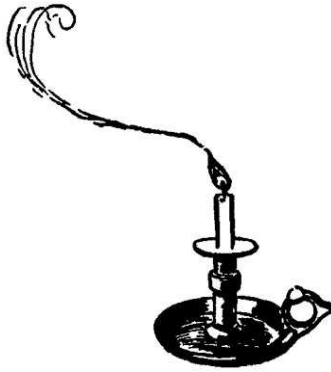


THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

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

Matthew 5:15

From The Editor's Desk.**Forgiveness – Faith – Trust – Disciplined – Prayer.**

Do these five words have anything in common?

At first glance most would likely say; “probably not.” But let us see what it takes to live each of those words on a daily basis in our Christian walk. Each one of those words with the exception of ‘disciplined’ is one that Jesus used in relation to our journey with Him – He did however use the word ‘disciple’ from which the word ‘disciplined’ stems.

Do we walk in each of those areas on separate days, Monday to Friday, one area per day? And have weekends off for a break from the daily routine? I would suspect that most would not – even though we may not walk in all of the five areas all day every day. We are human beings with our faults and failings, sometimes we forget to trust or pray, sometimes we don't really want to forgive, sometimes our faith is shaken by circumstances, sometimes we have not maintained the discipline needed to live the victorious Christian life of a disciple of Christ Jesus. Life's burdens come down upon us, we forget to take them to Calvary where the burdens are lifted, Jesus has made an offer to us all:

“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28 -30)

We all need help, encouragement and determination to exercise ourselves in these areas which are controlled by our will. When we subdue our will to God's directives we then can start to see ourselves as overcomers. That too is a scriptural requirement and when we overcome our will and submit to God's will then we are able to have the confidence that; *“He is the rewarder of those that diligently seek Him!”* (Hebrews 11:6)

This month there are articles to encourage you in each of those areas; *“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:”* (Ephesians 4:13)

May the Lord bless you as you seek to be an overcomer in the Kingdom of God and be an encouragement to others who struggle in this life. JvL.

MINISTER'S CORNER.*Bro. J. Martin, Pittsgrove, NJ.***The Power of Forgiveness**

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18).

Having a forgiving Father as our God is an inconceivable blessing. The heathen attempt to appease their gods with sacrifices, and secular men today attempt to be moral by doing more good deeds than bad, but our God forgives. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." No sacrifices, no penance, no large money gifts are required, but rather repentance and confession.

How is this possible? Modern Christianity has watered down God's holiness and man's sinfulness so much that His forgiveness seems both natural and reasonable. This concept is false. "Our God is a consuming fire," His Name is "Holy," and He has "purer eyes than to behold evil, and [can] not look on iniquity." The more we understand God's holiness, the more we understand our vileness, and the more we appreciate the miracle it took to reconcile us to Him.

The power of divine forgiveness comes through Christ, "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood ... that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:25-26). Here we can learn a great deal about God's love and His justice. He required a sinless sacrifice to pay the price for our redemption, and He provided His own Son to be that sacrifice for us.

God's forgiveness produces reverence in His children. "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Psalm 130:3-4). If God were a good-natured grandfather willing to overlook our sins, we could no longer reverence Him. If He were an angry tyrant giving us no hope of salvation, we could only despair. That God is holy and yet willing to forgive should produce a love for Him that responds in carefulness to obey His commands and to meet His conditions.

God's forgiveness is a present action. He does not limit it to one time only but offers it to us over and over. When such a cleansing can be ours, why would we remain in sin rather than eagerly come to Him for cleansing?

Probably the most powerful effect of divine forgiveness is the peace that comes from reconciliation with God as our consciences are purged. Forgiveness removes the enmity caused by our sin and breaks down the guilt barrier between God and us. It frees us from the dread of death and judgment and takes away the guilty feeling for past sins. True, we will still feel remorse for our mistakes; but if we have confessed and forsaken them, we should, in faith, let them be where God has placed them.

The Bible uses many descriptive terms to explain what God does when He forgives our sins. They are cast behind His back (Isaiah 38:17), "cast ... into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19), blotted out (Isaiah 43:25), and removed "as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12).

In Hebrews the phrase "remember no more" is used twice. How does an omniscient God forget our sins-or does He forget them? The Bible says that He will "not remember" them. God does not forget, but He does promise to not remember them against us. He will not visit our trespasses upon us in the future. This is the promise that God makes to us, but it is conditional on our willingness to extend that same forgiveness to others.

Jesus made this abundantly clear when teaching His disciples to pray. "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." We should not casually ask God to forgive our sins if we do not take seriously our requirement to forgive others. When we refuse to forgive, we reject the way to God, whose forgiveness we need most. We cannot afford to demand payment of one hundred pence from our fellow servant at the price of owing God ten thousand talents. Neither dare we insist that our brother suffer for a trespass against us and risk eternal torment. "If ye forgive." What a small condition to meet, but how powerful in opening ourselves to receive God's forgiveness!

It seems popular today to put much emphasis on accepting others and refusing to judge their conduct. Supposedly we should excuse sin in the name of love and forgiveness. But actually, Biblical forgiveness is quite opposite. By definition it is judgmental. It identifies sin with the intent to resolve it.

Biblical forgiveness is a powerful force in purifying the church and unifying the brethren. It compels the offended brother to confront the one who has offended him (Matthew 18:15; Luke 17:3), it directs the offender to quickly make amends (Matthew 5:23-24), and it restores the penitent disciplined member back into church fellowship (2 Corinthians 2:6-10). Those who have been forgiven are bound by gratitude and those who forgive are committed to not remembering past offenses. The blessings of forgiveness are forfeited, however, when we bypass forgiveness and choose to merely tolerate each other.

Appreciating God's forgiveness produces humility and graciousness. We will more readily acknowledge our wrongs and will be less easily offended ourselves. By accepting the fact that others are also imperfect, we will be willing to extend to them the forgiveness we have so generously received.

We dare not be satisfied to merely understand the doctrine of forgiveness; we must purpose to obey the command. Only those who practice forgiveness can understand its power.

"And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

Distinctive Worship Patterns (Part 3)

Kneeling Prayer

"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker" Psalm 95:6.

Clearly the psalmist considered kneeling as the normal position for prayer and worship. Also, in the very touching scene when Paul was leaving Tyre for Jerusalem (Acts 21:5), the brethren and their wives and children went with Paul out of the city and "kneeled down on the shore, and prayed." As mortal man comes before the holy God, kneeling is a very fitting position.

Our position in prayer may be an indication of the depth and sincerity of our worship. Jesus revealed the attitude of hypocrites when He said that they love to pray standing in prominent places (Matthew 6:5). The woman

who touched Jesus' garment revealed a contrasting attitude when she came with trembling and fell down before Jesus (Mark 5:33).

Kneeling prayer has been a historic Mennonite practice, based on the Scriptures. It was brought to Pennsylvania from Switzerland and South Germany, and long remained the universal practice among Mennonites and Amish. Only in the 1950s did this practice begin to change in some sections of the Mennonite Church.

As the Mennonite Church drifted worldward, this humble position for praying seemed unnecessary to many people. Also, the charismatic movement brought with it the practice of standing to pray with hands raised toward heaven. This militated against the former practice of turning and facing the bench when kneeling for prayer.

Also as the Mennonite Church lost the practice of segregated seating, pressure mounted to discontinue the practice of kneeling prayer. People became uncomfortable kneeling in mixed settings where carefulness was not exercised in seating men and women next to each other. Rather than remedying the problem by returning to the traditional practice of segregated seating, they dropped another Scriptural practice - kneeling for prayer.

A distinctive aspect of kneeling prayer is the practice of turning and facing the bench to kneel rather than kneeling forward and facing the Eucharist, or Communion table, as do worshipers in Catholic churches. It is thought that in order to refute the teaching that one should never take his eyes off the Eucharist, the Anabaptists purposely turned and knelt toward the bench. In doing so, they turned away from the front, where the Communion table normally stood.

One primary ingredient for the church to maintain the practice of kneeling prayer is humble hearts. In the past generations humility was a subject often addressed in messages in Mennonite and Amish worship services. May we remain diligent in warning against the sin of pride so that we in our generation can also maintain both humility in the heart and the humble practice of kneeling prayer. Jeremiah said, "Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" *Nevin L. Martin Moravia, NY. Reprinted by permission from The Eastern Mennonite Testimony*

WHAT IS YOUR FAITH?

What is your faith, or what is your faith doing for you? The devils believe in God and tremble, but they are still devils (James 2:19). Verily, the Bible says that all of mankind has a measure of faith (Romans 12:3); so perhaps the real question is, "What are the results of your (and my) faith?"

"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). Multitudes of professing Christians have a lot to say about believing, but where does the "saving" come in? "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12). We usually focus our attention on the words of the last part of this verse, "believe on His name." But we need to also consider the first part, which says that "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." In fact, it is safer and more important to consider whether or not we are truly "receiving" Him and the power to be His children than to ask ourselves whether or not we believe in God! Remember, even the devils believe in God and tremble.

What about being "saved" and "the power to become the sons of God"? If there are sins in our lives, are we saved and partaking of the power that makes us the sons of God? Does it matter or affect our eternal salvation as to how we live in this life? Yes, indeed it does. It matters very much! "God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein" (Romans 6:2)?

We are not saved by our works. But Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Oh, to believe, to receive, and to be crucified with Christ (that is, our flesh)!

It is so easy to comfort ourselves that we "believe," but what is it that we believe? Do we believe the Scriptures? Do we really believe that we are saved when still living in sin? Do we really believe that we are saved without receiving Him, His Word, His doctrine? "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 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" (w. 19-21).

Notice that the Word says, "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God," regardless of what they may think or believe. Listen to the Scriptures. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). This leaves no room for halfhearted Christian living or living an adulterated gospel versus the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ!

How often do we settle for "almost free" instead of "free indeed?" What is the difference between "free indeed" and "almost free"? To be almost free is to almost love the Lord with all of your heart, to almost completely submit yourself and trust your life into God's hands, to almost forsake all known sin. Almost, but not altogether. Could we say, almost making it to heaven?

To be free indeed is to do as the lawyer told Jesus, "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself" (Luke 10:27). It means to be completely washed in the blood of Jesus, completely open, completely turned from all known sin and evil. It includes being completely filled with the love of God, to be complete in Jesus. One is then a partaker of "the fruit of the Spirit... love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith" (Galatians 5:22). "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Ephesians 5:9). To be free indeed is to be without guile or guilt. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7). Isn't this the kind of life we want? Isn't it worth it to forsake all? Isn't Jesus worthy of all our affection?

Will we never stumble or fall if we are free indeed? "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand" (Psalm 130:3)? Unfortunately, we are still weak, earthen vessels and very subject to failing. Indeed, we find that as soon as we lose our fervency to God or become casual in our Christian living, we will slip back into an "almost free" condition. Again it will be "almost" but not "altogether." Will we ignore or justify our backsliding? Will we wait live a discouraged, halfhearted Christian life until the end? What are we going to do?

The apostle John so lovingly writes, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate

with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments" (I John 2:1-3). If we sin and fail of the grace of God, we need not despair but turn again to the Lord with all of our hearts. He has provided for us and will receive us. We may stumble, but we can rise again! We don't have to live a halfhearted or discouraged Christian life. We can be free indeed. We cannot afford to be "almost free." We have to be saved! What is your faith doing for you?

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[FAITH OR TRUST](#)

Hebrews 11:1

Now (my) faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

This particular verse of scripture is one that many professing Christians are able to quote when asked what faith means to them. I wonder sometimes if it used merely to avoid the deeper issue of what it means to have and exhibit faith in the scriptural sense.

Let us look at what this scripture verse is saying through the eyes of someone who does not know what the meaning is when we speak the word **faith**. Most would see the verse as follows: *we trust that something we hope for will happen, even though we have not seen the results as yet* – for sports fans it could be their team winning the grand final, for someone with stock market investments – a dramatic gain in the value of their shares. You can probably see where I am heading with those sort of statements, there is a basis for people trusting that their hopes will be realised, that their dreams will come true – even though they have not yet seen the evidence, their trust may very well be based on factors that in human reasoning seem solidly grounded on the available facts. There is a saying that although we know all the facts there is always one we do not know about and that unknown fact is always the one that changes the outcome of our expectations.

Let us now look at the difference between the worldly version of our text verse and the scripture quotation. The main difference is the word ‘trust’ – Christians use the word ‘faith’ – this amongst other things also implies ‘trust’ – but it means more than that. It is a word translated from the Greek that means that we are persuaded, have a moral conviction of the truthfulness of God but especially a reliance upon Christ for salvation, an absolute assurance or belief in the truth of the Gospel itself. I see faith as being something one can only have in God, He, and only He, is able to keep ALL the promises He makes. What mortal being is capable of that? Scripture indeed tells us in Psalm 146 *“Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no helphappy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God:”*

Those that have come to Christ and have accepted Him as their Lord and Saviour, which means obedience to all His requirements as shown in scriptures, (John 14:15, 23 and John 15:10) can have that faith that is spoken of in our text verse. It is a faith which convinces us that if we are obedient to His ways then we will see (obtain) the substance of the things hoped for – that is eternal life in heaven.

The whole of Hebrews chapter 11 is taken up with a description of how important faith is and in particular verse 6: *“But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”* May you, dear reader, may you earnestly seek Him and live and walk in the faith that our scripture text refers to.

JvL.

SNIPPETS.

Composers/Writers of Hymns used in the Mennonite Church Hymnal

HOPPER Edward.

Born: February 17, 1816, New York City.

Died: April 23, 1888, New York City.

Hopper graduated from New York University (1839) and Union Theological Seminary (1842). He was ordained a Presbyterian minister in 1842, and pastored in Greenville, New York; Sag Harbor, Long Island; and at the Church of the Land and the Sea in New York City.

Hymns:

Jesus, Saviour, Pilot Me
They Pray the Best Who Pray and Watch

A Well-Disciplined Church

Bro. Lynn Diller, Gospel Light Fellowship, McVeytown, PA.

The subject assigned is "A Well-Disciplined Church: Scriptural Church Discipline and Its Effect Upon the Congregation." I am sure this subject could be approached from different angles. I was moved to draw primarily on some of the principles of discipline. I thought back in my own experience in church life. I think that since I have been a boy I have been in six different congregations, six different churches. I have been actually only a member in five of those churches. I also have worked under five or six bishops, and every congregation and every bishop has operated a bit differently. As we think of a well-disciplined church, I thought of the Scripture, "There are differences of administrations" (1 Corinthians 12:5).

We had a brother in our congregation recently who shared a devotional. He shared the thought that everyone is missing something. I appreciate that thought. Sometimes we give it this way, "Everyone has something - everyone has a gift." I believe sometimes however, with the struggles we face in church life, maybe we need to emphasize a little more the other side which is that everyone is missing something. Every one of us, it does not matter how experienced, are missing something. We need to face that reality. It is quite well that we understand what we are missing, and what we are deficient in, and learn to borrow from our brethren. I think that is a real blessing.

What are we missing? Not only are we missing something as individuals, but in travelling around to different churches, I noticed the churches can sort of have their personalities and their temperaments too. As a congregation we labour together. However, as a person observes a congregation, and in comparison to other congregations, we notice that congregations are also missing something sometimes. Hence there is the need of intercongregational fellowship. Every congregation is missing something. Therefore, do not waste your time and your valuable years in raising your family and so on, in shopping around for the perfect church, because I am here to say that there is no church that does not have some room to grow as

far as a well-disciplined church.

It is a goal and a desire that we have that each one of our congregations would be well disciplined. As parents here tonight, everyone has the desire that they can raise their family in a well disciplined congregation. But, what can I contribute to a well-disciplined congregation?

We can look at this subject from several different perspectives. I thought of three. **1) As an outsider, 2) As an insider, 3) As a leader.** I Kings 10:4-9 gives an observation from an outsider. "And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, (5) And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her. (6) And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. (7) Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. (8) Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. (9) Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made He thee king, to do judgment and justice."

1) As an outsider.

As an outsider observes the well-disciplined church, this is possibly a bird's-eye view of what they see. A) It is a place of order. Members operate in their specific roles and follow the order that they have been called to. It is not a place of chaos where you have a number of people trying to do the same or carry out the same responsibility, but there is order. People understand what their responsibility is and they are standing in that order. The members are happy. They are content. That is an outsider's observation of a well-disciplined church. These people are happy. They come in and see that there is a light on their face. They see that there is contentment and rest. They are not standing at the fence and constantly looking over and complaining about the church. B) God is glorified. In a well-disciplined church as the outsider looks on, he gives the glory to God. He finally concludes that this is the work of God.

They see that God is in our congregation and He receives the glory, not some man. C) It is attractive and inviting. A well disciplined church is attractive and inviting. There is a drawing and people want to want to be there. Many are not willing to pay the price, nevertheless, there is that attraction and there is that drawing.

The opposite is found in Galatians 5:15, "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." Sometimes outsiders get that picture as well. In congregations where they are not well disciplined they bite and devour one another. They can see the congregation being consumed.

2) The second perspective is as an insider.

As an insider when we think of a well disciplined church, I have heard parents say that they want to be a part of a church that is well disciplined because they want a safe place to raise their family. There may be a number of young families. I am sure that it is their desire that the church would be a safe haven where their children and youth could grow up, and they do not need to worry about their association. They know that sin will be dealt with, problems will be addressed, and it will be a well disciplined congregation. We want that. That is our desire. Any parent who is concerned, you know, when he senses his youth with the other youth, he faces concern about what will happen and problems will not be addressed.

It becomes a drag on the spiritual man and on the congregation. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Corinthians 5:16; Galatians 5:9). As the church fails to discipline, the church fails to be a disciplined congregation, and it is a drag on the spiritual man. There are attitudes and things that are floating around in the congregation - mentalities that are not healthy, it has a way of dragging down those who are weak. It is not a healthy place to be. It is not a place we want our families to be. "lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" (Hebrews 12:15).

You notice the dangers that we face as an insider and some of the concerns that we have as insiders in a congregation. We ask, "Will these things go on unchecked? You know nothing is done about it." Our families are destroyed. Paul says of the Corinthians that "many are weak and sickly among you" (1 Corinthians 11:30), because they did not deal with sin and they were not a disciplined congregation.

3) Finally the third perspective is from a leader's perspective.

Every one of us as leaders (fathers and mothers and ministers) have a desire and a goal that our congregations would be well disciplined, and that there would be rest as it was in Solomon's kingdom. We have an interest in knowing how to accomplish that. I have that confidence in each one of our ministers that there is that desire. Sometimes we have different ideas about how to accomplish that. We know one thing as we look back to the life and experience of Rehoboam. Rehoboam made some bad decisions. As a new, young, "green," inexperienced leader, he came into the kingdom. He made some wrong decisions and the kingdom was split. It was not a well-disciplined congregation.

Sometimes as leaders we can almost be overwhelmed with experience of constantly putting out fires. We conclude that somehow we are failing to have a well-disciplined congregation. Our work seems to come down to simply putting out fires and dealing with problems. In another sermon we talked about the conquering church. It is hard for the church to be a conquering church if the ministers are overloaded with putting out fires.

The well-disciplined church begins with a well-disciplined member and a well-disciplined man. A disciplined man is a controlled man. By nature man is selfish, self-centred, and self-gratifying. That is his desire, and ambition. He is ruled by "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). We have the five senses of feeling (touch), smell, taste, hearing, and sight. We also have the pride of life, our soulish desires and so on. This is a part of the way we are created as men. That is the way we come onto the face of the earth. Speaking of one member, James goes so far as to say of the tongue that, "it is an unruly evil" (James 3:8), and that "no man can tame it." No man can tame this fleshly physical body.

We said that a disciplined church is made up of disciplined members. Disciplined means they are controlled. There is a control. We would like to consider the problem with controlling in Romans 7:18, 19, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." That is a picture of an uncontrolled, undisciplined man. Paul says here that this type of individual knows what is right. He knows what he needs to do, but he simply does not have the power to do it. He has the knowledge but there

is not the power there.

Our bodies want to indulge. We want to have a high and a good time. We want to live it up. That is what the body wants to do. It wants to eat drink and be merry. The bottom line is that this fleshly body wants to do those things. That is the undisciplined man. Discipline is the ability to say, "no," to that fleshly body. It is the ability to say, "no," to my flesh. A simple example or illustration of that is fasting. Fasting is a discipline. Fasting is telling your appetite, "No. You will not eat today. No." That is discipline.

The next question that will come, "What are the merits or benefits in discipline?" Why can we not simply "eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke 12:19)? Why not simply live, enjoy and indulge? The indulging life is finally an empty, disappointing, and an unhappy life. Anyone who has gone down that road knows, and can testify to that. Finally yes, there is a bit of pleasure but there is that emptiness and that vanity. Solomon came to that place where he went down. He tried it all. He had the money to do it. Today not all the people always have the money to do it. Therefore, the Devil leads them to believe if you could do this yet, if you could have that liberty, and the flesh could do this over here, then you could really enjoy it. Finally, Solomon had the money to do it all. Solomon tried it and he said, "All is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2, 14; 2:17; 3:19; 12:8). There was an emptiness to the point that Solomon despaired of life -"Is life even worth living?" Thus, with the flesh finally there is no lasting fulfilment.

The sentence of death is on the flesh. The New Testament tells us that those who "live after the flesh . . . shall die" (Romans 8:13). The disciplined man is a man who is a pleasure to be around. When you work with a disciplined man, it is a pleasure. You enjoy being around him. The self-centred, selfish man, who wants to talk about what he is doing and his ego, interests, tastes and so on, and he has no time for you. He is repulsive. We have no interest in it.

The question is "How can man be controlled.?" How can we be controlled? I think of three discipline options:

1) Self-control.

The majority of the world, the best they know is this self-control. You find out what is right to do, what is proper etiquette, what is humanly acceptable, and you grit your teeth, clench your fist, and you do it. That is self-control. The "good moral man," out of his own self-will says, "No. No,

I will not drink. No, I will not fall into road rage." Someone was telling me about a road rage incident in a certain big city. Someone became angry and wheeled over. Until it was all said and done there were around eight vehicles involved in an accident - all because of road rage. The man with self-control says, "No, I will not do that." We could maybe call him the good moral man. He says, "I know that this will not be acceptable," and he looks far enough ahead and he sees that there are sad results to that. Therefore, he simply does not do that.

The good moral man however, can attain a certain level of surface respectability. You can look at him and he appears quite well, but down in that man's life, and down in that man's heart, behind the scenes, if you had the opportunity to observe his thoughts, attitudes, and passions, you would find that he is an untamed man. That may be walking around. He has bitterness and a "burning saddle." That thing is constantly rolling around. In contrast, when he meets people, we can meet him with a smile, because he is self-controlled.

2) Control by some authority.

I thought back to my years in teaching school. I was not a teacher with a lot of rules, but I told the children on the first day, "When it becomes evident that you cannot control yourself, I will need to step in and help you." That is the second option of discipline. When the person does not have the self-discipline, then others need to step in since he cannot say "no." They need to step in, and in essence say "No," for him. That is part of the responsibility of the government and parents. As parents, we are involved in this. We are a secondary authority to a person's life - our children. If we simply left them on their own, we soon know that our small children would have no self-discipline. They might get a hold of a candy bag and eat until they were sick. Therefore, father and mother must say, "No." That is authority and it is a form of discipline.

Yes, when people lack self-control then parents, ministers, or the government must step in and say "no" for them. The bottom line is right behaviour, and whatever it takes to get there. If you can do it on your own that is fine. However, if you cannot, then we need to help you. That is what I am saying. Either do it yourself or we will need to help you.

3) Spirit control.

This option probably is the least used. It is in the minority. However, it is what the Scripture says in Galatians 5:16. "This I say then, Walk in the

Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." Spirit control is by far the most superior, and it is the form of discipline we really are interested in. In I Corinthians 9:27 Paul says, "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." We can read back in the previous verses and find that the apostle Paul was Spirit controlled. It was through the Holy Spirit that he was able to keep his body under subjection.

We already read in Romans where this man was not able to do what he knew he should. In Romans 7:24 we read, "O wretched man that I am!" It is an awful feeling. It is a feeling of defeat. We know we should not do it and yet we did it again. We did not want to. I remember before I was converted I was determined, "Today, I will live right. Today I will live holy." Around 10:00 in the morning, I would lose control with one of my brothers or something. I remember that plainly. Then I would feel defeated and the rest of the day, I would think, "Well, this day is lost. I might as well wait until tomorrow and start with a new resolution." That is what the carnal man is.

That is all the fleshly man can do. He can try, and he can clench his fists and try ever so hard but unless that heart is changed, we will not. We can only go so far. All you can be is a good moral man.

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Who will bring me under subjection? "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (verse 25). Being Spirit controlled is the answer to the problem we have of lack of self-control. Then Romans 8:3 says, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh." The Law is good and right. The Law tells us what is right and what is righteous behaviour. There is nothing wrong with the Law. The bottom line is right behaviour, and that is all the Law does. The Law simply tells us what is right. Then, we need the Spirit of God to help us live that. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (5) For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit" (Romans 8:3-5).

Jesus said, "the axe is laid unto the root" (Matthew 3:10; Luke 3:9). Jesus Christ was not interested in His kingdom and in His Church simply dressing people up on the outside - you know - cleaning up the outside of

the sepulchre. Jesus knew where to go. He went to the root of the fountain. He went to the root of the tree. He dealt with heart issues. He changes our hearts, attitudes, and the things that I could not do that I wanted to before I was converted. Those things which I could not do after I was converted, then it was a pleasure, and there was power and then grace to live it.

The Holy Spirit changes our hearts, appetites, and our attitudes. That is the secret to controlling the flesh, and living a disciplined life. Finally, the key to a well-disciplined church is Spirit controlled members and individuals. The closer we can come to being 100% Spirit controlled, the closer we can come to a well-disciplined brotherhood. Now, in all reality, the work of purging out the flesh, and of keeping the flesh in subjection, is a lifelong work of sanctification. That is why we are facing some of the things we are in the congregations. There is still some flesh that wants to stick its head up. Paul says, "I die daily" (1 Corinthians 15:31). That is the Spirit controlled life. Yes, the converted man now has the control of the Spirit in his life. At the same time, he is working with his fleshly body. As long as we are in this fleshly body, we can allow the fleshly body to rise up and go back to its old life and its old habit.

Some forms of discipline for the Church.

As we think of a well-disciplined church, what are forms of discipline that are acceptable and are recommendable? Paul told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 3:3, "ye are yet carnal." They were still living in the flesh. He went so far as to say, "Shall I come unto you with a rod" (1 Corinthians 4:21)? "Shall I come to you with that form of discipline?" "or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?"

1) The use of the rebuke.

This is one form of discipline that is recommended in Scripture in 1 Timothy 5:20, in maintaining a well-disciplined church. It is one of the milder forms. "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." We rebuke someone. The apostle Paul went before Peter. He saw that Peter was not eating with the gentiles. He was favouring the Jews. Paul saw what he was doing and knew that Peter did not believe in that. Yet, for the convenience of the hour, Peter had fallen into that. Paul says, "I withstood him to the face" (Galatians 2:11). The rebuke is an acceptable form of discipline that needs to be used in the Church with love. Especially as leaders, there are times where you say, "Brother, you know you are in sin. Brother, what you are doing is wrong. It is taking you down the wrong road. You

need to get off that road. You need to repent." Yes, some strong rebukes are in order at times. There are other Scriptural guidelines that go along with that. "First cast out the beam out of thine own eye," (Matthew 7:5) before you go to your brother. There needs to be love, and a burden. Therefore, there are qualifications for the rebuke.

2) Church standards or disciplines.

This is another form of discipline that is recommended in the New Testament in Philippians 3:16. "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Standards are an asset in helping to maintain a well-disciplined congregation. It gives the knowledge and it also provides a safeguard for those who are weak. Another Scripture is Hebrews 12:13. It is my understanding that this Scripture is addressing that very issue, "And make straight paths for your feet." Why do we need to spell out some guidelines? Why do we need to make some straight paths, rather than simply leaving it to John, Tim, James, and everyone to choose their own way? Why do we need to spell out some straight lines? "Lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." It is done lest those who lack the convictions are snared and lose out spiritually because they lack the Spirit control in a certain area. We need to make some straight paths and some standards and some guidelines lest those that are weak in the faith be snared.

3) Separation.

2 Corinthians 6:17-18 gives another form of discipline which the church can use to help maintain a disciplined congregation. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Separation is something that is scoffed at today. Too many professing Christians want to get as close to the world as they can and claim the power of God. This is a form of discipline where we set a barrier or a bound between the world and the church. This was an Old Testament principle that Israel failed to apply too many times. There were the kings who had a vision to clean up the land and to get rid of the idols and so on. Some of them did a fairly good job, while others only rid the land of the idols, but then did not remove the high places. They failed in separation. Separation is a discipline. Some people want the liberty to do whatever and to freely mingle with the ungodly world. However this is a discipline the church needs to apply such that we

guard ourselves. Therefore, we set some safeguards and separate ourselves from the ungodly world about us.

4) Excommunication.

1 Corinthians 5:13 says, "But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." Finally, the form of discipline of excommunication which I spoke about in another sermon is a form of discipline which the church needs to use to maintain a well-disciplined congregation. Finally, we come to the conclusion that this person has walked away from truth, is failing to be obedient to the church of Jesus Christ, and they need be excommunicated. They must be put out of the church. That is a form of discipline.

The Holy Spirit controlling our life. We said that Spirit control is what our goal is. We want each member to be under Spirit control. These forms of discipline which we already spoke of—the rebuke, standards, separation, excommunication, (and there are others) help us on the road of Spirit control. The control by the Holy Spirit is ultimately what we want for every soul. We want each member in our congregation to have the Spirit of God alive in his life. We want him to be sensitive to the voice of the Spirit and be controlled from within. We are not satisfied about putting him in a box and putting a fence around him, and now we have him as a member.

That is not really our goal. I am not saying there is not a place for some boxes and fences. Finally, that is the ultimate goal that we want for our people.

The Early Church needed to use some of these forms of discipline. I would like to take notice how the apostle Paul approached this. Paul, while he used excommunication, the rebuke, and so on, was constantly trying to “jumpstart” that Spirit control. At the same time, he was recommending, and trying to reason with them in I Corinthians 5:2, "And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned." Do we see how Paul is appealing to their reason? He is appealing to their conscience. "Brother, you should have repented. You ought to feel sorry for that kind of behaviour." Paul was appealing. He wanted that man to think seriously of his relationship before God. "That he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you." "Do you not realize the seriousness of this kind of a sin?" That was Paul's kind of reasoning.

In 1 Corinthians 6:2 we read, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy

to judge the smallest matters?" Notice how Paul appeals to their reason? He did not simply come in and say, "You need to excommunicate that man." Paul explained to them, and was appealing to their understanding, and personal conviction. "Brethren, you lost sight of the truth. There is something wrong with your conviction. Do you not know the truth of the Scriptures? Do you not understand the principles in the Word?" The reason I bring that in is because finally, as a church, we are trying to cultivate Spirit controlled lives. We are not merely content with authority controlled lives. We want Spirit controlled lives. That does not mean that there is not a place for authority controlled lives, or authority controlling, safeguarding and stopping some people in their path.

Finally, the time comes when it seems carnality is reigning. We do not keep nagging and begging. Instead we realize and get a vision that this soul does not really have the Spirit of God. He does not have the means and the wherewithal to live the holy life. He finally does not have it. We are using some discipline to make him think seriously. He however is simply trying to negotiate the way around that rule and that standard. It is simply a carnal heart and a carnal life. We all need wake up calls as believers. There are times in everyone's life when we need someone to knock on our door and say, "Brother, you are getting off the right path." The real Spirit controlled man, when you do that for him, there is a different response from him than you will receive from a cold carnal heart. I have noticed it over and over.

How do they respond to admonition when you go to a brother and he has deviated in his Christian walk? As a minister or another responsible person, when you go to someone and point that out to them, is there the remorse which Paul spoke of? Or, is there a defense? "That is what you think." What kind of a spirit do you face?

I am a firm believer in church standards. I have seen this with individuals whom I believe never knew what the total surrendered life was. They came into the church and the church tried to stop a hole here, tried to stop a hole over there, and simply make this rule and that rule. Finally, we realized we were working with a carnal heart. Then, we need to look deeper. The problem is deeper. We need to wake up to that reality. With the Spirit controlled life, while we may yet lose ground spiritually, we still have a spirit. We have an attitude and a conscience which can be worked with. It can be cultivated and brought back to life.

2 Corinthians 7:11 is a beautiful attitude that needs to be to some degree

in every believer. "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." A person can have that carefulness, and can kind of grow cold. We become somewhat careless. However, when you come and speak to him, he will see that there is concern. We had to speak to a young brother not long ago. This brother stood up quite strong, but at the end of the meeting he was hanging his head and saying, "I'm sorry. I do not want to go that way." That is what I am talking about. The Spirit controlled heart was still there. The heart was changed. However, if we cannot get that attitude to come to life, it is time to be concerned about whether the person really is under Spirit control.

As we cultivate Spirit control we need to:

1) Be alert to attitudes.

A simple rule is: every big thing that we face in a congregation at one time was a small thing. If only we could have caught it when it was small. Let us be alert to attitudes. Hebrews 12:15 says, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitter-ness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

A well-disciplined congregation is a congregation where the leadership especially is looking diligently and observing the attitudes in the congregation. They are concerned even about general attitudes. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." We can let this attitude go and after a while this brother starts talking to that brother. After a while you realize there are three or four involved, and we have a problem we cannot manage.

I am challenged as a minister, as a parent, and as a leadership that we stay in touch with our people. The Scripture says, "know them which labour among you" (1 Thessalonians 5:12). It is also important that those who are labouring know their people. We can notice something that is not in order when we know our people. It does however, take time to know the people. It means as a ministry that you will probably need to meet each one in the congregation probably at every service. Try to make it a point to meet all the brethren. Keep those little contacts with the leadership. We need to be alert if something is not quite right. I might meet a brother at church who had a far away look. I have phoned some brethren already and asked, "What is on your mind brother?" Try to be alert. Look diligently.

2) Cultivate a sensitivity to the conscience and the Spirit of God.

Sometimes we can think that a person is challenging our authority or he is challenging the church. We need to take him a step deeper. Brethren what is the Lord trying to tell you here? What is the Lord trying to show you? Cultivate a sensitivity to the Spirit of God. Or, maybe he comes to you and says "That brother said this about me and he simply does not appreciate me." Therefore, we point him to the Scriptures. Do you have ears that hear? [Revelation 2:7 etc.] What is the Spirit trying to show you? Challenge our people to have ears that hear. What is God telling us?

3) Cultivate well disciplined homes.

This starts already with our children. I lament whenever parents are careless in bringing up their children. They are careless with things like honesty and respect for authority. The right kind of training is not happening in their home. Their homes are not the well-disciplined homes they should be. After a while these youth respond in the church and then the parents expect the church to straighten everything out. Many times these problems are best handled in the home. Fathers take the responsibility to go to their sons and daughters and say "It is not in order here." If it not dealt with there, I believe that the church can be overloaded with disciplinary problems. Parents who fail to do what they should be doing at home and who let it go and leave it for the church to try and take care of it are not helping the church to be well-disciplined. When children are trained in the way that they should go in our homes, it is an asset to a well-disciplined congregation. "What advantage then hath the Jew" (Romans 3:1)? When children are taught to respect authority, they come home from school and the parents do not side with them in a complaint they have with the teacher. They learn that in their younger years. When they come up to church life, they have already learned some of those basic principles. "What advantage then hath the Jew? ... Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:1, 2). Those foundational principles have already been laid in their lives. I realize that does not take care of all the problem. We already said that we can have the "know how." We can know what is proper behaviour and right living. Finally, we have to have the wherewithal to do it. We have to have the Spirit of God to do it. If it is established as a conviction in your children that it is a sin to disrespect authority, a sin to lie, a sin to be careless and cheat, and so on it is a great advantage to them.

A well-disciplined church will be guided by leaders who have learned to discipline themselves in pulling together as leaders, have we learned to discipline ourselves in pulling together? If we have not, how can we expect our brethren in the congregation to do it? Yes, there are different personalities and different temperaments. I mentioned that I have worked under six different bishops and they were all different. They were all "missing something" (if I can say that respectfully). The good side is that whenever we realize we are missing something, we can borrow from our brethren. We go to our brethren and we use our brethren where we realize we are missing something. However, as leaders in the congregation, are we living a disciplined life where we have learned to pull together. Have we set that example?

Order is another aspect to the disciplined congregation. Order and discipline in the congregation go together. There are times however, where maybe things are out of hand. The first thing to do is to establish order. In working with a home once as a ministry, we finally said that there needed be order. Mother must be in her place. Father must be in his place. The children must be in their place. It is a little bit like the town clerk at Ephesus, who said, "We need to have order. There must be order." Part of a disciplined congregation is that there is order, and we properly understand our responsibilities in staying in those places.

A well-disciplined church must have a good housekeeper Stay in touch with the people and apply the necessary measure. A while ago when several of us were in Nicaragua, we needed to make a decision on how to handle the situation there with my brother Myron. The Doctor was trying to make a decision whether they needed to amputate his leg. For us cutting his leg off was a major problem. - he would not have a leg. If you cut his leg off, the rest of his life that is the end of his leg. That looked like a major thing. I am sure it was for the doctor too. I want to bring out a principle here in church life. We need to see what needs to be done, and do what needs to be done. Maybe the measures are a bit severe sometimes, but as housekeepers we need to do that.

This doctor told us that he needed to know by the next morning, if he were to remain there. "I need to know, and I need to have the liberty to amputate his leg, because we do not want to leave this go until a week down the road after the body is worn down and then amputate it. Now is the time to do it." In a well-disciplined congregation there are measures

which need to be taken sometimes which, as leaders, we would rather do anything else. Yet, they realize, and they can see down the road the consequence of waiting and the drag and detriment it is to the congregation. Then, they rise to that responsibility. Yes, when we clearly as a leadership see the problem and the solution, why wait and allow it to drag on and wear the congregation down? The Scripture says, "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9).

There is much more which could be said. I feel like I did not say much at all. I simply pointed out a few principles on a well-disciplined congregation. It begins with the Spirit controlled life. I want you to remember that is our goal as congregations and as churches. We want and need to cultivate the Spirit controlled life. The thought that you can remove all other forms of discipline and the Spirit- controlled life will simply bloom and happen is unrealistic. According to Scripture some discipline needs to be used. Some governmental discipline needs to step in and stop me in my drift, lest I am turned out of the way and destroyed spiritually. Let us also remember to look ahead. We want this brother to do things from his heart because he has a changed heart and he understands that this is fruit. That should be our goal.

Sometimes that cannot happen instantly. We cannot sit around a table and expect to discuss something for two hours and everyone around the table will have the conviction. Sometimes it takes the Spirit. Sometimes you need to be in those shoes. Sometimes you need to be a mother or a father to really gain an appreciation or gain a conviction for something. Time is involved and discipline is necessary lest we will be snared. Hebrews 12:13 speaks about the "straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." It is necessary to set some guidelines, fences, and safeguards because of that.

As I have said before, I was criticized once that we make greenhouse plants out of our youth. There is a time for greenhouses. When the outside is harsher than what the plants can tolerate, we need the greenhouse. That is exactly what our youth and children need. However, we are not content with merely keeping them in a greenhouse. We want them to finally be able to take the outside.

In closing, if you are not a part of the problem and you are not a part of the solution, stay out of it. There can be something happening and we have

certain members without fail who are in there asking, "What is happening? Are you doing something about it? What are you doing? Are you sure you are doing the right thing?" They are involved and it is none of their business really.

We need to be concerned about what is happening in the congregation. However, but I also appreciate brethren who simply know that we need lay brethren back there who are carrying on the work of the church and are faithful in their responsibilities and praying for the work. Gossip is another whole dimension of it. That is often involved with those that get involved in things that are really not their business. They are looking for something juicy that they can pass around.

Finally, if we are not a part of the problem, not a part of the solution, then let us pray about it. *Used by permission from: The Pulpit Exchange.*

**By faith I unseen Being see,
 By faith I know the worlds were made,
 By faith I see the unseen things - hid from all mortal eyes;
 By faith I build my lasting hope on righteousness divine;
 By faith I overcome the world, and all its hurtful charms;
 By faith I have a conqu'ring pow'r and banish all my woes.
 By faith I stand when deep I fall, in darkness I have light;
 By faith I trust a pardon free,
 By faith I keep my Lord's commands,
 By faith I'm more than conqueror,
 By faith I hope to see the Son, the light of grace.
 By faith I walk, I run, I fly,
 By faith I suffer thrall;
 By faith I'm fit to live and die,
 By faith I can do all.**

Extracts from the poem 'The Valour and Victories of Faith'
 By Ralph Erskine, Eternal Life Ministries.

To Him That Overcometh.

Jesus sent a message to each of the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3. There was one over-riding theme in each message **overcoming**.

To Ephesus He said (2:7), "*To him that **overcometh** will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*"

Remember, He could not allow Adam and Eve to continue eating from the tree of life after their fall, for that would have perpetuated sin. Only those who overcome sin can be granted access to the tree of life.

To Smyrna He said (2:11), "*He that **overcometh** shall not be hurt of the second death.*"

To Pergamos He said (2:17), "*To him that **overcometh** will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.*"

To Thyatira He said (2:26-28), "*And he that **overcometh**, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even us I received of my Father Anti I will give him the morning star*"

To Sardis He said (3:5), "*He that **overcometh**, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels.*"

To Philadelphia He said (3:12), "*Him that **overcometh** will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.*"

To Laodicea He said (3:21), "*To him that **overcometh** will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also **overcame**, and am set down with my Father in His throne.*"

Overcoming is accomplished by faith. *"For whatsoever is born of God **overcometh** the world: and this is the victory that **overcometh** the world, even our faith."* (1 John 5:4.) This is the faith of Jesus. This is the kind of faith the remnant will possess. *"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."* (Revelation 14:12) These are so connected to Christ and filled with the fullness of God that they would rather die than sin. You can be among that number if you will fully surrender your life to the blessed Savior, and *"press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, ""perfecting holiness in the fear of God."* (Philippians 3:14, 2 Corinthians 7:1.)

1 John 5:4-5

*For whatsoever is born of God **overcometh** the world: and this is the victory that **overcometh** the world, even our faith. [5] Who is he that **overcometh** the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

Revelation 21:7

*He that **overcometh** shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*

2 Corinthians 6:16-18

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. [17] Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, [18] And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

These scripture instructions to **overcome** apply just as much to us personally today as they did to the seven churches mentioned. The battle is not won until victory has been achieved, only **overcomers** will share that rich inheritance due to the children of God. Verse 17 above tells us to "come out, be separate, touch not" terms that mean an active role on our part – that of being an **overcomer**. May it be so for each of us and know that our reward is in heaven. Let each reach out and help the other to be an **overcomer**.

JvL.

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