



## 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. 8

Issue # 308

### **Understanding the Influence of Pietism**

It is a blessed privilege to be in the house of prayer and a special privilege to be in the house of God. We gather with those who take separation from the world seriously and are ready to pay the price of the Christian life. I wonder how I would make it if I would be alone? I am sure that each of us could raise that same question. There are times when, even in this world, through persecution individuals must face the

foe themselves. We are thankful that even in situations like that we can all depend on the Lord. Let us thank the Lord for the opportunities we have to sing together. We study the Bible together. We hear the same message and we have the blessing pronounced on us as we leave. How good it is to dwell with the people of God.

The Sunday School lessons are a challenge for us. The book of

### **IN THIS ISSUE**

#### *Pietism*

**Understanding the Influence of Pietism**

**177**

#### *Book Reprint*

**One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study**

**195**

Hebrews is one of the deeper doctrines. He says in Hebrews 6:1, "let us go on." We try to do that as we look at the deeper things of the priesthood. I am glad we do get into those Scriptures. One of the blessings of having our own Bible studies is that we do not avoid any difficult Scriptures or any distinct doctrines. Some of the other groups around us and other publishers follow the International Sunday School Lessons, and then

maybe do not get into some of those distinct doctrines and teachings. However, we are thankful for the brethren who have gone on ahead and put much time into our lessons (our booklets) before we get them. We are thankful for that.

I will use Luke 14 for the text. I will give you the title in a few minutes. We live in a day when it is rather popular to be a Christian. Did anyone ever walk up beside you and say, "I am a

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Christian too?" Praise the Lord. Sometimes we could also respond, "Well, I would not have guessed it." This is the type of world we are living in where it is popular to be a Christian. Some years ago, one of the Presidential candidates seemed to ride on that tidal wave of being a Christian. It seemed to help him get into the White House. It is a popular thing. Jesus was facing this also in Luke 14. There were multitudes with Him in verses 25–28. We will consider this as a text, and maybe on to the end of the chapter. "And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them." What did he say unto them? We could first of all think He might have said, "Well, good. Everyone is following. Let us sit down and we will study the Bible.

However, Jesus looked deeper than that and He saw that many of these people were following Him, not because they really wanted to serve Him, but like it says in one place for the "Loaves [and fishes]" [John 6:26] and the popularity of the day and the movement. Jesus saw that and He sifted them out like we would sift wheat from chaff and chaff from wheat. He says a few things which really cut deep in verses 26 and 27. "If any man

come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

Jesus was sifting the group, and He used some strong language. In fact, we need to go to the other account in Matthew who, instead of using the term, "hate not," he says "He that loveth father or mother more" (Matthew 10:37). He was saying how we cannot love an earthly family more. That is the idea here. Or, that we are not to love anything more than we love the Lord. Thus, it was strong language. It helped to sift them out. It helped them to really see that if a person would follow Jesus, he needs to go the whole way. This leaves nothing for this popular Christianity that people talk about where they want to be saved in the end but they are not ready to pay the price of it.

I am glad that in our church circles there is a constant emphasis on discipleship and being willing to go the whole way. Separation from the world and a number of doctrines fit in there.

The subject we are looking at is "Understanding the Influence of Pietism." It fits right in here

into this text. I will read a bit more of the text in a few moments. Before I define that further, we want to take a little time and look at this passage, and another one to see exactly what Jesus was saying and how he was answering the question, “What must I do to be saved?” There are a lot of mixed up people around us and a lot of mixed up teaching. I am glad we can go back to the Scriptures and here it is. Here is how a person is saved. Here is how a person can finally make it through.

Luke 14:28 says, “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?” See the comparison is to following Jesus in the Christian life. Stop and think. We do not try to bring people into the Church, and then slowly introduce them to all its costs. At the beginning, we should help people to see that this will be costly. This will require everything. There will be nothing — no corner of your house that you can say “This is mine. Jesus does not enter.” Rather, we must stop and count that cost “Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build,

and was not able to finish” (verse 29). Is that not exactly what has happened to many people in the Christian life? They began but they never finished it.

“Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (verses 31–33). In other words, we believe in complete discipleship to Jesus. The Anabaptist’s term (at least it was used of them) is *radical discipleship*. Jesus certainly taught radical discipleship here, did He not, and the cost that goes into it?

The reformers and the Protestants around us today also emphasize faith. There is a lot of faith only teaching, and the Calvinistic emphasis and so on. That was true in the Anabaptist’s time where the reformers emphasized faith, but the keynote for the Anabaptists was following. We know there is a big difference. How can we test a person’s faith? How could we test if he really has faith, and a deep faith?

Is it not always tested by following? That is the keynote that they emphasized. The reformers allowed for an intangible inner experience, but the Anabaptists emphasized that only a total surrender and full obedience to Christ would be what Christ would accept and is based on a Scripture like this.

Let us go to Matthew 7:13 which is an even more familiar passage. Jesus was teaching the Sermon on the Mount. We are looking at radical discipleship — what the Scripture demands of us if we would serve Him. Then, we will go into this other subject on Pietism (and that is the other side of it). “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Talk about radical discipleship! The emphasis in Scripture is that a person must lay down everything to be able to enter that door, that narrow door. After he is through that narrow door, the way is narrow and he keeps on that narrow path.

By contrast, the gateway to hell is broad and so is the path, so that any person can take along whatever they want and they can

take self. Jesus goes on then to explain some about this. I will however go down to verses 21–23. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Something very sad takes place here. We can hardly imagine people who are working for the Lord finally come to the end of life and to the judge of all the earth and the judge says, “Get out of my presence. I do not even know you.” We wonder how can that happen.

The problem is that they are not taking seriously the commands of Jesus, and Jesus explains that here. He says in the little story of the wise man and the foolish man, that those who hear and do are the ones that will be saved. There is a problem existing all through the Christian era, and I think it is especially true today a problem, where people are content to hear the Word, or they are content to carry their Bible, or they are content to

know the Scripture language. Like I said in the beginning, it is popular to say, "I am a Christian too." However, I think some of those are the people who in the end will have that terrible disappointment, the worst disappointment a person has ever had, to be thinking they are going to heaven and are turned around and sent to the place of condemnation. We need to be able to think through what Christ is saying so that we do not find ourselves at that place in the end of time. This is what we believe based on Scriptures. We should be able to know what the Scriptures say.

Now, going on to this term *Pietism*, we are looking at understanding the influences of Pietism. We will see how this fits in here in a few moments. Let us define Pietism a little bit. It is a term that we use. You have heard your preachers use it, and it is a term that has been around, but it is good to look at this occasionally. The word *piety* is a good word. When we think of a pious person, we think of what? Someone who is humble, someone who is lowly. Piety means, "devotion to Christian duty." The *Mennonite Encyclopedia* says this about piety, "True Christian piety is one of the distinguishing traits of every consecrated child of God." The reason is because

the Bible condemns pride and lifting up ourselves. So piety is the opposite of that. A pious person is one who is humble and he does not boast about his own accomplishments and that type of thing.

*A few Bible examples.* Luke 1 is a very precious one to me. I like what it says in a few verses about Zacharias and Elizabeth, who were the parents of John the Baptist. Luke 1:5 where he officially begins the main treatise of the book says, "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth." Notice what it says, "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (verse 6). I think that is a picture of pious individuals. Certainly we should pattern our lives after that where it could be said that we walk, you walk, I walk, "in all the commandments of the Lord blameless." That is quite an attainment is it not?

Let us notice another couple of pious individuals. Acts 10:1, 2 does not use the word *pious* but it certainly describes it. This is Cornelius the centurion. "There was a certain man in Caesarea

called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.” It goes on to describe him, and how God honoured that. I think that is an example of a pious person.

Acts 11:22–24 is one that is not quite as familiar, but it is interesting what it says. This is about Barnabas. I would like to read what is says about Barnabas. “Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.” I want to give a little comment on Barnabas. I am impressed to see his piety. We can see there is a place for piety. We believe in that. We believe in being humble and expressing it in a humble way. I am glad to be part of the plain people who reflect a meekness and gentleness in the land, and the quiet in the land.

I will read a couple of para-

graphs from a few history books. *The Anabaptist Vision* has a few very good comments. It describes the piety and the piousness of the Anabaptists. One of the Roman Catholic clergymen wrote a treatise against the Anabaptists, but in doing so, he describes them. And as I read this, let us use this as a test. Would this be how people describe our conservative Mennonite brethren and sisters today? (Notice he refers to them as part of heresy). “Among the existing heretical sects. . .” “There is none which in appearance leads a more modest or pious life than the Anabaptists. As concerns their outward public life, they are irreproachable — no lying, deception, swearing, strife, harsh language, no intemperate eating and drinking, no outward personal display is found among them, but humility, patience, uprightness, neatness, honesty, temperance, straightforwardness in such a measure that one would suppose that they had the Holy Spirit of God.” Is that not quite a testimony? Of course, he did not want to admit they are God’s children, but rather he wrote against them. In all that he said, one of the words that impressed me was the “neatness.” Sometimes people think of the plain emphasis as a getting

away from neatness and orderliness, but it is not. These certainly had a balanced life, did they not? That is an example of piety and we love that kind. We want to keep teaching that.

Pietism is a little bit different. Pietism is a religious movement that began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century originating in Europe (probably Germany). This emphasis stressed the personal religious experience (and we need some of that) at the expense of the group emphasis, and how that we are in Christ together. Remember, the emphasis of the Anabaptists was not only following, but also the fact that we are in Christ with our brother. No man is in Christ without his brother. It is an important phrase from Anabaptist literature. That is what they believed. That is where Pietism separated from the Anabaptist emphasis. The emphasis with Pietism is on the individual relationship with God, and it does not matter so much which church group you are of, as long as you have a good personal relationship with the Lord. We will look at that and evaluate some of that as we go on here. They would stress personal religious experience ahead of the group conscience and so on.

Remember that this was in a time when nominal Christianity

was very cold, back in the 1600's. Most people (especially those of you interested in singing) may remember the story of Isaac Watts how he complained a little bit to his father, a clergyman, about the songs of the day. His father said to him sort of curtly, "Well, if you think you can write or doing something better, go ahead and do it," and he did. It was not long until he had his first hymn which we sing today and appreciate. That gives a picture of the church life of that day.

It was time for revival. It was very formal, but with very little spiritual life there. That is when Isaac Watts injected some spiritual life and truth to it. It was time to emphasize personal Bible study, and the priesthood of each believer. The Catholic emphasis would have been that the believer does not do too much, but rather it is the priest that is in charge and so on, and he has the spiritual experience.

It was time for Bible studies, prayer meetings, home mission meetings, Bible distribution and that type of thing which there was more interest in, and so on. We can appreciate that. However, what happened in this emphasis was that with all this emphasis on personal experience, the other side was neglect-

ed where we are in Christ together. The Anabaptists said, “We are our brother’s keeper,” and “We are not in Christ without our brother.” This feeling and thinking of Pietism resulted. Usually when we put an “ism” on a word, we are referring to an overreaction, we could say. It is used in words like the term “Mennonitism.” We do not necessarily use that for our congregations, do we? It refers to something that ran off the track a little bit. Pentecostalism, would be another one. Pentecostal is a good word, but we are cautious about Pentecostalism. We could go on. Individualism is something that puts a negative slant on it. That is what has happened with the term piety. When we think of Pietism, we are thinking of moving away from that which is solid and square and moving into an “ism.”

*The Mennonite Encyclopedia* says this about Pietism. (Earlier I referred to the Encyclopedia on Christian piety). “Pietism emphasized the heartfelt religion accompanied by a self-analysis, based on personal, emotionally experienced conversion.” Did you get that? These Pietists emphasized a heartfelt religion — a strong spiritual life and a lot to talk about, and we need some of that. “Accompanied by a self-

analysis.” How do I know if I am saved? We always say the Church helps us to understand that do we not? Yes, we go to the Scriptures, but the Church helps us to understand the Scriptures. We have our written discipline for instance which binds us together and helps us to understand what the Bible says. Without that written discipline, we would probably be quite scattered in what we think the Bible actually says, what it actually means, and what we should do. Therefore, I am glad for our discipline that helps us to do that.

Now, to explain a little bit further yet, I will read from another history book *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries* by Robert Friedman. This gives a little illustration further on what was happening there. “Among the Anabaptists, the cross was consciously the leader in life’s destiny and signified practical opposition against the evil world, whereas in Pietism the cross was more a symbol of an emotional experience.” That explains the difference. The Anabaptists emphasized the cross, suffering and discipleship. Whereas in Pietism, they saw the cross as something more of an emotional experience. “It ultimately meant for the Pietist,” (apparently) “the gradual disappearance of that

concrete Christianity which had been the goal of the original Anabaptists, and the substitution for it of an emotional Christianity which no longer caused the authorities or State or Church any trouble.” I thought that is interesting. The way the Anabaptists lived it was not long before they got into trouble with the authorities. They could recognize them. They could pick them out by their dress and by their way of life. However, the Pietists emphasis was not so much on the outside. The main thing is if you love the Lord and had a good experience to talk about. Consequently that did not make the State and the authorities any trouble.

“So the Pietists made peace with the world as it is and in spite of his sincere intentions to achieve a real Christlikeness, avoided or eliminated the friction and opposition which he would otherwise have had to face. Without doubt, many Anabaptists ultimately also followed this road without being conscious of what they were doing. It was the easier and yet a Christian way.” I think that brings us right to the crux of this subject in this message. That is very real today is it not? — the easier way to live the Christian life. Some look at our group and our congregations and

think we have so many rules, and we make it so difficult. And they are Christians too and they have a lot to talk, maybe a lot more emotion that can make us begin to wonder. . . but, mark it down, something is happening. This easy Christian life, in the end, will not be sufficient like we read, “I never knew you” (Matthew 7:23), which Jesus says to those who were not ready to pay the price. There is a lot we could take from history on that, but that gives you a little idea.

We could say, “Pietism is sometimes a misguided piety.” In other words piety is a good thing. When it is misguided, it becomes Pietism and it is an over emphasis on personal experience at the expense of discipleship, obedience, and suffering. Sometimes it sounds so good what they have to offer. You know, “The Spirit told me this, and I had a dream about this,” and so on. “The Lord spoke to me in a dream.” There is much which can be said, but the question is, “What is the end result and where are the goods?” We would say. “What is it producing?”

We will look now at five areas where Pietism becomes a threat to us today, or to the true Church.

- 1) *Pietism overlooks the call to personal Christian discipleship.*

While it does talk about a personal experience, it overlooks that call to personal discipleship. The Christian life will cost us something personally. We said we should be ready to share that upfront with people. This type of emphasis, emphasizes the love of God for instance — how God is so good and God is so merciful. All of that is true, and we appreciate those doctrines. However, sometimes people get confused as to what is the central attribute of God. See, the Bible does say “God is love.” Does that mean that God is more love than He is something else?

*As we think it through, we must come to the premise that God’s basic characteristic is holiness. Everything else must bow to that. God can only love a person as far as His holiness requires it, but His holiness will not allow a sinner to go to heaven. His holiness requires that a sinner must go to hell. Therefore, we must be careful lest we think in those terms — that God is so loving that He simply lets things go because He is more loving than anything else. The Scriptures do not teach that. Rather, they teach that God is holy and everything bows to His holiness.*

In Pietistic circles, they have little to say to say about obedience but are like what we saw in

Matthew 7. Jesus said that those who build on the rock are the ones that hear it and obey it [Matthew 7:24]. They however, may have little to say about that, but may have a big talk about a testimony, program, and so on.

Christianity is viewed as a nice, pleasant thing and there are very few issues. Many times the people who think in these terms (and they are around us today) say, “We do not really need a group discipline. All we do is each one goes to the Bible and the Spirit speaks to the person individually.” There is a lot of emphasis on that.

*There is emphasis on, and a lot of allowance for, falling in the Christian life and coming short. Then (we could call it the “sin salvation syndrome,”) where a person sinned he gets saved again and sins some more. It is the going up and down. This type of thing certainly undermines what the Scriptures say. They overemphasize the forgiveness of God, but they tend to forget what it says about sin. “For sin shall not have dominion over you” (Romans 6:14), the Scripture says. That is what the Scriptures tell us. Therefore, we excuse ourselves for falling into sin, because “Well, God forgives.” Then, we get that “straightened up” and we are back in it again,*

and God forgives again. Well . . . we know God does forgive but Scriptures also say “sin shall not have dominion over you,” and they say, “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die” (Romans 8:13), and we must, “mortify the deeds of the body,” and “if any man sin” (1 John 2:21). There is provision if any man sinned.

Maybe an illustration of this would be sometimes coming through in the songs. We need to be careful. I appreciate (I think we all do) the old hymns that we sing which our hymn books have. However, through listening on tapes to singing groups, we can expose ourselves to some wrong concepts and wrong thinking. Maybe they can even enter into our hymn books if we are not careful. Take a little time sometime and look at the song in *Zion's Praises* #352 *Because He Forgives* where the text says this, “Again and again, so prone to sin, then heavy my burden, Again I must pray, ‘forgive me this day for losing the way.’” It is the idea that we sin every day. Now, we are prone to sin, and it is possible to sin, but I do not think we should be thinking in those terms where we sin every day. It is like one man told me who claimed to be a Christian. He said, “Why, I sin every day.” Well, that is a little the flavour this song gives.

Going on quoting this song, “His pardon to me means I can be free, If I will but ask Him — Because He forgives, I know I can live for Him ev’ry day.” The chorus says, “To forgive is a sign of presence Divine, to err is but human, Because He forgives, I know I can live.”

There is a side to that. We can only get to heaven because He forgives. However, we should not think in those terms, where we sin every day and need to keep coming back for forgiveness because that opens the door to violating these Scriptures like “If any man sin,” and so on.

Pietism overlooks the call to personal discipleship and we branched out on that a bit. I will read again from Bender’s book to describe the Lutheran thinking on this. I thought this was quite interesting. We are influenced and we do not need to go as far as the Lutheran church to get some of this input or influence.

“Lutheranism said that since the Christian must live in a world order that remains sinful, he must make a compromise with it.” Oh, the Anabaptists had nothing for that did they? “As a citizen, he cannot avoid participation in the evil of the world, for instance, in making war. And for this, his only recourse is to seek forgiveness by the grace of God.” In

other words we can go to war, and realize it is wrong to kill someone. Therefore, we ask for forgiveness and that type of thing. “Only within his own personal, private experience can the Christian truly Christianize his life. The Anabaptists rejected this view completely since, for him, no compromise dare be made with evil. The Christian may in no circumstance participate in any conduct in the existing order which is contrary to the spirit and teaching of Christ and the apostolic practice. He must consequently withdraw from the worldly system and create the Christian social order within the fellowship of the Church brotherhood.” That is what we try to do, right? Separation from the world even while we live in it, and it is a new social order (we could say subculture) that we relate to. One more sentence from this book, “Extension of this Christian order by the conversion of individuals and their transfer out of the world into the Church, is the only way by which progress can be made in Christianizing the social order.” The Protestant emphasis (and we see it and we have seen it in the recent Presidential election) is to make the world better by getting in there and being involved in the world events. The Anabaptist

emphasis is “No, no, you must separate yourself from the world and be part of a separated body and that is how you become the salt of the earth.”

2) *Pietism places a premium on the individual feelings and emotions.* We had a little bit of this, but let us take it a bit further. It is true that all of us are a three-fold being — body, soul and spirit. We know that they are inter-related. We cannot stay away from the emotional completely. There is a right place for tears and joy. However, we must not overemphasize the emotion at the expense of the spiritual. In New Testament times the emphasis is on the spiritual when it comes to worship, for instance. “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). In the Old Testament they had very emotional emphasis including, for instance, the musical instruments which touched the emotions. That is one of the reasons why we lay those aside in New Testament times because now we worship not in emotion, and with all those things but in spirit, where our spirit is in contact with God and we worship that way. This is the New Testament emphasis.

Thus, Pietism places a premium on individual feelings and

emotions and we shun away from the strong emotional emphasis in our services. Historically, we do not have much room for that, but at the same time, we cannot get away from emotions — they can serve if they are kept in place. Let me explain this. I will read another few sentences from *The Swiss Anabaptists* booklet by our own publication board [Eastern Mennonite Publications]. This explains this concept a little bit. “Pietism was a religious movement that began in Germany during the 1600’s just prior to the major wave of Mennonite immigrations to America. It reflected a reaction of popular discontent with the insincerity of the State religions and the miseries of the Thirty-Years-War. This movement laid great stress on the emotions in religion and de-emphasized all formality, religious customs or ordinances and ecclesiastical institutions. The majority of the adherents of this belief retained membership in the State churches and made their emotional religious preferences as an individual matter.”

I have this quote yet about their meetings, “The Congregationalist evangelist Jonathan Edwards and the Methodist evangelist George Whitefield conducted popular revival campaigns in the mid

1700’s. Great emotional fervour was displayed in these meetings and frequently those under conviction of sin would burst out in bitter mourning. Some would be overcome and faint. Many more would weep silently, while a few were so affected that they made strange and unusual motions. The evangelists expressed unrestrained zeal unlike the normal sense of order expressed by ministers.” One writer stated that the Great Awakening terminated the Puritan age and inaugurated the Pietist age, and so on. I think that describes it. Some of us have read history and know about that. We are not saying that those mass revivals had no place or did not serve, but that is where there was a change, and the emphasis now on the emotional worship.

*Today it might impact us with the emphasis on more emotion in our worship services.* We do not need to go too far from our circles until we find the candlelight services, and more emphasis on the auditorium and the building being just right so they can worship and various aspects like that, or even the dramatic preaching. We are glad for our preaching and there certainly is a place for emphasis. There is place to make it interesting, but the Pietistic emphasis is on dramatic preaching. What happens is that people

tend to flock to the group to hear the preaching, but many times it does not still stay with the people and help them through the difficulties.

*The convincing testimonies.* As a people, we are a little bit slow to have public testimonies. We do have some sometimes and there is a place for it in a limited way. However, we can get into some circles and there is a lot of emphasis on public testimonies. “The Lord did this for me.” Many times there is a sour note that goes with that because those who are listening know the other side of that, and oftentimes the life does not add up. We are not saying it is always that way. Consequently, as a plain people we have seen the error of that and have moved away from the public testimonies to a large degree. Maybe however we have overreacted. Maybe we need a little bit more of it at our prayer meetings, and so on, or at least there is a place for occasionally sharing a verse that is meaningful. We believe there is a place for that.

3) *Pietism undermines the role of the Church in the believers life.* I think this is a very important one. We need the Church, do we not? The Scriptures say “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”

(Proverbs 16:25). As long as we are in this body and have this fallen nature, we will always face that tendency to go the wrong way. Sometimes it is hard to sift out. A person can say, “Well, I read the Bible. The Holy Spirit tells me what to do, and I do it. So it is my Bible and I. You know that is really all I need — the Bible, the Spirit and myself.” And we say, “No, no there is something missing here, and that is that the Church needs to help us. It is because of the old, fallen nature that I cannot, by myself, determine the Lord’s way. I leave too much room for myself. There is a way that seems right to me but it is the wrong way. It is the way of death.”

Therefore, I need the group. I need my other ministering brethren. I need the congregations. That helps me to understand what the Bible is saying. It is like what Jesus is saying to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3. He says it to each one and He misses none. “He that hath an ear, let him hear. . .” not what the Spirit says to me, but “what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). I think that is real significant. Yes, the Holy Spirit does speak to us, but through the Church. By way of the Church is

how He can help us come to our final decisions and final practices. So, I am glad for our emphasis on the Church. I think it is a tremendous safety for us. It helps us to stay in the centre of God's will as long as we are part of a Scriptural Church.

There is a place, of course, where that does not carry and that is once the Church begins to move away from a Scriptural premise. Then, the Spirit cannot speak through the Church. Sometimes individuals have had to leave that kind of a setting.

*The Pietists talk about the invisible Church, but that was foreign terminology to the Anabaptists.* Oh, the Anabaptists could have slipped out of a lot of trouble if they had been part of the invisible Church, but they believed in the visible Church. They were identified with the Church and they were not ashamed of it. That is what cost them their lives many times. It was right. They took a stand that was right.

*The Pietists emphasize open communion.* They say "In our communion, your communion with the Lord." It is a vertical relationship. The Anabaptists however, and our type of church life says "No, no. Yes, it is a relationship with the Lord, but that relationship with the Lord is

tested by the horizontal relationship, how do we relate to the brotherhood, the discipline of the brotherhood and so on." That is why we have our counsel service. The Anabaptists kept coming back to the concept that no man is in Christ without his brother. Pietism provides a pleasant alternative to the struggles of the disciplined life. It is easy to slip through in some ways. Maybe I will say this to sum up that point. It tears down the group lines. This idea is that a person has a relationship with the Lord, and then it does not matter so much which group they are a part of. It tears down the concept that we have group lines and that we draw lines. We are careful to fellowship with those who we can share with and those who think the same way. The Pietistic emphasis is something different. It encourages mixture because, after all, if someone over here says that "They love the Lord too," how can we question that then if it is only an individual basis.

4) *Pietism destroys appreciation for the tried and proven traditions.* It would be interesting to develop this further. It is easy to think in terms of undermining our traditions. Sometimes people begin to think that what we do is we simply carry it along in

some old practices. No, the traditions that we have are usually based on Scripture. For instance, the covering style that our sisters have has proved itself beneficial and certainly has an image. People certainly recognize it as a Christian woman's veiling and so on. The emphasis on alternate styles today often comes from this Pietistic thinking where each person sort of makes their own idea on it. I am glad for the unity that we have and the challenge is to always keep it spiritual and to keep the coverings large enough to serve and so on.

At times people begin to fear tradition, and they are more afraid of that than they are of carnality or worldliness. That can be quite a deadly combination, can it not, when people are afraid that the traditions we have will make us legalistic. They become more concerned about that than what they are about the carnal expressions and worldly expressions among us.

5) *Pietism provides a deceptive and easy step into the world.* Once a person is thinking in these terms, and emphasizes the individual relationship and forgets about the church relationship it is an easy step into the world. Have we not seen that various times where people get involved in this kind of thinking,

and it is a couple quick steps and soon there is nothing left. No wonder because everything it seems, then becomes so relative. The thinking, "As long as I feel good about my spiritual life and as long as I can say the right things why then what does the rest matter?" However, it is a convenient step into the world. Time after time we need to go back to our relationship with our brotherhood and find the strength that we need.

In closing I will share a few thoughts on facing the challenge to uphold the Anabaptist/Mennonite way. 1) Our churches must promote personal spiritual life in every member. That may sound like a paradox to what we had, but no, we need that, and our Bible schools, Sunday Schools, and preaching, are all geared to do that in order to make strong spiritual life. We need a surrender to the demands of Jesus, and a desire to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28). We need that kind of strong church life. 2) We must be a spiritual church then. I am so glad for the revival that we have seen, for instance in the brotherhood assistance. That certainly is a sign of a spiritual people. There is also the Christian day schools, separation from the world in our

clothing, our dress, and many other ways. We need that kind of spiritual emphasis to continue.

3) We can never fully trust ourselves. We cannot go back to the idea where it is only Christ, the Bible and myself, or the Holy Spirit, the Bible and myself. Let us never fully trust ourselves because we still have that fallen nature. It is equally possible for us to finally, in the end, be among those to whom Jesus says, “I never knew you” (Matthew 7:23). That can happen to us as well as to anyone else. Therefore, let us never fully trust ourselves, but let us always lean on the brotherhood conscience to help us to make right decisions. Sometimes people are oversensitive when the church has something to say and the church taps them on the shoulder and says, “What is this?” We should not be. We should be appreciating that. It helps us to stay saved and safe.

4) Church administration. We need church administration that

calls our membership to discipleship and separation from the world. 5) Finally, we need to be satisfied to be strangers and pilgrims. The Anabaptists were. They knew they would need to suffer when they took a stand, and were baptized, and so on. They saw themselves as pilgrims and strangers and they really did not have their roots very deep. One of the challenges we face is to be detached enough from this world and this life so that when the tests come we are ready to stand for truth, rather than to somehow compromise so that we can have a comfortable position here in this life.

May the Lord help us as we continue. We certainly glory only in the Lord. We cannot glory in our Anabaptist/Mennonite heritage. We cannot glory in recent year revivals even though we can thank the Lord for it. Finally, it is the work of Christ that makes it possible. Let us be faithful unto the end.

### **Other Messages on Pietism**

Gelassenheit Versus Pietism	<input type="checkbox"/>
History and Effects of Pietism, The	<input type="checkbox"/>
Just Lot — A Lesson In Pietism	<input type="checkbox"/>
Piety Without Pietism	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thought Patterns that Gave Rise to Liberalism and Pietism	<input type="checkbox"/>
Threats to the Full Gospel: Pietism	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Scripture References

	<b>Proverbs</b>	14:28	180	8:13	188
16:25	191	14:29	180	<b>Colossians</b>	
		14:31–33	180	1:28	193
	<b>Matthew</b>		<b>John</b>		<b>Hebrews</b>
7:13	181	4:24	189	6:1	178
7:21–23	181	6:26–28	179		<b>1 John</b>
7:23	186, 194		<b>Acts</b>	2:21	188
7:24	187				<b>Revelation</b>
10:37	179	10:1, 2	182	2:7, 11, 17, 29	191
	<b>Luke</b>	11:22–24	183	3:6, 13, 22	191
1:5, 6	182		<b>Romans</b>		
14:25–28	179	6:14	187		

### From the Previous Issue:

#### Cultivating Spiritual Vitality

From a message by James L. Yoder  
Cedar Springs Amish Mennonite Church  
Leitchfield, KY  
Preached at a Ministers' Meeting  
November 5, 2002

#### Book Reprint (Continued)

#### One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study

#### LESSON 47.

### Old Testament Prophecies Fulfilled. (Concluded.)

The following prophecies from the Old Testament, are, according to the testimony of New Testament writers, already fulfilled. For the sake of brevity, but two references with each prophecy are given. The first reference contains the prophecy; the second either contains a record of the, fulfillment, or is the testimony of some New Testament writer, referring to the prophecy as being already fulfilled. Other prophecies, which we believe have been fulfilled, might have been added; but as they are not expressly stated to have been fulfilled, they were omitted. In the following prophecies, we allow the inspired writers to do the interpreting.

I. The Jews.

1. Their unbelief. — Isaiah 53:1; John 12:37, 38.
2. Their hardness of heart. — Isaiah 6:9; Matthew 13:13–15.
3. Their hypocrisy. — Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:7–9.

## II. John the Baptist.

1. The voice of one crying in the wilderness. — Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:1–3.
2. The messenger of Christ. — Malachi 3:1; Mark 1:2.
3. Sent before Christ. — Malachi 4:5, 6; Matthew 17:10–13.

## III. Christ.

1. His advent. — Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:21–23.
2. The seed of Abraham. — Genesis 22:18; Acts 3:19–26.
3. The offspring of Jesse. — Isaiah 11:10; Romans 15:12.
4. The place of His birth. — Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:6.
5. The sign of His advent. — Numbers 24:17; Matthew 2:2.
6. Worshipped by the wise men. — Isaiah 60:6; Matthew 2:11.
7. Slaughter of innocents. — Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:16–18.
8. Called out of Egypt. — Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:15.
9. His mission.
  - a. Prophet. — Deuteronomy 18:18; Acts 3:19–21.
  - b. The Redeemer. — Isaiah 59:20; Romans 11:26.
  - c. The new covenant. — Isaiah 59:21; Hebrews 8:10.
10. Ministry in Galilee. — Isaiah 9:2; Matthew 4:13–16.
11. His miraculous power. — Isaiah 35:4–6; Matthew 11:5.
12. Spoke in parables. — Psalm 78:2; Matthew 13:35.
13. Purging the Temple. — Psalm 69:9; John 2:13–17.
14. The bearer of burdens. — Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 8:17.
15. A priest like Melchizedek. — Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 7:17.
16. His divinity. — Psalm 45:6, 7; Hebrews 1:8, 9.
17. His dominion everlasting. — Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:33.
18. Triumphal entry into Jerusalem. — Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:5.
19. His betrayal.
  - a. By His friend. — Psalm 41:8; John 13:18.
  - b. For thirty pieces of silver. — Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 26:14, 15.
  - c. Purchase of the potter's field. — Zechariah 13:7;

Matthew 27:6–10.

- d. Deserted by His disciples. — Zechariah 13:7;

Matthew 26: 31.

20. His trial.

a. Silent under accusation. — Isaiah 53:7, 8; 1 Peter 2:23.

- b. Mocked. — Psalm 109:25; Matthew 27:39, 40.

- c. Insulted and spit upon. — Isaiah 50:6; Matthew

26:67.

21. The crucifixion.

- a. His suffering. — Isaiah 53:4–6; 1 Peter 2:24.

- b. Hands and feet pierced. — Psalm 22:16; John 20:25,

27.

- c. Numbered with the transgressors. — Isaiah 53:12;

Mark 15:28.

- d. Not a bone broken. — Psalm 34:20; John 19:36.

- e. Casting lots for His garments. — Psalm 22:18;

Matthew 27:35.

22. Buried with the rich. — Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57–60.

23. His ascension. — Psalm 68:18; Ephesians 4:8.

#### IV. The Church of Christ.

1. Tabernacle of David re-erected. — Amos 9:11, 12; Acts 15:7–20.

2. Baptism with the Holy Ghost. — Joel 2:28–32; Acts 2:14–21.

3. Conversion of Gentiles. — Isaiah 49:5, 6; Acts 13:46–48.

1. What prophet most clearly set forth the characteristics of Christ and His Kingdom?

2. By what names is Christ designated in O. T. prophecy?

3. Explain Amos 9:11, 12.

4. Explain Isaiah 53:7, 8.

5. Who are the real Israel of the New Dispensation?

## LESSON 48.

# The Land of Canaan.

I. Secure a map of Palestine as it existed in the days of Joshua.

Give boundaries. — Locate the tribes. — What tribes settled east of the Jordan — Give reasons for their so doing. — What native tribes remained unconquered? — Locate their possessions. — Name and locate three prominent places connected with the life of Abraham; of Isaac; of Jacob. — Name the events which gave prominence to these places.

II. Secure a map of Palestine as it existed in the days of David and Solomon.

Give boundaries. — Name the leading seaport towns. — Locate the following: Hebron, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Bethel, Shiloh, Jabeth-gilead, Shechem, Mt. Tabor, Mt. Carmel, Gaza, Mt. Lebanon. — Name some event connected with each of these places. — Bound the rival kingdoms after the revolt of the ten tribes. — Where did Jeroboam erect his high places?

III. Secure a map of Palestine as it existed in the days of our Saviour.

Give boundaries. — Name and locate the principal places visited by our Saviour. By whom was Palestine inhabited at this time? — What were the principal provinces? — Did the Jews exercise any civil authority over their dominion? — Was the Sanhedrim a civil or a religious body? — Describe the government and population of Palestine at this time. Describe the government and population of Palestine at the present time.

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Afflictions and Tribulations -- Psalm 119:71

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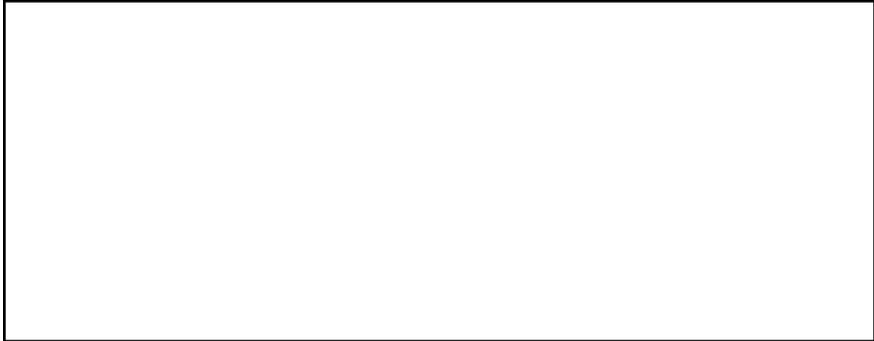
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 Gratitude  
 Hearts Knit Together in Love --  
 Colossians 2:2  
 Holy Spirit Directed Moods  
 Home, The  
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 Substance  
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 Corinthians 10:13  
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 Instead -- Isaiah 53  
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 Ordinance of the Christian Marriage  
 -- Mark 10:2-12  
 Our Great High Priest  
 Pointers on Efficiency in Our  
 Schools  
 Praying Without Fainting  
 Prepare to Meet Thy God  
 Principles that Govern Finances  
 Providence of God, The -- Psalm  
 121:2  
 Realistic Goals for Parents, Teachers,  
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 Redeeming the Time  
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 Removing the Thorns  
 Repentance  
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 Scriptural or Spiritual  
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 Silent Sermons  
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 Sovereignty of God  
 Spiritual Separation and Materialism  
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 Thanksgiving and God's  
 Unspeakable Gift  
 Trying the Spirits  
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