



MAP ♦ 575 US Highway 250 ♦ Greenwich, OH 44837 ♦ (419) 962-1515 ♦ January 2024

## The Secret of the Strength

— by Peter Hoover

### CHAPTER 8

#### On to the Teachings of Christ

In the Gospels, the Anabaptists found the teachings of Christ, to which the following passages are the open door:

*“And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him” (Matthew 4:18-22).*

*“And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead” (Matthew 8:21-22).*

*“And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom:*

*and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him” (Matthew 9:9).*

*“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 16:24-25).*

*“And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, 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. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:25-27).*

*“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33).*

#### Teachings of Salvation

Jesus' words, as recorded in the gospels, especially in the Sermon on the Mount, were for the first Anabaptists, the *seligmachende Lehre* (teachings of salvation) to which the Old Testament was an introduction and to which the New Testament epistles gave testimony.

The first Anabaptists did not regard any of the scriptures lightly (they used and quoted from apocryphal books without apology), but for them, the gospels were the doorway to them all. They believed that every understanding of the scriptures was mistaken if it did not match Jesus' example and his teaching in the gospels.

With the Christ of the gospels as their guide, no doctrine, to the first Anabaptists, looked complicated or “profound.” They may have known the German word for doctrine (*Doktrin*), but both the term and its connotation were foreign to Anabaptist thought, and they did not ordinarily use it. They simply spoke (English translations notwithstanding) of the *Lehren* (teachings) of Jesus.

Menno Simons, in his book, *A Foundation and Clear Direction to the Teachings of Our Lord Jesus Christ Which Are Able to Save You*, wrote:

We do not have a new teaching, as people would like to make you believe. We teach what was taught and practiced in the church 1,500 years ago. It is the teaching which brought the church into being, through which the church is, and through which it will be to the end of time.<sup>1</sup>

In another tract, Menno wrote:

I speak with sure conviction. I speak not because I had a vision or some special revelation from heaven, but I speak by the sure Word of our Lord. From my innermost being I am convinced that this teaching is not our teaching. It is the teaching of the one who sent us: Jesus Christ... Those who love darkness rather than light curse the truth we find in the gospels. They call it heresy and handle it like treason. But the Word of God shall remain unbroken to the last day.<sup>2</sup>

### Steps to Understanding the Teachings

After a thousand years of darkness, the first Anabaptists rediscovered the first step to understanding Jesus' teachings.

That step is to get up and follow Him. We need to submit to Him (*throw ourselves under Him* as the Anabaptists wrote) in true detachment from this world's things. As long as we have not done this, the study of the scriptures is useless—or even harmful. Leonhard Schiemer wrote before they beheaded him in 1528:

He who has not learned what he knows from God, but from men, has a faith that cannot stand. . . . If I should try to teach someone who has not thrown himself under Christ, I would be running ahead of Christ, and I would be a thief and a murderer. For such a man's heart and mind are in the dark. Paul says that man is a stranger to the life that is from God. Trying to teach such a person about spiritual things is like lighting candles for a blind man. He still cannot see.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Een Fondament ende clare aenwijsinghe van de salichmakende Leere Jesu Christi*...1558.

<sup>2</sup> From *Die oorsake waerom dat ick M. S. niet of en late de leeren, ende te schrijuen* ... first published at Antwerp ca. 1542.

<sup>3</sup> Vom Flaschlen... 1527.



**Strasbourg**, at the convergence of the Ill River with the Rhein, where Germany meets France, has been a gathering place for centuries. Open to nonconformist ideas, the city sheltered many Anabaptists, including Pilgram Marpeck, who assisted in the engineering of its drainage canals.

The second step to understanding Jesus' teachings is to let His Spirit teach us. Only after the Spirit of God "shines in our hearts to give us the light of knowledge" (2 Cor. 4:6) can we hope to understand the gospels. "The understanding of the truth does not come from human study," testified an Anabaptist before the court at Regensburg in Bavaria. "It comes only to those to whom it is given by grace through the light of His Spirit."

Before they beheaded him at Konstanz in 1529, Ludwig Haetzer wrote:

He who goes only by the scriptures receives knowledge. But it is a useless knowledge that does not change anyone for the better. No man, no matter how learned he may be, can understand the scriptures until he comes to know them and learns them in the most inward part of his soul. If he speaks about them before this takes place, he speaks like a blind man about color.<sup>4</sup>

The third step in understanding Jesus and his teachings is to love Him. Before his death in the massacre at Linz, Wolfgang Brandhuber wrote:

Oh brothers, if true love is missing, what does it help to know much, to speak, or to teach? Oh brothers, let

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Karl Hagen's second volume of *Deutschland's literarische und religiose Verhältnisse im Reformationszeitalter* (Erlangen, 1841-44).

every man act according to the truth in his heart, before the face of God... May the Father of all grace give to those that hunger the true Bread and the ability to discern the scriptures and the way they are tied together, because the Spirit of God does not want to be bound.<sup>5</sup>

### Teachings in the Heart

Obedying the teachings of their consciences and obeying the teachings of Jesus in the scriptures was, for the first Anabaptists, the same thing. They made no difference between the Word in their hearts and the Word of the gospels but looked to the complete Word of Christ as their highest authority.

The "outer Word" (the scriptures written with paper and ink) the Anabaptists taught, is nothing but the lamp from which the light of the true Word shines. Ulrich Stadler, servant of the Word at Austerlitz in Moravia, wrote:

The outer Word is only a sign of the inner Word, like the sign on an inn telling of the wine in the barrels inside. The sign is not the wine. It satisfies no one's thirst. But we know when we see it that the wine is there.<sup>6</sup>

Hans Denck, who found the "wine of the inner Word" when he decided to follow Jesus at any cost, wrote in 1525:

When Christ, the sun of righteousness, arises in our hearts, the darkness of unbelief is overcome for the first time... The man who does not listen to the voice of God speaking within him but who tries to explain the scriptures for himself (which only the Spirit of God is able to do) makes a total abomination out of the secrets of God which the writings contain.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> From *Ein sendbrief von Wolfgang Brandhueber an die gmain Gottes zu Rottenburg am In*, 1529.

<sup>6</sup> Vom lebendigen Wort und geschriebenen, ein kurzer Unterschied und Bericht, ca. 1530.

Concealed within the written word, the first Anabaptists found a great treasure—the dwelling place of Christ. Balthasar Hubmaier, before they burned him at the stake, wrote:

The scriptures are the friend of God. Christ Jesus lives in the scriptures, and in them, He makes His home and rests.<sup>8</sup>

### Putting the Teachings to Practice

The first Anabaptists did what children might do with the scriptures. They read them to see what Jesus said and did so they could imitate Him. They believed that by putting His teachings to practice, they could please Him and live with Him forever.

Menno Simons wrote:

The bright light of the Gospel shines again in these last and dreadful times. God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, is gloriously revealed. His gracious will and holy Word concerning faith, the new birth, repentance, baptism, the nighttime meal, and all of his saving teachings and example has again come to light. It has come through seeking and prayer, through action, through reading, through teaching, and writing... Now, let us go on and build His church community in the apostle's way.<sup>9</sup>

"The words that I speak unto you," said Jesus, "they are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). The Anabaptists, by putting His words to practice, discovered that this was true. Menno Simons wrote in 1552:

The brightness of the sun has not shone for many years. Heaven and earth have been as copper and iron. Brooks and springs have not run, nor dew descended from heaven. Beauti-

<sup>7</sup> From the written testimony of Hans Denck, presented to the court at Nurnberg, in January, 1525.

<sup>8</sup> Preislied des gottlichen Wortes, ca. 1526.

<sup>9</sup> Onderwijs...van de excommunicatie, 1558.

ful trees and verdant fields have been dry and wilted—in a spiritual sense. But in these last days, God, in His love, has opened the windows of heaven again. The dew of His Word has fallen upon us so that the earth produces green branches of righteousness bearing fruit for God. The holy Word and the sacraments of our Lord have been rescued from the ashes.<sup>10</sup>

### What is Heresy?

When the first Anabaptists put Jesus' teachings into practice, people called them heretics. That was because they had forgotten, after a thousand years, what Jesus had said and done. This led Menno Simons to ask:

Who are the real heretics and deceivers? Who are they that teach contrary to the teachings of the holy church? According to the venerable Bede, the word *heretic* means one who picks out, one who chooses or gleans... Men cry against us, saying: Heretics! Heretics! Drown them, kill them, and burn them! And this for no other reason than that we teach a new life, baptism on confession of faith, and bread and wine for all members in a blameless church community.<sup>11</sup>

While identifying the real heretics (and who they were not), Menno Simons wrote:

I have taught no other baptism, no other supper, no other ordinance than that which was implied by the unerring mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ and the example of His holy apostles... Put your trust in Christ alone and in His Word. Put your trust in the sure instruction and practice of His holy apostles. Then, by the grace of

<sup>10</sup> *Een grondelicke en klare bekentnisse...* 1552.

<sup>11</sup> From *Verclaringhe des christelycken doopsels in den water duer menno Simons wt dwoort gods*, first published at Antwerp, ca. 1542. *Onderwijs...van de excommunicatie*, 1558.

God, you will be safe from every false teaching and the power of the devil. You will walk with a free mind before God.<sup>12</sup>

### The Rediscovery of Jesus' Teachings

The story of King Josiah finding the Book of the Law while cleaning out the temple in Jerusalem moved the first Anabaptists and became Menno Simons' theme when he wrote:

Behold, the Book of the Law, the saving Gospel of Christ, which was hidden for so many centuries by the abominations of the Antichrist, has been found! The book of Christ, by the grace of God, has been found again! The pure, unadulterated truth has come to light... at the expense of much of the property and blood of the saints.<sup>13</sup>

And as in Josiah's day, the discovery of the book had far-reaching effects. Menno Simons described them in *The Cross of the Holy Ones*:

God has again, in these last days of unbelief and abomination... opened the book of eternal truth, which had been closed for so many centuries. He has raised the dead from their graves. Those who all their lives lay in wickedness, He has called to a new and blameless life. Yes, God is calling the distressed, starving sheep out of the jaws of ravening wolves. He is leading them out of the desert of human teachings to the green pastures of the mountain of Israel—to the care and custody of the eternal shepherd, Jesus Christ, who bought them with his blood.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> From *Christelycke leringhen op den 25. Psalm*, ca. 1528.

<sup>13</sup> *Van dat rechte christen ghelooue ende zijn cracht*, ca. 1542.

<sup>14</sup> *Eyne troestliche vermaninge van dat lijden, cruyze, vnde veruolginge der heyli- gen, vmme dat woort Godes*, 1558.

Guided by Jesus' gentle teachings, the Anabaptists found their way ...

---

## CHAPTER 9

### On to the Word

---

*“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God” (Revelation 19:11-13).*

The Word of God, for the first Anabaptists, was a man—a man whose voice we hear in our hearts and in the scriptures.

Some years ago, I heard a minister explain how the first Anabaptists used the Bible. He said their slogan was *sola scriptura* (only the scriptures), and they were known as “the people of the book.” At the time, it sounded right, but since then, I have made other discoveries.

The slogan *sola scriptura* was invented and used by Huldrych Zwingli (the Anabaptists' mortal enemy), and the “people of the book” are the Jews or the Muslims.

The first Anabaptists aimed for something infinitely higher than *sola scriptura*. Their aim was full community with Jesus. And they were not “people of the book.” They were “people of the Man.” The first Anabaptists did not read in the gospels that the Word was made of paper and ink. They read that *“the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father; full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14).

In agreement with Jakob Kautz, who taught that the written word is “only a witness, pointing to the inner Word,” Hans Denck wrote:

I value the scriptures above all of human treasure, but not as highly as the Word of God which is alive, strong (Heb. 4:12), eternal, and free. The Word of God is free from the elements of the world. It is God Himself. It is Spirit and not letter, written without pen or paper so that it can never be erased.

As a result of this, salvation is not bound to scripture, even though the scriptures may help one on to salvation (2 Tim. 3:16). We need to understand that the scriptures cannot possibly change an evil heart, even though they may educate it well. A godly heart, on the other hand, in which the little light of God shines, can learn from all things. We see, then, how the scriptures help those who believe toward salvation and holy living. But to those who believe not, they serve only for condemnation...

If salvation depended only on reading the scriptures or hearing them preached, many illiterate people and many towns to whom no preacher has come would be lost.<sup>1</sup>

Before they burned him at the stake in 1528, Balthasar Hubmaier wrote:

The Word of God is water to all those who thirst for salvation and is made alive in us through the Spirit of God, without whose work it is only a dead letter.<sup>2</sup>

One Anabaptist testified before the court at Regensburg in Bavaria:

The scriptures and the outer word are merely the witness of the inner Word

of God. A man can well be saved without the preaching or the reading of the scriptures. (Otherwise, what should happen with those who are deaf or cannot read?) We understand God our Redeemer, not through the lifeless letter but through the indwelling of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

### The Word of God is One

Because the first Anabaptists spoke of an inner and an outer Word, their enemies accused them of making two Words of God. “But the outer, preached or written word,” wrote Pilgram Marpeck, “and the inner Word are one.”<sup>4</sup>

Truly surrendered to Jesus, the Anabaptists found perfect unity between the voice of Jesus in their hearts and the scriptures in their hands. Ulrich Stadler, Anabaptist servant of the Word at Auslerlitz in Moravia, wrote in his book *Of the Living and Written Word, or of the Outer and Inner Word, and how they work in the Heart*:

The inner Word is not written, neither on paper nor on tables of stone. It is not spoken nor preached, but man is assured by it through God in the depths of his soul, and it becomes engraved in a heart of flesh through the Spirit by the finger of God.

Hans Denck wrote about the inner and the outer Word in three of his books. He taught that the inner Word (the voice of the Spirit) comes before the outer word (the scriptures), making it possible for the latter to be received. Without the Word inside, the written word is unintelligible because, *“the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually dis-*

<sup>1</sup> *Widerruf...* 1528.

<sup>2</sup> From *Eine Christliche Lehrtafel, die ein jeder Mensch, bevor er im Wasser getauft wird, wissen soll*, 1526.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Hermann Nestler's *Die Wiedertäuferbewegung in Regensburg*, 1926.

<sup>4</sup> From a letter to Helena von Streicher, ca. 1544.

cerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Hans Langenmantel wrote before they beheaded him at WeiBenhorn in Bavaria in 1528:

Luther says he preaches the Gospel of Christ, and with his physical voice, he brings Christ into the hearts of his hearers. But I say that there must first be something within us that can receive the physical voice.<sup>5</sup>

Leupold Scharnschlager, Anabaptist servant of the Word in Austria and Switzerland, wrote:

If the scriptures are not opened in the heart by the Spirit of God, then not only are they dead, but Christ Himself, with His teachings, His life, His sufferings, and His death, yes, even His resurrection, is dead. To know all about these things without the Spirit of God within is useless, even though one may read about them and study them as long as he likes. Without the Spirit, one becomes learned, but he does not learn.<sup>6</sup>

### Beyond Literalism

In Gemeinschaft with the inner Word, the first Anabaptists caught the spirit of the scriptures. This kept them from the bondage of a systematic theology. It kept them from focusing on the details at the expense of the theme. And it kept them from an empty literalism in their interpretation.

When they burned Georg Blaurock and Hans Langegger at the stake near Klausen in Austria<sup>7</sup> in 1529, an eight-year-old boy stood wide-eyed among

<sup>5</sup> From *Ain kurzer Anzayg, wie doctor M. Luther ain zayt hor hatt etliche schrifften lassen ausgeen vom Sacrament, die doch straks wider einander*, 1527.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in the *Zeitschrift des Vereins fur die Geschichte Mahrens und Schlesiens*, 1928

<sup>7</sup> After World War I, the city of Klausen, and the surrounding territory became a part of Italy. In Italian, it is known as Chiusa.

the spectators. His name was Peter. He could not forget. As a young man, he began to follow Jesus, and at twenty-one years of age, he was a servant of the Word. In his early twenties, Peter Walpot wrote one of the confessions of faith most widely used among the Anabaptists of Austria and Moravia. On taking the scriptures literally, he wrote:

Because Jesus said, “I am the true vine,” He was not physically a grapevine. He is called a lamb, but He is not physically a lamb. He called Simon Peter a rock, but Peter did not turn into stone. He remained human. Paul says of Sarah and Hagar that they were the two testaments. Should that make them literal documents? No, they only stood for the documents.

Jesus said, “I am the door into the fold, and I am the way.” He said that whoever believes on Him will have rivers of living water flowing from within him. But He does not mean a literal river. Jesus spoke of a man having a beam in his eye, but this does not mean a literal log or the tongue of a wagon. He said to Mary on the cross: “Woman, behold your son,” and to John he said: “Son, behold your mother.” According to these plain words, John would have been the natural brother of Jesus, but he was not. His mother was someone else. Jesus said the seed is the Word of God, and the field is the world. The seven fat cows and the seven lean cows were seven years. The Scriptures speak many times in words like these. If we should take everything literally, many foolish things would happen. In the same way, when Jesus said the bread was His body and the wine was His blood, it was not physically the case, but it stood for those things.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> From *Funf Artikel des grossten Streitens zwischen uns und der Welt*, 1547.

### Beyond “Biblicism”

“The Anabaptists,” some take for granted, “were avowed Biblicists. They gave the Bible first place in their lives and died in its defense...”

But were they?

That the first Anabaptists followed Jesus and all His teachings in the Bible is apparent. But that they felt about the Bible like modern-day Biblicists or Fundamentalists is not so clear.

The first Anabaptists must have known the German word for Bible (*Bibel*), but they never used it. They spoke of the writings (the scriptures)—or the holy writings (not in capital letters, despite modern German rules on the capitalization of nouns).

The first Anabaptists stated no opinions on the correct “version” or “translation” of the Bible. German translations were just beginning to appear. Not all of them were accurate, and the principal one came from Martin Luther, their arch-enemy. Beyond this, only a few Anabaptists, such as Menno Simons, Conrad Grebel, and Hans Denck, could read the Latin Vulgate (the Roman Catholic Bible).

The first Anabaptists had no clear position on the “canon of Scripture.” They accepted and freely quoted from all the books of the Apocrypha, including the third and fourth books of Ezra and the third book of the Maccabees. They seem to have been influenced by the books of Pseudo-Dionisius, the Gospel of Nicodemus, the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, and literature on the saints. The Ausbund commemorates in song the deaths of Saint Laurence, Saint Agathe, Saint Margaret, Saint Catherine, and others. The *Martyrs Mirror* includes more of the same.

For more than 150 years after the beginning of the Anabaptist movement, they wrote very little on what they be-

lieved about the scriptures. That belief, while they followed the Word of God riding on a white horse and dressed in a garment dipped in blood, needed no explanation.

### Beyond Mysticism and Pietism

“What were they then?” a sister asked me after I spoke about the first Anabaptists following the Word that lived in their hearts. “Were they some kind of mystics or Pietists?”

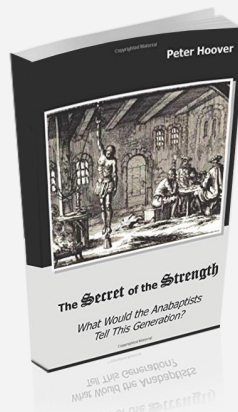
No. Without a doubt, the first Anabaptists felt the influence of medieval mysticism, but they left the mystics behind when they got up to follow Jesus. The mystics and the Pietists later found their delight in secret communion with Jesus alone. They managed to “follow Jesus” in such a way that most of them could keep on living in peace in the state churches. For the Anabaptists, this was unthinkable.

Both the mystics and the Pietists found their delight in experiences of the soul and in revelations that threatened to eclipse the example of Jesus in the Gospels. But the Anabaptists found their delight in the Word of Christ. Menno Simons wrote in 1539:

I have received no vision or angelic inspirations. Neither do I desire such, lest I be deceived. The Word of Christ alone is sufficient for me. If I do not follow the Word, then all I do is in vain. Even if I had special visions and inspirations, they would have to agree with the Word and the Spirit of Christ, or else they would be mere imaginations, deceit, and Satanic temptation.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Die oorsake waerom dat ick M. S. niet of en late te leeren ende te schrijuen, 1542.

CH 9: Continued in Next Issue



Are you anticipating the next chapter and would like to read the book in one sitting?

To order your personal copy of *The Secret of the Strength*, send a \$10 check to:

*The Amish Voice*  
575 US Highway 250  
Greenwich, OH 44837

Include your address and a note stating that you would like a copy of *The Secret of the Strength*.

I would like to personally invite you to come and join us for this year's *Step Out of the Boat Conference*. The conference will once again be held at Bethel Chapel in Greenwich, OH. We will start right at 7pm on Wednesday and finish up on Saturday at noon. While there is a registration cost to help cover the cost of food, we would be most happy to provide housing and transportation for you while you are at the conference.

The main goal for this conference is based on Anabaptists coming together, under one roof, and sharing of a time they stepped out of their comfort zone, forsook the world, took up the cross, and followed the Lord Jesus Christ. You will hear twenty men and women share stories, the secret of their strength, and what God did when they forsook all and followed Him.

I urge you to pick up the phone, call our office, and register today. The *Step Out of the Boat Conf* is life changing and is anointed of God. Come and hear what God is doing through the Anabaptists in our generation. Just like our forefathers, we are zealous and filled with fervor to do the right thing, willing to go unto death for the sake of Christ Jesus.

Register today by calling our office at (419) 962-1515. You can also go to our website and register online [MapMinistry.org/step-out](http://MapMinistry.org/step-out).

Single \$90; Couple \$170; Family \$200  
(after Feb 10, the registration cost will go up \$20)

When you register, ask about free housing and transportation. During the conference, we will provide all the food you can eat during the 4-day conference. Bring your whole family along. We have something for all ages.—Joe Keim

***“Jesus...saith unto him, Go...to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee... And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.” —Mark 5:19–20***



It was 2:00 am, and I couldn't sleep. My sins (and they were great) were weighing too heavily on me. I got the cordless phone and called Preacher Dale. "I need to talk to someone. Can I come over?" He said I could, so I jumped in my little pickup and went to see him.

I poured out my sins to God before the preacher man. Or maybe it was to the preacher man. I am all about confessing your faults one to another, but this was like confessing to a priest to receive forgiveness. But then, I prayed, confessed my sins to God, and asked Him to come into my heart again. (Many believe that if you commit even a thought sin, you immediately go into a state of being lost.)

I dumped it all, and I felt like a million bucks! So free! On the way out the door, Preacher Dale reminded me, "You do realize this will result in your being excommunicated?"

I acknowledged that I knew that, but told him I was OK with it and was just happy to be right with God.

I scooted home in my little pickup and slept a couple of hours before getting up and having a glorious day at work. I was right with God! I was free! I was happy! Hallelujah!

Well, they did excommunicate me. I don't know if they specified they were turning me over to Satan for the destruction of my flesh, but that's a normal part of it, so I suppose they did. Even though excommunication is a massive rejection, it barely phased me because I was right with God! I was free. I was happy! Hallelujah! Excommunication wasn't shunning. I just had to go through a time of being punished by not being a member, being looked down on, and being officially mistrusted. After I paid enough penance, all would be well again with the church.

A few days went by. Then... Oh crap! I suddenly remembered another sin I had forgotten. I hadn't confessed that I had gone to the casino and gambled that one time. Crap! Crap! Crap!

But you know what, even though I knew it was gonna bite me to confess this forgotten sin, I did not want to jeopardize my rightness with God and my freedom and joy! So, I decided to bear the consequences and fess up.

I told Preacher Dale what had happened. I told him that I had struggled a bit, but I now wanted to go all the way with God.

The next church service was a Wednesday evening. After church, a preacher man tapped me on the shoulder. "Could we meet with you downstairs?" Uh-oh, this ain't good. We got trouble coming right up.

Sure enough, there was trouble. BIG trouble. Bigger trouble than I had expected. Because there was no way I could have forgotten such a gross and heinous sin, they deduced that I must have been lying when I said I had forgotten it. While they were glad that I had made the right decision, they placed me under the ban to teach me the seriousness of not confessing my sins.

I was officially shunned. No one could have anything to do with me socially. Whereas before, I was somewhat of a pariah in the only tribe I knew, I was now OFFICIALLY a pariah. I was unclean. Stay away! Don't get contaminated!

On Friday, the young people were going to ride the Durango-Silverton Train as an outing. I asked if the ban applied to that, and they said it did. I went out into the night, angry, stunned, and feeling completely abandoned, even by God. "Confess your sins and be aban-

doned" was the message I got. It was a hard, dark time.

I look back on this experience and shake my head in bewilderment. There are so many screwed-up things in this story that it blows my mind.

I love them. They are my people. But I want nothing to do with any religious system that will produce this kind of evil in the name of God. I am grateful that God salvaged me from that mess and also the horrible mess that I put myself into during the following years, and set my feet on the Solid Rock.

I wonder sometimes... did those men watch the trainwreck of my life and consider that what they did contributed mightily to it? Or did they nod their head sagely, knowing that I proved their judgment of me was indeed righteous and correct? Never mind. I don't wonder. Unless God has rocked their world, I know what they thought. I know that system. Religious systems damn you to hell, then when you begin living out that damnation, they cluck their tongues and "know" that they were right all along.

I'm not mad. I just want y'all to remember that the next time the religious system goes after someone, find out what is true and right. Don't participate in creating self-fulfilling prophecies from hell in people's lives. Call them UP into a better life and a better way.

And for sure, when someone comes clean of their sins, don't kick them into hell.

**God formed us.  
Sin deformed us.  
The Bible informs us.  
But Jesus transforms us.**

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

## *Revelation 19:1-9*

**Intro:** We all know what a spectacle a wedding can be. Thousands of dollars are spent trying to produce a perfect moment in time that will join a couple together in marital bliss. Typically, the church is decorated to the nines, the bride is resplendent in her pure white wedding dress, and the groom stands nervously at the front of the church. It is a special moment in the lives of those two individuals and for the people who know and love them. Weddings here on earth are a special thing!

Everyone who has a wedding is looking for one thing: a marriage made in heaven! Well, I want you to know that while some marriages may have been made in heaven, they still have to be lived out here on earth. That in itself makes them all less than perfect.

Today, we come to an event in heaven that will take place while the earth is in the midst of the Tribulation Period. It will happen after the Judgment Seat of Christ, and it will involve all of God's children. This event is commonly referred to as **The Marriage Supper of The Lamb**. It will be a time of great joy for all the redeemed people of God! You see, for the church, the end times shape up like this: *In the Rapture, we will be Caught Up; at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will be Cleaned Up; and at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, we will be Cheered Up!* It is this event that we want to park on for a while this morning. I want to tell you about *A Marriage Made In Heaven*.

My desire in preaching this sermon is to help those who are saved understand

that there are some blessed days ahead for the people of God. I also want those who do not know the Lord to realize that they need to get ready to meet the Lord. He is coming, and He will take His people to Heaven. He will only take His people! The rest will be left behind to endure the Tribulation and face the fires of Hell. Therefore, this morning, let's visit Heaven and see how marriages are made there.

### **I. This Wedding Is Preceded by a Celebration** (v. 1-6)

(Ill. This is sort of backward. Typically, a wedding is followed by a celebration. The time before a wedding is usually filled with tremendous stress and many hours of preparation time. While it is a happy time for those involved, it is anything but a time of celebration. In Heaven, things are different! It seems from this passage that Heaven rejoices before and after the wedding. I like that! The cause of all this rejoicing is mentioned in verse 7. It seems that the marriage of the Lord Jesus is the catalyst for Heaven's anthems of praise. Those in Heaven lift their voices in four "Hallelujahs" that fill the heavens with praise. Let's listen in this morning and see why Heaven praises God!)

**A. The Hallelujah of Redemption** (v. 1)—Heaven praises the Lord for all He has done for them (the cross, the blood, the empty grave, etc.). They are saved, they are in Heaven, and they have a reason to shout!

(Ill. Years ago, in Wales, there lived a man by the name of Billy Bray. He was an old-time shouter! Many people who heard him shout used to rebuke him for praising the Lord so loudly and so often. Whenever they would try to stop him, old Billy would respond by saying, "I can't help it! God has been so good to me! With every step I take, I

remember His glory!" He said, "I put my right foot down, and it says 'Hallelujah.' I put my left foot down, and it says, 'Amen.'" With that, Billy Bray would march off shouting "Hallelujah" and "Amen" with every step he took. Billy Bray knew that God deserved praise for the salvation He so freely gives!)

**B. The Hallelujah of Retribution** (v. 2-3)—The residents of Heaven praise the Lord for executing His judgment upon a lost, sinful, and rebellious world! They know that His judgments are fair, they are right, and they are perfect. Therefore, they praise His name!

(Ill. Lest we forget, we are serving a God Who has already won the war with evil! Thank God, the Lord, and as a result, His people come out on top of this thing! That is enough to shout about now!)

**C. The Hallelujah of Realization** (v. 4-5)—If you take the time to look at the book of Revelation, these 24 elders who are mentioned show up about six times (**4:10; 5:8; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4**), and, every time they do, they are doing the same thing: falling on their faces and worshipping the Lord! Just to let you in on a secret, those 24 elders represent the redeemed of God. If you are saved, they picture YOU! Well, why are they praising the Lord so much? Because in Heaven, they are finally free from the limitations of the flesh, and they can see God like He really is! They are no longer afraid or ashamed to worship Him, but now they are ready, willing, and able to fall down before the Lamb of God and shout His praises!

(Ill. If it ever dawned on us the reality of all God is, of all He has done for us, and of all that is ours as His children,



there isn't a saved person in this world who wouldn't shout himself hoarse this morning! One day, we will, but we won't get hoarse!)

**D. The Hallelujah of Regulation** (v. 6)—Then, they praise the Lord for His reign. They glorify the Lord that, at last, He is honored, exalted, and worshiped by all His creation! Thank God, there is coming a day when the Lord will have the glory and honor He deserves all the time. I look forward to being in that number when we stand around the throne and lift our "Hallelujahs" to the glory of God!

(Ill. I want to call your attention to verse 4! There are two heavenly words mentioned here that you and I need to look at just for a moment. They are **Amen** and **Hallelujah**.

**Amen** is a word signifying agreement with and approval of the Word of God. When **Amen** appears at the beginning of a sentence, it means "truly." This word was used by Jesus on many occasions. When it is spoken concerning the words uttered by another, it means "I agree" or "So be it." Amen is said to be the most-known word in the world!

The word **Hallelujah** is a Hebrew word meaning "Praise the Lord." It is used only one time in the New Testament, and that was to give honor and glory to the Lamb. It is heaven's praise word!

I want to say that if you and I intend to be in tune with Heaven, then we need to learn to use a little heavenly language. Therefore, learn to say "Amen!" and "Hallelujah!" It is all right to praise the Lord! If something blesses your heart, just try "Amen!". If the Lord is moving in your soul, try "Hallelujah!" I will guarantee you one thing. It won't hurt you!

I realize we live in a day when people frown on old-time worship of the Lord. I mean, it's all right for people to sing The Hallelujah Chorus, but if they

shout, they are considered nuts and fanatics! I want you to know that old-fashioned praising and glorifying God never goes out of style!)

## II. This Wedding Is Perfected by a Consummation (v. 7–8)

(Ill. This marriage made in Heaven will be the consummation of some significant and powerful events.)

**A. A Plan Will Be Consummated** (v. 7a)—Notice the words "is come." These words imply a sense of relief that a long-anticipated event has finally arrived. Nothing could be more true!

At this moment, God's plan for the ages is finally complete. Since man sinned in the Garden of Eden, God has been working to bring man back into fellowship with Him. This was accomplished when Jesus died on the cross for the sins of humanity. Now, all those who place their faith in Jesus are saved by the grace of God and brought nigh unto Him! While many may be saved, they are still not in the very presence of God in Heaven. On this day, that will change! This is the moment when Jesus gets to receive His Bride unto Himself. This will be the most special moment in all the history of creation! It will be the moment when the Lamb of God takes His Bride unto Himself!

(Ill. By the way, did you notice that at this wedding, the groom, and not the bride, is the center of attention? Down here, everything is on hold until they start playing the wedding march, and the bride, the center of attention, makes her way down the aisle. In heaven, things are just a little different! It's not the bride, but it is the groom, the Lord Jesus, who is the center of attention! If that happened here, there would be some angry women! However, over there, it won't matter in the least! In fact, I think it will be the bride herself who gives Him the most attention!)

**B. A Presentation Will Be Consum-**

**mated** (v. 7–8). It might help us to understand a little of the background for weddings of this type. In oriental weddings, there were typically three stages. There was the **Betrothal Stage**, the **Presentation Stage**, and the **Celebration Stage**.

**1. The Betrothal Stage**—This was something like what we know in the West as an engagement. However, the major difference lies in the fact that this was a binding agreement! When a couple was betrothed, they were considered married! There was no getting out of it except through a divorce or death! Even though the couple did not dwell together or share the marriage bed, they were, nonetheless, married! Another difference was that the marriage partners and the marriages themselves were usually arranged by the parents of the bride and groom. You didn't even get to pick your mate! Love was not usually the basis for marriages. You didn't marry for love; you loved who you married! Many could learn a lesson from that today! (Ill. I can see great danger in that!)

The bride of Christ is in the midst of this betrothal period right now! We have been picked by the Heavenly Father, and we are married to Jesus right now! We are just waiting to go to Him.

**2. The Presentation Stage**—When the time of the wedding arrived, the Father of the groom would send the bridegroom and his friends to the bride's home. They would get her and bring her back to the groom's house, which he had prepared for her, with great celebration and joy. There, gifts would be exchanged, the marriage would be consummated, and the couple would begin their lives together.

That is what we are waiting on this morning! We are married; we are

just waiting for the Bridegroom to come and call His bride to come meet Him. Friend, that day is coming! Are you ready to meet Him when He comes?

3. **The Festival Stage**—Following the wedding, the couple, their friends, and their families would enter a time of celebration. I will say more about that in a few moments.

**C. A Preparation Will Be Consummated** (v. 7b–8). Notice that the text says, “**his wife hath made herself ready.**” Typically, oriental brides prepared their own wedding garments. It could be as elaborate or as simple as they chose to make it. Usually, it consisted of two pieces. One, an inner garment called a tunic, and two, the outer garment called a toga. It was the bride’s responsibility to get herself ready for the wedding!

(Ill. You and I need to understand that we are to prepare ourselves for that coming day as well! You see, **verse 8** says that the Bride of Christ will be clothed in white linen and that this linen is the righteousness of the saints! I take that to imply that how simply or how elaborately we are dressed may depend on the kind of life we lived while we were in this world!

Let me illustrate. There are three kinds of righteousness that a person can have.

1. **Personal Righteousness**—This is the righteousness you can produce yourself. It is basically evil, and no good at all can come from it—**Isa. 64:6**. In our own righteousness, we are literally dressed in rags before the Lord.

2. **Provided Righteousness**—This is the righteousness we are given when we trust the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior—**2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:21–22**. This refers to that tunic or inner garment. We have been provided with a spotless inner garment of

righteousness!

3. **Practical Righteousness**—This is the righteousness we live out each day we are in this world. It refers to how we conduct ourselves, how well we submit to authority, and how we use the opportunities, gifts, responsibilities, and privileges we are given as children of God. This speaks of the outer garment, or the toga, that the world sees. It is pure speculation, but how well we are dressed at the Wedding may depend on how we live here! It may be that the wedding garments will be handed out at the Judgment Seat of Christ, **Matt. 22:1–12**, and that they will reflect how we lived life here below! It is something worth thinking about!)

(Ill. Whatever the scenario that is played out here, the fact remains that the bride has made the proper preparations, and she is ready for the wedding! This means that the faith she placed in Jesus was not misplaced. It means that all her trials and struggles are behind her. It means she has trusted the Lord to save her, and He has! She is home! She is loved! And she is ready to enter into the joy of her Lord! What a day that will be!)

### **III. This Wedding is Punctuated by a Continuation** (v. 9–20:3)

(Ill. This wedding doesn’t end with the couple coming together to live. This wedding will continue with a celebration like nothing this universe has ever seen! Let me mention a few brief thoughts!)

**A. The Guests at The Wedding Supper**—guests will attend this heavenly wedding. Who? Well, it will be the Old Testament saints and the Tribulation saints. It will be a group made up of all Jews and Gentiles who were saved before Pentecost and after the Rapture! That will be quite an assembly!

**B. The Glory of The Wedding Sup-**

**per**—After an oriental wedding, there was always a celebration. The length and the opulence all depended on the wealth of the Bridegroom. When rich men married, their wedding celebrations might last up to 7 days!

The Lord Jesus will present His Bride with a celebration that will last 1,000 years! After the wedding, we will return with Him to this earth. He will put down His enemies and establish His throne on this earth. Then, He and His bride will reign together during the millennium for 1,000 years!)

(Ill. Many of you can remember the 1981 wedding of Charles, The Prince of Wales and Lady Diana Spencer. It was a spectacle of enormous cost, and billions of people watched the royal wedding. However, that wedding was doomed! Later, the world watched that same wedding collapse as publicly as it had begun.

Friend, I am trying to tell you about a real royal wedding! One that will be attended by more people than any other in history. One that will be more extravagant than any in history. One that will produce a marriage that will last longer than any in history! It will be a real Royal Wedding!)

### **C. The Groom At The Wedding Sup-**

**per**—In a typical oriental wedding celebration, the groom would mingle with the guests to ensure everyone had every need met.

Imagine what it will be to be in the presence of the Lord Jesus and have Him be occupied with seeing that our joy is full! Jesus will serve His people in that day, **Luke 12:37!** My, that is almost beyond the grasp of my mind!

**Conc:** I can imagine the society page in the New Jerusalem Times the next day! It might read something like this:

*“Yesterday, the Lamb of God took His bride unto Himself in a service presided over by the Heavenly Father. The*

*bride was dressed in garments of glorious white, and she was spotless and without blemish. The Groom was clothed in glory as is His custom!*

*The angelic hosts lifted their voices together and praised the name of the Most High God while the cherubim and seraphim hovered overhead crying, "Holy, holy, holy!"*

*After the service, the couple left Heaven to return to the earth for a 1,000-year honeymoon. When they return, they plan to spend eternity together in the palaces of Heaven."*

My friends, are you ready for that wedding in the sky? There will be a marriage made in Heaven someday, but only the redeemed are invited. Does that include you? If not, it can! Please come to Jesus and be saved today.

For those who are going, consider for a moment how you are preparing for that day! What kind of garments will you wear when you stand there at that Royal Wedding? The time to prepare is today! The place to prepare is here! The person to prepare is yourself. Will you come and let the Lord work in your heart and life?

**END**

## Questions About the Holy Spirit

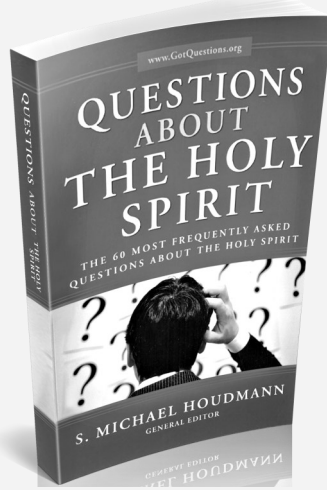
The 60 Most Frequently Asked Questions about the Holy Spirit

As Oswald Chambers said, "The Spirit is the first power we practically experience, but the last power we come to understand." Some people feel the intense conviction of sin while others appreciate His comfort, guidance, and strength. By searching the Book inspired by the Holy Spirit, we will discover more.

Send \$15 check to:

*The Amish Voice,*  
575 US Highway 250,  
Greenwich, OH 44837

Add a note stating you would like *Questions About the Holy Spirit.*



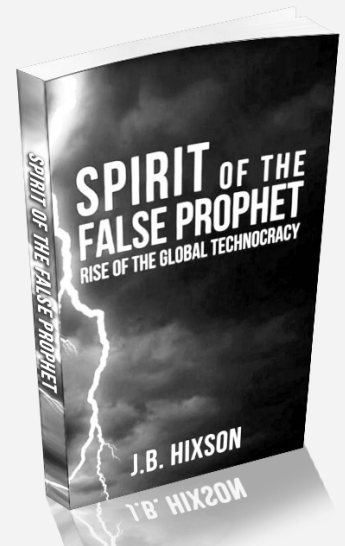
## The Spirit of the False Prophet

Yesterday's science fiction stories have become today's headlines as technological advancements provide powerful new tools in the Luciferian arsenal. How will AI, biometric surveillance, digital currency, and a global ID system pave the way for the coming global technocracy and the mark of the Beast?

Send \$17 check to:

*The Amish Voice,*  
575 US Highway 250,  
Greenwich, OH 44837

Add a note stating you would like *The Spirit of the False Prophet*



## The Strange Woman

—by John Weaver

Proverb 5 is a warning concerning the enticing woman. That path will lead downward to death and hell. We cannot afford to be ignorant of the many tools and devices at Satan's disposal to entice men to wickedness. They are evil, and the end thereof is death and hell.

If you struggle in this area, take courage. You are not alone. More importantly, there is hope. Jesus came to set the captive free. The Word of God promises that if we walk in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Galatians 5:16).

How do you walk in the Spirit? Give

God your priorities. Start the day with prayer and reading God's Word. Seek and claim His promises. Tell God daily, "I will set no wicked thing before my eyes" (Ps 101:3). And then don't. Do it again the next day and the next.

The closer your relationship is with God (walking in the Spirit), the less power or pull these enticements will have. There will be temptations, which are not wrong in themselves. James 1:14-15 says every man is tempted. But it is when a person is drawn away of his or her own lust and enticed... then when lust is conceived, it becomes sin and leads to death.

We choose how to respond to temptation. If we are drawn away and enticed, a conception takes place. It takes both coming together for sin to be conceived. Temptation and lust will result in sin.

Praise God, we can say no to temptation. "Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her" (Prov 7:25-26). But may I add, many strong and weak men have also chosen the right path. Jesus came to set us free. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be **free indeed**" (John 8:36).

# Sermons over the Phone

Dial the phone number.  
Enter the access code.  
Choose the sermon. Enjoy!

**Dial-in Number: (641) 715-3800**  
**Access Code: 478499 #**

New sermons are  
available each month!

## January

### **A Call for Christian Modesty** (2 of 2)

In today's sexually confused culture, what does the Bible have to say about modesty? — Pastor John Marino

### **What is the Invisible War?** (part 1)

Demons, Satan, the powers of darkness—they're real and they are actively at work in our world. The question is, do you know how to recognize them—and, if need be, go to combat against them? Message by Chip Ingram.

### **What is the Invisible War?** (part 2)

Can a Christian be demon-possessed? Can Satan read my mind—or even control my thoughts? Chip Ingram shares that if you are going to have victory over Satan, you need to know who he is, how he works, and what weapons he will use against you.

### **The Power in the Blood** (parts 1 & 2)

In these messages, Adrian Rogers shares how the powerful blood of Jesus continues its work even after our sins are washed away and we are whole again.

## February

### **Prepare for Battle** (part 1 or 2)

We are in a cosmic conflict and Satan is doing everything he can to make you fail. Chip Ingram reveals how you can be victorious over the schemes of the Evil One by learning how to use the supernatural weapons God has provided.

### **Prepare for Battle** (part 2 or 2)

Condemnation. Doubt. Guilt. Is it possible that the enemy of your soul is using these common emotions to keep you from experiencing God's love and power? Chip Ingram explains how you can prepare for spiritual victory!

### **Damascus, Gog & Magog—What Next?**

Jan Markell talks to Amir Tsarfati about the biblical and prophetic significance of the current Mideast conflict. Why are some churches silent about this? What should we anticipate?

### **Build Back Better Turning Humans into Gods**

Jan Markell talks to Dr. J.B. Hixson. The technology we love has been turned into a weapon in the globalist effort to be as God. What is the role of the False Prophet in this effort? Merging man and machine will turn the world into a prison planet that will be normal once believers are gone.

## March

### **How to Do Battle with the Enemy and Win** (part 1 of 2)

Spiritual warfare is real. Chip Ingram relates the most fearful encounter with demons he ever faced and how you can prepare yourself to do battle with the enemy.

### **How to do Battle with the Enemy and Win** (part 2 of 2)

Have you ever been praying and had a wicked thought go through your mind? Have you ever been driving and had an impulse to do something crazy or evil? What's the source of those wild, out-of-control thoughts? In this message, Chip Ingram shares how to combat thoughts when they enter your mind.

### **Can You Hear the Hoofbeats?**

Jan Markell talks to Pastor Barry Stagner. The hoofbeats of the four horsemen are revealed in the intensity of the signs. Does King Charles play an apocalyptic role?

### **When the Oldest Hatred is the New Normal**

Jan Markell welcomes Trevor Rubenstein and Olivier Melnick. God's plan of the ages involves Jesus, the Jews and Jerusalem, yet many hate all three.

This publishing work is registered as a charitable organization in the USA. We welcome your articles, testimonies, and questions. We reserve the right to edit or decline any material and are not responsible for the return of any articles.

The cost to print and distribute *The Amish Voice* is \$.75 a copy and is totally funded by readers from across our great country who appreciate the ministry and care to support it. If the Lord would lay it on your heart to come alongside of us by helping with expenses, it would be a great benefit, as well as highly appreciated. Thank you. —Joe Keim, Executive Director

# Are We All the Same to God?

—by Ray Burkholder

For most of my life, I thought people who weren't in our denomination were worldly and ungodly. But is that an accurate statement? What does the Bible say about it? Here are just a few examples of what the Bible says regarding this matter:

*"He hath made everything beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart..."* (Ecc. 3:11).

We can see here that everyone has the world set in their hearts.

*"For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not"* (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

*"Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?"* (Proverbs 20:9).

We can see that there's no one on earth who is not a sinner, worldly, or ungodly. We are all on the same level.

Peter said,

*"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons."* (Acts 10:34).

*"For there is no respect of persons with God"* (Romans 2:11).

Both Peter and Paul said that God accepts any person; it does not matter what denomination a person is in or how ungodly and worldly someone

thinks that person is.

*"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"* (Romans 5:6).

*"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

Jesus Christ died for ungodly/worldly people. Jesus said he came for the sinners, not the righteous.

God did have a special group of people at one time, the nation of Israel. Israel is now a fallen nation (Romans

11:11). God doesn't have any special nations or groups today. Now, we all come to God as individuals.

Jesus Christ didn't die to establish denominations. Jesus Christ died so all men could be reconciled to God the Father.

*"Even the righteousness of God which is by FAITH of Jesus Christ unto ALL and upon ALL THEM THAT BELIEVE: for there is no difference:"* (Romans 3:22).



As we can see, being a part of a particular group has nothing to do with a person being reconciled to God.

God's will for today is this:

*"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy 2:4).

Let me close with this thought: if you haven't already trusted in the shed blood, death, burial, and resurrection of what Jesus Christ did on the cross for all your sins, please, friend, do so today before it's too late. (It's a FREE gift! Romans 5-6)

*"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Romans 6:23).

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

*"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise"* (Ephesians 1:13).

# Failing a Test

—by Gerald Hochstetler

I messed up. Badly.

I feel stupid.

The tests that we face in life are not so that God knows who we are; they are so we know who we are. We can look good on the outside, but what lies buried deep, deep inside? Often, that doesn't look so good. Little tidbits of

anger, traces of bitterness, and if the stage is set, it will manifest itself. So yes, I was very disappointed in myself.

I am not struggling with the fact that God forgives. He took care of that when He went to Calvary's Hill. He died for my stupidity. I'm struggling because I thought I was better than that.

But I'm not.

I'm going to get back up, shake off the dust, and proclaim the good news. I'm going to believe and receive that robe of righteousness He hands out for the believer and take another shot. Not because I am worthy, but because...

**He is worthy.**

## The Church in a New World

In the first decades after Amish arrived in the New World, church life was not well organized. Settlements were being formed and migration was disturbing community and church life. New families arrived monthly while others moved westward to build from scratch. Due to constant changes, church services were infrequent in many districts. On top of this, many areas were without a minister for extended periods of time because ministers were often transient as well. Sometimes new settlements had to wait a several years before an ordained church member could lead a service. The first Amish bishop (Jacob Hertzler) arrived no earlier than 1749.

Most Amish were farmers just as they had been in Europe. Some were millers, some tanners, and one was even a folk-physician (Hans Blank, Lebanon Valley). Wheat was the chief cash crop in the eighteenth century. Other typical farm crops were flax (linen) and apples.

## Fitting in and Standing Apart

Amish appreciated simplicity and modesty in dress. There are no records that a distinctive style of clothing set them apart from other German immigrants.

The Amish came as free laborers. Other immigrants who could not pay the cost of immigration came on credit. They were known as “redemptioners” and paid off their passage by working for a negotiated number of years. Even though the Amish were not wealthy, they practiced mutual aid. There are no records of any Amish who had to work as redemptioners after arriving in the New World. This was one of the reasons Amish communities grew, flourished, and thrived economically, though it was not always easy. Just as Amish valued their freedom, they also

respected the freedom of others. Unlike some of the people surrounding them, the Amish did not own slaves.

## Suffering Violence in the New World

The Amish could practice their faith in an abundance of freedom in the New World. However, they still had to deal with violence. French and English soldiers were fighting about colony borders during the Seven Years’ War. Native Americans often sided with the French and attacked anyone who lived in or near English settlements. William Penn had invited Anabaptist groups to migrate to Pennsylvania, but he and other British attackers made no difference between Amish and non-Amish. Households faced violence and insecure living in bordering areas.

Until that time, Pennsylvania had been a pacifist province. The government now wanted to form an army to defend against attacking bands. They initiated a militia and began funding military defence. The Amish and Mennonite “peace churches” appealed for exemption from this program. They were not forced to go against their religious beliefs, but instead, were allowed to take care of war refugees and provide other necessary services.

## The Threat of Revivalism

Even though threats of persecution and being treated as second-class citizens were absent in the New World, the Amish church still faced hardships. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Amish church lost members to other Christian denominations.

Evangelical preachers taught that a conversion experience was essential for becoming a Christian. Amish teaching emphasized experiencing salvation by daily living the Christian life.

Both Amish and evangelicals taught salvation by grace alone and saw the necessity of daily living with Christ. For the Amish, a unique, emotional conversion experience was not essential since they believed that the fruits of one’s life were a clear testimony of their faith. Evangelicals saw the ability to testify of a clear salvation experience as necessary. They charged the Amish with dead formalism and tried to infuse their communities with a more experiential religion.

Amish and evangelicals viewed the church differently. Amish saw church in terms of community which influenced every aspect of life with accountability. The revivalists’ emphasis on individual salvation weakened the importance and authority of the church.

At that time, the cultural gap between Amish and the rest of society was not easily seen. Many young people were attracted by the teachings and lifestyles of other Christian churches and left the Amish church behind. Others left due to marriages with a spouse from another Christian church.

The German Baptist Brethren, also called “Dunkers,” attracted many Amish. They shared the revivalism of many evangelical churches, but stood close to traditional Amish values on church and community life including non-resistance and plain dress.

Despite many Amish leaning towards evangelical churches, most Amish remained faithful to the Amish church and stayed united in their beliefs, practices, and simple lifestyle.

Primary source: *A History of the Amish*,  
by Steven M. Nolt

*To be continued  
in next issue...*



# Grace Through Suffering

How the Ayers Family Buried Their 8 Children

—by Kristen Gilles  
thegospelcoalition.org/article/

“Could we bear the burden of burying any more children?”

My husband, Bobby, and I have often pondered this question since we buried our son Parker, who was stillborn last fall.

Recently, we walked through the oldest cemetery in New Albany, Indiana, where the founders and many of our town’s first settlers are buried. We happened upon the family plot of a father, mother, and their eight children. These parents buried all of their sons and daughters before their oldest was even 20 years old. Contemplate this family’s story of hope-filled suffering.

In 1820, 28-year-old Elias and 24-year-old Mary Ann Ayres celebrated the birth of their first child, Mary. The next year, they received their firstborn son, William. Three years later in 1824, they added another son to their family, Edward. And in 1826, they welcomed another daughter, Caroline H.

After their fifth child, Henry, was born in January 1829, suffering swept in. Their 3-year-old daughter Caroline H. died in August 1829. Her memorial stone says:

**"SHE CAME FORTH AS A FLOWER  
AND WAS CUT DOWN."**

Two months later, they buried their 8-year-old son, William. His epitaph reads:

**"HE WAS A PRECIOUS GIFT. IN  
HIS YOUTH, HE SOUGHT THE  
LORD GOD OF HIS FATHERS AND  
IS NOT FOR GOD TOOK HIM."**

In 1830, several months after they buried Caroline H. and William, they were comforted with the birth of their third

daughter, Caroline S. In August of that same year, however, they laid to rest their fifth-born, Henry (20 months old).

With three of their six children now in heaven, Elias and Mary Ann journeyed on together as a family well acquainted with grief. In March 1833, God blessed them with another daughter, Cornelia. But 16 months later, they gathered at Fairview Cemetery twice in the month of July 1834 to bury Cornelia (16 months old) and Caroline S. (4 years old).

As Cornelia’s tombstone testifies, Elias and Mary Ann were still blessing the name of the Lord even after He’d taken five of their seven children to heaven. It reads:

**"THE LORD GAVE, AND THE  
LORD HATH TAKEN. BLESSED BE  
THE NAME OF THE LORD."**

Two years later in 1836, they celebrated the birth of their eighth child, their fifth daughter, Maria. The next year, however, Elias and Mary Ann laid their Maria to rest.

Then in 1839, Elias and Mary Ann buried their 19-year-old daughter, Mary, and their 15-year-old son, Edward, one in July and the other in December. Mary’s memorial stone declares:

**"BLESSED ARE THE DEAD  
WHICH DIE IN THE LORD."**

With all of their children resting in peace, this couple likely visited their family plot at Fairview often, encouraged by the truth inscribed on their children’s stones. In 1842, just three years after burying the rest of his children, 50-year-old Elias was laid to rest. His testimony reads:

**"I WILL LAY ME DOWN IN  
PEACE AND SLEEP."**

For the next 36 years, Mary Ann was temporarily parted from her husband and all of her children until her death in 1878. She was 82 years old. Her epitaph quotes Psalm 4:

**"HER LIFE WAS HID WITH CHRIST  
IN GOD, AND WHEN HE WHO  
IS HER LIFE SHALL APPEAR,  
THEN SHALL SHE APPEAR  
WITH HIM IN GLORY."**

She knew the safety and rest of belonging to God, just as she and Elias had taught their children.

When I first discovered the Ayres family story in Fairview Cemetery, I was heartbroken as I realized their continual suffering (and imagined my own suffering magnified eight or nine times). But as I read the testimonies of these parents who chiseled God’s Word on the memorial stones of their children, I saw God’s grace at work in their suffering, just as it is in our family’s suffering. We know what they know: God is faithful to His Word and can always be trusted. He should be praised from one generation to the next.

We can trust our Lord no matter what suffering we may endure because He has already endured it for us. He will help us until the day He returns. Until that day, we must hope in the Lord as we lift our voices to bless the name of the One who gives and takes. We will remember:

*"... your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:3-4).*

## Moving? Receiving duplicate mailings?

### Not interested in the Amish Voice?

Your address label is needed to make these changes. Please help us update our database by noting any corrections directly on your address label, and then returning it to us at:

575 US Highway 250 - Greenwich, OH 44837

## Two Sets of Eyeballs

—By Joe Keim

The Lord gave all living creatures one set of eyes to see with. But to mankind, He gave two sets of eyes. Let me explain:

In Gen 3:7, it says that the eyes of both Adam and Eve were opened, and they knew that they were naked.

We know that Adam and Eve had been naked since the beginning. However, up to this point in Gen 3, they saw everything through their spiritual set of eyes. Everything - the whole world - appeared and operated in the supernatural. That is until they ate of the forbidden tree. It is then that their spiritual set of eyes closed up. While the supernatural world still existed and surrounded them, they were no longer able to experience it. Their spiritual eyes were shut.



Now that they switched to their other set of eyes, they could only see the physical, and they immediately understood that they were naked.

Note that seeing the world through their physical eyes drove Adam and Eve to run, hide, and become fearful.

Now, let me share another experience that is very similar to the one we just read but worked from the opposite direction. In this case, the man went from seeing the whole world through his physical eyes to seeing the entire world through his spiritual set of eyes - the supernatural.

*“And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (2 Kings 6:17).*

Just like the nakedness of Adam and Eve, the horses and chariots of fire were all right there, but each required a different set of eyes to see and experience.

Do you have both sets of eyeballs? Which set are you using right now? One is loaded with peace, joy, and power. The other is doom, gloom, and full of fear,

If you have been seeing the world through your physical set of eyes for too long, you may have to ask God to help you switch to your spiritual set of eyes.

*“...the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, they were in the midst of Samaria” (2 Kings 6:20).*

*“...their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight” (Luke 24:31).*

*“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened...” (Ephesians 1:18).*

As you consider what I just shared, let Luke 10:23-24 challenge and be a blessing to you; that is, if you have both sets of working eyeballs.

Don't stop reading now. We have just one more very important announcement from Jesus.

who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.

23 And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: 24 For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. 25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 26

Luke 10:23-24