



The *Pulpit Exchange*

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

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Issue # 504

The Anabaptist View of Liberty of Conscience

Our subject is understanding or knowing more about the Anabaptist view of liberty of conscience. This is a very important subject as we understand the faith — the Anabaptist faith. It is also a subject that is very much misunderstood. We would like to look at the right and proper view of the liberty of conscience as the Anabaptists taught it. We believe it was a Bible way. Also we want to think about some examples of

how this teaching was abused then and today.

Matthew 17 gives an illustration of the idea of freedom given by Jesus in His discussion with Peter on one occasion. “And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute? (25) He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, say-

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ing, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? (26) Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. (27) Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto

them for me and thee” (Matthew 17:24–27). It is a very interesting Scripture and does shed light on at least one aspect of our subject.

I do not know exactly what tax or custom these men were asking of Jesus or His disciples. It could have been (as some conclude) the Temple tax, which would have been half a shekel and would have been enforced by Roman law. It is possible. I doubt it. At least, the lesson that Jesus gave

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was “of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute?” It alludes to the fact that there would have been an elite class of people in society of the kings children (using that terminology) to designate a group of people who would be part of an elite class who would be exempt from paying tax. That is what He is saying. He asks that question, and Peter says, “Well no, it is strangers that need to pay the tax.” Then, Jesus made this comment (which is what I want to refer to). Jesus said, “Then are the children free.” We are talking about liberty of conscience. The thought here is that people who are a part of God’s true kingdom are in a real sense free. Now that is, of course, carefully qualified in the Scripture. However, in a real sense, those who are subject to the highest law of God need no law. That is what He is saying. I realize, having said that, that there are dangerous extremes to which people have taken that. We want to look at the Scriptures and particularly as the assignment was given, at the Anabaptist view, by example and illustration to see how this was worked out.

Leaving the Scripture now for the time being, we will come back and finish this thought. We will leave that lay for now as to how that all would apply, but it

does say, “Then are the children free.” I like that thought. The children are free. It does not mean that we do not pay our taxes, but we are free in a different sense.

The Protestant Reformation did not bring religious toleration. Although it was promised in the early stages, Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin consented to a close union of Church and State. If there is to be a union of Church and State, the compromise meant that dissenters would need to be persecuted. Therefore, that is what you had in the Reformation.

Understanding the Anabaptist view of liberty of conscience is a bit difficult to determine for a number of reasons. 1) There is a scant amount of writing. There are some records of debates. There are some records of what Bucer and Zwingli and others wrote in refuting what the Anabaptists said. We have that record. We have the Schleitheim Confession. On the Dutch side of the story we have more written. We have the writings of Menno Simons, and Dirk Philips. I am not referring a lot to that. Due more to a personal interest in our history, I stayed more with the Swiss side of the story.

I would like to talk about three main areas then about this Anabaptist view. The Scriptures

that I chose for reading, most of them you would find in the record, or in the story of the Anabaptists declaring their view of this liberty of conscience. I think, if I remember right, Galatians 3:27, 28 is one that surfaced occasionally. Galatians 3:27, 28 says, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." That verse is simply quoted and interpreted as meaning (and I think it is right) that in the world there are people who are male and female. There are some who are Jews and Greeks, and there are some who are slaves and free. However, in the spiritual realm no one can be against his will enslaved. No one can be in the spiritual realm.

"There is neither bond nor free." 1) *The thought of the free will of man.* That is one very important part of the Anabaptist view of liberty of conscience. What do we mean by the free will of man? Well, it is self-explanatory, is it not? It means that no one can make you believe something, can they? No one can make you believe something. You can outwardly say you do so that nobody harms or persecutes

you, but in your heart and mind you can believe whatever you want. It is a part of the way God made us. There is the free will agency in our being that we can believe whatever we want to. Whatever people say we must say, or do outwardly does not change anybody's heart or life.

In the Swiss region of Berne prior to even what we commonly think of as the Reformation, in (I believe) the year 1299 there was a report of people living in the Emmental valley who were either questioned, or persecuted to some extent about what they believed of their faith. They came up with a number of points. I will not list them all. However, they did not believe that infant baptism ever saved the soul. They did not believe that the holy water that the priest poured on people had any benefit whatever spiritually. They did not believe that working on a Sunday, or working on a holiday was a sin (and we do not either because we tend our cattle and so forth). Maybe they took it further than that (I am not sure) but that is what they said. They did not believe that it was any benefit to be buried in a grave where the Catholic church has blessed and sanctified as a church cemetery. In fact, they stated they would rather be buried somewhere else.

I am not sure who these people really were. It could have been some remnants of the Waldensian faith, having been there earlier. Probably that is what it was.

The point of the story simply illustrates that however ironclad the rule, never did a government or a ruling power dictate what people think. They cannot. That is the idea that faith is voluntary and it is optional for all. Things like infant baptism, the doctrine even of election, eternal security, the State church, all of these attempt to infringe on the person's free will. I will quote from Anabaptist leaders now in the Reformation era. "One cannot or should not use force to compel anyone to believe or to accept the faith." Without free will there can be no repentance. Without free will there can be no real commitment to discipleship. Only outward compliance is ever possible aside from the exercise of free will.

You and I, we are children of our own times. We grew up in a world and in a country where we are free to do and think and go where we please, and even move where we want to live. I remember the story of Hansi (I am not necessarily recommending her writings). She came to this country after World War II. They were living in the state of New

York and they decided to move to California because they had friends living there. They went to their friends (their sponsors — the people who had brought them into this country) and said that they wanted to move to California. "How do we get the papers. We want the privilege to move." These people told them, "This is America. If you want to move you simply pack up and go. She said, "You know what? Freedom is frightening." To think all these people out there moving where they want to. There is something about freedom we are accustomed to. However, people who are not accustomed to freedom find it frightening because they are afraid of what others might do who are not regulated. This is the idea of the free will of man.

I want to qualify this. This does not mean that a general toleration and recklessness is carried on in the Church of these people who believed in the free will. They had a definite creed of what they believed. There was discipline, commitment, and submission in the church. The only thing that was different, or one of the things that was very different with their church and the State church, was that the people who were in their church were there voluntarily and voluntarily

accepted that as their creed. That is where the difference lay. There have been people in our day and time who have used the teaching of the liberty of conscience by the Anabaptists to teach a free doctrine, or no doctrine, or a free expression as a liberty of conscience. That is a total misuse of the original teaching and its intention as it was given long ago. That is totally wrong, and I will not spend more time on that.

2) *The response of the Anabaptist people to the government in matters of faith and conscience.* Again, I would like to quote a minister of the Swiss brethren, a man by the name of Hans Markort, “In matters of faith the believers are responsible to God alone, to whom they owe greater obedience than man. Therefore, all our brethren esteem their faith in God as the highest, greatest, most valuable thing and of this we do not suffer ourselves to be riled even if our life is at stake.” (This was given at a debate in 1528 by a minister of the Swiss brethren). Also, from Scriptures, we have the testimony of Peter in the book of Acts. Then in 1 Peter 2 is where I want to read next. We have support in the Scripture for this point of view that “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts

5:29), in matters of faith and conscience. 1 Peter 2:19 says, “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.”

I will start to read now though verses 13–20, “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; (14) Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. (15) For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: (16) As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. (17) Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. (18) Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. (19) For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. (20) For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.”

There are a number of thoughts in this portion of Scripture. *I want to dwell primarily on the idea of when is it*

right, and when did the Anabaptists fathers actually disobey the law of the land? That is the question that is under consideration. I think this question is really a very serious question in light of the fact that there is pressure today even among our own church group to carry this also to a point that is not necessarily Biblical or consistent with Bible principle and consistent with the Mennonite faith. When is it right to disobey the government?

We hear people today who are reluctant to pay their taxes, or they only pay a portion of their taxes. Or, there are people who say that sales tax or income tax is unconstitutional, “You should not pay it. You really should not pay it because it is unconstitutional.” There are people who say it is wrongful for the government to ask and to qualify drivers by having a CDL driver’s license in that way. I understood that there has been people driving without proper credentials and training because they thought the government was somehow unfair. It brings some weight to the question, “When and where is it right and proper, and can one in good conscience defy the government?” I think it is a question we ought to fairly, and rightfully answer. It is directly related to this subject of liberty of con-

science.

We find here in the Scripture in 1 Peter 2:19, “for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.” In Acts 5:29 it is “obey[ing] God rather than men.” I like the answer of Jesus when He was brought the question of whether they should pay tribute to Caesar. Jesus said, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21). He showed that those two loyalties might come in a separate class of categories. Our loyalty to God is first and foremost. However, in the Anabaptist story, when and where did they break the law? I would like to answer that question.

The law meant that when they were forbidden to meet for worship in private gatherings in their own faith, and in their own congregations. They met together though forbidden. That is one place they broke the law. It meant that where they were forbidden to baptize converts upon confession of faith. They baptized converts anyway. That is another way in which they broke the law in their day. It meant that when the government required that their children be baptized according to Catholic or reformed tradition they refused

to have their children baptized. It was in matters of faith and conscience.

It meant in their setting when they were exiled from their homes and they had no place to go, and there was no land in which they were not also banished that they returned to their homes for nowhere else to go. I said a while ago that we are children of our own times. As we think of the story of them being banished from their homeland and they and their children roaming and seeking rest, "Of whom the world was not worthy" (Hebrews 11:38) (the writer of Hebrews says) and then returning. In my reading I came across this list of individuals' names who had suffered persecution and came down this list to this man's name. It said he was banished twice. That means he was banished and returned to his home and was banished again. This they did against the law.

The issues that are in focus are all issues that are related to issues of faith and conscience. They are not issues about whether or not they would pay their taxes. It was issues about whether or not they would abide by land use. In Pilgram Marpeck's story there were careful laws that were carried out about the use of the river and the use of trees. We find that

our Anabaptist forefathers were law-abiding citizens.

We know that there was an element of our parents, our forefathers, who because of the severeness of their persecution in the Emmental, removed and lived in the Jura mountains. There they lived in the high lands and suffered tremendous adversities because of the place that they lived. They were not allowed to own land and they paid rent, which was extremely high. The rent represented a tax that was imposed upon the landowner so the high rent they paid was an unjust and unfair levy of the government upon them to create hardships for them. They willingly bore the burden of those taxes. After America was discovered, they grew potatoes to pay the taxes. Spelt, turnips and a few crops were a very meager way to live but the potatoes and the cheese that they produced needed to be sold. They never enjoyed the blessings of those things in their diet, or very little because of hardships imposed by the government. Robert Friedman says, in discussing the relationship of Anabaptists to Pietists, "And Anabaptists were the only ones who were willing to bear the burden of hardship and persecution." The only ones.

When I think about these

things, about the suffering church that is in our heritage, and the willingness which our forefathers bore the yoke of suffering and oppression it does irritate and upset me to think that some of the people in our generation and time would be so bold and arrogant as to complain about our government. We know there are many things about the government that are not fair or right, but who gave us the responsibility to decide whether what the government does, is constitutional? That is not our business. Our business is to decide whether or not what the government requires of us is in keeping with the law of God. That is all we are asked to do. Aside from that we have no obligation to determine whether the government is doing things right or not right, and we need to stay out of it.

In this story of the Anabaptist people, we have the story of the *halbtäufer*. They were the people who said that they believed like the Anabaptists, but they did not do like the Anabaptists did. They believed without obedience. They believed and were in sympathy, but they did not do. Really, it was a way of moving through the world in their day without any conflicts. Outwardly, they appeared like anyone else. They said they

believed differently. I would like to think a little bit later about some ways in which there may be some laws in some present day applications where liberty of conscience is called into question. We will save that for near the end of the message.

I would like to read a quote. I know a number of you understand some German, and I came across this quote in my reading. The spokesman was Hans Hoffman in the year 1535. I think he was of Swiss descent. He may have been living, not in Switzerland. I am not sure. In Southern Germany perhaps. I will give the translation. It is related to this idea of the true Church as a church that is willing to bear hardship. He says, “The world fails in this, that they take Jesus, or Christ only as a gift, and not in the mode, or in suffering. . . They do not receive Christ as a mode of living that is in suffering. . . And who will follow Christ must follow Him in the way of the cross, or in the way of suffering.” There is no other way. We need to think of that in our day and time. Some of those thoughts do seem rather far away — that hardship and suffering would need to be the lot.

3) *Thinking about obedience to civil authority*. I will give some quotes (especially two

quotes) from the era of time that we are considering. Jesus said to Pilate, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above" (John 19:11). Pilate recognized that God does give authority to earthly rulers. I thought of Romans 13:5 too in this connection, "not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake," is the injunction there to believers. We do not only obey because we are afraid that there might be some consequences for not doing so. Rather, we obey the law of the land for conscience sake because of the higher law of God.

It would be interesting for me to know how many of you remember Romans 13 being used as the text of Scripture on Thanksgiving day as a general rule. That was generally the theme on Thanksgiving day because in the early years of this country, as one thought of the issue of Thanksgiving as an annual day, one remembered that today we live in freedom and are deeply indebted to a liberal government. That was a tradition of long standing.

The Schleithem Confession says, "The sword is ordained of God outside the perfection of Christ." I like that: "outside the perfection of Christ." We read from 1 Peter 2:13, "Submit your-

selves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." Now, I would like to read a rather lengthy quote again from the Swiss minister Hans Markort. "We confess that civil government is necessary, and is a divine appointment. And we say with Paul in Romans 13 that every man should be subject and obedient to the higher power. Not only to a mild and peaceful government, but also to a tyrannical government. Therefore, all believers under whatsoever government they live will not complain of heavy burdens nor resist the government, or cause trouble, or uproar on account of what they may be called upon to bear. In matters which do not concern faith and conscience and do not conflict with our duty to God, we are ready to obey the civil government anything that may be asked of us. And, if the government, contrary to just and right, confiscates our property and reduces us to poverty, we bear and suffer it since it is impossible for us to escape such oppression without transgression and disturbance." That is a voice which comes to us from the past and it is a voice that comes to us from a very Biblical point of view. I believe that we would do very well to heed the conviction that comes to us by way of this testi-

mony.

I want to come back to the thought that we began with, in Jesus' statement that "Then are the children free" (Matthew 17:26). I want to explain that further. The Christian is, first of all, subject to the higher law of God. That is, first of all, our commitment. We assume that voluntarily and we began by considering the free choice. There is something about man's freedom to choose that I do not think anyone can totally explain. However, you and I are a free moral agent. We can choose what we will, and the Christian is, first of all, subject to the highest law of God. In this commitment the children are free, as they have no higher loyalty and no higher law. In that sense they are free. There is another sense in which the children are free and that is that the children of God who are true to their covenant with God, need no restraint here in the world. They do not.

That might sound strange to us. We believe that we need restraint in the brotherhood but even in the truest sense, if a person would always (aside from human failure) be true to his commitment to God, he would be free in the sense that he would be in need of no human restraint. We know that while we are all

human that is impractical and impossible. However, in that sense they are free who are subject to the highest law of God. That gives us the liberty to sometimes violate an earthly demand. Nevertheless, for the Lord's sake, and for conscience's sake, we are to obey all civil law that is not in conflict with the higher law of God. That is what the Scriptures enjoin us to do.

I would like to raise the question, "What about the seatbelt law?" There are people who reasoned that when the seatbelt law came into existence "Well, now this is a government trend that the government is invading the privacy of our lives. And it is a government trend in which it is assuming the responsibility of being a provider for people rather than merely a protector." I am not sure we can make that distinction. The child safety seat law would come in that category. I agree that in our world today, and in the endtime socialistic system there is more and more pressure on government to invade the privacy of personal lives. I agree with that.

However, *the example of history and the example of Scriptures as we looked at them teach that the safest and the right approach is to be obedient to the government unless we know it violates*

our keeping a covenant with God. In our statement of standards we say, “whether reasonable or unreasonable.” Maybe the seatbelt law seems a little unreasonable in some ways. Yet, in other ways once we become accustomed to doing it does seem like a reasonable thing to do when you see people who have gone through the windshield.

We might think of other things like the great restriction on land use, and the difficulty to obtain permits for buildings and so on. I have heard people reason, “Well, who owns this land? Does the government own the land, or do I?” — You know that sort of reasoning. I agree that the trend is somewhat oppressive, and it does not quite seem fair. However, as we think about the suffering of past generations, really it is hardly even noteworthy in this message to think about a few of the things that we find a little disturbing and difficult.

Let us turn the table around though and look perhaps at the other side of the issue. What are some areas where we face an infringement from government and from government trends that would come in the area of conscience and faith? We have read in our congregation at least parts of the statement about these child protection laws — the rights, or

the duties of parents versus the invasion of government. We do not know what we might face. We have a little clue of something by some things that have happened in the past, but I do believe that it is area where the government is invading the rights of the children of God to exercise and give free expression to their faith. The children belong to the parents. The children are “an heritage of the LORD” (Psalm 137:3), and it is an area, I believe, that is an example, which comes in the category of liberty of conscience. We must find our way together. However, it is one area in which we may need to violate what the government is asking of us.

In this general realm would be other areas that would affect preserving the faith, and preserving our way of life, and the preservation of our schools. I remember an illustration among an old order group where they were not given the liberty to build a school. It seemed in a certain community, an Old Order community had attempted to gain permission from the township, or the county (or whatever) to build a school, and they were not given permission. They needed a school. They felt it was somewhat an infringement upon their ability to propagate and multiply

in the land. I realize that we need to be very careful before we follow an approach like they took, and we need to think through it together. However, I do think the area of our schools is an area where the devil is will be busy trying to destroy. It is a matter of liberty of conscience. It is a matter of the free expression and propagation of our faith.

They consulted someone and this legal advisor said, "According to the world's view they would need to take the matter to law." However, he said, (I want to say this carefully and I am open to challenge on this point. I am only saying what they did). He said, "What you need to do is begin excavation for a school without a permit. Then the authorities will stop you. The matter will then automatically come before the law because they are halting you, rather than you appealing to the course of law to them." I am not saying whether that is the right approach or not. I want to finish the story. By that time, in this community, the attention of public had been drawn sympathetically toward

their efforts. Of course, there was a stop work order brought and there was nothing violent about it.

They began to build a school, and the purpose for the excavation was known. Then, the authorities stepped in and they needed to stop. Due to the stop work order on a project, it needed to come before the local court. By this time, the local court and judge were in sympathy to the Old Order community and granted them their request. I only give that as an illustration. I realize from what some things that I said earlier that illustration must be very carefully qualified. I do personally believe that there are times in light of government trends, and in light of the encouragement that there is on the free expression of faith, that there are times where we together must discover for ourselves, what the law actually means, and what approach we can safely take to protect our schools, churches, and homes. We need to understand the liberty of conscience to give a free expression of our faith and to propagate it.

Scripture References

| | | | |
|----------------|-------|-------------|---------------|
| Psalms | 17:26 | 83 | Acts |
| 137:3 | 84 | 22:21 | 79 |
| | | John | 5:29 |
| Matthew | | | 78, 79 |
| 17:24–27 | 73 | 19:11 | Romans |
| | | 82 | 13 |
| | | | 82 |

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| 13:5 | 82 | 11:38 | 80 |
| Galatians | | 1 Peter | |
| 3:27, 28 | 76 | 2:13 | 82 |
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| | | 2:19 | 78, 79 |

From the Previous Issue:

Nurturing Constructive Relationships

From a message by Glen Diller

Tennessee/Kentucky Life Conference Meetings May, 2004

Held at

Mt. Carmel Bible Fellowship

Flemingsburg, KY

Book Reprint (Continued)

One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study

LESSON 24.

Paul. — Saul of Tarsus.

[References from Acts, unless otherwise stated.]

I. Nationality.

1. A native of Tarsus. — 22:3.

NOTE. — At this time a Roman City.

2. A Jew. — 21:39; 22:3.

3. A Roman citizen. — 22:25–28.

II. As a Pharisee.

1. His education. — 22:3; 26:24.

2. His zeal. — 22: 3; 26:5.

3. The persecutor of the church.

a. The martyrdom of Stephen. — 7:58; 8:1; 22:20.

b. Christians imprisoned. — 8:3; 22:4; 26:10.

c. In the synagogues. — 22:19; 26:11.

d. Design against the Christians at Damascus. — 9:1, 2; 22:5.

III.— His conversion. — 3:18.

NOTE. — Paul relates his experiences in chapters 22 and 26. The

event is remarkable (1) because it is the only instance like it on record; (2) it was the setting apart of an apostle to the Gentiles; (3) it is the only instance recorded in the Bible where a man received a direct call from God to preach the Gospel. It might be added that in this instance the call was confirmed to another man (Ananias), and that before he began the active labors of his life work, he received a formal ordination from the church (13:3).

IV. From his conversion to the beginning, of his apostleship.

1. The period of fasting. — Galatians 1:16, 17.

NOTE. — The old way to prepare for the work was in a school of fasting and prayer. The modern way is to get this preparation in a theological seminary.

2. Preaching at Damascus. — 9:20–22.

3. Barnabas introduces him to the brethren at Jerusalem. — 9:26, 27; Galatians 1:18, 19.

NOTE. — Put Galatians 1:16, 17 between Acts 9:18 and 19 then read Acts 9:17–30.

4. His preaching at Jerusalem. — 9:28, 29.

5. Is sent to Tarsus. — 9:30.

6. Barnabas brings him to Antioch. — 11:25, 26.

NOTE. — This now becomes the center of missionary work.

7. The second visit to Jerusalem. — 11:30; 12:25.

8. Barnabas and Saul set apart for missionary work. — 18:1–3.

Among Paul's qualifications for the work upon which he was now about to embark, were the following: (1) "full of the Holy Ghost," (2) ardent zeal, (3) superior education, (4) self-possession, (5) blameless character, (6) physical endurance, (7) decision of character. This is the person whom God ordained as His chosen vessel to the Gentiles.

1. Locate the places mentioned in connection with this lesson.
2. Who was Gamaliel?
3. Compare Saul of Tarsus with Paul the apostle.
4. How often and on what occasions did Paul refer to his conversion?
5. Tell what you know about the connection between Paul and Barnabas in the Christian work.

LESSON 25.

Paul. — Paul the Apostle.

I. First missionary journey. — Acts 13; 14.

1. Discourse at Antioch. — 13:14–42.

2. Miracles performed.

a. Elymas stricken with blindness. — 13:10, 11.

b. A cripple healed. — 14: 8–10. (Its effect —

14:11–18).

3. Persecutions.

a. At Antioch. — 13:50.

b. At Iconium. — 14:1–6.

c. At Lystra. — 14:19, 20.

4. Gentiles receive the word. — 13: 46.

NOTE. — Paul's invariable custom before and after this, was to preach the Gospel "to the Jews first."

5. Conversions. — 13:12, 48; 14:1.

6. Various churches strengthened. — 14:20–26.

7. Report to the church at Antioch. — 14:27.

II. The conference at Jerusalem. — Acts 15:1–29.

NOTE. — This was seventeen years after Paul's conversion, or fourteen years after his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion.

III. Second missionary journey. — Acts 15:36–18:22.

1. Dispute between Paul and Barnabas. — 15:37–39.

2. Timothy circumcised. — 16:1–3.

3. Discourses.

a. At Thessalonica. — 17:2–4.

b. At Berea. — 17:10–12.

c. At Athens. — 17:16–31.

d. At Corinth. — 18:7–11.

4. Persecutions.

a. At Philippi. — 16: 19–39.

b. At Thessalonica. — 17: 5–9.

c. At Berea. — 17:13.

d. Before Gallio. — 18:12–17.

5. Conversions. — 16:14, 15, 32, 33; 17:4, 12, 34; 18:8.

6. Paul's first visit to Ephesus. — 18:19–21.

7. Return to Antioch. — 18:22.

IV. Third missionary journey. — Acts 18:23–21:17.

1. The cause strengthened in Galatia and Phrygia. — 18:23.

2. The work at Ephesus.

a. Preaching of Apollos. — 18:24–28.

b. The Holy Ghost given. — 19:1–8.

c. Various miracles and uproars. — 19:9–41.

d. Paul's first leave of the Ephesian brethren. — 20:1.

e. Paul's second leave. — 20:11–38.

3. The work in Macedonia.

a. Timothy and Erastus sent ahead. — 19:22.

b. Followed by Paul and others. — 20:3–12.

NOTE. — Paul could rejoice over abundant fruits of his former labors.

c. The journey to Miletus. — 20:13–16.

NOTE. — During this journey, Paul is said to have written the epistles to the Galatians, the two epistles to the Corinthians, and the epistle to the Romans. The rest were written during his imprisonment at Rome.

V. The journey to Jerusalem. — 21:1–17.

VI. Paul in bondage. — Acts 21–28.

1. The attempts to dissuade him from going to Jerusalem. — 21:1–14.

2. Takes the Nazarite vow 21:20–26.

3. The Jews create an uproar, and Paul taken prisoner. — 21:27–37.

4. Address to the multitudes. — 22:1–21.

5. Claims privilege of a Roman. — 22:24, 25.

6. Before the Jewish council. — 23:1–24.

7. Before Felix. — 23:27–35; 24.

8. Before Festus. — 25:1–9.

9. Appeal to Caesar. — 25:10–12.

10. Before Agrippa. — 26.

11. voyage to Rome. — 27; 28:1–15.

12. Life in Rome. — 28:16–31.

The absence of any damaging evidence against Paul secured for him comparative freedom. He improved the opportunity of his semi-prison life by preaching, writing epistles, receiving and encouraging fellow-laborers, etc. It is the general opinion that he received his freedom for a time, during which period he visited Greece, Asia Minor, and Spain. Being imprisoned and sent to Rome the second time, he is said to have met a Martyr's death.

1. Name Paul's companions in travel during his first missionary journey; second; third.
2. Locate the leading churches with which his name is connected.
3. What evidence have we of the friendship between Paul and Peter?
4. Enumerate the leading events connected with the voyage to Rome.
5. Do the Scriptures indicate that it was the will of the Lord that Paul should go to Jerusalem at the time of his capture by the Jews?

Children's Book Reprint (Continued)

Greasy the Robber

Even Solojev took part in the general joy and was greatly touched by the unexpected reunion of the brother and sister. Oh, what joy there was! Shura was so excited that she did not know what to do first. Again and again she drew near to Pasha, put her arms around him, and said, "Is it truly you, my brother? Do I really see you? Oh, what joy! As you neared our house I had the impression of having found something valuable; my heart was full with an unspeakable joy. I did not know how it came. I was prepared at once to offer you

refreshment and lodging. After all the distress that I have experienced, I am ready to help other needy ones also, but in this case my heart yearned especially to do so. Now I know why. It was my beloved brother who came to me; for twenty years we have not seen each other. What a joy!" Again they fell on their knees and praised God with such a fervency as never before. Even the five-year-old daughter of Shura prayed, "Dear Saviour, I thank Thee that Thou hast brought Uncle Pasha to us!" They all cried, and Alexei Vasiljevitch

thanked God for the valuable gift that God had granted to his wife.

It was already three o'clock in the morning, but they had not slept; even the children had not lain down. Once more they drank tea, conversing together. Finally just before daybreak they went to bed, having commended themselves to the care of God. On account of their recent experiences the sleep of all was restless. Pasha dreamed of how he had read the gospel to his robber pals in the woods and of how he had parted from them. He dreamed of the district attorney, the court, the transfer prisoners, and the compulsory labour. When he awoke and convinced himself that he had only been dreaming, he thanked the Lord anew for what He had done. At the breakfast tea, he again expressed the same astonishment and admiration at the wonderful grace of God in caring for orphans.

Shura asked her brother to repeat his experiences from the time of the parting at the snow fences at the railroad station. She herself had suffered much in the barracks for the girls and had remained there until late fall. With the beginning of autumn, since the barracks were not heated, an epidemic had set in and the children had died by the dozen. Then the good people from the

surrounding villages had come and taken the children with them to save the little ones from freezing. Shura had been taken by a poor but believing widow who had four children of her own. In a small hut, where the flat roof was covered with turf, Shura had spent the winter with Aunt Dunja (a pet name for Eudoxia): there she had had enough bread. Aunt Dunja used to read the New Testament and pray with the children. In this colony was also a school which Shura had attended; she studied diligently. She enjoyed reading very much and especially liked to read in the New Testament. At the age of fourteen she had experienced the grace and knowledge of salvation and requested baptism, through which she had received the fellowship of believers.

Four more years passed. Shura had grown up to young womanhood. She was known as a diligent worker and was the best singer in the choir. Everybody loved her. It would not have entered anybody's mind that she was not the daughter of Aunt Dunja. They loved each other very much. The choir of the village had often visited the neighbouring villages and towns to witness for the Lord. Once the singers had decided to visit the town where Shura now lived.

There the Lord had blessed their service richly. Under the influence of the spiritual messages of the preacher, who had come with the choir, and under the effort of the wonderful singing, a number of people had turned to the Lord, among them a young bookkeeper who was employed in a business house. Within a year he had become the husband of Shura, and they had since lived together in love and harmony. They were blessed with two children.

When Shura had finished her story she reminded Pasha of how he would have thrown himself under the train after the death of the parents and of how she prevailed upon him not to take the desperate step, saying, "Despair not, my beloved: God will not forsake us." Now Pasha and Shura were constrained to think of the words of the Psalmist. "Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that ruleth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him. A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation. God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains" (Psalm 68:4-6). At this they praised God Anew.

Shura agreed with the intention of her brothers to return to

the old home to call the relatives and acquaintances to Christ and she was also desirous of accompanying him on the trip and helping him in the work with unsaved souls. Alexei Vasiljevitch heartily agreed with the plan and promised to watch over the boy, while Shura was to take the girl along. He also gave the necessary money for the journey.

Three days later the brother and sister were on their way toward European Russia. With Solojev, they passed through Samara, Saratov, Pensa, Voronesh, Kursk, and Kiev, in the latter city Solojev parted with Pasha and Shura to go to his home village in the hope of returning to them after having seen his mother. The brother and sister continued their journey to the government of Mogilev to reach finally their home place of Sosnovka.

Upon arriving there and inquiring about the family of Tichomirov, they found two brothers of their father, two aunts, and some distant relatives still living. All were surprised at the appearance of Pasha and Shura, whom they had heard perished after the death of their parents before reaching their destination. Everybody invited them as welcome guests.

Soon they learned that their young relatives were evangelists who refused to celebrate the joy of meeting again by drinking because it was not becoming to Christians. "But why not?" asked the inhabitants of the village. "Are we not also Christians? Yet we drink liquor at every opportunity." Such questions usually started a discussion which later turned to the reading of God's Word. Pasha's narration of how he came to the new life made a great impression upon all. Almost every evening the inhabitants of Sosnovka gathered at Tichomirov's to hear the Word of God. Very gradually the truth of the gospel broke down the barriers of the old prejudices of their purely outward form of religion. Many found Christ as their personal Saviour and decided to devote their lives to Him wholly.

Then came a new testing time. The priests were stirred up and aroused the police of the whole district, insisting that the convict had come and ruined the foundation of the orthodox faith of the people and that if the authorities did not capture him even the foundations of the state would be endangered by the new teaching. At night a policeman appeared in the dwelling of the Tichomirov's and led Paul to the president of the country police, where the

next morning the examining magistrate and the priest appeared. After the investigation, a bill charging seduction was filed. While awaiting the court trial, Tichomirov was taken to the country prison under police guard.

Shura sorrowed very much for her brother. She had to return to Siberia without being able to see him again, because visiting the arrested ones was forbidden before the trial. After a few days, Pasha wrote the following letter to his sister:

"My dear sister Shura,

"I beg you not to be sorrowful about me. I am very glad to be in the prison no longer as a thief and robber, but as a Christian to take part in the sufferings of my Saviour. I rejoice therein indescribably because in the prison many lost souls thirst after salvation, to whom I am permitted to bring Christ. Be not dismayed, but pray for me. I greet you and your husband and children with a kiss."

A whole year passed before the court trial; by that time Paul had been in three prisons. Everywhere he preached Christ, and everywhere the sinners decided to follow the way of salvation. The prison chaplains, however, asked the authorities to deliver them from this heretic

with whom they could not live peaceably. The court condemned Tichomirov to banishment for two years in the government of Jenisejek on the charge of seduction of the orthodox believers to “Stundism” (gospel belief). Investigation brought to light that in Sosnovka alone about a hundred ceased to go to the priest and to worship holy pictures.

Soon after his condemnation Paul was carried again, by the way of the transport prisons, to the country so well known to him — Siberia. He succeeded in notifying Shura and her husband of the train in which he would pass the nearest railroad station, and they went there to see him once more. They were permitted only to greet him through the bars of the prison wagons. Shura cried because she felt sorry for her brother, but he looked at her, smiling, and let her know thereby that he was glad to be permitted to suffer for Christ’s sake.

Two years passed. The life of Tichomirov during this banishment reflected everywhere that pure and holy life of Christ, which was the cause of the success of his testimony. During those two years he was in continual communication by letter with Shura and also with Solojev. The latter informed him that he remained in his native village,

where a small group of gospel Christians gave him a brotherly welcome, and that he was permitted to work among them with a great blessing. His mother was still alive and very happy because God had answered her prayers and saved her son. She was concluding the last days of her life with her son, who was now an honest and chaste Christian.

After finishing the time of his banishment, Pasha went to his sister fully determined to devote his whole life to the salvation of lost sinners. He would not be bound in marriage because he wanted nothing to hinder him in the proclamation of that gospel that had changed him and many others completely. He worked in the congregation of that town in which Shura lived and also in other towns in Siberia, but his permanent dwelling was with his sister, to the joy of his brother-in-law also. Shura often accompanied her brother on his trips into the villages as his co-worker in the vineyard of the Lord. The spiritual life of the congregation progressed.

Paul Tichomirov wrote the following words on the first page of the New Testament that he had taken from the brother whom he slew: “Forgive me for Christ’s sake, beloved brother, I put you to death while I myself was dead

in my sins. The Lord hath forgiven me and raised me to a new life. Thy untimely bodily death was the means of leading not only me, but also many other sinners and murderers to eternal life. Thy New Testament softened my hard heart as a living stream, stilled my thirst, and continues to flow further, quickening and giving life to other souls also. For this I praise thy and my God. Amen!”

In thankfulness for blessing obtained by the reading of this life story, this effort has been

made by the means of this translation to enable others to be partakers of the blessing that comes from a sincere and serious acceptance of the Word of God. It is recommended by repeated reading not only to gain more thorough knowledge concerning the incidents described, but also a more correct appreciation of one’s own condition as it is in the sight of God. This effort is made with prayer that the reader may search his own heart to see if he can measure up to the standard of God.

—Charles Lukesh

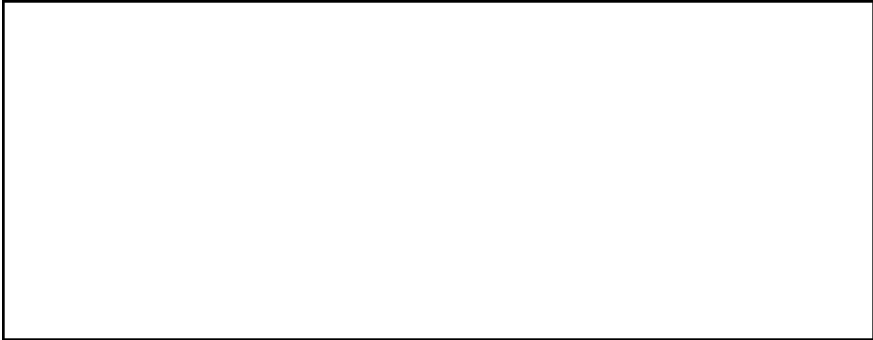
FIFTY FUNDAMENTAL FACTS

41. **Active Christian service is enjoined upon all Christian people.**

We are commanded to pray (Matthew 6:1–13), to obey (Acts 5:29), to do personal work (Luke 14:23), to attend public services (Hebrews 10:25), to help those in need (1 Thessalonians 5:14), to be tireless in well doing (Galatians 6:9, 10), to help evangelize the world (Matthew 28:18–20), and to do many other

things belonging to a faithful Christian life. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58). The highest tribute that can be paid to any man is the Master’s “Well done” at the close of an active, faithful, self-sacrificing Christian life of service.

Sermon nugget: “The person that can see the hand of God in every circumstance of life will best be able to commit everything into the hand of God.” From a sermon on Psalm 73.



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