

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

Vol. 4 No. 6 - JUNE 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

It is much to be desired that there were that love in all men to teach what they know, and that humility in others to be instructed in what they know not. God humbles sometimes great persons to learn of others that are meaner (of perceived lesser status), and it is our duty to embrace the truth whoever brings it, and oftentimes ordinary persons are instruments of knowledge and comfort to many that are greater than themselves, as Aquila and Priscilla instructed Apollos.
(cf: Acts 18:26)

Richard Sibbes.

From The Editor's Desk.

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with thee all.

The opening quote struck me as one of those sayings from which all can benefit if we are prepared to put it into practice and indeed have a willingness to learn from others.

This month the focus is on **“The Call to Discipleship”** and another important area, **“Purity”**, this too takes discipleship! And discipline!

This publication is meant for the edification, exhortation and encouragement of us all and the scope of articles is thus wide and varied because each of us has different areas of need in our lives. You may read an article and think, “Well this does not do apply to me” and that may be true, but neither you nor I know how it may answer a deep cry in someone else’s heart. Let us pray for each other therefore, that the needs in each person’s life be met, first by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, then through His word in scriptures and also through the words published here which are gleaned from various sources. In all cases every endeavour is made to ensure that the articles, often transcribed sermons, have the correct scripture quotations.

Should any error be detected please notify The Editor so that correction may be made.

JvL.

MINISTER'S CORNER.*Brother Daniel Yoder, Montezuma, GA..***The Call to Discipleship**

We have seen the suffering and pain that our wonderful Lord went through in order for you and I to enjoy the wonderful gift of eternal life and the blessing of that wonderful fellowship with Him. We must acknowledge in our hearts that Christ, our wonderful Lord, did so much for us.

Why should I not do all I can to surrender this body of mine to His service. I will trust that the Lord will feed us and challenge us this morning. There is a phrase in one of the songs we sang this morning (No.5) it says in the chorus: "Bless Jehovah all His creatures" and what caught my attention were the words that followed: "Ever under His control." Ever under His control - that speaks to me this morning of someone that has wholly dedicated and surrendered his life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. My desire this morning is that I would be an instrument of God, wholly surrendered to His divine will for my life. That His will be performed in my life "Ever under His control" and many of us sang those words this morning. I have to think back on times and situations in my life when I just must admit that God was not in control of my attitudes, my feelings, maybe some words that I said, maybe some expression of impatience that was seen in my life when God was not in control. It is my desire, and I trust that it is your desire this morning, that you would be ever under God's control. Then there is another phrase in song number 32, it says: "Thou hast Thy throne within my breast." Now when the throne of God is set up in our hearts as we have sung this morning: "Thy throne is within my breast" it is telling me that I have surrendered my will to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have no reservations for myself. I have sold out for the cause of Christ regardless of the cost, and so with me emptying myself of everything that I possess, I am allowing Christ to come in and set up His throne in my heart. And when Christ is upon the throne of my heart then everything is under His control.

May that be for each one of us our desire this morning that we would ever be under the control of God.

The title of the message is *The Call to Discipleship*.

In the world we live in today there are a lot of threats being made against Christianity. We do not know what the future of this world, or this country holds for the Christian. We do not know the future, but I believe it is important that we prepare ourselves for whatever the future holds. And a call to discipleship is a call for all of God's children. Discipleship is a position where we empty ourselves of everything that we possess and allow Christ to be upon the throne of our hearts and we attach ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, and Him alone. We can be a disciple this morning of our own doing, there are things that dominate and control our lives whether we want to believe it or not, if Christ is not on the throne of our hearts controlling and dominating our lives then it is probably something else that is controlling us.

I wonder this morning what is dominating your life, what is controlling your life, the decisions that you are making this morning and the position that you are standing in, where are you getting your orders from? Are you getting your orders from the courts of heaven? Or is it of your own carnal doing? Your own carnality that is dominating you? There are so many things that are threatening Christianity in this world. We sometimes get phone calls, we get literature seeking support for such things as people going to the White House and trying to make room for homosexuality and lesbianism and all kinds of philosophies under the name of Christianity.

We are going to turn to some scriptures before we go much further and read from them: Here in this portion of scripture from Matthew, we have an account of the rich young ruler that came to Jesus and asked Him what good things shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

Matthew 19:16-22

And, behold, one came and said unto Him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? ¹⁷And He said unto him, **Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.** ¹⁸He saith unto Him, Which? Jesus said, **Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,** ¹⁹**Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.** ²⁰The young man saith unto Him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what

lack I yet? ²¹Jesus said unto him, **If thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and* follow Me.** ²²But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

Now here was a young man, he had done very well, I guess he was honest in all that he said he was doing as the foregoing scripture passage sets out, and it was quite honourable of the young man to be able to uphold the law of God in such a manner, if he was truthful about what he said. But there is one thing you lack, God said to him, and maybe this morning there is one thing that you and I are lacking, we may not have totally surrendered that to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and it is a possibility that that one thing hinders us from experiencing eternal life and the fullness of Christ in our lives. When the Lord Jesus Christ laid claim on this young man's riches, what did this young man do? He turned away and was sorrowful. He was not willing to sell all that he had and give to the poor.

We're not trying to preach a message this morning that God is calling us to sell out everything that we have and give it to the poor. I don't believe that that is the call of Christ on every one of our lives, but it is possible that God is calling one of you to that kind of discipleship – following the Lord Jesus Christ. So many times we have reasons and humanistic ideas and excuses for not doing what we feel the Lord is calling us to do. He may be calling you to leave your family and your homeland and going to some faraway country, in the hot deserts of Africa and spend your life time ministering to people that have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are living in the land of America, the land of prosperity, riches, plenty of food to eat, nice homes to live in, and all these cosy places. We have family and friends we can assemble with from time to time and have that sweet fellowship. But there maybe some lost soul that is waiting to hear the gospel, and the Lord Jesus Christ knows that soul that He died for needs to hear the gospel of repentance and remission of sins, maybe God is laying His hand upon you to go to that individual and share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A call to discipleship is sometimes a hard calling. It is a self-denial life, denying of self, emptying of self and saying as Jesus did in the garden of Gethsemane: "Not My will but Thine be done." The true disciple is one who attaches himself to someone. You can be a disciple of your own self,

you can be dominated by your carnal thinking, you can be dominated by your material things, you can be dominated by sport and, if you are honest about the matter, and if you were just to analyse it, you maybe a disciple of those issues that are dominating and controlling your life. My desire is to stimulate our minds this morning, to make us aware of whom or what I am attached to, to take inventories of your life and get serious with God. Place yourself before the altar of God and just open up yourselves and say: God what do You want me to do?

There are many people, multitudes of Christians, I am especially thinking of China this morning that are suffering immensely for the cause of Christ. Christians that are willing to stay behind prison bars, for years and years, they have the opportunity to deny their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to be released and go to be with their children and their families, but they choose rather to be yoked with Christ and to be attached to Him, rather than experience freedom and be with their little children. Sometimes the call to discipleship is hard.

I stand before you this morning as one that has not really experienced a whole lot of heartrending experiences because of my commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. What are you attached to this morning? This country is getting worse and worse, there is certainly a lot of opposition that is taking place against Christianity, I do not remember how many years ago that this happened, Macklin Mary O'Hare, the woman that took prayer out of schools, there is such a threat to society and for America in prayer being taken out of schools, the 10 Commandments being taken of the walls of buildings across places in this country, and when we cause the commandments of God to leave our walls, it becomes putting policemen in the halls of our schools, when you remove the law of God from your midst you are setting yourself up for chaos.

Brothers and sisters, when pleasures and materialism become to control and dominate our lives, this church is in for serious trouble. Yes it is! Jesus wants our lives, nothing more and nothing less. When we take the authority of the word of God out of our lives it sets us up to be dominated and controlled by the enemy of our souls. We can see in Isaiah chapter 1, that God is not interested in our prayers or our sacrifices. I look at this portion of scripture and see how it does not matter to God, we can do all kinds of good things, we can have long prayers, all kinds of sacrifices, but if we

are not sacrificing ourselves, God says: do away with all these things I hate them!

Isaiah 1:10-16

Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. ¹¹To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. ¹²When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread My courts? ¹³Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. ¹⁴Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth: they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them. ¹⁵And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

Have we regressed to such a state in our spiritual lives that we do not sense the departure of the Spirit of God from our lives? We come before Him and spread our hands before Him in prayer and we offer such sacrifices as maybe our farms, our cattle or whatever it maybe, but we fail to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice. God is not interested in your farms, He is not interested in your cattle, He is not interested in your occupation, He is interested in your life. And when you give Him your life as a total and complete sacrifice to the Lordship of Jesus Christ then He will have the rest of it. Yes we can have the right dogma, right creed, right theology and right standards for the value that we confess them to be, but it will all fall short of the gospel requirement of true discipleship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Luke 14:27 we have the words of Jesus Christ saying:

And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.

Bearing the cross is simply dying to the self life. The cross speaks of death, when we are called to follow Christ we should not dialogue with Him and say: "Well God, what if You called me to go to Africa, what if You called me to go to Australia, what if You called me to go to Haiti, what if You called me to go to Iraq, God, am I still going to have to follow You?" We begin to question God and we start looking at all the discomforts in following Christ. There are thousands of Christians today that are

suffering because they have chosen to follow the Lord, regardless of the price they have to pay in order to do it. Are you willing? Am I willing?

Will I have to suffer? That is up to the Lord.

Will I have to give up my family? That is up to God.

Will I have to live in a mud hut? That is up to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Will I have to leave this wonderful church in Montezuma Georgia? That is up to Jesus Christ.

What did Levi the son of Alphaeus do when Jesus walked along and he was sitting at the receipt of customs and Jesus told him: “follow Me.” He arose and went and followed Christ. He did not dialogue with God, with Jesus and start asking Him: “Where are you going to take me? What are you going to do with me? What am I going to have to suffer if I follow You?” This portion of scripture in Matthew 28 is a wonderful scripture that we can have comfort and consolation in:

Matthew 28:19-20

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even unto the end of the world.*

When you go through the fire or water, or in the pulpit or in prison, to succeed in this great undertaking He says: “**lo, I am with you,**” so as to make your ministry effective to the disciplining of the nations, for the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan. So we have the promise when God calls us to follow Him, that we need not worry whether He will cause us or call us to suffer or call us to leave Montezuma Georgia, because we can lay claim on this promise in Matthew 28: “**lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.**”

Brothers and sisters this morning I am convinced in my heart, that God will stand with you, if you follow God wherever He takes you, you follow Him, He will stand with you, and He will provide the grace to give your life for the cause of Christ, if that is going to be your calling.

The call to discipleship.

When we are called to follow Christ we are summoned to an exclusive attachment to His person, the grace of His call will burst all the bonds of legalism, it is a gracious call, a gracious commandment. It transcends the difference between the law and the gospel, Christ calls, the disciple follows, that is grace and commandment in one.

Psalm 119:45 *And I will walk at liberty: for I seek Thy precepts.*

That is where you and I will find the greatest liberty, and the most joy in our heart is when can have the confidence and the assurance that God, the Lord Jesus Christ is leading us.

Discipleship means adherence to Christ, and because Christ is the object of that adherence, it must take the form of discipleship. An abstract Christology, a doctrinal system, a general religious knowledge on the subject of grace, or on the forgiveness of sins, render discipleship superfluous and in fact they positively exclude any idea of discipleship whatever, and are essentially inimical to the whole conception of following Christ. With an abstract idea it is possible to enter into a relationship, relation of formal knowledge to become enthusiastic about it and perhaps even to put into practice. But it can never be followed in personal obedience. Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship. Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ. It remains an abstract idea, a myth, which has a place for the fatherhood of God but omits Christ as the living Son. Any Christianity of that kind is nothing more or less then the end of discipleship. In such a religion there is trust in God but no following of Christ. Because the Son of God became man, because He is the mediator, for that reason alone the only true religion we can have with Him is to follow Him. Discipleship is bound to Christ as the mediator and, where it is properly understood, it necessarily implies faith in the Son of God and the mediator. Only the mediator, the God-man, can call men to follow Him. Discipleship without Christ is a way of our own choosing.

By this we make reference back to Isaiah chapter 1, that our sacrifices and prayers and all the things that we do will avail us nothing if we do not have and are practicing that call of discipleship in our own lives. Many things could be said concerning discipleship, but I just want to stimulate our minds. The Lord laid this message on my heart and I know that I need it myself, but we must be careful brothers and sisters, that we do not get so complacent in the lives that we live that we fail to follow our Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul says: "I beseech you therefore brethren." If God by His divine hand would lead all but a few out of this congregation to go somewhere and serve, I would want to say God bless you. God be with you and guide you, and give you sustenance to live faithfully until He receives you up into glory. That is my prayer for each one of you. So let us

not get so involved in our own things that we fail to walk the life of true discipleship with Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is not really Christ to us until we experience what real discipleship is in our own lives. I believe that the Lord laid this message upon my heart, that this message is for me, and I certainly want to receive it as the Lord has laid it upon my heart and I want to encourage each one of you to lay yourself before the Lord and ask the Lord: "Everything that I do and I possess, is it an act of following the Lord Jesus Christ as He would desire for me to follow?" May the Lord have His way.

Transcribed from a message given on 31 December, 2006. Used by permission.

"Education is very dangerous, but the lack thereof is even more so."

Steven Brubaker.

Balanced Christian Living (Part 6)

By Bro. Lamar Garman Denver PA.

Blending Without Compromise

An old saying asserts that the man who holds the ladder at the bottom is as important as the man working at the top. The two men have blended their divergent capabilities and are steadfast in their purpose of accomplishing the task at hand. The man holding the ladder is serving as a stabilizing anchor and is glad for the work being done above him. The man on the ladder must appreciate the contribution of the other lest he find the ladder slipping from under him.

The spiritual implication is clear. Even though our gifts and capabilities vary and we may not always agree minutely on every issue, as Christians we need each other. The contribution that other Christians make in our lives is inestimable. God, in His wisdom, has designed the church to have each member blend together in a harmonious whole for the blessing and benefit of all. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one

members one of another" (Romans 12:5).

It is indeed a blessing when the church is united in belief and practice to the extent that blending together in the bonds of love is possible. Each member should have convictions for practical holiness based on the Scriptures and appreciation for the standards of the church "that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27).

However, at times an individual or a family may have higher standards concerning practical applications than what is normally practiced in the group. Convictions may vary somewhat on things such as the size of a business or farm, the kind of housing we utilize, or the vehicles we drive. It is normal for some variations to exist even while staying within the accepted standard of the group. Despite these differences, is it still possible to blend with other Christians without compromising personal convictions?

By the grace of God and in the spirit of Christian love, blending of individual convictions is not only possible but also desirable. The timeworn statement still applies: "We must stand for something, or we will fall for anything." Our goal needs to be to stand for that which we believe most accurately represents Scriptural living in today's world while at the same time blending with and appreciating other Christians.

May we praise the Lord for the Scriptural formula that makes blending without compromise a possibility. "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:2-3).

"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be on one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (2 Corinthians 13:11).

Reprinted by Permission from: "Eastern Mennonite Testimony" End of Series.

There is still a unique Anabaptist practice,
But is there an Anabaptist mind?

An anonymous quote.

A Call to Thought Purity

by Harold S. Martin, *Bible Helps*, Hanover PA..

An older proverb says, "You are not what you think you are, but you are what you think." The statement is not merely an ancient proverb, but it is also a Bible truth. The Bible states that as a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Proverbs 23:7).

Satan attacks all of us in many ways, but perhaps his most vigorous assault is brought to bear upon our thought lives. Satan knows that what we think, eventually makes us what we are. He knows that our thoughts often lead to actions -- and so he works on our thought lives. Each of us is responsible for what he welcomes into his mind.

1. The Mind's Capacity for Evil

The Apostle Paul was keenly aware of the capacity of the mind for evil thoughts. One may dwell upon lustful thoughts, wrong thoughts about some member of the opposite sex. Another may seethe in his mind with jealousy and envy toward other people. Still others are consumed with pride and with high thoughts about themselves. The "works of the flesh" in Galatians 5 is a long list of sins -- many of which are sins of the mind.

The mind can easily be covered up (at least for a while), and so the mind is difficult to capture for Christ. We can retreat within the walls of our minds, and think about things that are known only to ourselves and God -- and so it is difficult for others to detect what we are really thinking. We must remember however that God does know our thoughts, and He is concerned about them -- and often they eventually do come out into the open.

In the European country of Italy nearly 2,000 years ago, there was a thriving town called Pompeii. It was nestled on the slopes of Mt. Vesuvius. One man who lived in Pompeii painted filthy pictures on the walls of one of the rooms of his house. He normally kept the door to that room shut. He thought no one would ever know. But in 79 A. D., Mt. Vesuvius erupted and buried the town of Pompeii. And in more recent years archaeologists began to uncover the city, and they found houses just as the owners had left them. The house with the bad pictures was discovered, and today, those who tour Pompeii find that the guide keeps the door to that room locked so that people will not walk in accidentally, and become embarrassed. His thoughts came out into the open.

The greatest area of sin in the believer's life is not usually in the area of actions, but in the arena of the thought life. Pride, for example, is a sin of the mind. And so is lust and suspicion and discouragement. These are all sins of the mind. Because all of us contend with the old nature (even after we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ), all of us have trouble with undesir-

able thoughts popping into our heads. These thoughts can be surprising, sometimes confusing, and sometimes even condemning. Most of us would not want the thoughts that have gone through our minds during the past month to be flashed on a screen in front of a room for all to see. It could be kind of embarrassing, and perhaps even frightening.

The secret thoughts, however, that pop into our heads are not really an accurate barometer of our spiritual condition. It is what a person continues to think about, and what he delights in -- that tells more accurately what he is and where he stands spiritually. While we cannot ever completely get rid of the sin-nature here in this life, we can keep it in relative control.

2. The Mind's Occupation with God

The mind is like a garden which can grow beauty or it can grow ugliness. It can produce flowers or it can bring forth weeds. It must be tended with care and with diligence. It must be disciplined by conscious exercise. The mind must be exercised like the body -- thinking on good and wholesome things. The Bible says in Philippians 2:5, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." We must cultivate spiritual thinking, and the Scriptures give a list of worthy objects that we ought to be thinking about. The list is recorded in Philippians 4:8.

"Whatever things are true" -- that is, whatever is earned or received by fair methods, not by cheating and falsehoods. For most of us, it is not the big things that test our honesty. We will likely never embezzle ten thousand dollars from an employer, but we must be careful about the dimes and the quarters. We must guard against considering stealing towels from a motel room or accepting too much change from a store manager. Satan tells us, if we receive too much change in a restaurant: "That lunch really wasn't very good; I'll just keep this extra coin as a sort of refund." By way of contrast, every Christian needs to think in terms of old-fashioned, second-mile honesty.

"Whatever things are just" -- that is, things that are right and fair and impartial. It is right to give a customer full measure when selling merchandise in business. It is right to expose doctrinal error and false teachings when presenting the Word of God. It is right to play it fair-and-square in all our dealing. Parents must diligently seek to be fair with their children and treat them all alike. We should never plan in our thoughts to do anything that is unfair and partial.

"Whatever things are pure" -- that is, free from anything that is tainted. Purity speaks especially about chastity in the realm of sexual relationships. It is very hard to live through a single day in our society without having the mind bombarded with sex in some kind of distorted form. Un-

clean thinking is stimulated by abbreviated dress, obscene pictures, and dirty stories. For this reason, the follower of Christ does not attend the movies, he carefully censors his reading material, and he avoids participating in a joke that is not noble and pure. Most television programs and television commercials are not acceptable to him. Whatever things are pure, think on these things.

"Whatever things are lovely" -- that is, things that are beautiful, winsome, and pleasing. "Lovely things" are the opposite of the ugly and bizarre. The Christian should cultivate the traits of courtesy and pleasantness. He should avoid the snapped answer, the harsh reply, and the sarcastic response. It is sad to see a husband who cannot answer his wife in gentle tones. Such things are not "lovely."

We should think of things that call forth admiration -- incidents of faithfulness and courage and loyalty. Paul Harvey, on a news broadcast, sometimes tells of a marriage that lasted 60 or even 70 years. That is a "lovely" kind of report to hear. By way of contrast, television programs and magazine and newspaper articles that emphasize stories about wife-swapping, child abuse, lesbianism, and crude violence -- are ugly things that are the opposite of that which is lovely.

"Whatever things are of good report" -- that is, things spoken in a kindly spirit; things spoken with good will toward others; things which are the opposite of gossip and the spreading of rumours. Courtesy to others, respect for parents, loyalty between husband and wife -- these are always things "of good report."

The word "think" means "to dwell upon" or "to focus attention upon." Qualities such as kindness, loyalty, helpfulness -- these are qualities we should seriously think about. Spirit-controlled thinking can lift our thoughts and bless our whole life. The Scripture passage which we have just analysed (Philippians 4:8) suggests that the way to conquer evil thinking is not so much to fight the wicked thoughts, as to cultivate the good thoughts. Philippians 4:8 is a call to think upon good things.

3. The Mind's Battle for the Right

Living the Christian life involves a daily battle. The Apostle Paul spoke of the great conflict that raged within him. He says in Romans 7:23, "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." On the one hand, his mind was bombarded with solicitations to evil; on the other hand, there was the appeal of the Spirit of God, seeking to bring Paul's mind under God's authority.

We are all subject to Satan's attacks. Every one of us has had problems with wrong thoughts. It is true that the work of sanctification is a slow

process, and never reaches perfection here in this life -- yet each of us has a responsibility in the realm of thought-control. God says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts" (Isaiah 55:7-9). And again, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee" (Isaiah 26:3). But how does one go about conquering evil thoughts? One method for defeating evil of any kind, is to run away from it. The Bible says, "Let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19). And again, "Flee youthful lusts" (2 Timothy 2:22). When Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife, he fled and got away (Genesis 39:12). One way to conquer evil thoughts, is to stay away from situations that can stimulate wrong thinking and provide easy occasions to sin.

Another means of achieving victory over evil thoughts, is to intentionally occupy the mind with wholesome things in order to drive out the flood of evil that tries to enter. The devil walks about looking for vacancies in our minds and seeks to make entry. When evil thoughts pop into our minds, we must make it a practice to immediately pause and pray, to analyse a portion of Scripture, or to turn our attention to some pleasant, exciting experience in the past -- so that soon our minds will be absorbed with the pleasant memory -- and the evil thoughts will more and more fade into the background.

A third means of victory over evil thoughts, is to be alert to watch and pray. We must over and over again reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. This takes conscious effort; it takes human resolve; it is not going to come automatically -- but it can be done. We cannot keep Satan from injecting wrong thoughts into our minds, but we do not need to dwell on those thoughts. We cannot keep a bird from flying over our heads, but we can keep it from building a nest in our hair. We must continually be a policeman! Bring every thought into captivity, into obedience to Christ. The Bible says, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds . . . and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). Keep a watchful eye. Guard your mind all day long. Sit in judgment upon every thought that flickers through your mind. When sinful thoughts pop into your head -- repeat aloud a Scripture verse; begin to sing a hymn; offer a prayer for deliverance. And slowly but surely (with God's help) you will bring your thought life into captivity.

If we give diligence to think upon those things which are lovely and honest and praiseworthy, we will experience growth in grace. May the Lord help us to guard our minds and give us power to reject what is untrue and unwholesome.

SNIPPETS.

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

Christopher Wordsworth

Born: October 30, 1807, Bocking, Essex, England.

Died: March 20, 1885, Lincoln, England.

Buried: In the graveyard of the church at Riseholme College, north of Lincoln

Nephew of poet William Wordsworth, Christopher was both a scholar and athlete in his student days. Later, he served as headmaster of Harrow Boys School (1836-1850), which Winston Churchill would attend a century or so later. Wordsworth was also Vicar at Stanford-in-the-Vale, Berkshire (1850-1869), and Archdeacon of Westminster, and became Bishop of Lincoln in 1868. A recognized Greek scholar, he also wrote theological and other works. Of his hymns, he said, "It is the first duty of a hymn to teach sound doctrine and thence to save souls." His works include:

Commentary on the Whole Bible, 1856-70

The Holy Year; or Hymns for Sundays and Holydays Throughout the Year, and for Other Occasions, 1863

Hymns:

Hark! the Sound of Holy Voices [TCH]

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord [CH/TCH]

O Day of Rest and Gladness [CH]

See, the Conqueror Mounts in Triumph [CH/TCH]

The Day Is Gently Sinking to a Close, [CH]

O Lord of Heaven and Earth and Sea [CH]

The Need for Purity

When there are needs we need to make it known. The only way we will receive help is where we make our needs known, and pursue the right avenues to have our needs met. The subject before us is "The Need for Purity." Why this subject?

As we look around in church, everyone is wearing clean clothes. We all look 'pure.' We dress up in our best, and we look pure, do we not? But, God sees the heart. God sees our heart. If we are honest with ourselves, we would give recognition to the fact that we do have a need of purity. I do. I confess that. I have a need for purity in my heart. Ezekiel tells us, "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." (Ezekiel 11:19) "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." (Ezekiel 36:26, 27) In Deuteronomy it says of the heart, "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 for ever!" (Deuteronomy 5:29) This was God's cry.

God still desires for us to experience a new and clean heart. There is a teaching that as long as the heart is right that is all that matters. Is this right? No, not entirely. Yes, the heart must be right, but fruits must follow. It is not exactly all that matters.

There are three subtopics to consider on the need for purity.

- 1) **In the home,**
- 2) **In the church,**
- 3) **In society.**

The dictionary definition for purity does not expound very much, on the word 'purity.' It is mentioned as, "the condition of being pure." If we look at the word "pure," there is quite a list of meanings or quite a definition of the word "pure:" The connotation that we will focus on is, "free from what vitiates, weakens or pollutes." Vitiate would refer to moral issues. "Containing nothing that does not properly belong ... free from moral fault or guilt." There are various areas of purity. We would like to look at several of them. As we consider ourselves in this life, we find ourselves amongst a society and we consider functioning together as a church. There is a need for purity. We must have a burden or a vision of purity, because God wants a pure heart.

I thought of the verse in Matthew 5:8 where Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Do we want to see God? We will see God, but it tells us, "Blessed are the pure in heart." Thus, it does matter whether the heart is pure or not, and this is where it starts and, where it must start. We have no power of ourselves to be pure on our own strength. First of

all the heart must be pure. As we look around us, not only out into the world, but as we live and function together as churches, we recognize that there is a need for purity in our day. I trust, and am thankful that it is not as it is in the world.

If we observe the world, we find ourselves living amongst a society that largely has very little regard and respect for purity. In the warmer time of year, undress is very prominent, such that increasingly we find ourselves living amongst a society that has little regard for purity, or shame of undress. Certainly there is a need to speak about purity to us, so that we will be encouraged and our convictions can grow in those areas of our life. As we simply observe each other or look at each other, we cannot see if there is an impure thought. We cannot see each other's thoughts. God knows our thoughts and hearts. This is why we need to provoke each other to purity, and encourage each other to have right thoughts, in the things that we talk about, or that we look at and read and that they would provoke us to purity. There is certainly a need for purity in our day, especially as the society around us and the ungodliness increases. I do not want to focus a lot on the negative side of society. The thrust of this message would be to encourage us to purity and deepen our conviction of purity and modesty.

As we live in this society of impurity, immorality and undress we maybe tend to become somewhat used and kind of hardened to that. God help us to never get used to that. May it always be an abomination to us as it is to Him. It is my prayer for God to help me abhor this as He abhors it. This is the only way that we will stay clear and be victorious. As we think of Christian people, we might think, "Why should God's people be plagued with this moral impurity?" We know this is a problem. It is a sin that has plagued mankind since the fall of man. We can look into the Old and New Testaments and see that it was prominent there. Up and through into our day, it is prominent in society. It should not enter into the Church, but somehow it does. The Devil is no respecter of persons or churches, or of any one of us. He will try his best to make us stumble. He will try to pollute a person or a church with these things. Yes, it is pollution. Anything that is impure or that defiles, is pollution. We must know what the Bible says about such actions and be convinced that there are consequences to face if they are not repented from. It is my burden that we are convinced that we cannot go on in impurity or delight in such things and not face the consequences.

In Galatians 5 we can see what the Bible has to say about some of these sins. Galatians 5:16-21 lists some things that are very specifically spelled out,

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." (16-18) It tells us about a battle. We do not have to fall. We do not have to be overtaken with this sin of impurity or immorality. It says, "Walk in the Spirit," and we will not do those things. Again it comes back to our heart. If we "Walk in the Spirit," (the Holy Spirit) it says we will "not fulfil the lust(s) of the flesh." Then it speaks about the battle. The flesh, our humanity, fights against the Spirit. That is the battle. We know it is not a literal battle, but it speaks about the Spirit. Our flesh lusts against the Spirit - the Holy Spirit.

Our flesh is largely motivated by a spirit as well - the evil spirit, the Devil. The Devil is the one who tries to stir that lust within our flesh, and this creates the battle. The Holy Spirit is there trying to convict us, speak to us, and to keep us. As we walk in the Spirit we will be victorious. I do not want anyone to think that, "There is no hope for me," because there is. The Bible is clear that if we "Walk in the Spirit," stay close to God, and if we want victory, God is there to help us. The flesh and the Spirit are "contrary the one to the other: "so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Our flesh sometimes does get the upper hand and we fail and fall. Verse 18 says "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." If we fail and fall, the Spirit is there to convict us and to help us back up. We can depend on that.

Verse 19, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness." The works of the flesh and all moral sins are expounded here. Uncleanness here has the meaning of any kind of moral impurity. It covers it all. Then it continues, "Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." These are the consequences of such sins and actions. There will be no inheritance in the kingdom of God. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8) If we are not pure in heart, our life and actions will not be pure, and we will not see God in eternity. Yes, we will see God at judgment. However, speaking of being with God in eternity, the consequences are very serious. The consequences are eternal.

Colossians 3:5-6 gives somewhat the same thought, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." This is our body. It says mortify, which has the thought of crucifying or putting to death. "Mortify therefore your

members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience." The wrath of God is expounded or dispelled to those who fall under such sins and do not repent. There are serious eternal consequences. I trust that there is no one who reads this who is willing to face the consequences of eternity by being overtaken or guilty of such things. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." That verse kept returning to me, time and again as I studied and pondered for this message.

To be free from impure thoughts and actions, we must want to be free from them. Then we beseech God for strength. That is where it comes in. Thus, it still is a heart matter. We must come to the point of asking God for help, when we are tempted in a weakness that we have, or in something that we struggle with. I know humanity well enough that we are not entirely free from that. First of all we must want to be done with it. We must desperately want to be free from that. Then we must ask God to help us. We can ask God to help us grow in our conviction, and our desire to want to be free from that. However, if there is still any desire and that desire is not completely crucified, the Bible tells us we must mortify our flesh. We must come to where we are done with it and we do not want it anymore before we can have complete victory. We know the flesh, and we may have to do it again and again, because the flesh, the Devil, stirs our flesh and the lust within our flesh, and at times we find ourselves slipping back a little bit. We must stay on guard. We must walk in the Spirit. We must realize that God abhors immorality, impure thoughts and impure lives. We might think then, "Who can stand?"

In Psalm 24:3-5 we read, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in His holy place?" There are two questions. As we consider an Almighty, Holy God, we might wonder, "How can I get there?" Maybe we wonder, if we are struggling with something, "How can I get there?" "How can I come before a holy God?" "How can I stand there?" Verse 4 tells us, "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." Clean hands are hands that are undefiled and pure. It is a pure heart. We are free and forgiven. I would rather say that we are forgiven from impurities. Then we have the promise in verse 5. "He shall." It does not tell us that maybe we will, but it says, "He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from

the God of his salvation." This tells us that we can depend on victory. We can depend on overcoming these things which we struggle with or cause us to trip or stumble. It takes a blood washed, pure heart to be victorious over immoral thoughts and actions.

These things always start in our minds, and the deeper we become involved, the more our thoughts will be in such avenues. Maybe, we get there subconsciously and do not realize it. Let us read I Peter 1:13-21. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind." We must gather our mind together and want to keep it clear. It is our decision. Yet, we need the grace and the strength of the Holy Spirit. "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." (verse 15) In every walk of our life be holy. We must gather up the loins of our mind, keep our thoughts together and channel them in a right direction. Let us remember that we are called to holiness, and when we are tempted with such thoughts, may we be quick to give heed to the Spirit, of what Jesus has done for us. He points us to Jesus Christ. What were we redeemed with? "The precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Christ was not tainted with impurity. Even more so, God wants the best for us. God will not hold back any good thing from us by telling us to live holy, and to have a pure heart.

The need for purity in the home.

I would like to make an application especially to fathers. In 1 Timothy 5:22 we read, "Keep thyself pure." Husbands, this is not simply a suggestion. This is a command. We are called to a very high level, or the highest level of purity, especially in our moral life as husbands. As we have taken a wife, we are not free to be gazing around. We need to take this verse seriously. I am thankful that I did not have to try to come up with some of my own thoughts and share with you what my thoughts are on the subject. I am thankful that we can turn to the Word of God and that it stands. I Corinthians 6:13-7:3 gives us some very clear direction; "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body." We see how God intended it and how He created it. The body is not for fornication, immorality or impurity. It is for the Lord and the Lord for the body. Both are for each other. "And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by His own power." As I think of the things that humanity struggles with at times, God has raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. He wants to raise us up out of impurity, and out of the things that we struggle with. God wants to raise us up above that

and to set us on that level of holiness.

"Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman." This is speaking directly to husbands and to young men. We as husbands are not free to be looking around at all. It tells us in 7:2 "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." "Keep thyself pure," brethren. To all of us, married and unmarried brethren, keep yourselves pure. The Scripture asks the question, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of [God]." This is another thought that we need to cultivate as we go through life, and face temptations and struggles. Our body is not our own. It is for God. It should be for the honour and glory of God. It says, "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" We do not want to defile that. God help us! God expects husbands to keep themselves in all fidelity through faithfulness and loyalty to your wife, family and the Church. In order for your wife and children to flourish we must keep ourselves morally pure. God expects that of us. May we be convinced of that. God expects that of each one of us.

Yes, these things are in the world. The Devil comes to us. There is not a sin in the world which the Devil has not come and taunted the Church with. The burden on my heart is that we can gain more victory on these grounds. At times we learn, or we hear that a brother falls here and there because of this very thing. He did not keep himself pure. May we grow in our convictions. May we abhor this thing as God abhors it. May this thing of impurity be 'gross' to us. May we seek for purity and holiness in our own life first of all, then in the life of our family. Fathers, we must set the example for our children and family. Someone is following us. The example that we set is most likely what our children will follow. Instruct your sons when they come to adolescent age. Keep 'tab' on them. It is a father's responsibility to instruct our sons. When they get to that age when their body starts maturing. Likewise mothers same to your daughters. Instruct your daughters. As parents we have an opportunity and obligation to teach our children in the ways of purity, in the things that they need to know. They will find out one way or another. May we take the responsibility and the privilege of teaching our children the things that they will learn so that they are taught right and in a godly way.

Boys and girls need to be taught reserve from little up. We know that little boys and girls play together. There is nothing wrong with that. However, as parents, we need to, from little childhood up, teach them what is right and what is wrong, what is proper and what is improper. We need to ensure that it

is carried out closely. We must monitor their playing. We as parents, have a great responsibility in that. Maybe at times this responsibility comes upon the mothers a little more than on the fathers, because they are around the children more often. We must put a premium on keeping ourselves pure. We must remember that our body is the temple of God. God wants that. God wants His Spirit to fill our body and to be in our body.

Again, we must have a pure heart. It begins in the heart. We must first of all have a pure heart. We must have a heart full of desire for purity. We must all be careful what we look at and read. What we think of and what we pursue is largely by what we see with our eyes. Thus, we need exercise diligence in regard to what we look at, and what we read. If it is questionable, if we know that it is something that we are having a struggle with, we had better take heed, and recognize it for the sin that it is and flee from it. Fathers, we must be careful with the relationship that we have with our teenage daughters. We need to realize that our little girls grow up to be young women. Something that has come to plague the Church at times is when there have been unhealthy relationships between fathers and their daughters. It has marred souls for life. Brethren, it should not be once named amongst us.

We need to have a relationship with our children, but there comes a time when as fathers, we must show and practice reserve to our daughters. How else will they learn? Mothers need to teach their daughters the proper way to conduct themselves around men and brethren. Teach them that reserve that they need to exercise by your example and teaching. Fathers, we must realize that those little girls grow up to be young women, and they need to be respected as such. Ideally, the girl's relationship should be closer with her mother than with her father. In the same way fathers, we need to have a relationship with our sons that we both cherish. It is improper for a father to counsel alone with his daughter. The mother should be along. We need to have a relationship as fathers with our daughters, but when they get to the age of young women, we need to be careful. If they need counsel certainly their mother needs to be along.

The need for purity in the Church.

Ephesians 5:25-27 teaches us that God wants a pure church. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it." How did Christ love the Church? He gave Himself. He gave His life. He shed His blood. "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not

having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." This is what Jesus is looking for and He expects of His Church. "Holy and without blemish . . . [without] spot, or wrinkle." He expects a pure Church without sin - a Church that deals with sin. 1 Corinthians 5 gives very specific direction of how to handle sin in the Church. We know sin in the Church defiles a church. Then, if it is not dealt with, the church is impure - it is no longer pure.

When receiving people into the church, we must always be conscious and sensitive for the purity of the Church. We do not want to lose the vision of helping people, but at the same time, we never want to disregard the purity of the church. We cannot take someone into the church if there is a question about their life. If for nothing else, for the sake of purity in the church. All must be clear and 'above board' before we receive people into the church.

We know also that there are things that try to creep into the church. Let us keep that perspective of purity and holiness in the church. Let us not accept those things that would defile, and analyze those things. What will they do in the future? All members must guard the purity of the church. It is not only for the ministry. The ministry have a part in that, but each brother and sister also has a large part in that. We have a responsibility to each other and to the church in our own life first of all, and then also in others. There needs to be a proper reserve between brethren and sisters in the church. I appreciate our practices in our churches such that there is a reserve. After services the sisters for the most part stay over on one side and the brethren on the other. There is not a mingling back and forth. This does not say that it is absolutely not permitted for a brother to speak a sister. That is not what I am saying. However, if we do, we need to be respectful and keep it very brief.

Brethren, do not entreat a sister in a way that you would not want a brother to entreat your wife. We must remember the golden rule. Be very respectful. Mothers, be an example of sobriety and reserve to your daughters and other young sisters. Titus 2:1-5 applies to brethren as well. "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." I have a picture of a humble person. It is a person walking in God's order. May this be our experience in the church as

we work together. Fathers and older brethren need to be an example to the younger ones, so that they have a godly example to follow. Older sisters need to be an example to the younger ones, teaching and encouraging one another.

The need for purity in society.

We may think that we do not have much of an effect or bearing on society. Certainly we have. In 1 Timothy 4:12 we read, "Let no man despise thy youth." This verse is referred to with regard to youth sometimes. However, I want to apply it to each one of us as we relate to society. As we find ourselves getting out into society, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." The Bible tells us we are to be an example to those around us. We are to be an example to each other, but especially I think of society. We are to be an example in society of purity. In 2 Timothy 2:15 we read, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Is our conduct in society, or among society approved by God? We need to ask ourselves that question, as we go about our business, as we rub shoulders with, we might say, society. Is our conduct acceptable to God? Are we a true light to the world?

I think of the example of Joseph, when he was in Potiphar's house. He was tempted to impurity very strongly. When Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39:9b Joseph answered her this way, "how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" First of all, our accountability is with God. We need to ask ourselves this when we are tempted or when temptation arises. The Devil is no respecter of persons with regard to whom he will tempt. We must flee those temptations as Joseph did. It tells us in 39:10, "And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her." Joseph did not really have a choice. He was obligated to Potiphar his master, to work in his house. Joseph sought every opportunity he could that he would not be with the temptation. He fled the temptation. That is what we must do. If we face the temptation we must flee from it. We must get away from there and stay away. We know that danger lurks, therefore stay away. We must beware that people in society are very bold. We are not, and at times, when we are exposed to that, it frightens us. Brethren it should. When we see the boldness of society, conduct yourself in a godly manner, in your speech and actions. I would like to warn: brethren be careful in business places. It is happening more and more in business places that there are women there. In some places the business is run

by women for the most part. When we go into business places like the bank, and sometimes at the parts store a woman is there. Be careful that you conduct yourself in a godly manner. May the Lord bless.

*Brother Wayne Hostetler, Berea Mennonite Fellowship TN.
Used by permission: The Pulpit Exchange.*

« Prayer for Purification »

Lord Jesus, I sin. Grant that I may never cease grieving because of it, never be content with myself, never think I can reach a point of perfection. Kill my envy, command my tongue, trample down self. Give me grace to be holy, kind, gentle, pure, peaceable, to live for Thee and not for self, to copy Thy words, acts, spirit, to be transformed into Thy likeness, to be consecrated wholly to Thee, to live entirely to Thy glory.

Deliver me from attachment to things unclean, from wrong associations, from the predominance of evil passions, from the sugar of sin as well as its grasp; that with self-loathing, deep contrition, earnest heart searching I may come to Thee, cast myself on Thee, trust in Thee, cry to Thee, be delivered by Thee.

O God, the Eternal All, help me to know that all things are shadows, but Thou art substance, all things are quicksands, but Thou art mountain, all things are shifting, but Thou art anchor, all things are ignorance, but Thou art wisdom.

If my life is to be a crucible amid burning heat, so be it, but do Thou sit at the furnace mouth to watch the ore that nothing be lost. If I sin wilfully, grievously, tormentedly, in grace take away my mourning and give me music; remove my sackcloth and clothe me with beauty; still my sighs and fill my mouth with song, then give me summer weather as a Christian.

Taken from The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions, edited by Arthur Bennett Reformatted by .E.L.M.

Practical Truths for Today

Are we ready?

"Ready to go, ready to stay, ready my place to fill" We need to evaluate our own readiness from time to time. One day, and from that day forever forward, being ready will be all that matters. Utmost diligence, faith, and love for truth need to be summoned in making this prayerful evaluation of our state of preparation. Many nominal Christians have accepted the belief in eternal security, endeavouring to shift the responsibility of our own readiness to God, and believing that because we were once saved, it will always be so. The true believer, however, can only use God's Word as the standard of judgment. Christ's second coming to earth is not to save the world but to judge the world with divine justice.

May we examine our lives by the following standards found in God's Word to help prove if we are "*looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God*" and not disregarding the signs of our times.

- Becoming a born-again believer (John 3:3). We cannot enter nor can we see the Kingdom of God unless we are born again. To try to enter some other way makes us but thieves and robbers. The only door is Jesus Christ, through His call to repentance, conversion, and forgiveness of sins. No amount of training or studying can replace being born again. "*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*" (John 3:5).
- Doing the Father's will (Matt. 7:21). Jesus makes it abundantly clear that many will profess to be laborers together with Him in His spiritual kingdom without having honestly submitted to God. Many will claim to have prophesied, to have cast out devils, and to have done many wonderful works for the Lord, all the while being self-employed. To be divinely employed and known by Him, we must be able to pray as Jesus prayed, "*Not My will, but Thine, be done*" (Luke 22:42).
- Dealing with sin issues (Rom. 6:23). The evil powers of darkness, together with the sin nature in every person, try to make sin appear abstract and vague. But the Word of God is replete with clear absolutes: the soul that sins shall die; the Lord will not hear those who regard iniquity in the heart; he who commits sin is of the devil. To make exceptions for ourselves and ignore scriptural accountability will leave us unprepared. The age-old question of "Hath God said?" is very much alive today with answers that are not bibli-

cal. As believers, may we allow His Word to wash away our sins and His blood to cleanse us, because if the Son shall make us free, we shall be free indeed (John 8:36).

- Embracing truth. Since all things which are temporal shall be dissolved, it is only prudent to embrace sound doctrine. We are here on this earth to do the Father's pleasure, which is to believe what Christ teaches, to do what Christ enjoins, to imitate His example, to cherish His Spirit, and to make known His gospel to others. Is this not "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God"? What comfort and security come to the prepared hearts today which submit themselves to the righteousness of God and do not try to establish their own righteousness. What unspeakable delight awaits tomorrow for those who avail themselves of God's grace.

- Learning sanctification. In this life we are not infallible or beyond the reach of depravity, but we try diligently to be pleasing to God. This can only be done as we allow the flow of grace to sanctify us. Thus we grow in grace and knowledge of our Savoir, becoming more like Him. As we live the gospel, we will be ready for His return from the day of our conversion until the day we die. The gospel only saves those whom it sanctifies.

That these fundamental teachings of the Bible are so often altered or ignored in today's society is a sign of the last days in which we live. May each of us, young and old, scripturally prove our own readiness, "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37).

Questions

1. Is it possible to prove our own readiness, or must we rely on our brother's help?
2. Even the most dedicated Christians, if given time, will prepare to die. What revelation or witness of the Spirit assures our hearts that we are ready?
3. How much time does it take to get ready for His return?

Excerpt by permission Sunday School Lessons by Gospel Publishers, Moundridge, Kansas.

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