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## The Secret of the Strength

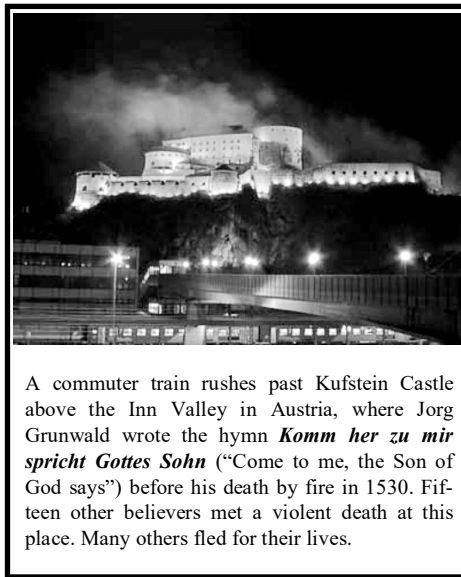
— by Peter Hoover

### CHAPTER 6 On to Jesus

In 1527, two years after the birth of the Anabaptist movement in Switzerland, people already wondered about its secret. Their wondering, with minds just coming out of the Dark Ages, led them to suspect magic. Somewhere in the deep valley of the River Inn, between the snow-capped mountains of Austria, a strange story began to circulate. People said the Anabaptists had a magic container, a little vial, filled with a liquid about which the devil himself had no clue. They said the Anabaptists forced their converts to drink from the vial. One little sip of its contents was enough to bring anyone completely under their power. Just one sip and a person became serious-minded, no longer able to do what he used to do, and no amount of money, nothing that life had to offer, could bring him back to what he used to be. Once a person tasted from the vial, he would die before giving up his strange beliefs.

Leonhard Schiemer, in prison before his beheading at Rattenberg on the Inn, took the time to answer this foolish story in 1527:

Well, you godless crowd, let me tell you how it is. Let us say you are right. Let us say it is true that we must all drink from a little vial. And like you say, it certainly is true that the devil does not know what is in it. If you do not know it either, you are also devils... but if you want to know, I will reveal the liquid's secret proportions to you!



A commuter train rushes past Kufstein Castle above the Inn Valley in Austria, where Jorg Grunwald wrote the hymn *Komm her zu mir spricht Gottes Sohn* (“Come to me, the Son of God says”) before his death by fire in 1530. Fifteen other believers met a violent death at this place. Many others fled for their lives.

Like Caiaphas, you speak the truth without knowing it. You say that whoever takes a sip from the vial is permanently changed. How true! For the liquid in the vial is made from nothing else than a struck down, ground up, rubbed

apart, and sorrowful heart pulverized in the mortar and pestle of the cross ... and it is the liquid which our dear brother and friend, Christ Jesus, drank- mixed with vinegar and gall.

The vial is the one He offered to the sons of Zebedee. It is the one He drank from in the garden. It is the one that caused Him to sweat until He sweated drops of blood, and until He trembled and fell into a faint so that angels had to lift Him up. Truly the liquid in it is such an awful liquid that no one can drink it without his neighbors taking note that he is totally changed!

Whoever takes a sip from the vial indeed becomes willing to forsake everything he has... because the Spirit of Christ teaches him and reveals to him things that no man can express and which cannot be written onto paper. Nobody knows what those things are, save those to whom they have been revealed ... <sup>1</sup>

A broken heart and fellowship with

<sup>1</sup> From Leonhard Schiemer's writing *Vom Flaschlen, gantz clarlich endteckt, was es bedeytet, alien Frommen Trostlich zu lesen*, written on the Thursday after Saint Andrew's day, 1527.

Jesus-Leonhard Schiemer answered the foolish story in a truly Anabaptist way.

The first Anabaptists followed Jesus.

It was so simple that people could not understand it. It was so easy to explain that it seemed mysterious.

### Jesus Calling-Me?

When the New Testament fell into their hands in the sixteenth century, many German people naively took it at face value. When they heard Jesus' call to the disciples, "Follow me," they thought it meant them. When they read Jesus' commands to turn the other cheek, or to give to him who asks of you, or to sell everything you have, that is what they did. They thought Jesus was God in human flesh, showing them how to live, and that God expected them to live just like that. They thought that being a disciple of Jesus meant studying His teachings, putting them to practice, and living with the consequences (the cross) of following Him.

It never occurred to them that following Jesus, while carrying a cross, would lead anywhere else but to death.

Michael Schneider, before he died under torture at Passau in Bavaria, wrote from the castle dungeon:

Listen to me, all peoples of the earth. Listen to me, young and old, great and small. If you want to be saved, you need to leave sin, follow Christ the Lord, and live according to His will. Christ Jesus came to the earth to teach men the right way to go, to teach them to turn from sin and to follow Him. He said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the father, but by me."

He who longs for *gemeinschaft* (oneness, community) with Jesus and who wants to take part in His king-

dom, needs to do what Jesus did while He was on the earth. He who wants to reign with Jesus must first be willing to suffer for His name. The man who dies with Jesus in this life will enter with Him into the Father's kingdom, in eternal joy. But the man who does not follow Him, is not redeemed by His blood, and his sins will never be forgiven.

Those whose sins have been forgiven should live no longer in sin. This is what Jesus Christ, our Lord, teaches us. Those who fall back into sin break their covenant with God. Even greater pain and suffering will be theirs-and their loss will be forever.

Not all who say, "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom. Only those who keep His covenant will be accepted by Him. He who confesses Christ before the world and who stands for the truth to the end will be saved.

Help us to that, God, our Lord, that we may stay with Jesus-that we may always walk according to His teachings, that we may commit no more sins, and that we may be an honor to His name, now and forever... into eternity! Amen.<sup>2</sup>

### Jesus' Community

Following Jesus, for the Anabaptists, was much more than obeying His commandments. It was much more than confessing Him publicly or being willing to die for Him. It was knowing Jesus, and living like the first disciples in full *gemeinschaft* with Him.

The words of Paul in Philippians 3:10 stated distinctly the goal of the Anabaptists: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being

*made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."*

The Greek word *koinonia*, translated "fellowship" in this verse, was always translated into the German word *gemeinschaft*. To the Anabaptists, this beautiful word meant both spiritual communion and community of goods. It was the word used in Acts 2:44 and 4:32 for "all things common" (*alle Dinge gemein, es war ihnen alles gemein*). It was the word they found in I John 1:7: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have **gemeinschaft** one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." It was the word they used instead of "church."<sup>3</sup>

About this statement, Peter Ride-man wrote in chains from his dungeon of the castle at Wolkersdorf, in Hesse, in 1540:

When we listen carefully to the Gospel and conform to it, we come to take part in the community of Christ, as may be seen in the words of John: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have **gemeinschaft** with us: and truly our **gemeinschaft** is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

*Gemeinschaft* is nothing else than to have all things in common (*gemein*) with those to whom we are inwardly bound. It is to keep nothing for ourselves, but to share all that we have with others - like the Father keeps nothing for Himself, but shares all that He has

<sup>3</sup> The Anabaptists nearly always spoke of the church as the Lord's *Gemein* (commune), and left the high-sounding term *church* (Kirche) for the Roman Catholics and the Protestants to use. It was also the word they found in the Apostles' Creed in "the communion of the saints" (*die Gemeinschaft der Heiligen*).

<sup>2</sup> *Ausbund*, 82

with the Son, and like the Son keeps nothing for Himself, but shares all that He was with the Father and with those in *gemeinschaft* with Him.

Those in *gemeinschaft* with Christ follow His example and keep nothing for themselves. They hold all things in common with their Teacher, and with all those who belong to His community, so that they may be one in the Son, as the Son is one with the Father (John 16:13-15).

This is called the "gemeinschaft of the holy ones" (in the Apostles Creed) because we hold in common holy things: the things through which we were made holy in the Father and in the Son. The Son makes us holy through what He gives us. In this way, everything serves to the advantage and building up of one another, and to the praise and glory of God.<sup>4</sup>

*Gemeinschaft* with Jesus, like earthly *gemeinschaft* among men, comes about only at incredible cost and continual struggle. But it is a gift from God. It must be fought for again and again. But it is the only way to peace.

To the Anabaptists, *gemeinschaft* with Jesus was worth having at the expense of husband, wife, children, or parents. It was worth the terror of flight and torture. The glory of community with Jesus, the "gemeinschaft of sharing in his sufferings" lit up the deepest dungeon. It shone with an other-worldly radiance above the flames of the *scheiterhaufen* (the woodpile where the condemned were burned at the stake). It was the light they saw that opened the heavens and allowed them to see right there, almost with-

<sup>4</sup> From Peter Rideman's *Rechenschaft unserer Religion, Leer und Glaubens*, first published in Moravia in 1545.

in reach, the unspeakable joy of eternal fellowship in new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells.

*Gemeinschaft* with Jesus, for the Anabaptists, was the promise of the Kingdom of Heaven. A south German Anabaptist wrote in the mid-1500s:

Oh God Father, on heaven's throne, You have prepared for us a crown if we stay in Your Son, if we suffer with Him the cross and the pain, if we surrender ourselves to Him in this life and if we struggle continually to enter into His *gemeinschaft*. You tell us what we need to know, through your Son, if we have inner *gemeinschaft* with Him ...

You gave your beloved Son to us to be our head. He has marked out for us the road we should take, so that we would not lose our way and find ourselves outside of His community... Therefore, Christians, oh little flock, let us all look together at how He walked before us here on the earth. Let us become like Him in love and in suffering. Let us keep our covenant with Him and not stay away from eating His flesh and His blood.

His flesh and His blood, the food He gave us, must be understood like this: In eating His flesh and blood, the Spirit brings us into community with Him.... God redeems us together with Jesus. He serves us through His Son. His Son is the rock and the cornerstone of His church community—His wife, His companion and His love, through whom He works on the earth....

Therefore come! Come all you newborn Christians! Come in sincerity to Christ the Passover lamb, whose

<sup>5</sup> *Ausbund*, 55

kingdom and communion shall never end!<sup>5</sup>

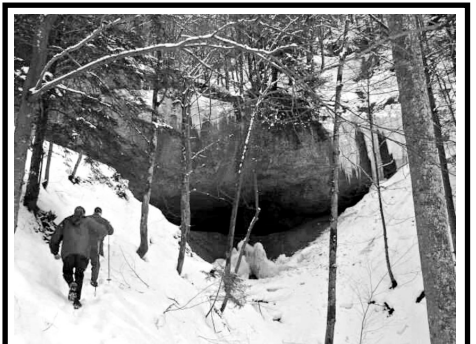
## Jesus, the Focus of Their Prayers

The Anabaptists, far removed in Spirit from the wooden christs, the crosses, and the worship of Mary and the saints in the Dark Ages, prayed freely to Jesus. Far removed from the doctrinal "correctness" of the Protestant Reformers (who offered formal praises to "God Almighty, the Lord Sabaoth"), they simply prayed to God the Father, or to Jesus their brother, or to both at the same time, knowing that, in the Spirit, their prayers were heard.

Without this direct communication with Jesus, the Anabaptists could not have followed Him. Under torture or on the way to the *scheiterhaufen*, the Anabaptists, like Stephen, cried to Jesus in their distress. They lived in total confidence of Jesus' words: "*Come unto me ... Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out... No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*"

"Oh Christ, help Your people!" cried Michael Sattler before they cut out his tongue and burned him at the stake in 1527.

"Oh Lord Christ from heaven, I praise you for turning away my sorrow and sadness!" cried Felix Manz before they threw him into the Limmat River at Zurich, in 1526.



Still known as the *Taufershihle* (Anabaptist cave) this hiding place high above the village of Betswil near Zurich in Switzerland, provided harassed believers with a refuge and meeting place during the sixteenth century.

"Fly to the mountain of refuge: Christ Jesus!" wrote Menno Simons. Commend your affairs to Him who has chosen you to be His precious bride, His children and the members of His body."<sup>6</sup>

The Lord Jesus Christ was no dim theological figure, no "marginal character," to the first Anabaptists. He was their friend, their brother, the hero and the focus of their highest admiration. An unnamed Anabaptist wrote in the early 1500s:

Look at Jesus the friendly knight!  
Look at the captain! The battle, when you come to this place, is fierce. The enemies—the world, the flesh, sin, the devil, and death—close in around you. But leap to your captain's side! He will kill the enemies! He will help you out of all distress.

Stay with your flag! Do not let them drive you back from your captain, Jesus Christ! If you want the crown and the glory, and if you want to triumph with Him, you must suffer and die with Him too. They caught Christ our captain and beat Him. In like manner they mistreat us, his followers. The hour of distress has come upon all the earth. They hunt us out. In almost every country they try to catch us because we stand for Christ. They try to keep Him from coming to help us, barricading all the roads until they have us. Then the strangling and the stabbing, the gruesome violence begins. But wait, our captain, He will avenge it! He will break the power of the enemy, and He will stand with His little flock!

All you beloved knights of God, be strong! Be manly in the fight! This dreadful storm will not be long. Stand fast! Stand true to

death! Do not allow them to drive you back. Men and women, trust in God!<sup>7</sup>

### A Picture of Jesus

Little by little, out of their "community with Jesus" (Phil. 3: 10), a picture of Jesus began to take shape in the Anabaptist movement.

Wolfgang Brandhuber, a servant of the Word among the Anabaptists in southern Germany and Austria, wrote in the late 1520s:

The one who fears God sees the true light and evaluates in it all his thoughts, his words, and his works. That true light is Christ, whose life is the will of God. In actual humanity Christ Jesus showed us what we should do, so that no one may have an excuse on the last day. Our thoughts on the inside, and our deeds on the outside — all our life is to become a picture of Christ who said: *"I and my Father are one."*<sup>8</sup>

Shortly after writing this letter, Wolfgang Brandhuber died with seventy others who were sentenced to death by "fire, water, and sword" at Linz, in Austria, in 1529.

### The Teacher and the Example

True disciples of Jesus follow His example in everything. Doing this is the way to "learn Christ" (Eph4:20).

Before they beheaded him in 1528, Leonhard Schiemer wrote:

The educated people of this world start at the wrong end. They hitch the horse to the back of the wagon. They would love to receive the truth of Christ in high institutions of learning, but that is like me going to the goldsmith and telling him to teach me his trade without bothering to take me into the workshop, or like a man

learning out of a book how to make shoes.<sup>9</sup>

Learning by doing is the way to learn Christ. It sounds easy: "Do what Jesus would do." But it is not easy. It is "living by faith" instead of sight.

Hans Schlaffer was a Roman Catholic priest in the mountains of upper Austria. But he followed Jesus and became an Anabaptist servant of the Word. On a cold evening, December 5, 1527, while on a trip up the Inn River to his mountain home for the winter, he attended an Anabaptist meeting in the valley, at Schwatz. The police caught him and locked him up in the nearby Frundsberg castle. There, on the night before they beheaded him, he wrote a long letter addressed to God. In the letter (which contained teachings for his survivors) he wrote:

Oh God, illuminated by Your kindness, we understand the word *faith* in the context of *deeds*. He who has faith in Jesus gives himself to You and to Your will. He denies himself, takes up his cross and follows Jesus, his teacher, his Lord and his head ...even into death. He says with Paul, *"I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,"* and *"if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*

Oh Father in heaven, whoever lives in Christ, Your Son and suffers and dies with Him, will rise with Him in glory to be in His Kingdom forever. This is how we have understood the holy Gospel. This is how we understand Christ and His teachings, and this is how we now understand the word *faith* which we never understood like this before.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> From *Vom Flaschlen*. .. 1527.

<sup>10</sup> From *Ein einfaltig Gebet durch ein Gefangner almen Bruder im HeITen, zu Schwatz gebetet und betriibt bis in den Tod*, written Monday after Candlemass, 1528.

<sup>6</sup> From *Dat Fundament des Christelycken Jeers*... first published in 1539.

<sup>7</sup> *Ausbund*, 78

<sup>8</sup> From *Ein sendbrief an die gmain Gottes zu Rottenburg am In*, 1529.



Looking across the Inn Valley from a window in the Frundsberg Castle at Schwatz, in which Hans Schlaffer lay imprisoned in 1527.

Michael Gaismair, who led the peasants' revolt in South Tyrol, lived and worked in this mining town as a young man. A large number of his co-workers, sharing his disgust with the greed and hypocrisy around them, found the Lord and got baptized in the 1520s.

## Christ the Head of the Body

Paul's picture of Jesus and the church as a body could for the Anabaptists have only one meaning: The body must follow the head. Because Jesus, the head, suffered, the body must suffer with Him.

Ambrutz Spittelmayr, tortured in the castle at Ansbach before they beheaded him in southern Germany, wrote in 1527:

All who are one with Christ through His divine Word are members of His body: that is they are His hands, His feet, and His eyes. He is a real man in the flesh. He is the head of the body, and it is through Him that the members are governed.<sup>11</sup>

Ambrutz went on to speak of the body's "community of suffering" with the head, but I will quote again the ex-priest, Hans Schlaffer, who wrote on the night before his execution:

Oh my God, how shall it go with me in the hour of my great need? I lay my worries, my terror, and distress on You. You have always been my pow-

<sup>11</sup> From the statement Ambrutz addressed to the court at C dolzburg in Franconia, on October 25, 1527.

erful help. Surely you will not withdraw Yourself from me in the hour of my greatest weakness.... Surely You will grant me, in the hour of my body's death, eternal life!

You have decreed that the entire Christ, the head with all the members of the body, must suffer... the members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones, who have become as one flesh with Him. This is a great mystery in Christ, and in His church community.

Now, since Christ the head lived in human flesh (but without sin), He needed to suffer and die, and we who have become the members of His body cannot do anything but go along with our head.<sup>12</sup>

## Detachment

Following Jesus, the Anabaptists, especially those of south central Europe, spoke of *gelassenheit* (a state of detachment, letting everything go) for Jesus. Hans Haffner, from the community at Auspitz in Moravia, wrote a tract while in the dungeon of the castle in Passau, Bavaria, in the 1530s. Its title was "About the True Soldier of Jesus Christ." In it, he spoke of detachment:

Now let us hear what true detachment is: It is to let go of all things for God's sake ... and to turn to God so that He may lead us. Jesus Christ called it hatred: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." True detachment is to put to death the flesh and to be born another time. The whole world wants to have Christ, but they pass Him by. They do not find Him because they want to have Him only as a gift, only as a giver of grace and a mediator which He certainly

<sup>12</sup> *Ein einfaltig Gebet*. . . 1528

is, but they do not want to have Him in a suffering way.

The same Christ who says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" also says that whoever will not forsake father and mother cannot be His disciple. Whoever loves truth must accept the one as well as the other. Whoever wants to have Christ must have Him also in the way of suffering. It is foolish to say: "We believe that Christ has redeemed us, but we do not want to live like He lived."

True detachment involves two things: enduring persecution and overcoming ourselves. When they hit us on one cheek, we are to turn to them the other. In the second place, we must be weaned from the ways of our human nature as a child must be weaned from his mother's breast. We must be willing to forsake wife and children, father and mother, lands and property, our lives and even what God has given to us ... for Christ.<sup>13</sup>

## Madmen or Fools?

Four centuries after Hans Haffner wrote this tract, I spoke about Christian economics at a mission church in Latin America. I read what Jesus said on the subject and implied that we should obey Him. No sooner did the meeting end, than the missionary (a North American) came to me and wondered what I meant. I said I didn't mean anything but what Jesus said. He replied: "Well, I haven't studied into it much, but I am sure there must be other Scriptures that would give this more of a balance."

Balancing out Jesus-what a difficult assignment! Especially for a mission-

<sup>13</sup> From *Von einem Wahrhaften Ritter Christi, und womit er gewappnet muss sein, damit er iiberwinden moege die Welt, das Fleisch und den Teufel*, written ca. 1533.

ary who hasn't "studied into it much"! Leonhard Schiemer, Wolfgang Brandhuber, or Hans Schlaffer—it would never have occurred to them that Jesus needed "balancing out." The first Anabaptists did not ask what Jesus meant. They simply followed Him, and people called them fanatics.

The young Anabaptist messenger, Klaus Felbinger, wrote in chains from the castle dungeon at Landshut in Bavaria shortly before they beheaded him on July 19, 1560:

The world has become a wilderness, sunken in sin, and knows little or nothing of God. And now the very teaching of the Gospel has become a new and heretical teaching, a deception in the eyes of the world. As soon as God raises up a messenger of salvation... one who proclaims to them the true Word of God and shows them the right way to go, they refuse to believe him and think he is a madman or a fool. Anyone filled with the Spirit is considered stupid or insane.<sup>14</sup>

It was the Protestants, not the Anabaptists, who studied the New Testament in the sixteenth century to find out "what Jesus meant." It was the Protestants, not the Anabaptists, who arrived at a "place of rest" and at "balanced" and "reasonable" positions on scriptural issues. It was the Protestants, not the Anabaptists, who knew their theology, their soteriology, and their ecclesiology. And certainly, the Protestants had inspired and capable leaders too.

### **A Monk in Armour**

As a sixteen-year-old boy wrestling with a colt to get it untangled from its tie strap, I broke my foot. For several weeks I was laid up and an elderly neighbor brought me books to read

<sup>14</sup> From *Ein Sendbrief Klaus Felbingers geschrieben aus seiner Gefenknus an die Gemein Gottes in Mahren im 1560. Jahr.*

from his church library. One of them, a book about Martin Luther called *A Monk in Armour*, moved me deeply.

The story of Martin Luther's conversion struck me to the heart. His conviction and his zeal for the truth inspired me, as few things have, in my Christian life. This is part of the story in his own words:

No matter how irreproachably I lived as a monk, I felt myself to be a sinner in the presence of God. My conscience bothered me very much. I could not believe that I pleased God with the things I was doing to gain His favor. I did not love God and His justice. In fact, I hated Him -if not in open blasphemy, at least with huge murmurings in my heart. I was indignant with Him, thinking that on top of condemning us miserable sinners to eternal destruction through original sin, and oppressing us with all kinds of calamities through the law and the ten commandments, He had added sorrow onto sorrow by giving us the gospel (impossible to obey) through which His wrath would finally fall on us.

In this way I struggled fiercely and desperately with my conscience, while I continued to knock away at the epistles of Paul, consumed with a burning desire to know what He meant. ...

Then, at last, I began to understand the justice of God. I began to see that the just man lives by the gift of God, that is by faith. I began to understand that the justice of God revealed in the Gospels is to be taken in a passive way, and that God justifies men not by works but by faith, as it is written: "The just shall live by faith." When I comprehended this, I felt myself to have been born again, and to have entered through open gates into paradise itself.<sup>15</sup>

Martin Luther found rest for his conscience-not in Jesus, but in Paul, not in the Gospels, but in "sound doctrine." When I was ten years old, his great hymn, *From the high heavens I come to you, I bring you salvation and the doctrine of grace, Sound doctrine I bring you in great amounts, and of that I will tell you singing*<sup>16</sup> made a deep impression, through a special occurrence, on me.

Throughout my childhood, it was my favorite hymn. But in the years following, little by little, I began to see where Martin Luther and the Anabaptists parted ways.

Martin Luther found the Scriptures. The first Anabaptists found Jesus. Their discoveries led them in totally different directions.

### **A Balanced Position**

At the Diet of Augsburg on June 25, 1530, the rulers and church leaders of Protestant Germany met to draw up the Augsburg Confession of Faith (the "only authoritative and in every way the most significant" confession of the Lutheran church).<sup>17</sup> Among its "balanced" and "reasonable" positions, based on the Scriptures, the confession states:

It is taught among us that all government in the world and all established rule and laws were instituted and ordained by God for the sake of good order, and that Christians may without sin occupy civil offices or serve

<sup>15</sup> From the preface to Luther's complete works, which he prepared for publication in 1545.

<sup>16</sup> *Vom Himmel hoch da komm ich her, ich bring euch Heil und Gnadenlehr. Der guten Lehr bring ich so vie], davon ich singend sagen will . . .* (Some German versions have Gnadenmiir instead of Gnadenlehr.)

<sup>17</sup> From an English translation of the Augsburg Confession, published by the Muhlenberg Press in 1959.

as princes and judges, render decisions and pass sentence according to imperial and other existing laws, punish evildoers with the sword, engage in just wars, serve as soldiers, buy and sell, take required oaths, possess property, be married, etc.

Condemned here are the Anabaptists, who teach that none of the things indicated above is Christian. Also condemned are those who teach that Christian perfection requires the forsaking of house and home, wife and child, and the renunciation of such activities as are mentioned above. Actually, true perfection consists alone of proper fear of God and real faith in God, for the Gospel does not teach an outward and temporal but an inward and eternal mode of existence and righteousness of the heart.

After five other ringing condemnations of the "Anabaptists, Donatists and Novatians," the Augsburg Confession (translated and adapted for use in the Anglican and Methodist churches of today) was signed by John, duke of Saxony; George, margrave of Brandenburg; Ernest, duke of Liineburg; Philip, landgrave of Hesse; John Frederick, duke of Saxony; Francis, duke of Liineburg; Wolfgang, prince of Anhalt; the mayor and council of Nuremberg and the mayor and council of Reutlingen.

But the Anabaptists paid no attention to it. They followed Jesus. Further south, in Protestant Switzerland, Huldrych Zwingli and John Calvin also wondered how to handle the "Anabaptist pestilence." In a letter to Vadian (Conrad Grebel's brother-in-law), Zwingli said: "My struggle with the old church (Catholicism) was child's play compared to my struggle with the Anabaptists." John Calvin in his *Brief Instruction to Arm Those of Good*

*Faith Against the Errors of the Anabaptists* wrote:

These miserable fanatics have no other goal than to put everything into disorder. ... They reveal themselves to be the enemies of God and of the human race....! If it is not right for a Christian man to go to law with anyone to settle quarrels regarding possessions, inheritance, and other matters, then I ask these good teachers what will become of the world!<sup>18</sup>

The Anabaptists did not answer John Calvin in writing. They answered him with their lives.



Kappel, in Switzerland, where Huldrych Zwingli met his death in a bloody battle against Catholic opponents from the south, in 1531. The hero of the day, Adam Neff (who rescued the flag of Zurich) had Anabaptist children and grandchildren, whose descendants still live in Mennonite communities.

### The Way, The Truth, The Life

To the Protestants, the Bible was their manifesto, an end in itself. Once they reached an agreement on how to "properly" interpret it, they revered it and treated it with gallant devotion. They preached and persecuted and fought mighty wars in defense of the Bible and its doctrines.

To the first Anabaptists, the Bible was simply the book that took them to Jesus.

The Protestants found the "key" to Bible interpretation in the epistles of Paul. But the Anabaptists found it in Jesus and His Sermon on the Mount.

<sup>18</sup> *Brieve Instruction pour armer taus bans fideles contre Jes Erreurs de la secte des Anabaptistes (Geneva, 1544)*

The Protestants saw in Paul a great theologian, the expositor of the doctrines of faith and grace. The Anabaptists saw in Paul a man who forsook everything to become a "fool for Christ's sake." They found community with Him in his martyr's death.

The Protestants lived to obey their authorities. They spoke much about "God-ordained authority" and held their princes and church leaders in highest esteem. The Anabaptists lived to obey Jesus.

The Protestants worked en masse and waited until "everyone was ready" to make changes in religious practice.

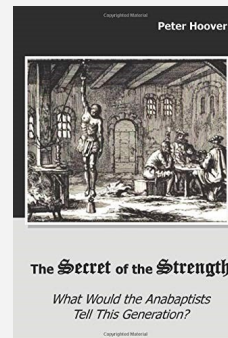
The Anabaptists did, on first opportunity, what they thought Jesus wanted them to do. If no one else joined them, they did it alone.

The Protestants followed a logical course. Theologians, princes and educators planned what to do in a way that made sense.

The first Anabaptists followed Jesus without making plans. That did not make sense. But it was the secret of their great strength.

And it led them ...

Continued in Next Issue



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I created a word to define a concept. Could an understanding of this concept improve your marriage, your team, your friendships?

This word I made up puts definition to a poisonous concept in relationships that I had never, in all my leadership training and development heard or read about. Whenever I teach on it, a significant amount of people react, as in “Oooch, I do that! Not good!” Originally, I made up the word to define what Ruthie used to do to me. But then I realized that people do this to people. Leaders do it to those they lead. Leadership teams have people who do this in their meetings, and worst of all... I then discovered that I was guilty of doing it to Ruthie.

I mention this word that I made up in my book, *Kingdom Culture*, as one of the things that brings a measure of dysfunction to a leadership team. It is a common ailment in marriage. It is a common malady in all relationship. I simply gave it definition and terminology.

The word is *passionating*.

Having passion is good. We need passion. *Passionating* is when you use your passion to overpower others, shut down their perspective in favor of yours, or exalt your idea or agenda above somebody else's. Passionating doesn't have to come in a mean way. It can come as a sincere way to proclaim that your idea is the best—or God's best.

## How I Got This Definition

**Ruthie:** One Saturday many years ago Bruce and I were talking about how some people shut down the voice of their spouse in subtle ways. I thought to ask Bruce if he ever feels that I shut

him down, knowing, of course, that I didn't. His answer shocked me! He said, “You do it a lot.” I was taken back not knowing what to say, and then I asked Bruce, “How do I shut you down.” He explained.

**Bruce:** “Ruthie, not always, but there are times when you have a perspective of how we should do something, or you have a strong opinion of something that needs decided. Then, when I express a different opinion, you become so *passionate* about your perspective that any opinion I may have is disregarded—as if your way is the better way.” After telling her this, I explained, “*You passionating me!* I try and tell you my viewpoint, but you have already moved on in your passion for your perspective and you don't take time to hear my “voice” on the matter. Unfortunately, often I passively give in to avoid an argument, but inside of me I have to deal with a bit of sourness toward your passionate force.”

**Ruthie:** I responded to Bruce by saying, “Bruce, I don't ever want to do that. Would you point out when I do that so I understand, because I have no framework for it. I don't see myself doing that.” That weekend Bruce pointed out three times I *passionated* him. Clearly, I saw what I was doing and grieved that I would shut Bruce down in this way. I asked Bruce to forgive me, and told him to tell me whenever I do it again.”

**Bruce:** From that day, I will NOT say that Ruthie has never dipped into passionating, but from that day what HAS happened is that, when she, on a rare occasion, does, she almost always catches herself and says to me, “Bruce, that's just what I think. What do you think? I don't want my way. I want what is right.” And then we talk, we listen, and we make a unified decision.

But, in time what I discovered is that I, too, am guilty of passionating Ruthie with my perspectives. So, it actually worked both ways to correct how we decide things.

**Ruthie:** It was several years later before I realized why I passionated Bruce. Growing up, I didn't feel as if I had a voice. I felt my opinions were not given value. I developed a self-protective habit of being forceful—or overpassionate—in order to get my way, and to be heard. Not wanting to be shut down was a subconscious filter that I communicated through—a filter that I didn't even realize existed until God revealed to me what I was doing and why.

**Bruce:** I love Ruthie's passion. She has a full measure imparted to her by God. I never want to destroy or pacify her passion. But, as always, our strengths most often are our greatest challenges. Passionating is an unhealthy manifestation of passion.

Passionating doesn't just happen in marriage—it happens in many arenas. An example would be: A team—any sort of team—is processing a project. One of the people on the team opens up with a passionate conclusion to their processing by saying, “Last night God spoke to my heart and...” How do you argue with somebody who says, “God told me?” I'm not saying that there are not times sharing what God said is appropriate, but often people think that because they have a strong viewpoint, it must be *from the Lord*.

The same kind of passionating can happen without saying “God said,” by expressing yourself on a team the same way Ruthie originally passionated me, by injecting into others something like, *How could anybody think differently than this!*



Do you passionate your spouse?

Does your spouse passionate you?

Does somebody on your leadership team passionate their ideas?

Do you have a friend whose mantra is passionating?

Are you a leader who passionates the people you lead?

*Passionating* is one of the many synonyms for the word *control*. Often it is sincere people who are doing it, failing to recognize that it is an *illegal* dynamic in healthy relationships. But sincere or not, it is a method of communication that needs opposed and confronted by people who have decided NOT to be controlled by it.

To expound on what I wrote at the beginning of this article, whenever I teach on this, a significant amount of people wake up and say, in diverse ways, *OOOOOO...I do that!* But, most of

those people are not passionating intentionally, they, just like Ruthie, never had it defined as something unhealthy in relationships.

## How Do I Get Victory Over Passionating?

First—recognize and define what you do.

Second—take responsibility for it. Don't say, *I do this because you won't listen to me!* That may be a reason, but it is not an excuse to communicate in an unhealthy way.

Third—repent. Break your agreement with passionating, and make an agreement to respect other's points of view. Also, break your agreement with the root of WHY you do it. If your voice was never heard, self-protecting will only lead you to "finding your life." Repentance will take you to another

level of trusting God, and "losing your life."

Fourth—renounce the accusation of the enemy. Renounce those thought processes that tempt you to passionate for your way.

Fifth—resist the thoughts until they stop coming. For Ruthie, as I mentioned above, her resistance comes when she catches herself doing it, she stops and includes my heart in the conversation.

This article is from God, and I don't want any negative comments! Hummmm...I think I just passionated you all. Forgive me!

*With a whole lotta love, Bruce & Ruthie*



If you would like to receive Bruce's newsletter, sign up at:

[brucelengeman.com](http://brucelengeman.com)

## "Embedded Demons"...or Simply Sin?

—anonymous

*"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:12-14)*

The word "delivered" has the meaning of being rescued or dragging a person out of danger. "Translated" has the meaning of transplanting a people to a settlement that is now a new home. "Darkness" and the "power of Satan" are one and the same, as seen in Acts 26:18: *"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."*

The distinction between a Christian life on earth and the continued life in heaven is by no means so sharply drawn in

Scripture as it by most Christians. Death does not carry the means or importance that brings about the huge change that we assume. We are already "settled" there—seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. No power of darkness operates in our new settlement. There is no well-hidden vestige of the enemy that has managed to hide well enough to sneak into our new settlement while still embedded in us—because all things are exposed by the light (Eph 5:13).

We have either been completely delivered and rescued from darkness or we have not been delivered at all. A captive over which the enemy still retains partial power has not been "delivered."

The best the enemy can do is to beat on the gates to attempt to entice us to partake again of the deeds of darkness.

*"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the*

*Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph 5:8-11).*

When we yield to the enticement of darkness, *"...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" (Gal 5:19-21).*

None of these are embedded demons. They are flesh and sins of the flesh. How do we deal with these sins? *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).*

The following article was taken from *The Topical Sermon Notebook, End Times* by Dr. Alan Carr, with permission. [www.serrmonnotebook.org](http://www.serrmonnotebook.org), Lenoir, NC.

## Matthew 24:1–31

**Intro:** Today, we continue our study of what the Bible has to say about the end of time, and the events that will take place as God completes His great plan of the ages. Thus far, we have considered the Rapture of the church and the man who will be known as the Antichrist. Today, we will be looking at a period of time known in the Bible as “*The Time Of Jacob’s Trouble*.”

This phrase is found in **Jeremiah 30:6–7**. In these verses, Jacob, or the nation of Israel, is portrayed like a man who is about to give birth. This man is suffering great pains and is bowed in agony. The Bible tells us that there are no days to compare with those that Israel must endure. However, **verse 7** shows us that Israel will be saved out of those days.

By way of introduction, I would like to share two major reasons for this time known as the Tribulation. There are many more reasons that could be stated, but these seem to stand out to me as some of the more crucial.

**1. To Punish The Gentile Nations—Rom. 1:18; 2 Thes. 2:12–13; Rev. 19:15.** For many thousands of years men have spurned the call of God to repentance and salvation. During the Tribulation Period, God will visit wicked humanity with the fruits of their sin: divine judgment!

**2. To Purge The People Of Israel—Eze. 20:37–38; Zech. 13:8–9; Mal. 3:3.** The Nation of Israel is guilty of rejecting the Messiah and of having a part in His death. However, God will use the terrors of the Tribulation to prepare Israel for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus returns to the

earth in power and glory, He will be met by a believing remnant of the Jewish people.

I want to say that I will be covering some frightening material during the course of this message. However, we need to hear these things because there may be people who have never repented of their sins and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. These people, if Jesus returns in their lifetime, will face many of the things we will discuss during the course of this message.

Those of us who are saved will not be here for even one minute of the Tribulation, but, we too, need to hear about these things. We need our hearts stirred about what the lost of this world are going to face. We need to realize that the responsibility of reaching this world before the Tribulation is on the shoulders of the redeemed people of God. May the Lord use these truths to stir the hearts of His children to action!

Let’s spend some time in the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew’s Gospel as we think together about **The Time Of Jacob’s Trouble**.

### I. How Tribulation Commences (v. 1–14)

(Ill. This passage is part of a sermon preached by the Lord Jesus known as the Olivet Discourse. This message came about as Jesus and His disciples were at the Temple. Jesus told His disciples that the Temple would eventually would be destroyed. This intrigued these men and they wanted to know more details about the end of time, **vs. 1–4**. In this message, Jesus tells them some of the events that will transpire during the course of the Tribulation. Even though these words were spoken to the disciples, they are a message to the nation of Israel. Even though these words are not addressed directly to the church, there are still lessons given here

that we can learn from and grow from.)

The first half of the Tribulation will be a time of:

**A. Spiritual Deception (v. 5, 11)—**There will be a rise in the appearance of those claiming to be the way of salvation. There will be many false Christ’s and false prophets during the Tribulation. However, none with the power nor the fame that will be enjoyed by the Antichrist and the False Prophet, **Rev. 13**. The two reprobates from Hell will deceive the world into believing that they are literally gods and they will demand and receive the worship of men! The Tribulation will be a spiritual time, but it will be marked by great deception. One of the great tools used by the Antichrist to deceive the world will be his ushering in a time of peace, **Rev. 6:2; Daniel 8:25**.

(Ill. We are already seeing these things being manifested in our times. Remember men like David Koresh, Jim Jones, Sun Myung Moon and many others who claim and have claimed to be the Messiah. False prophets abound. However, these are just the tip of the iceberg. The crazies will crawl out of the woodwork during the Tribulation.)

**B. Social Devastation (v. 6–13)—**The Tribulation period will be marked by an increase in the instability of society. Notice the pictures that are given here.

### 1. v. 6–7 This Time Will Be Marked By Disruptions

a. There will be an increase in warfare and the hostilities between nations, **v. 6–7**. The false peace instituted by the Antichrist will not last and will be replaced by the devastation of world war! This is made clear in **Revelation 6:4**. The Rider on the Red Horse is War!

b. There will be an increase in anti-Semitism and persecution aimed at

the Jewish people, v. 9. **Daniel 7:25** refers to this.

(Ill. Again, many of these things seem to be going on around us today. For instance:

1. The world's political scene is becoming increasingly unstable. Now, small nations ruled by unprincipled men have nuclear capability. Economic pressures are forcing countries to seek the resources that belong to neighboring nations for their very survival. The world is poised for war!

2. There is a marked increase of hatred towards the Jewish people in today's society. This is profoundly clear in the attitudes of Israel's neighbors.

The Palestinians and the Arabs would love nothing more than the total destruction of the nation of Israel. It is also my conviction that they will attempt this during this first part of the Tribulation. **Ezekiel 38–39** seems to indicate that the Russians will be involved in this attempt to destroy Israel, but the plan will fail and Israel will use the weapons of this warfare to provide fuel for their people for seven years, **Eze. 39:9**.

However, when the actual Tribulation comes to the world, there will be an astronomical increase in this kind of activity. The things that are transpiring in the world today are only the first rumblings of what is yet to appear.)

2. v. 7 **This Time Will Be Marked By Desperation**—According to this verse, there will be “famine” during the Tribulation. This is again made even clearer by the words of the Revelation, **Rev. 6:5–6**. A careful look at these verses reveals the following:

- a. The black horse speaks of death.
- b. The balances refer to a careful

rationing of food.

c. A “penny” was a day's wages. A Roman penny would purchase 8 measures of wheat or 24 measures of barley. In other words, the food supply will be 1/8th of what it is normally.

d. However, the rider is told not to hurt the “oil or the wine.” It appears that luxury items enjoyed by the rich will not be harmed. Sadly, the common man will not be able to buy these things. Therefore, he will starve!

(Ill. Again, we are already seeing these things begin to take shape. We are living in the most prosperous days this world has ever known. However, the world has never been this populated before. Much of the land that was once used to grow food now has been transformed into places for people to work and live. Our world faces genuine food shortages. Think about the following for just a moment.

1. One person dies from starvation or one of its related diseases every second of every day!

2. This translates into **86,400** per day; **2,592,000** per month, or **31,104,000** every year!

3. **75%** of those who die are infants and children under that age of 5 years of age. (Ill. That is the grace of God! Imagine that, over 23 million precious, innocent, souls ushered into the presence of God every year. They died a horrible death, but they have everlasting life!)

During the Tribulation, these things will just grow worse and worse. Want to stay here for that?)

3. v. 7 **This Time Will Be Marked By Diseases**

a. *Verse 7* refers to “*pestilence*”. This tells us that the Tribulation

Period will be a time when diseases will run rampant among the human family. Again, this is referred to in the book of Revelation, **Rev. 6:8**. This awful look into the future tells us that 25% of the world's population will die at one point in time. At present, there are over 6 billion people in the world with a new one being added every half-second! Every year, there are over 78 million new births in the world! Imagine a scene where over 1.5 billion people died during the same terrible tragedy. Imagine the disease that would result because of the lack of proper burial sites for the dead.

During World War II, 1 person out of every 40 died. During this terrible plague, 1 out of every 4 persons will die! Just look around and count them off. It will be a terrible time!

4. v. 7 **This Time Will Be Marked By Disasters**—Jesus says that there will be earthquakes and natural disasters during these early years of the Tribulation.

(Ill. Again, the Twentieth Century saw a dramatic increase in the number of earthquakes. These quakes became very intense and began to happen in places that earthquakes usually did not take place. These things are simply setting the stage for what will happen in the future.)

5. v. 10, 12 **This Time Will Be Marked By Disobedience**

(Ill. These verses seem to indicate that the Tribulation will be marked by a total disregard for the sanctity of life, property, or the rights of others. This is clear by two statements.)

a. **Betrayal and Hated** (v. 10)—These verses seem to indicate that men in that day will have no respect for one another. Certainly violent crime will increase and many will die at the hands of their fellow human.

(III. Of course, the population of the world is already being trained to disregard the life and rights of their fellow man.

- When we live in a world that allows the murder of over 55 million unborn children every year it sends the message that life is without value.
- When we see an increase in euthanasia and other forms of mercy killing become accepted by the people of the world, we know that have lost our respect for human life. It seems that we are not too many days removed from seeing the elderly, the mentally handicapped and others being exterminated to prevent them from being a drain on society.
- When the world accepts the foolish notion that man evolved from lower life forms, that when he dies, he is like a dog that merely goes to the grave, it becomes easy to take lives. If men saw one another as what they are: unique creations, each made in the image of God, it would prevent some men from taking the life of another.)

**b. Wickedness and the love of sin** (v. 12)—The Tribulation will also see an increase in man's attraction to and indulgence in sin. After the church is removed at the rapture, all restraints on society will be removed as well. No longer will there be the presence of a people who are filled with the Holy Ghost. No longer will there be people on the earth who pray for society and their neighbors. The world will continue its slide into Hell by following sin with all the power it possesses.

(III. We see these things happening all around us. A look at **2 Timothy 3:1–5** proves this beyond dispute! We live in a nation where **85%** of the population of the United States claims to be Christian. Look at people live and tell me how this can be!

- How can that be when **62%** of all Americans believe that Bible is not totally true?
- How can that be when **75%** of Americans do not believe in the existence of a personal, real devil?
- How can that be when pornography earns an estimated **14 billion** dollars per year in the US alone?
- How can that be when **4 million** men, every day, visit porn sites on the internet?
- How can that be when **1.5 million** unborn babies are aborted in the country in the name of convenience?
- How can that be when the rate of pre-marital sexual activity in the church is the same as that of the world?
- The world looks around and declares with joy that the divorce rate is dropping. They are right, but the reason is that the marriage rate is dropping. People are just shacking up and living in sin!
- How can that be when **32%** of professed Christians and **64%** of non-Christians say that they consume alcohol every month?

I could go on and on with that same kind of depressing mess, but I think the truth is evident! Our world is going to Hell in handbasket! While it does, it thinks all is well and good. It has a form of godliness, but denies the power thereof. This means people claim to be godly, but they refuse to repent of their sins and receive Jesus into their hearts. They refuse to allow the Lord God Almighty to be the Lord of their lives! Our world is already manifesting signs of the way things will be during the Tribulation Period. However, things will be far, far worse than this.

**C. Special Declaration** (v. 14)—Thankfully, not all the events of the Tribulation will be bad. During these years, God will raise up some men who will carry His message to the farthest ends of the globe. This great mission will be accomplished by two separate groups of preachers.

1. **The 144,000—Rev. 7:1–8**—God will raise up an army of Jewish preachers that He will seal, protect and send out to tell the world about the Lord Jesus Christ. The world system, the devil and the Antichrist will be powerless to stop these men from their appointed task.

2. **The Two Witnesses—Rev. 11:1–12**—These two mystery preachers will stand at the Wailing Wall outside the newly constructed third temple and they will preach the Word of God. All attempts to stop them will fail until the Lord allows them to be slain. Their bodies will lie in the streets of Jerusalem for 3 days while the world celebrates their deaths. Then, they will rise from the dead and ascend into Heaven.

(II. Even in this dark hour that will come upon the earth, God will have His men proclaiming His truth to a world that desperately needs to hear it. By the way, millions will be saved by the preaching during this period, **Rev. 7:9–17**. Now, if you are not saved, don't think you will wait until these fellows start ministering to be saved. What if you are part of that crowd that dies from war, starvation and disease? What if you are deceived by the devil and worship the Antichrist, **2 Thes. 2:12–13**? The time for you to be saved is right now. **2 Cor. 6:2; Isa. 55:6**. Where do you stand with God?).

*"...behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).*

Continued in Next Issue

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### **A Helper for All Occasions**

(part 3 of 3)

We have the Holy Spirit, the ultimate Helper, to carry us through life's trials. Message by Dr. Charles Stanley

### **All Scripture is Breathed Out by God—Continue in it**

In all your troubles, pain, joy, and pleasures, continue to stay in the Scriptures, because there's no better way to invest than in God's very words. Message by John Piper.

### **When the Problem is Your Spouse**

When you suspect your marriage problem is actually your spouse—what then? Message by Dean Inserra.

### **The Four Seasons of Marriage**

(part 2 of 3)

Join Emerson and Jonathan Eggerichs for part 2 of this three-part series. Why is marital paradise lost? Why do couples feel they have left Eden and live in a jungle of sorts? Since Scripture indicates couples will have trouble in this life, why are husbands and wives unprepared?

## August

### **How Does the Gospel Save Believers?**

The glorious hope of the gospel is that God Himself supplies the righteousness He demands from us. Message by John Piper.

### **How to Resist the Devil**

Join Charles Stanley as he teaches us how to become victorious over satanic attacks by submitting to the Holy Spirit.

### **When Being a Mom is Hard**

Is it possible to thrive in the mundane—when being a mom is hard? Listen to Liz Wann to find out.

### **The Four Seasons of Marriage**

(part 3 of 3)

Join Emmerson and Jonathan to learn why marital paradise is lost. Why do couples feel they have left Eden and live in a jungle of sorts? Since Scripture indicates that couples will have trouble in this life, why are husbands and wives...

## September

### **The Painful Discipline of Our Heavenly Father**

God is not an emergency room doctor responding to our hurts; He is the master surgeon who plans our hurts in order that He might do us greater good. Message by John Piper.

### **Parenting Kids When You're Far from Perfect**

When it comes to raising kids—what if perfection isn't the goal? Dave and Ann Wilson dive into the monumental task of parenting kids right here, right now.

### **Have You Seen These Crazy Cycles Between Managers and Employees?**

Men and women need love and respect as human beings in the workplace. Though there are daily demands to fulfill the mission of the organization apart from these emotional attitudes toward each other, that company will perform well when the men and women...

### **Success and Money**

Do you know what true success is all about? Message by Charles Stanley.

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*“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; YOU ARE FALLEN FROM GRACE” (Galatians 5:4).*

I am astonished at the people who continue to try to keep the law for righteousness. When the Bible speaks of “the law” it is the old covenant Law of Moses. The law has been replaced by a new and better covenant. Jesus came and fulfilled the law. He was the only person who ever kept the law perfectly.

We have the option to continue the futile attempt to please God by our efforts, and fail, or we can believe and put our full confidence and faith in what Jesus said He came to do: to save His people from their sins.

I have been contacted privately and challenged publicly concerning us today not keeping “the law.” Some have a concern that if we are not placed under a lot of law.. either Old Testament laws, or laws of their own invention, then we will be lawless and tossed about by Satan. Others have a genuine desire to keep the old covenant laws, at least the ones they choose to. Both are wrong.

We are called to go into all the world and make disciples teaching them to observe all the things that Jesus taught. I have never been called to teach people to keep old covenant laws. I do teach that Jesus gave us plenty of laws to keep: none greater than to love one another. I never teach that we are free to be lawless under grace. Rather it is grace that enables us to keep Christ’s commandments. Never is grace a license to sin. God forbid.

For those who want to keep Old Testament laws, please take your Bible and read the six chapters of Galatians. Then read it again. Then pray and ask God to give you understanding as you study the message contained therein. The

whole chapter deals with those who seek justification by keeping the law. As I quoted above, If we could be justified by law keeping, then Christ came in vain.

My encouragement is that everyone becomes a disciple of Jesus. Study His teachings, His life, His commandments, everything about Jesus. Be a follower of Jesus. After all, He is the only way to God. He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to God the father except by Him.

What about the good laws like the Ten Commandments? Surely we should keep them. Right?

I don’t make a big issue about it, but no, I do not keep the Ten Commandments. It would appear like I do, because most of the Ten Commandments have been repeated in the new covenant, and those I keep. But the old covenant, with its laws and rules and rituals and sacrifices, is no longer in effect. It is replaced by a new and better covenant. Hebrews 10 says that the first was taken away so that the second could be established. Hebrews 10 explains the new covenant and how and why it replaces the old.

The book of Galatians and also Romans clearly tells us that we can never attain righteousness in our own power. And

when we try, we are laying aside Gods grace, (fallen from grace) in order to establish our own righteousness. Roman 10 verse 3 says they are ignorant of Gods righteousness so they try to establish their own righteousness and by doing that they don’t submit themselves unto Gods righteousness. Serious stuff.

The book of Galatians has lots of warnings about not going back into the law. I can not express it any better than the following verse.

*“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1).*

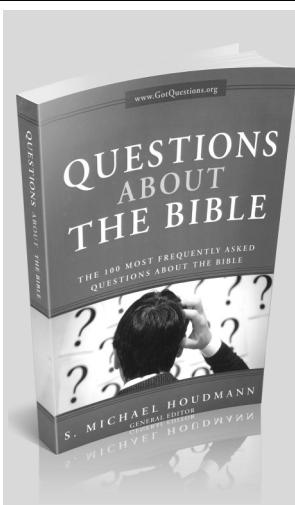
Two words that especially stand out are the words, “yoke” and “entangled.” The old law is a yoke and it is bondage. Law keeping tends to entangle people. Things like polygamy are an option etc.

Jesus came to save his people and to give us eternal life.

*“...forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14).*

Amen!

**END**



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## Where Did it Go?

—by Steve Stutzman

They HATED them.

Not disliked. Not resented. Not despised. Hated.

In the last week, I traversed some of Switzerland. I saw towering heights and stunning valleys and gorges, snow-capped peaks and green valleys. I also saw, photographed and entered multiple churches. I was looking for something.



I sat in some of the churches, looked at the stained glass and polished pipe organs. Was it still there? The hatred.

I drove thru Emmental Valley. I felt it. My spirit stood straight up on guard, as if I had been there before. I felt the fear glowering at me from the hillside. The serpent slithered about between the rocky cliffs buttressed against the mountains.

What caused humans, regular humans, to rise up against other humans: their neighbors, their cousins, their kinfolk, their friends? How could they rip their families apart, imprison, torture, and

murder them? How? WHY? Where did that level of HATRED come from?

They (Swiss Reformed) hated Anabaptists. Their response was demonic.

And then the real question I sought.... Where did it go? Is it still there? I don't experience that kind of a hated, pursued, persecuted, and hunted existence. My life is free.

Did the demons that hated, grow up? Did they get educated and civilized? Do they still hate the Life of Christ in human flesh, like they did in the Anabaptists? Or did they 'get over it'? Did they just move on to other methods of trying to kill and crush?

Jesus said not to marvel if there is a display of hatred for Divine Life. Today, the world celebrates Christianity (in the West)..... while the generation twists itself into a pretzel trying to be relevant and accepted by a demon-run culture.

I begin to feel like a freak from another planet.

So what would it take? What would it take for a generation to rise that would butcher their neighbors and family without voice or conscience? What would it take to shift society, until they

saw me as the #1 enemy that must be hunted down?

If God once again brought a world-shaking movement to earth, do you think for a minute that the devils would roll over and play dead? How many churches would respond directly to the voice of hell, and align themselves with evil?

These churches did. (Like it or not, these are the roots of Reformed theological churches today.)

And this castle has names like Yoder, Martin, and Miller carved in the stone basement, where they were held captive simply for knowing Christ.

Just thinking deeply... Two weeks ago I was with brothers who suffer extensively for Christ. They are today's Anabaptists. They are fearless heroes.

Why does the reality that burns in me, create so little disruption?

"Must I be carried to the skies  
On flowery beds of ease  
While others fought to win the prize  
And sailed thru bloody seas?"  
(Am I a Soldier of the Cross, by Isaac Watts)

My heart burns for reality. Not for persecution. We are instructed to pray for a quiet peaceful life. (1 Tim 2;2)

But what happened to the hatred?

Is it merely restrained?

## Love Your Enemies

—by David Bird

*"But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke 6:35).*

The litmus test of how much we really know God and are like Him is found in this verse. It's not how much Bible

knowledge we have or how active we are in our church or ministry, etc. It is how we treat people - NOT just our friends but much more importantly our ENEMIES, people who are hostile and unfriendly to us.

Are we cold in our heart toward them? Do we have a negative attitude toward them? Do we criticize them? If so, we need to be honest and admit that we are

far away from what God is like. We need to repent and ask God to soften our hearts and make us more like Jesus, who ALWAYS walked in LOVE, despite all the evil that people said about Him and did to Him.

*"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (I Cor 13:13).*

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## Jesus Above All

—By Joe Keim

### Colossians 2

- 3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
- 4 And this I say, **lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.**
- 5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.
- 6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:
- 7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.
- 8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.
- 9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

The early church continually struggled to keep their eyes on Jesus Christ. They took the spiritual gifts that God gave to the body and turned them into a man-made religion. They sought after visions and worshipped angels (Col 2). Rather than learning and growing in Jesus Christ (the Head of the church, the Vine, Cornerstone and Foundation of Christianity), they focused on and ran after healings, miracles, tongues (1 Cor 11-15). They elevated certain days of the week/month/year and worshipped "the day" instead of Jesus Christ (Rom 14 and Col 2).

Soon the body of Jesus Christ became puffed up! They were ever and only self-focused and fleshly minded - just like the world. Their humility was a false humility. The body of Christ brought confusion to the ones who

were surrendering their lives to Jesus Christ. It was a mess!

This self-worship and confusion led to sinful lifestyles in the church. It led to division, gluttony, fornication, and drunkenness. Some were dying because God said ENOUGH is enough and ended their lives early (1 Cor 11)!

In addition to making religions out of God's gifts to the church, the body of Jesus Christ made another very big mistake when they began to follow the leaders of the church instead of Jesus Christ. They elevated teachers and preachers over Jesus Christ. They enjoyed microwave Christianity more than they did faithfulness and endurance.

We are seeing the same mistakes being made in our generation today. Some of

us are following men and ministries instead of Jesus Christ. Some of us are making religions out of God's gifts. Some of us are living in the moment instead of eternity.

I urge myself first and you also, let's keep our eyes on Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. He is our Rock! Our Cornerstone! The Foundation of the Faith. The Way! The Truth! The Life!

Far too many have and will continue to follow the crowds, the noise, the action, and the drama. None of these should ever take the place of the One who gave HIS all for you and me!

Now that Jesus has been lifted high and worshipped above all else, enjoy His goodness and all the gifts He readily disperses among His sons and daughters in the Kingdom.