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The Secret of the Strength

— by Peter Hoover

CHAPTER 1

A Man Hanging by His Thumb

The sun shines on Klundert, green lowland plains lying flat as far as eye can see. Tourists visit Klundert. They take pictures: fields of flowers and vegetables. Thunderheads rise, making rows of poplars alongside canals of Noord Brabant look small. Long canals, they cut straight through the shimmering plains until they lose themselves in the haze where land and sky meet sea. “We like the peace of Noord Brabant,” say the tourists, “It does the heart good.”

But there is much the tourists do not know.

Klundert, tidy Dutch village in Noord Brabant, stands on blood. The blood of Anabaptists was shed here.

Anabaptists gathered at Klundert throughout the mid-sixteenth century. They came, sneaking out of nearby cities, to meet in secret on the fields. Sometimes they gathered in the homes of Elsen Deeken or Jan Peetersz, a servant of the Word. On August 5, 1571, about a hundred Anabaptists met at the Peetersz home in Klundert. Some came from Haarlem, some from Ley-

den, and many from towns not far away. During the meeting a young couple was going to get married, but they did not get that far.

The town magistrate and his assistant were sitting at Gerrit Vorster’s house, drinking. Someone told him about the Anabaptist gathering. He said: “We will root up that nest and get rid of them at once!” Twice he sent one of his men to listen at the Peetersz house. “Straight Peter” a tailor lived in the front part of the house. Jan Peetersz lived in the back where the people met. After nine o’clock the spies found the meeting in session. They heard someone preaching and saw the light of many candles in the room. Then the magistrate and his men, well armed with guns, halberds, swords, and other weapons broke in through all doors at once. They grabbed left and right. But most of the Anabaptists, ready for such an emergency, escaped up the stairs, through a hole in the roof, or back through a hall and out of openings in the wall.

When the raid was over, the magistrate’s men held six men and several women: Peter the tailor, Geleyn Cornelis of Middelharnis near Somerdijk, Arent Block of Zevenbergen, Cornelis

de Gyselaar, and a sixteen- or seventeen-year-old boy who worked for Straight Peter the tailor. The captives were led to Gerrit Vorster’s house where the women escaped. They handcuffed the men and kept them under guard. The next morning Michael Gerrits, an uncle of Cornelis de Gyselaar, came to see him. Also an Anabaptist, Michael came to encourage Cornelis to stand for Christ, no matter what might take place. The magistrate seized Michael too.

They confiscated the property of the prisoners, so their wives fled from Klundert with nothing. Then they called on the school teacher to dispute with the prisoners. He wrote up a report in which he said: “They do not baptise infants. They cannot believe that Christ had his flesh and blood from Mary, and they regard themselves as the little flock and the elect of God. But their lives are better than the lives of many others. They bring up their children in better discipline and fear of God than many other people. Their children in school are better students and learn more readily than the rest.”

The magistrate kept the prisoners in Gerrit Vorster’s house until noon of Aug. 7, 1571. Then he took them to

Breda to be tortured. Straight Peter, the tailor, gave up the faith, so they only beheaded him. The rest, including his teenage worker, remained steadfast. One had his hands tied behind his back to be suspended by them and whipped. Another was pulled to the utmost on the rack. While in this helpless condition they held his mouth open to urinate into it and over his body. But Geleyn Cornelis was treated worst of all. They stripped off his clothes and hung him up by his right thumb with a weight hanging from his left foot. Then they singed off his body hair, burning him in tender places with candles, and beat him. Finally the men, tired of torturing the prisoners, took to playing cards. They played for over an hour while Geleyn hung, by now unconscious, until the commissioner of the Duke of Alba said: "Seize him again. He must tell us something! A drowned calf is a small risk."



Jan Luyken, Dutch artist, poet and bar-room entertainer (married to a barmaid) found Christ as a 24-year-old in 1668. Radically transformed, he became a member of an Anabaptist community and spent the rest of his life buying back and destroying what he had painted or composed for the devil. On 104 copper plates Jan engraved scenes, such as this one of Geleyn Cornelis, for the *Martyrs Mirror*, published in 1685.

At first they thought Geleyn was dead. They shook him until he revived, but he did not recant.

They burned Geleyn Cornelis, Jan Peetersz, and the young boy first. The wind came the wrong way and blew the fire away from Geleyn's stake, so

the executioner had to push and hold his body into the flames with a fork.



Anabaptist home in Noord Brabant where, nearly five centuries after the burnings at Klundert, new conversions and baptisms have again taken place—this time at the hands of Hutterite believers from America. The cost of following Jesus in the Netherlands has not grown less, and today's believers face spiritual opposition of an intensity never seen before. Pray for them.

When they led Cornelis de Gyselaar and Arent Block to the stakes, Arent dropped a letter hoping that some Anabaptist in the crowd would notice it and snatch it up. But the Duke's men saw it first and took the two men back to prison for another torturing session. They did not recant and they refused to betray any of their brothers in the faith. Shortly afterward, they burned Cornelis, his uncle Michael Gerrits, and Arent Block.

Since 1571 there have been no more Anabaptists at Klundert. Tourists come-with Bermuda shorts, sunglasses, paper cups of Coke, and with camera strings flapping in the fresh spring breeze. They like Noord Brabant. But there is much the tourists do not know.

CHAPTER 2

What Was the Secret of the Strength?

For as long as I can remember, people have told me Anabaptist stories. In fact, I distinctly remember the first time they told me about Geleyn Cornelis, who hung from his thumb. I was not yet going to school. It was on a Sunday evening in southern Ontar-

io, and we had many visitors. (My father was an Orthodox Mennonite minister.) All of us sat around our long kitchen table on which a kerosene lamp stood to light a circle of solemn faces: women in dark dresses with large white head coverings, and men with suspenders and their hair cut round. I was sitting on someone's lap while one of the visitors told the story of Geleyn Cornelis. I never forgot it, and I live to this day deeply aware of the challenge put to me by my Anabaptist ancestors.

I am challenged by the strength of their convictions, by the strength of their endurance in persecution-and above all, by the sheer strength of the early Anabaptist movement itself

Within thirty years of the first baptisms in Switzerland, in a secret meeting of a few people, the movement drew incredible thousands-perhaps more than a hundred thousand converts to Christ, and this in the face of the bitterest persecution.

Congregations of Anabaptists sprang up almost overnight. On Palm Sunday, 1525, only two months after his own baptism Conrad Grebel baptised several hundred in the Sitter river at Sankt Gallen in Switzerland. Ten years later, the movement had reached the far comers of the German world. All of ancient Swabia: Switzerland, the Tyrol, Salzburg, Wurttemberg, Bavaria, Ansbach, and the Kurpfalz, as well as central Germany: Hesse, Thuringia and Saxony had been affected. Entire regions of southern Germany, whole towns, were reported to have "gone Anabaptist." In Moravia, Anabaptist communities eventually numbered 60,000 members. In the Netherlands, Belgium, the Lower Rhine region in Germany, Holstein, and along the Baltic Sea to East Prussia, the movement raced like a fire.

Due to favourable winds?

Hardly. Within those same ten years innumerable Anabaptists were imprisoned, exiled, and put to death by Roman Catholic and Protestant authorities. Anabaptists had white-hot rods pushed down their legs, their tongues screwed onto their gums, and their fingers chopped off. Some had gun powder tied to their bodies or crammed into their mouths to be set on fire. Some were beheaded. Some were drowned. Some were buried alive and many more burned at the stake.

The Anabaptist movement was a city movement in the beginning. Born in Zurich, it branched out quickly into the largest cities of central Europe: Strasbourg, Augsburg, Regensburg, Salzburg and Worms. Soon afterward, it reached Aachen, Gent, Utrecht, Amsterdam, Emden, Hamburg, Lubeck, Danzig, and even Königsberg (now Kaliningrad) in East Prussia. On back streets by lantern light, in town squares during public executions, everywhere, Anabaptists preached and lives were changed. Christian communities took shape and in the bond of love that united them the Kingdom of Heaven came to earth.

What was "the secret of their great strength"?



"Anabaptist Compound" says this sign on a Slovakian street corner, in translation. The first Anabaptists, particularly those that lived in community of goods, liked to rent ghetto-like courtyards, surrounded by multi-storied housing and shops in cities that tolerated them. This allowed everyone to work and live as members of one family in Christ.

A woman called Delilah once asked that question. And the more I think about it, the more parallels I see between the Anabaptist movement and Delilah's husband.

The Anabaptists began with spectacular accomplishments-but they met spectacular defeats.

The Anabaptists began as the only peace church, the only nonviolent movement in a violent age-but it did not take long until many divisions weakened them and obscured their witness to the world.

The Anabaptists began in great light from heaven, in true faith and personal conviction-but many of them became bound by tradition, blindly and pitifully treading the mill of meaningless custom.

In the beginning the Anabaptists were free, even in bonds. Now many of them are bound, even in freedom. Truly, their weaknesses and failures, like Samson's, have become apparent to all. But what, in the beginning, was the secret of their great strength?

That is the question I began to ask myself while growing up with horses and buggies, bare houses, and serious-minded German people in southern Ontario.

Was the secret of the Anabaptists' strength their return to the Scriptures? No. Most of the early Anabaptists could not read, and few owned Bibles. Christians today know the Scriptures as well, or better than they-but without the strength.

Was their secret a sound church structure and submission to men in God-given authority? No. The Anabaptist movement spread over central and northern Europe before it had any structure at all. Its early leaders were self-appointed and unofficial, many of them in their late teens or in their twenties. Many of them got killed.

Was their secret a connection to an evangelical tradition that had gotten passed on from generation to generation in the mountains of Europe? No. The Anabaptists inherited no sacred "body of tradition" from anyone. They were all new converts-not tradition keepers, but tradition breakers. There is no evidence of a single contact between them and the Waldenses, Albigenses, or other movements before them.

So what, finally, was their secret? Was it a return to perfectly correct doctrine and applications? No. All of the first Anabaptist leaders taught some things that were incorrect: an impossible view of the incarnation, mistaken eschatology, misunderstood Latin terms about separation from the backslidden, and the like. And in their applications of Bible principles, the early Anabaptists varied greatly. But for more than a century the Spirit of God moved among them in a truly miraculous way.

What a great secret! What a mystery! In spite of appalling weaknesses and a lack of education, of seasoned leadership, of church structure, of unified practice, of experience, of established tradition ... even in spite of errors in their teaching, the Anabaptist movement shook Europe so that like the first Christians, they were accused of turning the world upside down.

Four centuries later, I grew up inwardly aware, always conscious of our glorious "Anabaptist heritage" ... and wondering, already as a child, how they could accomplish so much and we so little. We heard our parents tell about the Anabaptists on long winter evenings. We learned about them in school, and we heard about them in the unpainted, wooden interior of our meetinghouse where we met to sing and pray. But already as a child I began to suspect the Anabap-

tists, like Samson, knew something-some secret-that we did not.

Now I am beginning to sense there is yet more to the Samson comparison: After Samson lost his strength and spent a long time blind, shackled, and treading the mill in prison, his secret came back to him. Little by little his great strength came back. He could feel it in his bones! Then, on the day of the feast in the idol's temple, poor old blind Samson came back. Thousands came to see him. Some smiled and giggled, pointing at his blindness and chains: "There he is! There is the man who sent the foxes through our fields! There is the man who struck down a thousand with a donkey's jawbone and walked off with our city gates. But just look at him now! He's blind. He doesn't know who's leading him around. Just look at the funny old man!"



Today's Anabaptists, of the more conservative groups, tend to live in orderly, quiet seclusion, as on this Old Order Mennonite farm in Ontario, Canada. To be "the quiet in the land" and to keep themselves from the corruption of the world has become their ideal.

While the words were still in their mouths, the Philistines began to stare. What was Samson doing! What was going on! He was pushing. Great muscles rippled along his biceps. Mighty legs braced themselves, and the pillars began to move, the roof began to sway ... and nobody remembered the crash, for the screams and curses of thousands who slid and thousands who saw them fall were silent, after the idol's temple came down.

In the end, Samson's great strength came back to accomplish more in

death than in life-and his name went down with the faithful in Hebrews eleven.

Any parallels?

I am fascinated with the possibility of an ongoing parallel between Samson's life and the Anabaptist movement.

The Anabaptists, like Samson, were once the terror of the populace. Governments spent all they had to get rid of them. Their writings were outlawed on pain of death.

But the Anabaptist movement, like Samson, grew old and feeble. No one is afraid of it anymore. Thousands come to look at the Mennonites, the Amish, and the Hutterites (the Anabaptists' descendants). Some smile and giggle, pointing at their quaint clothes and customs: "There they are! There are the people who dared defy the pope (and Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin besides)! There are the people who sang on their way to be burned at the stake, who had their fingers chopped off or their tongues cut out rather than give up what they believed. But just look at them now! They're blind. They don't know who's leading them around. Just look at the funny people!"

What they don't know is that the Anabaptist movement, like Samson, may yet have some life in it.

Something may be happening. New faces, new family names, new tradition-breakers (home-schoolers, seekers, hungry and thirsty Bible readers) are popping up out of nowhere, right out of our modern Dark Ages, to stir up the old Mennonite, Amish, and Hutterite communities. What would happen if some of those seekers, and some of those "plain people" should start remembering together-if they would rediscover the secret of the strength, the muscles would start rip-

pling, the shackles would fall, and the pillars of the idol's temple would start to move?

Just what would happen?

In this book I want to allow the first Anabaptists to answer that question.

CHAPTER 3

The Woman Who Had a Baby in Jail

In 1637 they caught the minister, Hans Meyli, of the Horgerberg, in the foothills of the Alps south of Lake Zurich in Switzerland. They tried him and threw him into the Oetenbach tower dungeon, but after forty-three weeks he escaped. The Protestant authorities (of Zwingli's Reformed Church) were furious. They did continual house searches and harrassed the believers. Thirty *Taufe.tjager* (Anabaptist hunters) found out where the Meylis lived and with bare swords and firearms stormed the house, hacking through doors and throwing things around to find the escaped minister. They cursed and swore and blasphemed God. When they realised that he was not there, they took his two sons, Hans Jr. and Martin Meyli captive. Martin was already married. They grabbed his young wife and tied her up tightly. Her name was Anna. She had a fourteen-week-old baby, which they took from her and gave to people from the state church to keep. They took the captives to Zurich, tried them and locked them up in the Oetenbach tower.

They took off the men's clothes and chained them to the stone floor for twenty weeks, torturing them with spiders and caterpillars. They gave them just enough food and water to stay alive. But the prisoners would not recant. After one year the two men escaped "with undamaged con-

sciences" and after two years, on Good Friday, 1641, Anna escaped as well. They fled from place to place, but the people betrayed them. Anna fell into the hands of the *Taufenjäger* again and was imprisoned, first at the Oetenbach, then in the Spital jail. This time she was expecting a baby. They left her shackled until the pains of labour came upon her. Then they loosened her to have the baby, and "with the help and grace of God" she escaped. After her husband found her they fled across the mountains and through the Black Forest to Germany.

That woman, Anna (Baer) Meyli, was my ancestor, eleven generations removed.

When I repented and chose to follow Christ at the age of fifteen, I wanted nothing more than to follow her on the narrow way to eternal life. But I did not know for sure which way that was.

We lived among twenty-five kinds of Mennonites and Amish in one densely populated county in southern Ontario. From the most acculturated to the most traditional, every type of Anabaptism was represented there. Every group claimed to be a legitimate heir of the "Anabaptist heritage" we all had in common, and they all claimed to be travelling on the narrow way. But their claims became jumbled in my mind.

During the 1950s, my parent's group (which had left another one in 1917) suffered a deep inner crisis. My parents then took part in establishing the group in which I was born and spent my childhood. When I was 13 we entered another time of turmoil, and my father became the lead minister of a new brotherhood. Then, two years later, we practically disintegrated, and now, by the time I was a young teenager, we were not attending meetings at all.

That a true remnant of the true church still existed somewhere -surely somewhere -among the Anabaptists' descendants, we felt certain. My father spoke of making a trip through the eastern United States and visiting all groups that looked like possibilities for a safe church home. But we had little hope that the trip would do any good. All our lives we had lived in a constant struggle over lifestyle issues—what to allow, or what to reject as "worldly" and of the devil. My parents never wavered in their dedication to Anabaptist beliefs. They kept on looking for something suitable among the groups. One of my sisters had contact with the Amish. But I turned, on long Sundays at home, to the Anabaptist writings. . . .

Late on a cold afternoon in 1975 a Stadtler (a man from the city) stepped from the Canadian winter into the dim light of our horse stable where I was working. His car had slid off the road and he had gotten stuck. I pulled him out with the heavy team and he gave me fifteen dollars. Another man gave me ten for the same reason, and I began to look forward to fresh snowfalls. With my money I bought the *Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, the *Aelteste Chronik der Hutterischen Bruder*, the *Ausbund*, the *Artikel und Ordnungen der Christlichen Gemeinde* and all other Anabaptist-Mennonite books I could afford. A friend of our family, J. Winfield Fretz of Conrad Grebel College, took a special interest in my studies. He gave me valuable books and directed me to Mennonite college archives in the United States and Canada. Another Mennonite professor, Frank H. Epp, became a personal friend and inspiration to me. He let me "work" on his unpublished manuscripts and introduced me to Anabaptist social concerns.

Then I met a World War II refugee from Yugoslavia. This man, living in

the city of Kitchener, Ontario, knew history and owned a wealth of rare and untranslated Anabaptist writings. He was not primarily a historian, nor a scholar, but he spent hours with me, a fifteen-year-old, intensely, earnestly, calling me beyond what I knew of the Anabaptists into strange and exciting territory.

It was in my contacts with this man, and while reading the literature he gave me from the Anabaptists in southern Germany and Moravia, that I began to sense, for the first time, a clue to their secret. I began to sense an incredible power behind the things they wrote, the power of a *new world coming, a time when men are free ... and we shall be his people and He shall reign in peace!*

Beyond the darkness and gloom of four centuries, beyond the tunnels of the traditional, the historical, and the academic, I began to see a strange new light in the accounts of those who went out "with shining eyes" to die. Dimly at first, but slowly and surely it dawned on me as a young teenager, that this light from heaven would surely break forth again, and that *someday a strong wind would blow and the raindrops and clouds would be gone ... and the darkness would leave me, and the sunshine would see me, as I walk . . . as I walk ... a new road.*

That new road has been longer and rougher and narrower than I expected, and it is definitely taking me to where I did not plan to go. It is taking me from the shelter of a long-established "background" into the raw uncertainty of going out, not knowing where to or with whom. It is taking me from the riches of my "goodly heritage" into dreadful loneliness—the forsaken loneliness of the

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Daniel 8:23–27

Intro: To say the least, the Bible is a complex book. Nowhere is this more true than in the area of prophecy. Just about every Bible teacher has his own opinion about how things will work out. What this results in is confusion on the part of the Christians in the pews. What I would like to do is shed a little light on a few areas of prophecy. I do not claim to have all the answers, but I am going to attempt to preach about several prophetic themes that are presented in the Word of God. I would like to try to present these studies in the order in which they will happen on God's prophetic calendar. Last Sunday, we looked at the Rapture of the Church. Today, I would like to preach for a while on **The Truth About Satan's Superman**. This sermon will focus on the life and work of the person who is known as the Antichrist.

Why a series on prophecy? Because many in our modern churches do not know what lies ahead. Because many all around us need to prepare for the coming of the Lord. Because the time is short and we need to hear the truth.

Some 40 billion people have lived on the earth since Adam was created in the Garden of Eden. Since that time, the world has witnessed the advent of many talented, intelligent and powerful people. However, none of these who has ever lived is able to match this man who will be known as the Antichrist. He will be powerful, deceitful, intelligent, brutal, ruthless and efficient. He will represent the pinnacle of all that man can achieve apart from God. He will literally be Satan's Superman. Let's see

what the Bible says about him.

I. The Appearance of Satan's Superman (v. 23)

(Our text tells us that in the end times, a fierce king will stand up. But, what are the signs of his appearing? Can men know when this man will appear? The answer to that question is both **"Yes"** and **"No."** I am certain that no man knows exactly who the Antichrist is or exactly when he will appear, but the Bible does tell us that there are certain signs that accompany his appearance. It is these signs that I would like to look at for a few minutes.)

A. The Condition Of The World—When this man makes his entrance, the world will be in a terrible moral condition. This is evidenced by two passages that make reference to the end times, **Luke 17:26–27; 2 Tim. 3:1–5**. It is easy to see that our world already bears the marks that suggest a fulfillment of these conditions. It is my conviction that the world itself is ready for Satan's Superman to appear.

B. The Corruption Of Religion—2 Thes. 2:3 tells us that the Antichrist will appear during a time of a religious apostasy, which the Bible calls **"a falling away."** This refers to a time when organized, visible religion will depart from the doctrines of the Word of God. Since the New Testament was written for and about believers, it makes sense to conclude that this falling away will be apparent in churches and denominations which operate under the umbrella of Christianity.

(Ill. I hope everyone understands that just because a church or denomination calls itself a Christian work, that does not truly make it so! In fact, the days in which we live are marked by a rapid departure from the foundational truths of Christianity. There was a time when, if a man said he was a Christian, you

pretty much knew what he believed. There might have been a few doctrinal differences, but for the most part, this person believed in the virgin birth of Christ, the substitutionary death and resurrection of Christ, the return of Christ, and the fact that the Bible is the Word of God. In other words, a Christian was a person who was in a personal relationship with Jesus and accepted all that the Bible teaches concerning Him and His work. Now, however, things have changed! A person may deny the virgin birth and still claim to be a Christian! A person may call themselves a Christian and cast doubt on the accuracy of the Bible. A person may doubt that Jesus really died and rose from the dead and still claim they are saved. Something is wrong with this picture! We are living in the midst of a **"great falling away!"** Cults are growing by leaps and bounds while genuine Christianity consistently finds itself under the gun from society, government and organized religion.)

(Ill. Just this summer the Southern Baptist Convention took steps to remove from their doctrinal statement any room for liberals and modernists to wiggle. This move brought cries of protest from the world and from the liberal crowd within the convention. This is just another indication that the tide is swiftly turning against those who believe the Bible and who know Jesus Christ.)

(Ill. When denominations have to take votes on whether to marry homosexuals, or to allow homosexuals to be ordained, something is wrong! There are things that are nailed down so firmly in the Word of God that there should never be a question about them. However, we are seeing every major doctrine under attack. We see churches and denominations turning away from the truth with alarming speed. Truly we are in the midst of apostasy!)

(III. If this is the case, then what hinders the Antichrist from appearing at any moment and what keeps the Tribulation from starting? There is one event that must take place before the Antichrist can be revealed and before the Tribulation Period can commence.)

C. The Completion Of The Church—2 Thes. 2:6–7—These verses teach us the truth that the church must be removed before the Antichrist can be revealed. Verse 6 tells us that there is something that “withholdeth”. Verse 7 says that there is One Who “letteth.” The two words are translated from the same Greek word and both mean “to hinder.” The Bible tells us, in verse 7, that the spirit of Antichrist is already at work. That is why we can see the evidence all around us. However, there are two forces that hinder him from stepping onto the stage and making his presence known. What are those two hindrances? The Church and the Holy Spirit! The work of the Spirit in convicting and judging the hearts of men is a tremendous retraining force in the world, **John 16:8–11**. The Spirit’s work in filling the Church to stand against the tide of evil is also a great hindrance to the work of the spirit of Antichrist. However, one day, both of these forces will be removed! When? At the Rapture!

(III. It is worthy to note at this point that the Tribulation is not for the church! It is called, “*the time of Jacob’s trouble*” (**Jer. 30:7**). It was told to Daniel that the Tribulation was a time for Israel (**Dan. 9:27**). The Tribulation Period is also known as a “time of God’s Wrath” (**Rev. 6:16–17; Rev. 16:1**). The Bible clearly teaches that God’s children have been saved from wrath through Jesus (**Rom. 5:9**). One of the greatest proofs that the church will not see Tribulation is Christ’s promise to the church at Philadelphia, “*Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from*

the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (**Rev. 3:10**).

(III. There are some who would tell us that the church will go through the first 3½ years of the Tribulation. However, to believe this view, you have to believe that many of the Lord’s prophecies to Israel also apply to the church. The fact of the matter is, if you interpret the Bible literally, you have to believe that the church leaves this world before the Tribulation Period.)

II. The Abilities of Satan’s Superman (v. 23b)

A. He Will Be A Man Of Popularity—**Rev. 6:2** tells us that this man will be “*given a crown*.” That is, the peoples of the world will embrace him as a godsend. No doubt this man will arrive on the scene with a workable formula for world peace. He will have a viable explanation for the disappearance of the Christians. He will embody all the world has ever looked for in a leader. It is said that the Antichrist will possess:

1. The Leadership of a Washington or a Lincoln
2. The Eloquence of a Franklin Roosevelt
3. The Charm of a Theodore Roosevelt
4. The Charisma of a John F. Kennedy
5. The Popularity of a Dwight Eisenhower
6. The Political Savvy of a Lyndon Johnson
7. The Intellect of a Thomas Jefferson

My friends, whether we will admit it or not, the world stage is set for the appearance of such a man! He will be popular!

B. He Will Be A Man Of Peace—**Rev. 6:2** tells us that when he appears, he will be like one riding a white horse. This gives him the appearance of good. It also states that he will have a bow,

but no arrows. This indicates that he will not come making war, but will come making peace. This is proven by what Daniel saw in **Dan. 9:27**. It seems this man will make a 7 year peace treaty with the nation of Israel.

(III. Again, it can be clearly seen that our world is looking for such a leader. The world is tired of war! Economies are in need of help and people want to prosper and dwell in peace and safety. The world will readily embrace a man with a message of peace.)

(III. The world will never know peace apart from Jesus Christ! While this world is in turmoil this morning, the children of God know peace in their hearts, **John 14:27**. When Jesus returns to this earth, He will usher in a genuine peace that will last. If you are looking for peace, you will find it only in Jesus!)

C. He Will Be A Man Of Prosperity—**Dan. 11:43; Rev. 13:16–17**. The Antichrist will eventually control the wealth of the world. He will bring prosperity to those who have lived in poverty. I am convinced that the Antichrist will bring an end to world hunger. That he will do away with much of the class distinction that exists in our world. That most people under his reign will be better off financially than they were before he rose to power.

(III. This is one area of this rule that will bring him lasting success. People like to prosper! Just look at America! We have a President who has been impeached. He is morally bankrupt. He heads an administration that has witnessed more scandal than any other in American history. All around him, people in positions of power have been convicted of crimes and are doing prison time. He, himself, is about to be disbarred as a lawyer, and he faces criminal charges when he leaves office. In spite of all that, most Americans support Bill Clinton. Why? Because they

are better off financially than they were before he came into office. The bottom line? A world leader who can promise and produce prosperity will be a very popular man!)

D. He Will Be A Man Of Power—Rev. 13:7–8. These verses tell us that Antichrist will eventually rule the entire world. Conquerors down through the ages have sought this lofty goal without success. He will achieve it! What men won't recognize, or won't care about is the fact that he receives his power from Satan himself, **Dan. 8:24**. He will become so large in the eyes of humanity that they will literally worship him as their god.

(Ill. All of this will be true of him in the beginning of his reign. However, in the middle of the Tribulation, this man of peace and prosperity will show his true colors. This brings us to our third thought concerning this superman from Hell.)

To Be Continued in May 2023 Issue

Continued from page 5...The Secret of the Strength

cross, where all men are equally poor. Out of the familiar traditions of my childhood into a frightening, totally unknown world, where "backgrounds" do not count, where terrible consequences must be taken in stride, where glances into the dark night ahead make the blood run cold ... with visions of hatred and rejection, of high-sounding religious denunciations, of fierce opposition from family and friends, a world of coercion, of fire-arms and murder, of castle dungeons and bloody torture, of treachery and terror and death.

This new road, I have discovered, is the road of the woman who had her baby in jail. Do you want to be on it?

If not, you should forget about finding the secret of the strength and stop reading this book.

To Be Continued in the May 2023 Issue

*Life is better when you are happy,
but life is at its best
when others are happy because of you!*

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (Jn 13:35).

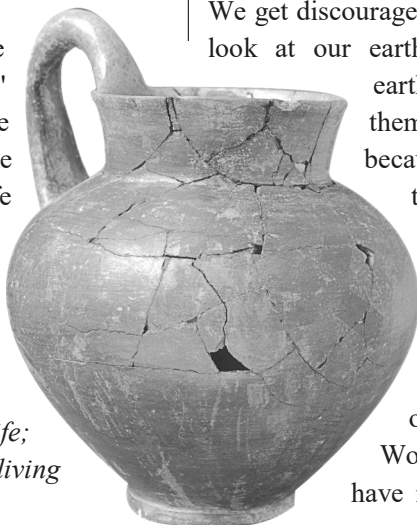
Trading Discouragement for Encouragement

—by Eli Lee

With so many blessings, why do we get discouraged? We get discouraged because our bodies were created with material from this earth, and we tend to look at the things of this earth. That's why.

But "WE" are not these earthen bodies. "WE" originated from the breath of God when He breathed the breath of life into this earthen body.

"And the Lord God formed man of dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen 2:7).



We are trapped inside this earthen body for our stay on this earth. Like Paul said in 2 Cor. 4:7, we have this treasure (Life in Christ) in clay pots, or earthen vessels.

We get discouraged because we tend to look at our earthly body and other earthly things and see them deteriorating, or because we believe who the world says we are. But, if we remember who we really are and fix our eyes on Christ in faith, renewing our mind daily by His Word and His Spirit, we have no reason to be dis-

couraged (if we belong to Christ), but rather live in gratefulness and great joy knowing we will soon be rescued from this body of death.

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16).

If we are not renewing our mind with the Word daily, that may very well be why we are discouraged.

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

— part 3 —

Anabaptist Survival Strategies

While Anabaptist in northern Europe were occupied with solving internal matters, the Anabaptists in southern Europe, especially Switzerland, were facing persecution and hardship. After 1614, the Swiss government ceased killing Anabaptists in order to avoid creating religious martyrs. However, the persecution did not end. The Swiss Anabaptists were imprisoned, fined and exiled. These measures were meant to discourage Anabaptist growth.

From 1648 on, an unexpected opportunity came for Anabaptists looking for a peaceful existence. The Thirty Year War had come to an end and the population had dropped drastically. In some places, only half of the inhabitants had survived. Farmland lay bare with no one to cultivate it. The situation was so desperate that rulers invited the cast-out Anabaptists to come work their lands. Many moved to the Palatinate and Alsace region. The duke of Alsace, however, set conditions: the Anabaptists could live in freedom, but could not proselytize, build church buildings, or meet in large groups. Despite these restrictions and heavier taxes, many Anabaptists saw this as a better opportunity than staying in Switzerland and undergoing the harassment and persecution that they had suffered for years.

New Disagreements Arise

The Anabaptists who remained in Switzerland continued to face hardship and persecution, and therefore occasionally chose to visit the state church. The help of non-Anabaptists neighbours could mean the difference between imprisonment and freedom. Neighbours who were sympathetic, hid the Anabaptists, interceded for them, or provided important social and political contacts.

This group became known as “Half-Anabaptists” (*Halbtäufer*) or “True-hearted” (*Treuherzige*).

The question arose: could the true-hearted be saved? Anabaptists in Palatinate and Alsace viewed them as unsaved. They drew a strict distinction between people inside and outside the Anabaptist church. The church would not rely on the true-hearted for help in times of trouble. God alone would see them through. This group took shunning seriously and practiced a strict avoidance toward wayward members.

A different view was held by most of the Swiss Anabaptists. They held the view that they simply could not know whether the true-hearted were saved – God alone would judge their hearts.

Jacob Ammann and Hans Reist

In the midst of this disagreement, a man named Jacob Ammann arose in the Anabaptist group in the Alsace region. Not much is known about him, but it is clear that he was a recent convert who did not grow up in a Mennonite family. He called for change and revival within the church and proposed for more frequent communion services. Preparation for the Lord’s supper included examining one’s life and relationships with God and other people. Ammann believed that more frequent communion would encourage members to give greater attention to their lives and also imply stricter church discipline, since people living in open sin would be kept away from the communion table.

Hans Reist, of Switzerland, balked at Ammann’s ideas. He was a friend of the true-hearted and kept the possibility open that they could be saved. Reist also did not practice strict social shunning of wayward members. For him, it was enough to exclude them from the yearly communion table.

Since the matter was disturbing and confusing the congregations, it was decided to hold a public debate between Ammann and Reist. Reist did not show up. A second invitation for a public debate was sent out to all ministers. Again – Reist did not attend. Someone was dispatched to urgently ask Reist to attend. He refused, stating that he was busy with harvesting. Jacob Ammann was furious and placed Reist under the ban. A shock wave went through those present and everyone waited for someone to speak a word of peace. However, the only words spoken, were the words of Peter Zimmerman, Ammann’s associate: “There you have it.”

Ammann wrote letters to all the congregations, asking them to choose a side. The congregations that sided with Reist or remained undecided by March 7, 1694, would be shunned by the congregations that sided with Ammann. These congregations soon became known as the “Ammanish Leit” or “Amish.” Thus, the Amish church was born.

Perhaps because Ammann was a tailor, he put importance in the appearance of people. Men were to wear untrimmed beards. Buttons, which were connected to the ornamental style of military uniforms, were forbidden. Ammann also forbade moustaches, which were often worn by soldiers.

A few years later Ammann and other Amish leaders felt they had acted too quickly – but it was too late to make the schism undone. They could not come to an agreement with the Mennonites anymore. Several Amish leaders – including Ammann himself, excommunicated themselves from the church, as an expression of their repentance. Since the Amish and Mennonites never reconciled, Ammann, unfortunately, died while being in the ban he had put himself in.

END

The name Christian was given to the early believers by unbelievers. It was a name of ridicule and mockery. Early believers called themselves brothers, believers, disciples, and saints. The word 'Christian' is used only three times in the New Testament:

- * Where the world called the believers at Antioch Christians. (Acts 11:26)
- * Where King Agrippa uses the name in scorn. (Acts 26:28)
- * Here in 1 Peter 4:16, where it reads: *"Yet if any man suffer 'as a Christian,' let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God..."*

*"Beloved, **think it not strange** concerning the **fiery trial** which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: ¹³ But **rejoice**, inasmuch as **ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings**; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be **glad** also with **exceeding joy**. ¹⁴ If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, **happy** are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: **on their part** he is evil spoken of, but **on your part**, he is glorified"* (1 Peter 4:12-14).

Following are excerpts from a discussion I had with friends about the above topic:

PERRY:

Thank you for sharing Joe. I had studied this about a year ago and I actually struggle calling myself a Christian. When someone would ask me if I was a Christian, I would say, "No. I'm a follower of Christ."

BELINDA:

I believe the label "Christian" is so misused. Many profess to be Christians but do not follow Christ. Their lifestyle and

the fruits of their life say otherwise. I like to say that I am a follower of Christ. He says to take up our cross and follow Him. That's what I strive to do. What did Jesus do? Are we doing those things? Are we crucifying our flesh to truly follow Him?

HARVEY:

Unbelievers had nothing to do with naming the name 'Christian.' It was prophesied by the mouth of the Lord many years before Jesus was born to a virgin. (Is. 62:2; 56:5)

ANDY:

Harvey, Isa 62:2 *"And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name."*

Isa 56:5 *"Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off."*

I do not find the word "Christian" in either one of your verses! I think I know what that "new name" is. "One in Christ."

Eph 2:11-15 *"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; ¹²That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: ¹³But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; ¹⁵Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances;*

for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace."

"Of twain (Uncircumcision and Circumcision) one NEW MAN!" What is the name of that one new man? The Body of Christ! Both Jew and Gentile can become part of the ONE BODY of CHRIST!

HARVEY:

Wisdom tells me that Christians are indeed in one body - the church, in Christ (Eph. 4: 4; Col. 1:18), not in any man-made and man-named denominations of which there are so many. You say you "think you know" what the new name is. But God, prophesied saying, we "shall be called." That time is here now, since the church was established in these last days. I can read of no other "new name" in God's Word, other than that name "Christian" by which God's sons & daughters, His disciples, were called first (Acts 11:26).

JOE KEIM:

Harvey, I guess I am not as convinced as you are that the promised "new name" discussed in Isaiah 62 and 56 is referring to "Christian." It would make more sense to me that the "new name" God was referring to could have been "the church." Here is why that makes sense to me.

In Isaiah, God's focus and message was primarily directed to the kingdom of Judah, but also to the Nation of Israel as a whole. The Nation of Israel was God's special and peculiar people. But as Andy Miller already pointed out, God looked down through the ages and saw a bigger picture, one that would stay hidden for another 800 years.

Finally, "the church" is birthed in Acts 2. Soon thereafter, God calls Paul to the scene, takes him to the third heaven and reveals what no one, not even principalities and powers were allowed to know.

Paul writes in Eph 3:

(v3) "by **revelation** he [God] **made known unto me the mystery**"

(v4) "the **mystery of Christ**"

(v5) "in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as **it is now revealed**"

(v9) "to make all men see what is the ... the **mystery**, which from the beginning of the world hath been **hid in God**"

Here we go ... ready...

(v10) "that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by **the church**"

Not saints. Not brothers and sisters. Not Christians. Not the nation of Israel. But the church. The mystery was finally

revealed and made known to "the church".

In (v-21) Paul writes: "Unto him be glory in **the church** by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

While "Christians" are named 3 times in the entire New Testament, "the Church" is named 182 times from Romans to Philemon - a total of 370 times in the Whole New Testament.

Some examples:

1 Cor 15:9: "I persecuted **the church of God**"

Gal 1:13: "how that beyond measure I persecuted **the church of God**, and wasted it"

Eph 1:22: "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be

*the head over all things to **the church**"*

Eph 5:23: "even as Christ is the head of **the church**"

Eph 5:24: "Therefore, as **the church** is subject unto Christ"

Eph 5:32: "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and **the church**"

1 Tim 3:15: "**the church** of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth"

Those who are saved become part of the church of God and take on various names, such as Christians, Saints, brothers, sisters, believers, Jews, Gentiles, etc.

One day, the Church, also known as the body, will go to meet the Head.



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March

Baptism: God's Will for Every Believer

Baptism is a necessary and powerful acknowledgment of Jesus' Lordship in our lives. Message by Dr. Charles Stanley.

The Triumph of the Gospel in the New Heavens and the New Earth

Death and decay won't have the last word. One day soon, God will release all of creation from corruption. Message by John Piper.

Why Confess Our Unloving and Disre- spectful Comments?

If the roles were reversed, we'd expect another to confess to us. If another was mean to us, blamed us for their unkind reactions, made light of their unkindness since they meant no harm... Message by Emerson Eggerichs.

50 Things Every Child Needs to Know Before Leaving Home

In parenting's daily grind, are you losing sight of the end game? Josh and Jenn Mulvihill unpack skills for every child to learn to thrive in faith and life.

April

The Church: What is it all About?

(part 1)

Is your church healthy? Is your church fulfilling the purpose God has for her? Message by Dr. Charles Stanley.

The Church: What is it all About?

(part 2)

Is your church healthy? Is your church fulfilling the purpose God has for her? Message by Dr. Charles Stanley.

Why Good Men Are Not Saved

If salvation is by good works, the question has always been, "How many good works must be completed to be saved?" But one can never do enough good works to merit salvation. This is clearly portrayed in the life of Cornelius, Peter's first gentile convert. Message by Dr. J. Vernon McGee.

Answering Teens' Tough Questions

Not sure how to answer? Michael Kruger, author of *Surviving Religion 101* offers answers for tough questions.

May

A Helper for All Occasions

(part 1)

You're not alone—the Holy Spirit is there to help you. Message by Dr. Charles Stanley

God Created Us for His Glory

God's glory and our happiness are never at odds. His pursuit of His own fame is a full commitment to our deepest joy. Message by John Piper.

The Stepping Stones of Salvation

The names of four women are woven through the genealogy of Christ. In their stories we find the plan of salvation. Message by Dr. J. Vernon McGee.

Mama Bear Special: How to Support Your Wife in the Way She's Made

Wondering how to support your wife in the way she's made? John & Hillary Ferrer talk about their path as John empowered Hillary to launch Mama Bear Apologetics.

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Feedback and Response

1

Dear Sirs, we have been receiving your letters lately. We are fully contended with the faith we have. Thus we have not even a remote desire to even seek anything else. If our faith is not right in the eyes of God, then why did our forefathers willingly bear hunger, cold, poverty, and even death rather than give up the faith? And why has it stood for hundreds of years? If our faith was good enough for them to sacrifice their lives, then it's by far good enough for us. We wish you God's blessings. —B.H.

Why are you using our forefathers as the standard for your beliefs?

What standard do you think our forefathers used? I wonder, did they rely on their forefathers as the standard?

How can you be so confident that you are still walking in the footsteps of our forefathers?

Do you want your grandchildren and great grandchildren to rely on you as their standard? Really?

I know someone that thought just like you. They lived during the time when Jesus lived on earth. The leaders of whom I speak of were looked at as the most religious people of their day. They stood out. They relied on the fact that their forefathers were Jewish, chosen and adopted by God Himself. But look what Jesus had to say to these religionists:

"...they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. —Matthew 15:14"

What do you think these religionists were using for their standard? Forefathers? A list of rules?

Whatever it was, their standard was leading them straight into the ditch, and right into the lake of fire.

One thing is certain, they were following the wrong standard. While their original standard—from generations before them—was right, it shifted along the way and got off course. Had these same religionists kept God's Word as their standard, they would have known God's only begotten Son and followed Him. When God's only begotten Son did not fit their warped and corrupted standard, they killed Him.

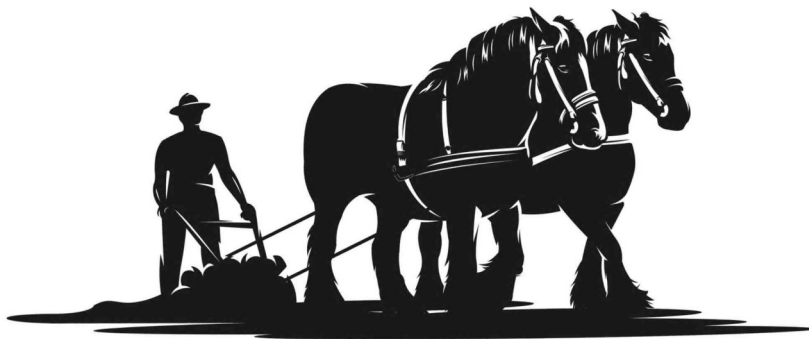
God has always had one standard for every race, every generation, and every tongue.

It is not a list of rules. It is not a certain church denomination, nor a certain man, a certain revival. It is not our forefathers.

1 Peter 1:24–25 *"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the Word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you."*

—Joe Keim

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Why Does God Allow Evil?

—by Sam Troyer

Why did God do this to me? If He knows the future, He had to know the miserable outcome of his creation! WAR, FAMINE etc. How can one believe and trust a God who “allows” so much evil? Is He impotent or does He just not care? Couldn't He have created a world that didn't have sin and death? Why did God place the forbidden tree in the garden if He actually didn't want anyone to eat from it? Again, surely He knew the outcome!

Let's explore some of these ageless questions. I'll preface this with:

“Shall the thing formed, say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?” (Romans 9:20)

“Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters” (Job 33:13).

To ask these questions we risk appearing as a petty criminal challenging the judge presiding over his case.

In the beginning...God. Our mortal minds cannot grasp this concept. Where does God come from? He stretched out nothing into dimension, and laid it at the beginning of an endless line which came to be called ‘time.’ His word was His only tool. God's physical creation (nature) doesn't have a will. It is mechanical, you might say. It cannot love nor can it hate. But even the beauty and intricate detail in nature seems to not have satisfied God's ultimate intention.

What He does next seems daring...did He take a risk, or was He just exercising faith? Just as an artist seeks to express their creativity through creating images, God also exercised His creativity and made a living self portrait! He formed a being, who like Himself, stood completely apart from nature, above all other creation. Then He did the unimaginable, He breathed His own self-perpetuating life into this vessel of clay He had made. Physical nature was

now linked to a human soul, infused with divine, eternal life. We are a mini replica of the essence of God.

When we explore creation, we see all life forms in three's.

- ⇒ Time is past, present and future.
- ⇒ Natural kingdoms on earth are animal, vegetable, and mineral.
- ⇒ Life on earth is divided into 3 main branches: bacteria, archaea, and eukaryotes.
- ⇒ Sun emits alpha, beta, and gamma rays.
- ⇒ Soil has 3 basic elements: nitrogen, phosphorus, and potash.
- ⇒ There are three primary colors from which all colors are derived: red, yellow, and blue.
- ⇒ We are body, soul, and spirit.
- ⇒ Flesh is covered by 3 layers of skin.
- ⇒ Our blood has 3 main cells: platelets, red, and white cells.
- ⇒ Our non material self (soul) consists

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of, mind, will, and emotion.

- ⇒ Within the realm of emotion, we can love, hate, or be indifferent.
- ⇒ We are capable of thought, word, and deed.
- ⇒ Space is height, width, and depth.
- ⇒ Just as God's persons are 3, His attributes are also three: omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent.

When Adam rose up off the earth and shook the dust off his brand new body, he was morally neither good nor bad - like a 300 page book with the first 150 pages blank. We have to assume that he lacked wisdom, because wisdom comes from experiences.

The command not to eat from the tree of knowledge was literally the only thing God withheld from them. Was this a necessary piece of the puzzle to strengthen their moral compass? The tree itself had three attractions. It could satisfy hunger. It was lovely to look at. And most of all, it could satisfy the desire to become immediately wise in the knowledge of good and evil. They probably realized by now that there were some things they didn't know. They were completely innocent, properly warned, and well informed. Was it a trust thing? After all, Satan said God was holding out on them. Like so many today, they wanted instant gratification and enlightenment.

As God watch this unfold, did He have to suppress the urge to step in and repeat his warning? In a sense, God had limited Himself when He made Adam in his image. God couldn't violate their personhood by invading their wills because He had made them autonomous beings. He also couldn't just annihilate them. They were created with His eternal spirit! Satan definitely played a role in this catastrophic chain of events, but he was only an advisor, at best. It was their choice, just as today we have a choice.

Was Adam deceived? I don't think so. I think he made a choice to stand by his bride. He was going to crash and burn with her no matter what that might mean! (Side note: Jesus was the second Adam and He also didn't leave his bride

to fend for herself either!)

It seems at this point, God had tried an experiment that had failed miserably. Free will, with no strings attached proved to be an expensive gift. God had sought a family and ended up with contenders for preeminence!

Could God have created humans incapable of sinning? No, because to exclude all possibility of sin, their freedom of will couldn't be higher than that of animals. Remember He said, "*Let us make man in OUR image.*" For God to create what He desired, He was limited, in a sense, to create a being who had the power to choose.

GOD IS LIMITED??? It may shock our senses to think in terms of God being limited, but this isn't limited in the normal sense of the word. God is limited to those means that are consistent with His end. In this case, His end was to make a person in His image.

Examples:

- ⇒ A witness is limited to telling the truth.
- ⇒ A lover, is limited to love. He has the freedom to not be a lover, but if he would be a lover, he doesn't have the freedom not to love.
- ⇒ A historian is limited to facts. He can write fiction if he chooses, but if he wants to be a historian, he is limited to facts.

There are things God cannot do, not for lack of power, but for want of conformity to His own nature and purpose. By choice, God cannot do that which is arbitrary or unjust.

Think about a 4 year old child misbehaving. The parents can forcibly prevent any action, but a good parent understands that it isn't going to be productive to violate the child's freedom to choose obedience. The parent would like to invade his soul and change his will, but we don't have that option. Not even God has rightful access to the sacred seat of an individual's soul. To forcibly invade the control and command room of the soul would constitute "divine rape."

God created us in His image and He

respects our individual autonomy. His only recourse is persuasion. Anyone who will not be persuaded, exercises their God given right to stand in defiance of the highest goodness, wisdom, and law. Remember it isn't God's will that any should perish but many will because it is their choice.

Moral capacity is a 2 way street. There is no up without a down. You can't have in, without an out. God cannot "create" character. Only by facing morally opposing options, weighing the value, and then following through with a choice do we develop character.

But why sin—why must we have that option? The tree of knowledge was a two way street with "good and evil." When God created a man who could love, He created a man who could also withhold that love. In the shadows of every good choice is its evil counterpart. If we get rid of the concept of evil, the positive would disappear with it.

God can be good without the presence of evil, but He cannot be known to be good by someone who doesn't have the knowledge of evil. When God created light, shadows became possible. Love is only possible where hate is also possible. To be loved is only possible where it is freely and voluntarily given.

Death has no hold on those who have been reconciled to God. Death is the release from this limiting body of flesh and blood. Death is the graduation into our eternal inheritance.

IT IS JUST THE BEGINNING! We will not find ourselves on a fluffy white cloud where we will fiddle away eternity playing impractical little harps and fanning tiny wings! There won't be eternal 11:00 am services with pious prayers. Death is the release of a captive bird into a universe of discovery!

We will reside in a splendid city set on a brand new earth with trees, grass, rivers, sunshine, and animals in abundance. We will eat, drink, dance and sing. Possibly, there will be new frontiers to conquer and new planets to fashion. We will continue to learn and grow. The utopian dream will finally be realized!

END

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Perspective

—By Gerald Hochstetler

We are born and life begins through no choice of our own. As a little child we forgive and forget quickly, but as we get older, the wounds and the cuts just go too deep. Our parents disappoint us, friends betray us, we think we have found love, and then get dumped for someone else. We try to manage, and in many cases, we do a good job at hiding who we really are.

In all honesty, most of us are hurting and damaged beyond the ability to self-repair. The proud voice screaming, “I don’t need anyone, I could care less

what anyone says, I am my own person,” is almost always extremely damaged and hurt. Rants, frustrations, lashing out at others, are reactions of unhealed wounds.

The focus is on others because we must avoid ourself. It just hurts too badly to go there. Some have scabbed over the wounds so well that they will laugh. “It is just a bunch of mushy nonsense,” they say. But they are angry, bitter, and wound those around them. They can’t help it. The wounded wound others. It’s just the way it works.

There is hope. Their is healing. Jesus was brutally slaughtered for your healing. He took it all on himself and paid the price. This is the healing it speaks of in Isaiah 53. By those stripes your inner being is healed. He wants to flood your inner being with healing so your spirit, soul, and body can be at peace. So that you can know rest and have peace. It is a beautiful thing. But you must be healed. May I speak metaphorically? Jesus is here. The Healer is here. Take up your bed and walk.

The Timing of the Rapture

—by Rodger Moyer

Don’t make it complicated, friends. The rapture and timing are stated clearly:

BY JESUS:

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the **Son of man coming** in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And **he shall send his angels** with a great sound of a trumpet, **and they shall gather the elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Mt 24:31-31).

“And then shall they see the **Son of man coming** in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his **angels and shall gather together his**

elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven” (Mk 13:26-27)

“And then shall they see the **Son of man coming** in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, **then look up**, and lift up your heads; **for your redemption draweth nigh**” (Luke 21:27-28).

BY PAUL:

“**For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven** with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: **then we which are alive will be caught up together** with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air...” (1

Thes 4:16-17).

“Now we beseech you, brethren, **by the coming** of our Lord Jesus Christ, **and by our gathering together** unto him...” (II Thes 2:1)

BY PETER:

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory **at the appearing of Jesus Christ**” (1 Peter 1:7).

BY JOHN:

“And now, little children, abide in him; that, **when he shall appear**, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him **at his coming**” (1 John 2:28).