

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 2-19

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in
the house.

Matthew 5:15

From The Editor's Desk.**What About Easter?**

To many Christians and non-Christians Christmas is the probably the most recognized and celebrated event on the western calendar and that is a sad reflection on the real reason for Christ leaving His heavenly home and coming to dwell among us (John 1:14). Easter time is also seen as nice, but also just another holiday in the busy calendar of worldly pleasures for those not of Christian persuasion – and some who do profess Christianity.

How do you see it? A commemoration of the death of Christ on the cross? Or is your heart and mind turned to the most glorious aspect of the end of our Lord's earthly life – His death for the payment of a debt we cannot pay – the propitiation for our sin. (1 John 2:2)

The brief, but thought provoking and encouraging contribution by a brother in the Lord titled, "Good Friday" is well worth our meditation. To one as I, who has come out of the darkness of sin and certain death and received the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, it was the most glorious day of all (Romans 6:23). Jesus Christ by His voluntary sacrifice made in and out of love for all of mankind, paid in full what none of us can ever pay – the penalty required by a Holy God for our trespasses.

We need to celebrate daily this sacrificial love of Christ Jesus for us and not just remember it at Easter time.

Recently a testimony from a Christian sister about her church came to attention and it expressed many of the things that surely are the desires of the heart of many of us in Australia and have in part experienced with various overseas visitors over the years. It is included under the title "Australian Dreamings" with adaptations to make it applicable here. The scriptures speak of dreams as having been given by God on a number of occasions, some as a warning, some as encouragement. It is not wrong to dream of these things. All of us may desire /dream, have a vision for what is expressed in that testimony and it is our prayer that the Lord in His kindness may make it come to pass. As you read the testimony do not be discouraged or dismayed, but stay strong in the faith and let us encourage each other at every opportunity and seek the Lord's direction in fervent and earnest prayer – perhaps some fasting may be in order too!

GOOD FRIDAY.

Good Friday refers to the day Jesus died on the cross about two thousand years ago. Why do we call it Good Friday?

It was a terrible day for Jesus and His followers! After not getting very much sleep the night before, Jesus was on trial, continuing into the early morning, and He was finally taken to Pilate's hall. It was a bad day for Pilate because he found no fault in Jesus. It was a day of much suffering for Pilate's wife, who said, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him." It was very hard for Pilate, because he knew that the Jews had delivered Him because of envy.

The Jews said, "Away with Him; crucify Him." Pilate asked, "Why, what evil hath He done?" But they cried out the more, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." Then He was sent to Herod, where He was dressed in a scarlet purple robe. Herod's men of war bowed their knees in mock worship. He was beaten with a scourge, blindfolded, buffeted, and spat in the face. He had a crown of thorns placed on His head and was struck with a reed.

It was a terrible day for Jesus. It was a terrible day for Simon, whom they compelled to bear Christ's cross. It was a heartbreaking day for Jesus' mother and for the other women who followed, weeping.

Jesus was crucified and tasted death for us! He felt the horror of being forsaken by His Father. He cried out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

It was very dark for three hours. And Jesus cried out, "It is finished!" There was a terrible earthquake, and the veil in the temple was rent in twain. It was a day of much fear, sorrow, heartache, and disappointment. The hope of the disciples was blasted.

Jesus was rich, but He became poor so that we might be made rich. One encyclopaedia says that the words "Good Friday" may be a corruption of God's Friday. I don't know if this is true or not.

We call it Good Friday. Why? Because Jesus paid the ransom for our sins. The debt was paid, the law was satisfied. And we can be free-free from the shackles of Satan and sin. On that day, we were redeemed and reconciled with God. Power was given to poor mortals to become sons and daughters of the Most High God, through faith in the name of Jesus. It was a good day for the one thief on the cross when he heard Jesus say, "Today thou shalt be with Me in paradise."

For the joy set before Him, Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame

and is set down at the right hand of God. He intercedes for us. It was a good day because the plan of salvation was finished then. Now whosoever will may come and drink of the fountain of salvation opened by the death of Christ on the cross. It is a good day, because now we can be free from sin and have title to a mansion in heaven.

May we never cease to praise God for His unspeakable gift. The veil of the temple rending in twain indicates the way that was opened for us to come to God in the name of Jesus, confessing our sins and making our requests known to God. Asking for daily grace to be faithful and obedient becomes our privilege.

It was a good day, for now we can serve God without fear and have a lively hope of salvation. This is all because of that terrible day long ago. Because God loved us so much, He was willing to pay the awful price. May Good Friday mean much to us.

With love, from a brother in the Lord.

GOOD FRIDAY: What a Day It Was!

by Geo. R. Brunk II

The Lord Jesus came to His own world which He had created but was rejected by His own people who received Him not. When Jesus said, "I am the light of the world," the Pharisees said to Him, "Thou bearest record of Thyself; Thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of Myself, yet My record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go."

In the dialogue recorded in the eighth chapter of John, Jesus said to them, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. . . . Ye shall die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins. Then said they unto Him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning."

They understood not that He spake to them of the Father. Then saith Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself."

The thrust of the above statement appears to be this: When you crucify Me, My Father will show you who I am.

And so He did. Let us review these momentous events of that day.

What an abusive and horrible night that was, preceding the day of His crucifixion! It was only a matter of hours from His arrest to the cross at 9:00 a.m., the third hour. In six hours, He was tried five times by four different "courts." He was accused by witnesses who contradicted themselves and sentenced by a judge who knew and said that He was innocent! Yes, Jesus knocked at the door of His world only to have that door slammed in His tear-streaked face.

If men's hearts were hardened and unmoved, the physical world was visibly shaken on that memorable day.

Darkness Over All the Land

Matthew, Mark and Luke, all three, record this miraculous darkness which lasted for three hours—from the sixth hour (noon) to the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.). It is not difficult to visualize and imagine the consternation and confusion that must have prevailed all over the land. What must this have meant to workmen in fields and shops? What must it have meant to housewives at work in their kitchens and to those in all walks of life? We think especially of those gathered around the cross who had heaped upon the Saviour indignities, abuse and ridicule. What could they have done, said or thought during those three hours of intense darkness?

Surely God was showing them that this person that they have crucified is an unusual person. Had not Jesus said, "My Father will show you who I am"?

Yes, we see that motley crowd milling around in disarray and confusion. Did they have any second thoughts? What a wonder it is that voices were not heard crying out in acknowledgment of their wrong judgments of Jesus! What a surprise that voices were not heard calling upon God for pardon and forgiveness! Surely such unheard-of darkness in the middle of the day (except for the plague of Egypt) should have produced expressions of remorse and penitence from at least a few.

The Veil in the Temple Was Rent

This also is recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke. These are the only references to the veil of the temple in the New Testament (the reference in

the book of Hebrews is to the veil in the tabernacle). This veil divided or separated the Holy Place of the temple from the Holy of Holies. It is reported that this veil or curtain was so tightly woven that it admitted no single ray of light to enter into the most Holy Place. Tradition has it that this curtain was stretched and tested against the light of the sun to be sure that the darkness of the most Holy Place was preserved.

No human foot dare enter the Holy of Holies with the exception of the high priest, who entered once a year on the Day of Atonement for the purpose of presenting sacrifice and incense before the Lord. It was in this place that the Ark of the Covenant rested until the captivity.

We have no record that our Lord Jesus Christ ever entered either the Holy or the Most Holy Place. He did His teaching in the precincts of the temple. But when He was crucified, that veil (heavy curtain) was rent in twain from top to bottom and sagged away to either side, exposing the Most Holy Place to view and turning its darkness into light.

The message of God to the world was this: All God's children now have access to the throne of grace!

But what a surprise, that evidently the priests that were on duty that day in the temple did not cry out in remorseful acknowledgment of their blindness and unbelief. Was not the Father again showing the world that it was His Son Jesus who was being crucified?

The Earthquake

Matthew tells us that "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent" (27:51). Then again, Matthew tells us that on the Sabbath, "as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was [had been] a great earthquake." So, we have two earthquakes-one on the day Jesus was crucified, and another on the day He was raised from the dead.

Was it not enough that there had been total darkness for three hours and that the veil in the temple had been rent from top to bottom? Should this not have persuaded the unbelieving population that He whom they had crucified was, indeed, the Son of God?

Again, we say, what a surprise that there was not a great outcry of remorse and acknowledgment of their sin and rejection of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. What an opportunity this was for a great sweeping revival. But we read nothing of the kind.

And the rocks were rent. Who knows but what we have is evidence even in this day as we view the slanted layers of rock in mountain passes? If these dislocations did not occur on the day of Jesus' crucifixion, then when?

The Opening of the Graves

Matthew reports that "the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:52-54).

We observe that this occurred after the resurrection of our Lord so that He was, indeed, the first fruits of them that slept.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine what consternation, confusion and fear this must have brought to the hearts of the people who seemed yet unconvinced that Jesus was the Son of God. Think of it!-"dead" people walking on the streets of Jerusalem! Yes, it says that they appeared unto many. Doubtless, those many were sent screaming for seclusion and shelter.

Was it a dream? Were they having hallucinations? Let us try to imagine what such a spectacular incident would mean today. Perhaps it was a relative or a neighbour whose grave had opened and who was now making an appearance. What an unforgettable and memorable jolt this must have been to the population. And again, we inquire, why was there no outcry of remorse in acknowledgment that Jesus was, indeed, the Son of God? What an occasion this was for a mighty revival. But only the centurion and they that were with him seemed to be moved, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God."

What a day it was! Heaven itself must have been moved even as the physical earth was so miraculously shaken with the darkness, the rending of the veil, the earthquake and the opening of the graves.

The absence of any widespread reversal of judgment in the light of all these visitations is proof of the hardness of heart and the blindness of the unregenerate mind.

From the Sword and Trumpet, May 1998, page 6-9. Geo. R. Brunk II is the editor of that Mennonite magazine. Used by Permission from: bibleviews.org.

SAY THANK YOU FOR THE CROSS!

If we had it in our power
To create new worlds of beauty,
Hills and valleys of a thousand royal hues.
If we gained the greatest riches
From all the corners of the world,
Ours to give away, however we might choose.
If we wrote the most majestic
And the sweetest sounds of music
That would echo throughout all eternity,
Or could pen the words of genius
That would turn the world around,
And go on to change the course of history.
If we offered up our homes
Our lands, and even those we love,
As small payment, never thinking of our loss,
We could count it all as worthless
For there is nothing we can give
To thank the Lord, our loving Saviour
For the Cross.

Author Unknown.

MINISTER'S CORNER*Brother Ronald J Border***Christian Ideals in Courtship.**

It is clear that. Christian courtship is under attack by the laxity and immoral thinking of this current godless age. We need to be reminded that God has a "way" for His people. It is our prayer that this written encouragement will inspire the youth to "think" and "act" in a responsible Christian manner and will encourage the church, in general, to preach and teach the value of the "ideal."

Courtship is a beautiful time to get acquainted with the young man or young lady of God's choice. Even though before the courtship days you thought you knew your "special" friend quite well, you will discover new depths to his/her personality, with which you must find fellowship and communion. When courtship is conducted within a God-honoring environment, the couple's relationship with God and each other may mature under the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit. This is the desired goal of Christian courtship.

When do we start to date?

It is a fact of life that young people's physical development runs ahead of their emotional development in the maturation process. Because of the differing development levels within the physical/emotional make-up, *we strongly recommend that courtship should not be undertaken before the age of eighteen years.* By this time, generally, the physical/emotional constitutions are better coordinated, resulting in a more balanced approach to this serious time of sharing.

It is not right to begin dating just because a person may indeed be eighteen years of age. There is no magic in the number *eighteen!* More important to proper Christian dating attitudes would be *the leading of God and settled Christian maturity in life.* If God does not lead someone to date until age twenty, it would be wrong for that person to date earlier. It is also not right for a person to begin dating just because friends may have started to date. The responsible, Christian young person will allow God to lead and guide in His way. By exercising patience and devotion to God's Will, the Christian can expect God to rightly lead -- whether it be into courtship and marriage, or into a life of single, celibate consecration. To force a

courtship and marriage against God's Will can only result in disaster!

Who should we date?

This answer must come from God. You cannot decide this for yourself. You must seek God's face (*His* answer) in this matter. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6). God may speak to you in several ways. He may speak to you through His Word. He may speak to you through your parents. He may speak to you through a Christian friend. He may speak to you through circumstances. But it is all important that you **MUST** seek God's Will in this situation. You must be willing to wait on His Word!

Courting is a serious venture. **WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT IS RIGHT TO DATE INDISCRIMINATELY!** This means that we do not date just anyone and everyone for the fun of it. It would not be right to date someone unless you had a clear signal from God that this was His choice for you. (You may misread a 'signal' sometime, but such a mistake should only serve to make you *more careful* the next time). God will surely lead you to date only a *fellow Christian of like precious faith*.

You should **NEVER** -- young man or young woman -- date someone who would not make a good, Christian marriage partner. To date "unsuitable" partners would be asking for trouble! Such indiscretion might well thrust the young person into the wrong crowd! Many former young people have suffered a life long of tragedy, because they were not wise in this area.

It would be wrong to date someone just because of physical beauty or good looks. (External beauty may fade!). God leads Christian young people to look for and appreciate "inner" beauty (Proverbs 31:30). It would be wrong to date someone just because of their financial stability. (Riches may be fleeting!). God leads Christian young people to seek out those who have put their "treasure" in heaven (Matt. 6:19-21). It is all-important to wait on God to reveal His Will. A poet described this wait on the following wise:

***"Some day, somewhere, someone beyond compare;
Will come your way forevermore to stay;
And you'll know He made her,
And you'll know He trained her,
And you'll know He kept her just for you."***

What a beautiful picture of waiting on the leading of the Lord!

How do we start to date?

Young man, first consider going to the minister of her church to make sure the sister is not treading in spiritual "danger" areas. Does she have a good testimony? Is she obedient to the church and its standards? Such a spiritual concern will be appreciated by all the parties involved, as it indicates the primacy placed on the spiritual perspective.

It would be well to choose prayer partners -- your father and mother, the minister, or a concerned and discreet Christian brother -- to pray *with* you and *for* you as you approach this decision. The prayer is not "Oh, Lord, make a way . . . ", but instead, it should focus on "Oh, Lord, reveal Thy Will . . ." Genuine prayer, then, includes "listening" for the voice of God and His answer.

After spending much time in prayer (and, why not *fasting* -- if you are really serious with God!), go to the sister's father to ask his permission. This is not an out-moded practice! It shows respect, and it builds respect. If you are unable to do this, you had better check your motives. Such an approach indicates real spiritual manhood and a respect for God's order. If the parents are truly Christian, they will undoubtedly join you in earnest prayer.

As God's hand, leading, and blessing is sensed upon the endeavor through the various steps, it would now be appropriate to ask the young lady herself to consider the matter in prayer, too. Prayers continue to ascend as God's Will is sought. If the sister is not well acquainted with the brother, inquiry can now be made as to his spiritual status and testimony. God's leading and approval needs to be sensed by both individuals.

A couple of weeks (or months) later, as God continues to lead, when *all* the persons concerned feel "clear" about it before God, then it is appropriate for the young man to ask the sister for a date. Two things are to be noticed in this section about "asking" for a date. First, spirituality and God's leading must be pre-eminent. Secondly, the young man asks the young lady. We feel it is uncomely and distasteful for the sister to "chase" the young man. We must be mindful of God's order if we desire God's blessing!

Young sister, be careful that you do not accept a date without clearly sensing God's leading in the matter. If the young man does not offer you an opportunity to first seek God's Will in prayer, you had better drop that

young man right now, for God is not being honored the way He should be!

Young sister, be careful, also, that you do not accept a date for invalid reasons. You should never accept a date because you feel sorry for a young man, nor should you accept a date because you are afraid that you will hurt his feelings by turning down his request. You will be causing much more hurt and grief by "leading him on" when you yourself had no serious intentions. You must keep clearly in mind that God will never lead you, as a conscientious Christian, to date the wild, young men who disregard the church and a life of holiness. **WAIT ON GOD!**

What should we do on a date?

Contrary to the practice of many, we do not believe that a young couple needs to go off to a special place every week to have a date. Wouldn't it be wonderful to share your times together with each of the families? After all, you are considering marriage with one from a different family. By spending time with the family, you will learn much about the family's devotional patterns and practices. It will help you to get acquainted! Who said that dating has to be done at night (after dark)? Plan daylight dates with the family -- so you can "see" where you are going!

The young lady should not expect a "special treat" every time the couple gets together. Married couples generally can't afford the expense of constant "special treats" when establishing a home. So why develop a relationship in the unreal world of restaurants, shopping malls, etc.? Courtship is the time to learn to love and appreciate each other because of the spiritual and practical strengths noticed in each other's lives.

Courtship activities should be ideally centered around the home environment. It can be a beautiful time where you both may stand before God in worship, prayer, meditation, and singing! The home is especially suited for this type of devotional exercise! It is important, also, to look on the practical side of life. Can your "intended" cook, sew, mend socks, take care of children, clean up a broken glass, read the Bible, memorize verses, share her faith, explain her practices, and have ALL patience? .. Can "he" provide an honest living, be dependable and trustworthy, fix the lawn mower, bandage a child's cut, change the oil in the car, and be a righteous leader in the spiritual and physical home? ... These are some of the questions you must have answered during your courtship days, before you take the further step of marriage. Your courtship activities should be conducive to the

discovery of the inner person of your partner. Don't waste valuable courtship opportunities in light and flippant conversation and activities which steal time from getting better acquainted!

What about "going steady"?

Some people have split the courtship period into various phases: *a) looking around* -- dating several people to check out the "field"; *b) going steady* -- concentrating on each other by mutual respect; and *c) being engaged* -- when you really get serious about the relationship. We believe that Christian should enter into their first date in the spirit of "going steady" by mutual expectation. If we cannot be serious about the first date, if it is merely "casual" dating, we had better not have it! "Casual" dating is not for the Christian! When a couple begins to date, they should have enough respect for each other that they will not, during the course of their courtship, be dating other individuals. If the couple senses that God is not leading into a deeper relationship, it is then time to break off and re-evaluate. "TO GO STEADY" is a pledge that consecrated, Christian young people do not need to make. They will naturally be "honorable" in their commitment to the relationship.

Some might argue, "You have to date other people so you know for sure whether or not you've got the right one." Such reasoning is shallow and "caught in its own trap." For example, if this *really* were the way to know Mr. or Miss "Right", and if you really wanted to know for sure (using the reasoning) ... *you'd have to date all the eligible people in the world* to make a correct decision. This, of course, is ludicrous and impossible! This is why we encourage all Christian young people to allow God to reveal *His* choice!

What about courtship standards?

We believe in a standard for Christian courtship based on God's Word. We believe that keeping late hours, dating in cars, courting with the lights out, being involved in physical familiarities and intimacies, and anything that debases the purity of the Christian character -- has the foul smell of Satan and should be avoided. We believe that curfews should be imposed and observed. Many times when the hours are late, the conscience becomes dull.

We strongly recommend the "hands-off" policy with respect to intima-

cies. It should be the desire of the Christian couple to get to know the spiritual man or woman. Holding hands, caressing, hugging, kissing, all serve to inflame the physical. The chaste characters of many young people have been ruined when their physical passions were aroused. The Christian couple avoids such temptations. By respecting each other's purity during courtship, the relationship is lifted to a higher plane and can be established more securely upon the Rock, Christ Jesus. There will be no regrets later on! There will be nothing about which to be ashamed! **ALL THIS IS POSSIBLE IN CHRIST JESUS!** "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim, 4:12).

Christian young people know that God is omniscient. They know He has "eyes" everywhere. They know they are responsible to Him as stewards of their bodies, time, and also of His Gospel and commands (I Cor. 6:18-20). And they will, therefore, conduct themselves as those who "have to give account."

Final Word

Submission to God's Will is the way to spiritual success during courtship days (and ALL of life)! God wants you to have His BEST! He has it all planned for you! Will you submit to God's leading?

The Wisdom of the Gospel

The gospel is the sum of wisdom; a collection of knowledge; a treasure-house of truth; and a disclosure of mysterious secrets. In it we see how justice and mercy may be associated; here we see unalterable law entirely satisfied, and sovereign love carrying away the sinner in triumph.

Our meditation on it broadens the mind; and as it opens to our soul in successive flashes of glory, we stand astonished at the profound wisdom manifest in it. Yes, dear friends! if you seek wisdom, you will see it displayed in all its greatness; not in the firmness of the earth's foundations—not in the measured march of the clouds of the sky, nor in the perpetual motions of the waves of the sea; not in the vegetation with all its intricate forms of beauty, nor in the animal with its marvellous tissue of nerve, and vein, and sinew; nor even in man, that last and loftiest work of the Creator.

But turn aside and see this great sight!—an incarnate God on the cross; a substitute atoning for mortal's guilt; a sacrifice satisfying the vengeance of Heaven, and delivering the rebellious sinner. Here is essential wisdom; enthroned, crowned, and glorified.

Admire, you men and women of the earth, if you are not blind; and you who glory in your learning, bow your heads in reverence, and admit that all your skill could not have devised a gospel that is one so just to God, and so safe to man.

From 'Grace Gems' by Charles Spurgeon.

SNIPPETS.

Composers/Writers of Hymns used in the Mennonite Church Hymnal (*CH*)
 And The Christian Hymnary (*TCH*) *Courtesy of Cyberhymnal.org.*

Henry Francis LYTE

Born: June 1, 1793, Ednam, Scotland.

Died: November 20, 1847, Nice, France.

Buried: English Cemetery, Nice, France

Orphaned at an early age, Lyte attended Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, distinguishing himself in English poetry. In 1815, he was ordained, and served a number of parishes in Ireland and western England. However, for most of his career, he was pastor at All Saints Church in Lower Brixham, Devonshire, England. He wrote two books of religious poetry and hymns:

- *Poems Chiefly Religious*, 1833 & 1845
- *The Spirit of the Psalms*, 1834

Hymns: A list of 88 hymns by LYTE is available.

Abide with Me (*CH/TCH*)

Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken (*CH*)

Pleasant Are Thy Courts Above (*CH*)

Praise for Thee, Lord, in Zion Waits (*CH/TCH*)

Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven (*CH*)

There Is a Safe and Secret Place (*CH*)

Balanced Christian Living (Part 4)

By Bro. Lamar Garman Denver PA

Judging Without Condemning

"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). Jesus gave this command to a group of people who were angry that a man had been healed on the Sabbath Day. They judged harshly the act of healing and condemned Jesus wrongly, saying that He had a devil. The Jews were so impassioned in their condemnation that they even sought to kill Jesus because of this incident.

Because of Jesus' words condemning this harsh judgment, shall we then shun all judging to avoid the same calamitous error? Is this what Jesus meant when He said, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned" (Luke 6:37)? Does this command preclude trying to help another see the error of his way lest we be guilty of judging him?

By comparing Scripture with Scripture, we know that God wants His people to exercise careful discernment and to use good judgment in all areas of life. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (Philippians 1:9-10). An increasing number of issues, deeds, and events call for discernment in the end times in which we live.

How do Christians judge without condemning?

By being convinced that the Bible is the standard of judgment.

As students of the Word, we know what the Bible says about immodesty, promiscuity, rebellion, divorce and remarriage, and the many other sins that are prevalent in the world today.

By upholding the principle "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). Good fruit comes from a good tree; bad fruit comes from a bad tree; and the difference between the two is clearly seen. To help the erring understand their true condition in God's sight without condemning them, we need a heart of love and compassion. We must love the sinner and hate the sin.

By seeking to edify others in all interpersonal relationships.

A critical, suspicious attitude toward the motives of others is very detrimental. Our goal must be to edify, encourage, and be a pattern for others to follow. "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (Romans 14:13).

By remembering that God alone is the righteous Judge.

In our limited human understanding, we may not always be completely accurate in our perceptions and conclusions of issues. May we rejoice in serving the God that is omniscient. "For He cometh to judge the earth; with righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity" (Psalm 98:9).

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PURITY.

There are various kinds and types of purity and impurity. One is pure in heart. One song writer expressed his desire to be "Purer in heart, O God, Help me to be." Thus, there may be perhaps degrees of purity in heart that we could be. Our longing is to be purer in heart.

The psalmist said, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23-24)

The Proverb writer asked a question, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean?" (Proverbs 20:9) Who can say this? No one can say this. We cannot cleanse our hearts.

The Word does say, "purify your hearts, ye double minded," (James 4:8) this, of course, is our part, but God does the cleansing. We cannot cleanse ourselves.

"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." (Psalm 51:7) We need to be cleansed and washed. This then is what makes the purification or purifying.

I like the song that says, "Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole; I want Thee forever to live in my soul,"... and make me to be whiter than snow. Is it not a miracle that God can wash and purify our filthy, dirty, black, ugly hearts in the red blood of Jesus (using terms of colours) and end up with them whiter than snow - whiter than any fuller on earth can make a cloth? We cannot cleanse nor purify ourselves. We need to be washed in the blood of the Lamb.

God expressed Himself throughout the Word, "the word of the Lord came unto," and "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter 1:21) This is how the Scriptures were written.

In Ezekiel 11:19 God says, "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh" Both of these are mentioning the flesh. God is typifying and symbolizing the New Birth and that He will regenerate, renew and give us a new heart and a new spirit. He is referring to this already in the Old Testament. "I will give them one . . . I will take the stony heart," We call this the New Birth, the conversion, regenerating the heart, giving us a new heart of flesh, one that has feeling, (not the flesh that pumps the blood) one that senses, one that is touched, a new heart.

Ezekiel was later inspired of God to almost quote the same verse again in 36:26-27 "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them." The only way this can be done is with a new heart and a new spirit that He will put within us.

There are other members of the body that are affected by the purification of the regeneration and the giving of a new heart.

The heart is one member. These are members that can be used both impure and pure. One writer says of hands that they can be swift to "shed innocent blood." (Proverbs 6:17). Another writer says, "lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." (1 Timothy 2:8) Do we see the contrast after these members are purified?

There are "feet that be swift in running to mischief." (Proverbs 6:18) Another one in the New Testament says, "[having] your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." (Ephesians 6:15) What a difference, if the feet are purified.

Eyes can be, "full of adultery." (2 Peter 2:14) or anointed with "eye-salve." (Revelation 3:18)

The tongue, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matthew 12:37) James writes, "the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity ... it defileth the whole body" (James 3:6). There are four different terms that lips can be 1) "uncircumcised" (Exodus 6:12), "flattering" (Psalm 12:2), "feigned" (Psalm 17:1), and "unclean" (Isaiah 6:5). If the heart is purified the lips will be praising God as the psalmist indicates, "My lips shall praise Thee" (Psalm 63:3).

In Deuteronomy 5:29, God expresses His heart's desire. His expression is like this, "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!"

We know the mind and desire of God. In the New Testament with the coming of Jesus, He has made this possible. We can have a new heart and a new spirit within us.

From a devotional by Aaron Troyer, Berea Mennonite Fellowship, Used by permission from "The Pulpit Exchange"

AUSTRALIAN DREAMINGS.

Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17

And it shall come to pass afterward, (in the last days saith God) that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

THE CHURCH I ATTEND

Adapted by the Editor from a South Dakota Christian sister's testimony in appreciation of the brotherhood she is a member of.

We sit in church and are inspired. The message is so soft and loving; the minister speaks at times with tears. Our cup is full to the overflowing. Why are we so blessed to be in this church building to hear the word spoken in all its truth and to hear the beautiful singing, when others are longing to know of something more? Our hearts are full. We want to reach out and bring the whole world in, to let them see and hear what we have. Here there are blessings untold.

Our church is not just the congregation where we go to worship. Our church includes members around the world. Each member is accounted for. We see their name in the Lamb's Book of Life whether they live in Australia, America, Brazil, China, Africa or any where else in the world.

We may not know you, may never see you. But if we are travelling and we see you, our sister, with your prayer covering or you, our brother, with a neatly trimmed beard, we feel a kindred spirit. We meet, and we are one in fellowship. We "know" each other. We can go to your home for the night, or you can come to our home, and we not only have the same fellowship, but we have the same way of doing things in many ways, like having morning devotions. We know that in every home, there will be Bible reading, and we will kneel to pray at breakfast time.

You may have been born and raised in your faith, maybe we have not. Nevertheless, we like untold others, have joined you in the church of Jesus Christ. We may have told each other of our conversion experience, how the Lord has forgiven us, and how we have been saved. God has accepted us, you have accepted us and we you. We are one.

We imagine attending a wedding. It is so beautiful that it almost brings tears to our eyes. It is truly holy matrimony and the desire of our hearts is

for our young people to 'marry in the Lord' When the song is sung, "A foretaste of Eden, this moment we share. Tread softly, tread softly, The Master is here" (*Church Hymnal No.185*). We feel His presence, for the Lord is there to bless the bridal pair on that solemn, and yet joyous, occasion.

Your church schools are such a blessing! Words cannot truly say how we feel in our hearts, how God has opened the door for you and how we desire that for our children. The Lord has supplied this for you and we marvel at His goodness. Listen to your children sing and recite! and be thankful to the Lord, and rejoice therein – and again I say rejoice - always!

So few in number we are, and scattered, and yet the Lord wants us to have His blessings too! You have reached out to the world with missionaries and through gospel literature. You have other institutions of caring for the less fortunate, the poor, the sick, the elderly, or the abused and neglected children, they are all little havens of rest. Going to these places to visit or help would be so rewarding. Your young people, volunteering their time to fill the needs of all these places are appreciated there, we are sure, as our young people would be had they that opportunity. It's such a blessing to see the out-working of your faith.

In your church, you don't need to worry about crime, drugs, drinking, smoking, or divorce. We know that if you are a member, you are kept free of that and are striving to maintain your Christian walk of life with the support of brothers and sisters and a caring ministry. That too is our desire.

At communion time you confess your faults one with another and, like the Bible teaches, "examined yourselves" before you partake of the communion service. Each and every one of you, speaks these words before the congregation, "I believe I have peace with God and man," and then you partake of sweet communion with each other and the Lord. We commune with our God daily – very rarely with brothers and sisters.

Our hearts are rejoicing for what God has done for you and for us, and yet we are crying also. Crying to attain a spiritual heritage for our children, but also crying tears of thankfulness for God's grace in our life, and, oh, such a love we feel for God and for each other as we travel on this highway, even if we can only share in spirit many of each other's blessings. We pray that you will count them daily, as we do ours, as we travel on His highway: "*And a highway shall be there, and a way and it shall be called the way of holiness...*" (Isaiah 35:8).

Dare I mention the times we have need of reproof? Yes! There are times when we need a caring brother or sister to speak to us of the way we are going, or a word from others who are concerned for our spiritual welfare. Our church would warn us if we go astray. What a caring brotherhood! How our hearts cry for that blessing.

"Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil..." (Psalm 141:5).

In our church, we would sing the song, "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken," We would sing with our whole heart, a lump in our throat and tears in our eyes, and we would sing many more songs of praise. Our voices would blend and soar to the heavens, to our God.

"Saviour, if, of Zion's city, I through grace, a member am,
 Let the world deride or pity, I will glory in Thy name:
 Fading is the worldling's pleasure,
 All his boasted pomp and show;
 Solid joys and lasting treasure,
 None but Zion's children know."

Our church could be described as a huge ship sailing on the seas. It is going, moving on with Jesus as the Captain, heading toward the heavenly harbour. As it is sailing the seas of time, the doors are open for anyone. But if you get on this ship, you cannot get off if you want to be saved. It is like the apostle Paul said in Acts 27:31, *"Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved."*

***But!..... it is only a dream! Reality sets in, two or three or just a few gather in His name and we praise Him in joy!
 He is here! In Australia! Alleluia! Praise Jehovah!***

No Will But Thine

Jesus, 'tis my aim divine,
Hence to have no will but Thine,
Let me covenant with Thee,
Thine for evermore to be:
This my prayer, and this alone,
Saviour, let Thy will be done!

Octavius Winslow

The Insanity of Sin

Background Scripture:

Jude 1- 25.

Introduction

The title of the lesson implies that disobeying the known will of God has a dominant element of the insane. The consequences of sin are such that any person who is able to think clearly and make rational choices should turn from sin with a shudder. Yet many people heedlessly and insanely pursue sin. This is not to say that insanity in a physical form suddenly comes upon the sinner, but his choices and actions, in the light of eternity, are unreasonable. Oh, the folly and recklessness of sin, all part and parcel of the greatest deception ever perpetrated: "Hath God said?" Only the truly sane person, the person delivered from the folly of sin by the blood of Jesus Christ, will be allowed admittance through the heavenly gates on the great Judgment Day.

Key Verse

O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this

death? (Romans 7:24).

Lesson Text:

2 Peter 2:1-3

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. [2] And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. [3] And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

2 Peter 2:9-22

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished: [10] But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. [11] Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. [12] But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; [13] And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the daytime. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; [14] Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: [15] Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; [16] But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet. [17] These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. [18] For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. [19] While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. [20] For if after they have escaped the pollutions of

the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. [21] For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. [22] But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Studying the Lesson

Since the days of the early church, the people of God have faced many perils. At times the threat has been external, in the form of persecution. Just as menacing has been corruption from within in the form of heretical beliefs and practices contrary to the true doctrine of the Word. The apostle Peter, in very strong language, condemns those who were disaffected and offended and forsook the way of righteousness and disseminated their malevolent teachings among the scattered flock. These false teachers are described as presumptuous, self-willed, despising government, speaking evil of dignities, and promoting other unholy deviations from the truth of the everlasting gospel. The severest judgments of God will surely be reserved for those who knew the way of righteousness but then, through malice and misguided zeal, subverted the truth.

It is tragically true that those who turn against the truth would have been better off not to have known it in the first place. It is in this sense that sin truly becomes a revolting spectacle: the dog returning to his vomit and the sow to her mire. Sin is never static; it is progressive, going from bad to worse. It has always been the intent of the adversary to lead us on a downward spiral that will eventually destroy us. The intent of God, on the contrary, has been to save the world from sin. He will use any number of methods at His disposal to bring sinners to the atonement at Calvary. A dumb beast rebuked the madness of the prophet; so also a humble Christian can, by the power of God, be an effective medium to reprove the world of sin.

Practical Truths for Today

The fall of mankind has been so tragic and thorough that it can hardly be described in a few sentences. However, it can be summarized in a single statement: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom.

3:23). From the initial fall of man to the present day, the folly of sin has been a terrible reality. The evils of pride and covetousness have permeated all levels of society the world over. The traditional family unit, which is the building block of the civilized world, is under attack on many fronts. There are wars and rumors of wars; mankind in general cannot avoid the violence, murder, and unspeakable atrocities that seem almost commonplace. Surely the angels of heaven lament and the spirits of hell rejoice as they view the appalling scene.

These are some blatant expressions of sin. Equally alarming is the subtle drift to a watered-down gospel. Many professing believers have a great reluctance to look at sin as God does, but we delude ourselves when we believe that God will overlook the small things. Can any sin be considered small when God has declared that never again will sin enter heaven? Believing and acting upon a falsehood caused the original sin. It seemed to be a small thing at the time, yet because of this act the entire human race was sentenced to death. It seems, furthermore, that conviction is frequently guided by public opinion. Genuine fruits of repentance are often invisible, or, worse, non-existent. How many of us would care to admit that we are of those who honor God with their lips, but whose heart is far from Him? Would to God there would be more willingness to recognize sin for what it really is: not as a benign growth that is a nagging irritation on the conscience, but as a deadly poison that will cause eternal separation from God.

The insanity of sin is a soul-searching issue that everyone, at some point in his life, must confront in a personal way. It has been said that a sign of insanity is repeating the same act over and over and yet expecting different results. The true child of God knows that only one road leads home, and he will do everything in his power to reach the destination. It may be too strong to classify our human weakness as being in the realm of the insane, but when we willfully deviate from the way of truth, the folly of sin will sooner or later become a dreadful reality.

Although we are all sinners, perhaps the greatest insanity of sin is not sin itself but the refusal to accept so great a salvation. The divine pleading continues to this day, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt. 23:37). The final chapter on the folly of sin will be written on that great Day when the unmitigated fury of God will be poured out upon all those who, for whatever reason, procrastinated

in dealing with their sins and despised so great a salvation.

For saint and sinner alike, the road that leads home is the road that leads to the cross of Calvary. It is at the cross where our will must be laid down, where true repentance and godly sorrow are found, and our sins are forgiven. Finally, it is at Calvary where we willingly submit to the cause of Christ and join the pilgrims journeying to heaven's door. This assembly of true believers must remain the city of refuge for seeking souls desiring to escape the insanity of sin.

Questions.

1. Discuss the practical aspects of loving the sinner but hating the sin.
2. Is there ever a time to rebuke sin forcefully?
3. Should we be concerned about heresies in our time?
4. Is the insanity of sin displayed in being impatient, short-tempered, moody, and irritable, and similar moods?

From: Adult and Youth Sunday School Lessons. Courtesy of Gospel Publishers Moundridge KS

EVIL (SIN) UNCHECKED GROWS.

EVIL TOLERATED

POISONS THE WHOLE SYSTEM.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

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Jesus Signed My Pardon



I was in sin's prison, oh, so dark and cold
Like a lost sheep wandering from God's eternal fold.
Then the door swung open, and He spoke to me,
"I have signed your pardon, now you may go free."

Chorus

Jesus signed my pardon, this I surely know
Took my place at Calvary, now I won't have to go.
All my life I'll give to Him - He gave His for me
When He signed my pardon there at Calvary.

Since the Savoir led me from that awful place
I can hear the angels as they sing Amazing Grace.
I know I was pardoned from my sin and shame
When I joined them singing, "Glory to His name."

Chorus

Jesus signed my pardon, this I surely know
Took my place at Calvary, now I won't have to go.
All my life I'll give to Him - He gave His for me
When He signed my pardon there at Calvary.

Life is now worth living since I've been set free.
I'm so glad He was willing to save a wretch like me.
Now I have a mansion, not a prison wall.
Jesus signed my pardon, Jesus paid it all.

Chorus

Jesus signed my pardon, this I surely know
Took my place at Calvary, now I won't have to go.
All my life I'll give to Him - He gave His for me
When He signed my pardon there at Calvary.

Yes, Jesus signed my pardon - Jesus paid it all!