget the past, we, in a sense, have put ourselves into a prime position of having that sensitivity of being hurt and misunderstandings injustice and all kinds of other things. Well, we must let them go.

III) *On the positive side, it is possible to forget and there is power to forget.* 1) In Philippians 3:8, Paul says, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss . . ." and then he says, "[I] count them but dung" — "I count them but useless." We must be finished with the past. If we will move on to higher ground, we must be sick and tired of the past. We must let go. Unless we are finished with it, we can never, and will never, let go with it.

2) In Philippians 3:10 Paul says, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings," (and then we read) "being made conformable unto his death." A whole surrender is what it takes to lay the past down and to let go of some of the things, some of the people that I think of, and the various things that have happened in life. There are tiffs and disappointments, there are things we could say that should not have happened but they did. We need to lay everything down, put it

behind us, and move ahead. Loved ones, God never takes anything from us that we are not willing to give up. Until we fully surrender, give it up and say we are done with it, the power of God will not take it from us. Only then can we be helped. Only then God takes from us the things that are dung to us, and are useless. We have nothing to hang on to. So often individuals are holding on to the past. I think it is a very subtle form of the unsundered will when we hold on to the hurts and the things of the past.

3) *The power to forget comes simply by putting a premium value on the Lord's directive for my life.* In Philippians 3:9, Paul says, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness." In verse 10 he says, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection." That is one of the ways that we can lay things behind us, when Jesus Christ becomes everything to us. In all of life, we seek His directives and it comes back to the surrender. Is not surrender one of the hardest things to do in the Christian life? Giving up my will, my ideas, and simply laying everything down and forgetting the past, is that not the hardest thing? But is not the end product the easiest way of life? When we

surrender how easy it is!

It is a picture of a child that surrenders everything. When the father disciplines that child and the child hands over his will (so to speak) to the father, he is simply released and is so happy. That is how it is in the Christian life.

4) *We must be robbed in the forgiveness of Christ.* In verse 10, I wish I had a whole broad picture and that the apostle Paul would have said more about this where he talks about "being made conformable unto his death," "and the fellowship of his sufferings." I do not know what all that means. I have an idea that one of the things is that, we can think of Jesus Christ in our lives, being robbed in the unconditional forgiveness of Jesus Christ. We focus on the forgiveness of Jesus Christ, hanging on the cross, crying out saying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what [we] do" (Luke 23:34). The power to forgive the past, or to forget the past, is to forgive the past — the wrongs, the injustices of others, the failures, and the list can go on. That is the power to be "made conformable unto his death." "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." They were these individuals who were crucifying Him.

We could ask, "Did God grant

forgiveness?” That was not the issue. The issue was that Jesus Christ would die a death, having forgiven, and not holding anything against anyone. That is the death that I want to die. As long as I do not let go of the past, and forgive as Christ has forgiven me, I cannot make progress in my Christian life.

The power to forget is the power to forgive. We can turn that right around. When the past is a dwelling experience, we must conclude that we have not forgiven. Jesus Christ — He forgives and He forgets. So it is with us. We must experience the same thing in life including all the injustice. We need to focus on the injustices in the life of Jesus Christ or the things that were done to Him — total injustice, not partial injustice. Usually, when we have been hurt and wronged by others there may have been some injustice but probably not total injustice. However, on the cross, Jesus Christ cried out and said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” So, it needs to be with us.

5) *We need to reach forth.* There must be a focus. In verse 13b Paul says, “and reaching forth unto those things which are before.” Focus — we cannot get out of the ditch; we cannot get

out of the rut, as long as we focus on how we got in there. Maybe you have not, but I have run off the road already, and I stood there wondering how I did this. I looked up at my tracks. We can look at them, and look at them again, and finally decide how we got there but it is not until we focus on how to get out of there that we can get out. We need to focus on something higher than ourselves and how we got in here.

That is how it is in life. We can focus on the bleak, the negative, the wrong, and the wrongs of others, but unless we have a goal and the focus to reach up to higher ground, we can never get out of it. While we are down there focussing on how we got there, there are hundreds of cars passing by and they are up on high ground. We must simply leave some of the things in the background and move on. Set a goal. Look beyond yesterday and look at today. Paul says, “[I reach] forth unto those things which are before.”

Again, loved ones, we cannot live on the experiences of yesterday. No matter how good or bad it was, we cannot live on it. One will, of course, of certainty bring more negative than the others, but we simply cannot go on that way. We must focus on what is

ahead. There is much to look forward to yet. There is land to be conquered. We cannot relate to the gold and the silver and all of that which is here in life. We do not want to because of our carnal nature. However, in heaven it will take on a whole new meaning because of the carnal nature will not be present. Therefore, let us keep focussing on things that are bigger and better than ourselves, than the failures, and faults of ourselves, and those of others.

A woman once went to a doctor and she was loaded with struggles of the past. This doctor listened to her for quite some time and he finally said, "Lady, you ought to go and see Niagara Falls and see something bigger than yourself." We must focus on something bigger and better than ourselves.

6) *As we think of the power to forget the things of the past, let us focus on the prize that is before us.* What is there in life, brethren and sisters, that we would not to lay down in light of eternity? Is there anything that is worth hanging on to in relation to the past (other than the Christian experience of course) that we would be unwilling to lay down? Listen. There was a man in the Scriptures whom we looked at. "Doest thou well to be angry?"

"he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death" (Jonah 4:9). He lost sight of the prize that was in focus. Oh, loved ones there is so much in store. There is nothing worth hanging on to in this life including the wrongs and the hurts of others. We can never move on and no doubt we will lose sight of eternity if we do not lay those things down.

The apostle Paul says, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). Notice verses 20 and 21 yet, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Eternity is the final reward of moving together along on the way of life. In light of eternity, what would you hang on to?

The closing Scripture I would like to think of is "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165). Nothing will cause them to fall. What is the key thought there? Great peace have they that love the Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing that will cause us to fall in life. Ah the lit-

tle things that so and so said and what did he mean by that? At one meeting, I was talking looking right at a brother, and he walked away from it. I could dwell on it for a week and say “What did that brother mean? What I was saying, was it not of interest? Did I offend him?” Well, great peace have they that

love the Lord Jesus Christ. These little things in life will not cause us to stumble. We will keep stepping heavenward. Let us continue to do those things, “forgetting those things . . . and reaching forth.” The prize is yet in store.

Scripture References

Nehemiah		Romans		Colossians	
8:10	90	7:15	91	3:17, 23	88
	Psalms	8:16	89		Hebrews
119:65	95	8:31	84	6:1	91
	Ecclesiastes	Philippians		10:17	88
7:10	86	3:1	90	12:1	90
	Jonah	3:1-14	82		2 Peter
4:9	91	3:5, 6	87	1:17, 18	85
	Matthew	3:8	89, 92	1:19	86
6:12	89	3:9	87, 93	3:18	90
17:4	86	3:10	92, 93		1 John
	Luke	3:13	81, 94	1:9	88
23:34	93	3:14	95		
		3:20, 21	95		

From the Previous Issue:

Distinctive Anabaptist Teaching: Authority of the Scriptures

From a message by Aaron H. Martin

Sunday, October 03, 1999

Centerville Mennonite Church

The Authority of the Word — Hebrews 4:12

From a sermon by LaRay Martin

Sunday, March 25, 2001

Culbertson Mennonite Church

Book Reprint (Continued)
One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study

LESSON 42.

Jeremiah.

I. Lineage. — Son of Hilkiah, of a priestly family.

II. Time of prophecy. — From the days of Josiah to the captivity in Babylon.

III. His writings. — He is the author of the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations; also a book of lamentations on the death of Josiah (2 Chronicles 35:25), not now extant. His name is connected with the authorship of several of the Psalms, and the two books of Kings; but this is only conjecture. The strength of his writings lies in their pathos.

IV. Incidents connected with his life.

1. His call to the work. — Jeremiah 1:4–10.

NOTE. — When people, on the plea of unworthiness, refuse to take up the work of the Lord, it would be well for them to consider that by making excuses, they simply say to the Lord that they know more about it than He does. This is assuming greater responsibilities than any kind of service demands.

2. His visions. — 1:11–14.

3. His mission. — 1:17, 18.

4. His message to Zedekiah. — 21.

5. Arraigned before the princes, but acquitted. — 26.

NOTE. — The priests that arraigned Jeremiah, were very much like our modern preachers who, delight in railing down on all who dare to preach the dark side of future prospects.

6. False prophecy of Hananiah denounced. — 28.

7. His letter to the captives in Babylon. — 29.

8. His imprisonment. — 32:2–5; 37:11–21; 38.

9. Buys Hanameel's field. — 32:6–12.

10. Writes his prophecy upon a roll, and reads the same. — 36.

11. Released from prison. — Jeremiah 40:1–6.

12. Proposed flight to Egypt. — 42.

13. Carried into Egypt. — 43:1–7.

V. Prophecies.

1. Seventy years captivity in Babylon. — 25:8–11.
2. Return from the captivity. — 24; 30.
3. Conquest of Egypt by Babylon. — 43:8–13; 46.
4. Destruction of the Philistines. — 47.
5. Judgment upon Moab, Ammon, Babylon, etc. — 48-51.
6. The slaughter of innocents. — 31:15.
7. Christ's rule of the Church. — 23:1–8.

VI. From the life, prophecies, and environments of Jeremiah, we learn:

1. That God sometimes calls children to His work very early in life.

2. That when God calls, no excuse is acceptable with Him.

3. That a foreknowledge of human events does not always produce pleasurable emotions.

4. That willful blindness to facts does not change them.

5. That earthly glory is built upon a sandy foundation.

6. That a neglect of present duty means eventual disaster.

7. That there are great blessings in store for those who seek the

Lord.

8. That God is with His people, even in adversity.

9. That to stand up for truth, when the same means reproach and persecution, requires Christian fortitude.

10. That God offers salvation to the penitent, “without money and without price.” [Isaiah 55:1]

1. What was the probable fate of Jeremiah?

2. Compare Jeremiah with Isaiah.

3. How often and for what reasons was Jeremiah imprisoned?

4. Was Jeremiah partial to the Chaldeans in his prophecies?

5. Why is Jeremiah styled “the weeping prophet”?

LESSON 43.

Ezekiel.

I. His commission. — 2.

II. Scene of his prophecy. 1:3.

III. Time of prophecy. — From the fifth (1:2) to the twenty-seventh

(29:17) year of the captivity of Jehoiachin.

IV. His writings. — If we were allowed to draw on our imagination, we would ascribe to him the gift of oratory as well as a versatile pen. Imagine a tall, spare man, his countenance indicating a fixedness of purpose and sternness of character and nobility of soul, standing before a congregation. “Son of man,” is heard in ringing tones. The clear, keen, penetrating, voice electrifies the congregation, which remains spell-bound while he pictures in vivid colors the marvelous visions with which his writings abound. No other writer excels him in the vivid portrayal of visions; yet many of his prophecies are shrouded in obscurity — must remain so until the mortal veil of imperfection shall be taken from off our vision.

V. Events of his life. — Little is known of his personal history. He was a priest, the son of Buzi, among the exiles upon the banks of the river Chebar (1:1–3), owned a house, was married, lost his wife by sudden stroke (24:18), and was frequently consulted on matters of importance (8:1; 11:25; 20:1). He is said to have been murdered by a Jewish prince whom he exhorted to leave his idolatry.

VI. Visions.

1. The cherubims. — 1:4–14; 10:8–22.
2. The four wheels. — 1:15–25.
3. The glory of God. — 1:26–28; 8:1–4.
4. Of the destruction of some and salvation of others. — 9; 11:13–21.
5. The coals of fire. — 10:1–7.
6. The resurrection of dry bones. — 37.
7. The Temple. — 44:4.
8. The holy waters. — 47.

VII. Types, parables, and signs.

1. A siege. — 4.
2. The prophet's hair. — 5.
3. A chain. — 7:23–27.
4. Ezekiel's removing. — 12.
5. A wretched infant. — 16.
6. Two eagles and a vine. — 17.

7. Sour grapes. — 18.
8. The lion's whelps. — 19.
9. Sighing. — 21:1–7.
10. Sharp and bright sword. — 21:8–22.
11. The boiling pot. — 24.

VIII. Prophecies.

1. Desolation of Israel. — 7.
2. Restoration of Israel. — 36:37.
3. Rejection of Jerusalem. — 15.
4. Captivity of Zedekiah. — 12.
5. Against heathen nations. — 21;28–32; 35.
6. God's judgment upon Gog. — 38; 39.

IX. Topics presented in the book of Ezekiel.

1. The glory of God.
 2. The goodness of God.
 3. The certainty of judgment.
 4. The blessedness of obedience.
 5. The wretchedness of sin.
 6. The vanity of worldly glory.
 7. The emptiness of form.
 8. The foolishness of fashion.
1. What other prophets prophesied during the life of Ezekiel?
 2. Distinguish between the visions of Ezekiel and his parables.
 3. Explain the vision of "dry bones."
 4. Discuss the parable of "sour grapes."
 5. Compare Ezekiel with Isaiah.

Children's Book Reprint (Continued)

THE PENNY TRACT

Revised and Reprinted © 2006

Francis Downes was sitting at the door, cutting a cork to make a float for his fishing-line, when he saw his wife come up to the gate. He saluted her, as his usual custom was, with an oath or some

abusive epithet; and asking her where she had been lugging the child, demanded what she had brought back with her.

"More than you deserve," she answered, with more spirit than

usual, showing him a quantity of broken meat which she had fastened up in her apron, and a few halfpence tied up in an old rag. As to the silver sixpence which the ladies had given her, she kept that for herself and child at some future time of need. The man was well satisfied with what his wife had obtained, and getting up and hobbling into the house, he heaped a few sticks on the fire, and sat down with her to sup on what she had brought.

While they were enjoying their food, for they were very hungry, the wife bethought* herself of the book; and taking it from her pocket, she gave it to her husband, repeating the lady's words. He laid down a bone which he was picking, and taking the book between his finger and thumb, he looked at the title, shook his head, and then dexterously tossed the tract from him upon a dresser at the other end of the room, and would no doubt have thrown it further, could he have done so without getting up

“Don't you like it, Frank?” said his wife. “Why, what's it about, that you are so angry with it?” asked she; what's the subject of it?”

“No matter,” replied the man; “at any rate, it is no business of yours.”

The poor woman did not dare to ask any more questions about the book, though she still felt some respect for it, from what the ladies had said. Accordingly, when she was putting away the things after they had done their supper, she took the tract from the upper part of the dresser and put it into one, of the drawers.

The next day Frank Downes, being tired of staying at home, thought he might make out to hobble to a pond which was in a wood not far off, to lay lines for fishing. Accordingly, he set out about five in the morning, but coming to an uneven part of the common, he stumbled and fell, and spraining his ankle a second time, lay in dreadful pain, till a carter, passing by with an empty cart, had the charity to take him up and carry him home. His wife had some trouble to get him to bed, and he groaned dreadfully with the pain, while an old neighbor bathed his ankle. The pain after a while was much less; but his foot remained so swollen and weak, that it was necessary for him to be constantly upon his bed. He was now, therefore, forced to make up his mind to stay at home, while he sent his wife again about the country to pick up what she could get by begging.

* To call to mind, to recall or bring to recollection, reflection, or consideration.

The first day of her absence he strove to amuse himself with mending his fishing tackle, and in this manner he passed the time till his wife came back; but the next day he could find no such handy job, and he lay from seven o'clock in the morning, at which time she went out, quite alone, and having nothing but his own thoughts to amuse him. Now, unless a man enjoys peace with God through the blood and merits of his dying Saviour, it is seldom that he can find much satisfaction in discoursing with his own thoughts. These indeed were companions of which Frank Downes was never very fond; and they were particularly disagreeable to him now, when he considered into what a situation he had brought himself. At length, being unable to bear his own reflections any longer, he got up, and hobbling to the dresser, he opened the very drawer into which his wife had put the tract. In this drawer Frank Downes used to keep a roll of old ballads, with which he thought he might now pass a little time.

The drawer, besides the tract so often mentioned, contained an assortment of dirty rags, combs, and onions, with such other stores of the like nature as negligent housewives are apt to collect in the drawers of dressers and

other convenient repositories. Frank Downes turned this rubbish over and over with one hand, while, in order to ease his lame foot, he leaned on the dresser with the other, but all in vain: the ballads could not be found. At length, cursing his wife for her carelessness, and looking round almost in despair for something with which he might pass away the time, his eye again fell upon the tract which lay in the drawer; and though his hand had rejected it several times while looking for the ballads, and notwithstanding the title was very far from being tempting to such a man as he then was, yet so hard pressed was he for something to do, that he took it up, and hobbling in great pain back to his bed, he threw himself down again in a very ill humor.

Frank Downes lay for a while without looking at the little book which he held in his hand; but finding his thoughts again getting very troublesome, he at length had recourse to it. The tract was written in a plain manner, and gave a simple account of man's fall, and of his redemption by God the Son. It also spoke of man's depravity, and of the manner in which his heart is changed and purified by the Holy Spirit. Much also was to be found in this little book upon that grand and

delightful subject, the love of God the Father for his creatures; and this affecting question and answer was put, "Which among you would give his son to die for his friend? Yet God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son to die for it, even when it lay in open rebellion against him." It also treated of the day of judgment, of heaven and hell, and pointed out somewhat more largely how one might be obtained and the other avoided. In short, this little book contained much divine wisdom; and had it been valued at a thousand guineas instead of a penny, it would have been rated infinitely below its value; that is, if we consider the good that it was the means, under Providence, of conveying to the soul of the poor sin-

ner.

Frank Downes was a ready reader, and therefore he was no great time in perusing the little treatise from beginning to end; and when he had finished it, he threw it from him, using at the same time one of his profane expressions. But although the poor man could throw away the book, it was well for him that he could not so easily throw away the ideas which the book had just put into his head, though he did his utmost to get rid of them. Nevertheless, they worked upon him in such a way, that he presently became, as it were, like a raging lion, and the weariness of his mind was, in comparison, far greater than the pain of his ankle.

FIFTY FUNDAMENTAL FACTS

11. **Fallen man is the most degraded creature on earth.**

The rest of the animal creation is as God created them, except as they have become influenced through fallen man. The hog fills himself with the things that he likes, lies down and grunts. The beast of prey pounces upon its victims, makes a meal of them, and then sulks back into its den. And so, with the rest of the animal creation. They were never intended for the lofty place

which God designed for man, and in the main are true to the purpose for which God created them. But it remains for man, who fell from the lofty state of the noblest of God's creatures into the lowest depths of degradation that it is possible for any earthly creature to reach. What other animal besides man can equal him in drunkenness, in murder, and in the lowest depths of vice! Where is there another set of creatures that will band

The Pulpit Exchange



themselves together, cross the ocean, travel thousands of miles, for the sole purpose of destroying their enemies by the wholesale in bloody war! Is there anything in the brute creation that can in any way equal the degradation and vice found in the slums or in the “high society” of our cities? Look at fallen man as he really is, and there are two emotions that

grip, your soul: (1) The awful retribution in store for fallen man in the place prepared for the devil and his angels,” which is his just portion. (2) Our greatest sacrifices are not too great in a faithful effort to rescue these poor, lost souls from the thralldom of sin and save them for a blessed eternity.

Catalogue

Other Inspirational Messages

- Cultivating Spiritual Vitality — 1 Peter 2
- Forgetting Those Things Behind
- Gates of Jerusalem, The : A Type of Building the Church
- More Than Conquerors: Conquering Guilt
- More Than Conquerors: Conquering Temptation
- “Praise Ye the Lord” — Psalm 150
- Sin Not Unto Death, The —1 John 5:16
- Strength of Structured Church Life, The
- “Who Shall Order the Battle?” — 1 Kings 20:14