

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

Vol. 4 No. 1 - JANUARY 2007



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.

Greetings in the precious name of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to whom be all the glory, now and forever.

This issue marks the beginning of another year and for many peoples around the world it will be their last, it may be so for any of us that read this. Some of us will face trials of various sorts as we endeavour to “run the Christian race” but with the apostle Paul we should all be able to say as in Galatians 5:5 (kjv) *For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.*

Another verse in the NIV translation says this: Acts 26:6 *And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today.*

Sounds serious indeed, and so it is, for Christianity today is on trial, besieged and embattled on many sides in many, if not all nations, amongst them our own. Some are more aggressive and militant in their persecution of Christianity than others, but we should not relax in our determination to see our faith in Christ Jesus through to the end, no matter the obstacles in our path.

In this issue it is my desire to share with you some thoughts on running and finishing the race that is set before us, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians : 3:14). We must encourage each other in this so that none of us becomes weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. (Galatians: 6:9). There is a cost involved, are you, am I, prepared to pay that cost, there is effort involved, there is sacrifice involved but as we study the scriptures and especially the words of Jesus, I for one, am convinced that it is worth it all. Looking back into history, and even today, there are untold numbers of those that have professed and do profess Jesus Christ as Lord of Lords and King of Kings who did think it all worthwhile and gave their lives for Him who gave His life for us. May each of us live the words of 1 Peter 3:15: *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.* JvL.

I AM THAT I AM.

Devotional: Valley View Mennonite Church. Aug. 2004. Unknown Speaker.

We sing the hymn, *Holy God, We Praise Thy Name*, and we want to praise God. We want to praise His name. In Chapter 3 of Exodus, we have the account of Moses, when Moses asked God what His name was. He did not specifically ask God, “What is your name?” but he said, “Who shall I say that thou art?” “What is his name? what shall I say unto them?” (3:13) I do not think it was because Moses did not know God’s name.

I had to ask myself, as I thought about these verses, what did Moses mean? What did God’s answer to Moses mean when He answered him? This is the account of when Moses was in the Wilderness. He saw the bush burning and went close to see what was happening. God spoke to him. God commissioned him to go back to Egypt and lead His people out of Egypt. God said in verses 12–14, “..... Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.”

And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.”

As we read and study the Word, we find various names for God in the Bible. However, when Moses asked God, “What should I tell these people that your name is?” God said, “I AM THAT I AM.” We have many names for God. Sometimes we hear the word, *El-Shaddai* which means almighty God. Another name that we have in the Bible is *El-Elyon* in the Hebrew, which means God most high. There is also *Elohim* which means, “God the everlasting,” but God did not use those names when Moses asked Him. God gave Him this name, “I AM THAT I AM.” It was a name that God had never given to people before. It seems as though Moses was the first one to have ever heard this as God’s name.

In Exodus 6:2 we read, “And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob,

by the name of God Almighty, [*El-Shaddai*] but by my name JEHOVAH,” (which is the name that God gave Moses in chapter 3, “I AM THAT I AM.” “JEHOVAH.. .” “but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.” Thus, it seems as though Moses was the first person to learn that this was God’s name. JEHOVAH is what we call it today. I wonder why God (when Moses asked Him what His name was) would give a new name to him.

As we study the Scriptures, we could say that this is God’s name — JEHOVAH. The other names, *El-Shaddai*, *Elohim*, describe God. When the Hebrew’s started out . . . “God,” and thought about God’s name, they used the name JEHOVAH. It was a name that was sacred. And it was a name that they never pronounced, because it was too sacred to pronounce. Instead the Jews said *Adonai* [Lord] when they got to the word JEHOVAH. JEHOVAH is God’s name. It was a holy name. When the scribes wrote the Scriptures, when they came to the word ‘JEHOVAH,’ they would go and take a bath. Then, they would come back, get a new pen, and dip it in ink, and they would write the name and throw the pen away. I do not know how many baths they would have taken some days as they copied the Scriptures, but it was a holy name. It was a sacred name. It was God’s name.

What does the word JEHOVAH mean? What does the name JEHOVAH mean? God did not tell Moses, what that name meant, and Moses did not ask God what it meant. If we go back to Genesis 1, when God created the world, did you ever notice chapter 1 of Genesis when it talks about God? Here we have God’s name *Elohim*. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” (verse 1) “And God said, Let there be light.” (verse 3) Then, we go over to chapter 2 and we begin to get into the account when the Lord, God, created man. There, we have a new name in verse 4. “These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,” — JEHOVAH *Elohim*. This really gives a definition of that name.

I understand from His words to Moses in Exodus 3, that the name implies that God is unchanging, eternal, everlasting, self-existent, and He is a great God. God says, “I AM THAT I AM.” In chapter 1 of Genesis, as we noticed, it says, God — *Elohim*. This talks of God again as a great, holy, and an all-powerful God, and the Creator of the universe. Then, in chapter 2, we have the new name added, JEHOVAH. JEHOVAH is always used in the Bible to speak about God, when it refers to His personal relationship with His creation. *Elohim* refers to God as the Creator, and a great one, and the who is above His creation, but JEHOVAH refers to God as God’s name a personal name— as one who is intimately related to His creation. It is

interesting in chapter 2, when we come to the creation of man and woman, the Scriptures says, “the LORD God.” Notice in the Old Testament that LORD is spelled with capital letters.

In the Spanish Bible, it always says, “Jehová” because this is a literal translation of the Hebrew. In English it says, “LORD,” but that again with the capital letters. It is interesting, when we come to chapter 2, it begins to talk about man, God’s relationship with man, God walking with man and God talking with man. Then, we have “JEHOVAH,” the personal God, the Almighty God, the One who is great above us, and greater than us, but the One who, though He is great, the Creator, self - existent, and the Eternal One, reaches down to us, relates to us, cares for us, touches us, holds us in His arms, and supplies our needs. This is a beautiful picture and that is the picture that I think God was giving to Moses when He said, “I AM THAT I AM.” None of us walk around saying, “I AM.” We always say, “I am happy. I am sad,” or “I am tired.” God is the only One who can say, “I AM,” because He changes not. (Malachi 3:6) God is always the same. Therefore, He is the “I AM,” and He needs no descriptive words, because He never changes. He is what He is, and He is what He will always be. God is an uncaused God. He is One who was never created.

Though God makes, He was never made. He is an uncaused God, and He is an uncontrolled God. We are controlled — the weather determines what we wear. The terrain tells us how to travel, gravity dictates our speed, and health determines our strength. We are controlled by so many things. We can challenge those things, we can order them perhaps, but we can never move them. However, God is “I AM THAT I AM.” He is uncaused and uncontrolled. He is God. We cannot hide from Him. David said, “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?” (Psalm 139:7) There is no place that he could go. I am thankful that we have this kind of God to be with us — this kind of father. We have a lot of change in our world today — relationships change, health changes, the weather changes, but our God who ruled the earth last night will be the same God who rules it today.

God has the same convictions, the same plan, the same love for us. He is a stable point for us in a changing world. We need that stable point. It is interesting when David wrote the Shepherd’s Psalm he said, “The LORD is my shepherd.” The LORD is JEHOVAH, the Almighty one, the unchanging one. He is also the One, who is so much greater than us, and who is our shepherd. We can have a personal relationship with Him. We can praise Him. We can walk with Him.

Therefore, when we face the elements of life, the storms of life, the afflictions of life, and the sicknesses, the worries, fears, disappointments and sorrows, when we feel like we are too weak, or too confused to control anything, or we feel as though we are in a situation that seems impossible, we need a God who is JEHOVAH. We need God, who is unchanging. who is mighty, and greater than anything that we can face in life. However, at the same time, we need God, who is personal, who reaches down to us, calms us, touches us with His love, and gives us peace, confidence, and security.

May we continue to "Abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psalm 91.1).

Used by permission from: The Pulpit Exchange Issue 202.

MINISTER'S CORNER.

Brother Keith Nightingale.

LABORING IN PRAYER

A few men stand out in Bible history for their prayers on behalf of God's people. Moses lay on his face before God for forty days and nights after Israel had sinned in making the golden calf (Deut 9:18). Daniel dedicated himself to prayer and fasting for three full weeks confessing the sins of the people. Ezra rent his garments, fell on his knees, and spread out his hands to God after discovering that the people were intermarrying with the heathen of the land (Ezra 9:5). What striking examples of zeal and earnestness these mighty men have left us! They are not meant to be mere history for us. They are our inspiration to give ourselves to the labor of love on behalf of the people of God.

The book of Colossians mentions another man of whom we seldom take note. "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis" (Col. 4:12-13). Two things distinguish this

man of God. One is his zeal, and the other is his labor in prayer for the churches.

Just how God uses the prayers of His children is not fully revealed in the Scriptures. We are told in Revelation that they are offered with much incense before God (Rev. 8:3-4). James tells us that they avail much (James 5:16). We do know that prayer is abundantly taught and exemplified in the Word. The prayers of the saints are unquestionably of great value in the battle against the spiritual powers that so much affect our lives. Only eternity will reveal the full extent of the gains and losses that have been incurred either by the breadth and depth or by the shallowness and laxity of our prayer life.

Sometimes we pray in desperation. Crises occur in our life, and we need help. The Syrophenician woman, who had a tormented daughter, and Peter, when he was sinking beneath the waves, are examples of this type of prayer. When we have sickness, we pray. Occasionally we lose a needed item and call upon God for help. Such prayers are good. God is intimately interested in the details of our lives, and many can relate experiences of how He has helped at such times. Prayers of desperation, though, are not the subject of this article.

Our scripture says Epaphras labored in prayer. To labor is to exert one's self. It implies patience and persistence. We labor when there is a job at hand, and we have hopes and plans for getting it done.

Those who love and know the Lord through their daily walk with Him turn naturally to prayer. In loving Him, they love His Kingdom. They identify with His purposes and seek to promote them. As they are daily in His presence, they see their own inability to accomplish anything deep or lasting in the spiritual realm. At the same time they become more convinced of God's all-sufficiency.

Humbling ourselves must precede effective prayer. We cannot plant conviction nor touch men's hearts. Only God knows those inroads. We cannot rightly discern spirits nor know what words to say to help someone. Until we become fully convinced of our limitations and inabilities, we will not feel the urgency to call on God for help. Thus humility is in the very fabric of true prayer.

One part of laboring in prayer is the struggle we have against our own weaknesses. We may see a need and pray once or twice about

the situation, then lose interest. Our flesh resists getting involved, lest we be disappointed or hurt. It is so much easier to be a spectator than to risk ourselves. The flesh would rather be cynical and critical. Other times we stumble because of impatience. In our push-button, computerized age, we want to see immediate results.

When they don't come as soon as we had thought, we tend to become discouraged. To be laborers together with God in prayer, we must deal with our carnal resistance and commit ourselves wholeheartedly to the work. Because sin and its effects are so persistent, our prayers need to knock continuously on heaven's door.

Often unbelief hinders our labors. Prayer is spiritual work. We are wrestling not with flesh and blood but with spirits and powers of darkness. Resistance, pride, offense, discouragement, and carnality are not things we can physically handle; yet we continually battle these giants in prayer. By faith we see into these realms. Faith gives reality to the spiritual side of life. The tangible, material world is so much easier to deal with and seems so concrete. Little faith is required to walk in the physical world. The more we turn our heart toward the material and natural, the less we are moved by the vision we perceived in our secret closet. Unbelief makes prayer seem idealistic and futile.

Proper methods do not give us power in prayer. Perseverance or effort will not necessarily make us effective if our prayers are not born of the Holy Ghost. Jude briefly commented that we should be "praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20). See also Ephesians 6:18. He is the one who knows the needs of His people. Without His inspiration, we are likely to err in our petitions. Even at best, "we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26). He is the Spirit of prayer as was prophesied in Zechariah 12:10: "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications."

When He lives in our hearts, prayer will be as natural as breath.

Many years ago the writer heard one of our faithful elders make the point, "He who would lead must first learn to follow." The leaders of God's people must first learn to follow the Lord in prayer. It is

there that they receive their inspiration and direction for leadership. God's ministers must be praying men. By humility, they learn their own insufficiency. By faith, they learn God's all-sufficiency. Experience with God makes them more and more dependent on Him through prayer. If the labor of prayer is neglected, the results will be far-reaching in the church. Prayer and preaching must go hand in hand.

As our gifts and circumstances differ, so will we vary in the focus of our prayers. The Father wants to use each one of us as laborers together with Him. Some will be called to wrestle in secret against the tendency to materialism and worldliness among us. Some may be more troubled about laxity and formalism. Others carry an abiding vision and urgency for the salvation of souls and the extension of the Gospel. There is great need to pray for the development of young congregations and newly-established churches. Furthermore the leadership in the church greatly needs the prayers of the brotherhood to help them rightly teach by word and example, discern the spirits, and lead in discipline. Each is called to labor in his special field.

Prayers need to be offered for the governments of our nations (1 Tim. 2:1-2). Their policies greatly affect the church. Thanks be to God that we have had an extended season of peace and prosperity. However, with each passing year we see increasing violence, corruption, and anti-Christian practices both at home and abroad. More and more our age begins to resemble the time of Noah, when violence covered the face of the earth and men pursued fleshly pleasures. This is the age when false religion abounds and deception prevails in all but the very elect. Is it the time spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2 in which the man of sin will be revealed, seating himself in the temple of God as though he were God? How urgently prayers are needed that the Church of Jesus Christ will be able to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God until the coming of our Lord.

From: Messenger of Truth – used by permission.

SNIPPETS.

Composers/Writers of Hymns used in the Mennonite Church Hymnal [CH]
And The Christian Hymnary [TCH]

Joseph Hart

Born: 1712, London, England.

Died: May 24, 1768, London, England.

Buried: Bunhill Fields Cemetery, London England. *John Bunyan, John Rippon & Isaac Watts* are buried nearby.

Hart resisted Christianity while young, writing the pamphlet *The Unreasonableness of Religion, Being Remarks and Animadversions on the Rev. John Wesley's Sermon on Romans 8:32*. However, Hart came to Christ in 1757, becoming an enormously popular preacher and hymn writer. Tens of thousands attended his funeral. Hart's works include:

Hymns

1. Come, Holy Spirit, Come [CH]
2. Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy [CH&TCH]
3. Once More Before We Part [CH]
4. Once More We Come Before Our God [CH&TCH]
5. That Doleful Night Before His Death [TCH]

Balanced Christian Living (Part 1)

By: Bro. Lamar Garman Denver, PA

Industry Without Materialism

"We are a bit behind in the planting season and the weather forecast is for a few days of rain, starting tomorrow, is it all right if I keep the planter running this evening instead of going to prayer meeting?" questioned eighteen-year old Kendall.

"No, son," Father responded, "the Lord is well able to bless us with a good corn crop even if we do not get it planted as early as we had hoped."

Is it possible to be industrious without being materialistic? Is a hard-working individual unbalanced in his material pursuits? Is material gain indicative of spiritual indifference?

The Bible helps us understand the responsibilities of industry, diligence, and labor incumbent upon mankind. After the Fall, Adam heard these words from God, the Creator: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground" (Genesis 3:19). Also, in 1 Timothy 5:8 the exhortation is given to provide for our own. "But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

However, a grave spiritual danger exists if we do not allow the Scriptures to balance our thinking between industry and material gain. Jesus focused on a rich man in Luke 12. There seems to be no doubt that this man was very industrious, but Jesus denounced him as a materialist, or one who puts more emphasis on material wealth than on spiritual pursuits. "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

How can this same tragic verdict be avoided today?

Put God first in daily life, in personal devotions, and in family worship. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

Avoid the "love of money [which] is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10).

Recognize daily dependence on God. "It is [God] that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:18).

Faithfully support the worship services and evangelistic work of the church. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

Sacrifice material gain if it poses a spiritual danger; for example, do not compromise honesty or a spiritually safe work environment.

May we seek wisdom from above in being industrious while espousing eternal values. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

Reprinted by Permission from: "The Eastern Mennonite Testimony"

A COLLECTION OF ATTITUDES

Based on Luke 10:30-37.

To the expert in the law, the wounded man was a subject to discuss.

To the robbers, the wounded man was someone to use and exploit.

To the religious men, the wounded man was a problem to be avoided.

To the innkeeper, the wounded man was a customer to serve for a fee.

To the Samaritan, the wounded man was a human being worth being cared for and loved.

To Jesus, all of them and all of us were worth dying for.

Confronting the needs of others brings out various attitudes in us. Jesus used the story of the good, but despised, Samaritan to make clear what attitude was acceptable to Him. If we are honest, we often will find ourselves in the place of the expert in the law, needing to learn again who our neighbor is. Note these different attitudes toward the wounded man.

Pride in the Believer

There was never a saint yet, that grew proud of their fine feathers, that the Lord didn't pluck them out one by one. There never was an angel yet, that had pride in his heart, that didn't lose his wings, and fall into Hell, as Satan and those fallen angels did; and there will never be a saint who indulges in self-conceit, pride, and self-confidence, that won't have the Lord spoil their glories, and trample their honours in the mud, and make them cry out, "Lord have mercy on me."

Charles.H.Spurgeon.

Training For The Christian Life.

By: *The Editor.*

(Act 20:24 KJV) But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

(1Co 9:24 KJV) Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

(Gal 2:2 KJV) And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

(Gal 5:7 KJV) Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

(2Ti 4:7 KJV) I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith:

(Heb 12:1 KJV) Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

These six verses of scripture have a common thread, they all speak of a race that is to be run and one that we are encouraged to finish and for that we need endurance.

From these text verses we can see that there is a direction, a definite course that we have to take to reach our desired goal with the ultimate aim of receiving a prize. The prize of course is to be united with Christ in the heavenly places for all eternity - what a glorious prize indeed.

I am sure that all of us realise that true scriptural Christian living takes hard work, self denial and gruelling preparation, the same as it does in the physical realm if we want to achieve our goal – to win the race.

When we are training for anything we need to be able to endure all. Some of the definitions of *endure* are: to last; to abide; to suffer or sustain without yielding. For the child of God this is a very pertinent attribute in the day which we are living. The scripture is very clear on this subject, and the Lord's own words in Matthew 24: 13 are, "*but he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved.*" The apostle Paul wrote in different Epistles of the need to hold fast to sound doctrine, to our profession of it and to not grow weary in the Christian walk.

The main text verse that I would like us to look at is found in:

Acts 20:24

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

We see in this verse that the apostle Paul has only one goal in mind, and that is to finish the course that he has started out upon. I wonder how many of us have this same determination for our lives. We have so many things that we allow into our lives or that clamour for our attention that we sometimes find ourselves losing sight of our ultimate goal, which is to enter in by the strait gate, and gain our reward in heaven. The scriptures tell us to redeem the time, and I'm often reminded of that as I work in my office. Just outside my office is a clock, which strikes every quarter hour and often is a sharp reminder of the passage of time, I may hear it strike the time and acknowledge that it is two o'clock. Then as I continue with my task, absorbed with my work, suddenly, the clock strikes again. And this time, it is four o'clock -- have I lost two hours? It may feel like it, but it is not so, there is an old saying that time and tide wait for no man, the hours that have elapsed have gone, never to return. It is the same when we go to sleep, the hours slip away, never to return. The only certainty in all of this is that the passage of time has brought me that much closer to finishing my course here on earth. It seems that we have so little time in which to make our calling and election sure, so little time to conform to God's ways and become the holy people that He calls us to be.

2 Peter 1:10 tells us: *“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:”*

We see here in this verse, the word diligence, which means to give close attention and continued effort. It is what we need to win a race or to stay the course, whilst I do not promote or condone the world's ways, it is interesting to note the huge amounts of money, time and effort spent on preparing for various worldly events, which can best be described as races, horse racing, car racing and the many other sporting events which occur on a regular basis -- all of them consuming money, time, people's efforts, all with one purpose in mind and that is to win. Unfortunately, only one person can win to prominence in these events, and that makes all the others, no matter how much time, effort and money they spent on trying to win, losers. What a contrast to the Christian race where all who start out and endure to the end will reap the price and be winners -- victorious overcomers.

There are three aspects to achieving the reward that has been prepared for God's children and we will look at each of these areas separately.

We can briefly describe them as

- 1..... Training For The Christian Life.
- 2..... Counting The Cost Of Following Christ.
- 3..... Why We Don't Give Up.

Hebrews 12:1-4

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

The scripture text you have just read compares Christian life to a race. It is quite possible that Paul, having spent some time in Athens, became aware of the Olympic races that were held in Greece every four years. [The first Olympiad commenced 775 years before the birth of Christ,] To participate in these races required much practice and discipline. In the sport addicted world of today, aspiring athletes follow a rigorous program of exercise and discipline in preparation for the contest in their chosen field. During the actual contest, the participant focuses totally on a planned strategy in which he or she hopes to win the prize to the exclusion of all others and there is no thought of helping anyone else to achieve the prize they so earnestly covet for themselves.

In our spiritual life, preparing for glory is one of the great purposes of life – bringing praise and glory to God I would venture to say would be the greatest purpose. All our efforts should be for the purpose of gaining heaven. What will it take to achieve this goal? Riches cannot buy it; the Bible indicates riches could easily bar us from heaven. (*Luke 18:25 For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*) Good works or a pious life will not suffice either!

Matthew 7:21-23

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. [22] Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? [23] And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity. We need to train diligently for the Christian life; such training takes time, dedication, energy, continued practice, and vision. We must all commit ourselves to the Christian life, but we must first know the rules as prescribed in God's Word: 2 Tim. 2:5 and *if a man also strives for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.* Here we see that we need to act lawfully in accordance with God's word, anyway contrary to this would be sin, and we know that sin will not get us into heaven. Remember the wages of sin?

As in all things that pertain to our Christian walk we need to consult the scriptures. It does not matter what our age or condition is, we need to cling to the Bible, the words of the song “Cling to be Bible” say it well, lamp for the feet, guide for the youth, hope for the sinner, staff for the aged and, the best Book of all. The Bible is our training manual for the course that is set before us.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. [25] And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. [26] I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: [27] But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

In the scriptures, we see that we need to go into strict training in order to get the prize. We must train ourselves to run the race of life, and to do that we need to keep our eyes on Christ -we must not get sidetracked or slowed down. The goal we are aiming to achieve is to win a reward, laid out for us in Christ's kingdom.

Philippians 3:13-14

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, [14] I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Here we see the apostle Paul, encouraging us to focus all our energies towards winning the race. Living the Christian life demands all of our energy, we cannot be half-hearted in our effort otherwise we will fall by the wayside. We do have to be fully committed and determined and part of that is to forget the past and strain for the goal, because we know Christ promises eternity with Him at the completion of our course if we but persevere to the end.

1 Timothy 4:7-10

But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. [8] For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that

now is, and of that which is to come. [9] This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. [10] For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

In the last three scripture references, Paul compares the spiritual journey with a physical striving for training for a race and he refers to the subjection of the physical body that is required to run the race successfully. Athletes preparing to compete usually have an instructor or coach to help train and plan the strategy so that they can win but when we consider the price that is to be gained by persevering Christians the comparison fails. The prize we are striving for is of eternal, priceless value, and everyone can attain. In the physical realm only one can win the race. We too, like the athletes have need of an instructor or a coach to help and plan our strategy, God has provided the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures as instructors. He is by our side as we meet the challenges of the race, we are also accompanied by fellow brothers and sisters running the race, and we should be an encouragement to each other. We are not competing against each other to get to God, but rather that we should be seeking to reach the same goal. And may I say that 1 Corinthians 9:24 does not negate the need to help our brother or sister on the way even though it may seem to imply a selfish ambition to be a winner, there are sufficient scriptures to show that we need to, and indeed must help each other.

The 2nd aspect of running the Christian race is “Counting the Cost of Following Christ” and being prepared to pay the cost. Essentially, the external areas that may cause us concerns as we endeavour to follow Christ, the areas of concern from which we may or perhaps should realistically expect opposition is from our governments and those who see themselves as religious people, and here I include those professing Christianity but only on their terms and opposing any who do not see it their way – none of us should discount the possibility of persecution from other Christian institutions – we only need to remember the history of the early church and the reformation when those professing Christianity turned against true followers of Jesus Christ and, in fact some even proclaimed that they were doing

God a service by their actions against God's people. Our forefathers in the faith persevered till the end so let us too be of good courage:

Psalm 27:14

Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.

Psalm 31:24

Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.

Isaiah 41:6

They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage.

Let us be prepared to do the same, as well as train up the next generation to remain steadfast in the faith at all costs.

Matthew 10:28

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

In our world today there is much persecution of God's people, and hundreds if not thousands die every year, martyrs for the cause of Christ. We in our Western society, may not face physical persecution and attacks on our properties but we do face restrictions, and are increasingly doing so, through the legal actions of governments, which seek to restrict our open and unfettered practice of Bible truths. How this will develop none of us know, but I think that we should be preparing our young people for the eventuality of persecution in a more physical sphere by groups opposed to the Word of God and those who proclaim it with their lives. In this verse we see that 'Fear of Man' a term often used when we describe ourselves as not having witnessed or spoken up when on reflection we know we should have. It is for most of us an unreasonable fear as we generally do not face violence for our witness, ridicule and scoffing perhaps yes, but that is part of our faith in Christ Jesus,

1 Peter 2:9-12

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light: [10]

Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. [11] Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; [12] Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

The fear that we as believers in Jesus ought to have is Fear of God.

2 Corinthians 7:1

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the Fear of God.

Ephesians 5:21

Submitting yourselves one to another in the Fear of God.

1 Peter 2:17

Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

Revelations 14:7

Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

This is the fear that the non believer also should have, but sadly too many are like those referred to in the letter to the Romans. The verse Romans 3:18 sums up their attitude.

There is no Fear of God before their eyes.

There is one more area or group of people that may respond to our faith in a negative (and quite hostile way at times) and that is our own family. This area of relationships can also awaken in us the “Fear of Man” and override the “Fear of God” if we let it. But again we should expect these things, the scripture is quite clear on the cost of following Christ in the areas of government and religious institutions/people but it is also very clear on family issues – this is what Jesus said and I for one believe Him, I see it in my own family.

Matthew 10:34-37

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. [35] For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the

daughter in law against her mother in law. [36] And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. [37] He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

These verses include by implication all blood relatives and spouses.

In all these areas where this “Fear of Man” can come from, all can be overcome by the relying on the Word of God as spoken by Christ Jesus;

Matthew 10:26

Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

Matthew 10:28

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Matthew 10:31

Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Matthew 10:32

Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven.

We see from these verses that the truth will be revealed, our soul cannot be harmed, God’s love will sustain us and Jesus will acknowledge us if we acknowledge Him. Blessed assurance indeed!

The 3rd and final aspect of training for and running the Christian race to achieve the ultimate reward, a word much misused by the world, we would briefly like to look at what the purpose of this race is, and the plan we should follow to achieve the desired outcome.

Perseverance – Persistence - The Prize! The Christian life was never promised as an easy way to live; instead the Apostle Paul constantly reminds us in his various letters that we must have a purpose and a plan because times will be difficult and Satan will attack. But none of us would ever persevere without the promise of a reward or prize at the end of course – a promise God will keep for those that remain faithful to the end. The scriptures selected now, give us pointers, directions as to The Purpose, The Plan and The Prize and each of

us can achieve what is laid before us as our reward – but we need to be diligent for our God is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him. The following five scripture references have been selected because they all show the three points of The Purpose, The Plan and The Prize mentioned above.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. ²⁵And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. ²⁶I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: ²⁷But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Purpose: Run to get the prize, run straight to the goal, no side-tracks or deviations.

Plan: Deny yourself whatever is potentially harmful and discipline your body/mind in God's ways.

Prize: A crown that will last forever.

Galatians 6:7-10

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. ⁸For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. ⁹And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. ¹⁰As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Purpose: Don't become weary in doing good, do not get discouraged, don't give up, do good to all men, especially those of the household of faith.

Plan: Sow to please the Spirit not the flesh.

Prize: Reap eternal life.

Ephesians 6:10-20

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. ¹¹Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. ¹³Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; ¹⁵And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. ¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: ¹⁸Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; ¹⁹And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Purpose: Get dressed for battle – put on the full armour of God, pray on all occasions (without ceasing)

Plan: Use all of the armour God has given you, don't discard some as being un-needful – it may save your soul!

Prize: Taking our stand against the devil's schemes and being victorious overcomers.

Philippians 3:12-14

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. ¹³Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, ¹⁴I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Purpose: To press on toward the day when you will be all that God wants you to be.

- Plan:** Forget the past, strain toward what lies ahead, plough on!
Remember Jesus' words in Luke 9:62
- Prize:** The prize for which God calls us and the place He has prepared is heavenward – upward not downward!

2 Timothy 2:1-13

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ²And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. ³Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. ⁵And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. ⁶The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. ⁷Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. ⁸Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: ⁹Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. ¹⁰Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. ¹¹It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: ¹²If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us: ¹³If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself.

Purpose: Share and entrust these great truths to people who will teach others – including our children.

Be strong in Christ's grace even when your faith is being tested and tried.

Plan: We are to endure hardship and trials like a soldier and Refuse to get involved or sidetracked in worldly affairs. Follow the Lord's rules – the scriptures –as any athlete or soldiers follow the rules set out for them. Be like the farmer, who sows, tends and waits until the harvest rewards his efforts. Remember - No pain, No gain!

Prize: We will live with Christ forever and reign with Him and He will always remain faithful to us and always carries out His promises to us.

One Day at a Time

One day at a time, with its failures and fears,
With its hurts and mistakes, with its weakness and tears,
With its portion of pain and its burden of care;
One day at a time we must meet and must bear.

One day at a time to be patient and strong,
To be calm under trial and sweet under wrong;
Then its toiling shall pass and its sorrow shall cease;
It shall darken and die, and the night shall bring peace.

One day at a time - but the day is so long,
And the heart is not brave, and the soul is not strong,
O Thou pitiful Christ, be Thou near all the way;
Give courage and patience and strength for the day.

Swift cometh His answer, so clear and so sweet;
"Yea, I will be with thee, thy troubles to meet;
I will not forget thee, nor fail thee, nor grieve;
I will not forsake thee; I never will leave."

Not yesterday's load we are called on to bear,
Nor the morrow's uncertain and shadowy care;
Why should we look forward or back with dismay?
Our needs, as our mercies, are but for the day.

One day at a time, and the day is His day;
He hath numbered its hours, though they haste or delay.
His grace is sufficient; we walk not alone;
As the day, so the strength that He giveth His own.

—Annie Johnson Flint

NATIONS AND GOD'S LOVE

The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever. (Revelation 11:15)

We talk about a Christian nation—there never has been such a thing. There are Christians in the nations, but not Christian nations. The constitution of nations is the same as that of a human being. There is a difference between individuality and personality: individuality is all elbows and must stand alone; personality is something that can be merged and blended. Individuality is the husk of the personal life; when personal life is emancipated, individuality goes. So with nations. The kingdoms of this world have become intensely individualistic, with no love for God, or care for one another. The insistence of nations is that they must keep the national peace—in the way they have been doing it! In the whirlwind of nations, such as is on just now many men have lost—not their faith in God (I never met a man who lost his faith in God), but their belief in their beliefs, and for a while they think they have lost their faith in God. They have lost the conception which has been presented to them as God, and are coming to God on a new line.

(a) The Origin of Nations (Genesis 11:1-9)

“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. . . . Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth” (Genesis 11:1, 9).

According to the Bible, nations as we know them are the outcome of what ought never to have been. Civilisation was founded on murder, and the basis of our civilised life is competition. There are grand ingredients in civilisation, it is full of shelter and protection, but its basis is not good. We each belong to a nation, and each nation imagines that God is an Almighty representative of that nation. If nations are right, which is *the* right one?

b) The Object of Nations

“From whence come wars and fightings among you? . . . Ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:1-2).

The question is on the lips of people to-day, "Is war of the devil or of God?" It is of neither, it is of men, though both God and the devil are behind it. War is a conflict of wills, either in individuals or in nations. As sure as there is will *versus* will, there must be punch *versus* punch. This is the object of nations. They will assert their rule and independence and refuse to be downtrodden. If we cannot by diplomacy make our wills bear on other people, then the last resort is war, and always will be until Jesus Christ brings in His Kingdom.

There is one thing worse than war and that is sin, the thing that startles us is not the thing that startles God. We are scared and terrorised when our social order is broken, when thousands of men are killed, and well we may be, but how many of us in times of peace and civilisation bother one iota about the state of men's hearts towards God? Yet that is the thing that produces pain in the heart of God, not the wars and devastations that so upset us.

c) The Obliteration of Nations

"And there followed great voices in heaven, and they said [rv], The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).

In these last days there is an idea that we are going to dominate everything by a perfect brotherhood. Any mind that expresses its view of the future says we are heading up into a federation of religions and nations when distinctions will be obliterated and there will be a great and universal Brotherhood. The quarrels of nations make men look forward to the time when nations will be federated out of independent existence. That is a revolt which is a mental safety valve only. Peter says God is "longsuffering to us-ward." At present He is giving men opportunity to try every line they like in individual life as well as in the life of the nations at large. Some things have not been tried yet, and if God were to cut us off short we would say, "If You had left us a bit longer we could have realised our ideal of society and national life." God is allowing us to prove to the hilt that it cannot be done in any other way than Jesus Christ said, viz., by a personal relationship to God through Jesus Christ Who is *God and*

Man—One. When sooner or later we come to the end of our tether, we hear Jesus Christ say: “Blessed are the poor in spirit”—“If you ask God, He will give you the Holy Spirit,” i.e., an unsullied heredity through Jesus Christ.

That is how the love of God comes in, and why it has to be such a long way round is because He is “bringing many sons unto glory,” not mechanisms, but men, full-orbed and sensible all through. Jesus Christ never used a revivalistic meeting to take a man off his guard and then say, “Believe in Me.” He always puts the case to a man in cold blood, He even seemed to spurn men when they wanted to follow Him (see Luke 9:57-62). “Another convert to My cause.” Not a bit. “Take time and consider what you are doing, are you ready to hear what I have to say?”

The love of God is going to embrace everyone and everything in the sovereign preference of His person, which is for His Son. God purposes that everyone of us shall partake of the very essential nature of Jesus Christ and stand in complete union with Himself, even as Jesus did. Faith in God is a terrific venture in the dark, we have to believe that God is love in spite of all that contradicts it. Every soul represents some kind of battlefield. The great point for the Christian is to remain perfectly confident in God. Paul says that when the sons of God are manifested, and everything is in a right relationship with God and expressed in devotion to Jesus Christ, all the wildness and contradiction in Nature and in nations will cease, and the Love of God will be the great Reality. (*From ‘Love of God’ Oswald Chambers – First Published 1918*) [AND JUST AS APPLICABLE TODAY 88 YEARS ON!]

Editor’s Special Note: For those who have access to the Internet and an interest in the history of Beachy Amish/Amish Mennonite churches, some of which support the outreach in Australia, the website www.beachyam.org may be informative.

Compiled & Edited by:
 J van Loon Deloraine TAS 7304
 E-mail: shimara2@dodo.com.au.