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The Secret of the Strength

— by Peter Hoover

CHAPTER 9 (cont) On to the Word

The Word, Above All Human Authority

Dirk Philips, after he left a Franciscan monastery and joined the Anabaptists at Leeuwarden in Friesland, wrote:

The Gospel of Jesus is the real truth, and the only foundation on which everything must be built (1 Cor. 3:11). Beside this truth and this foundation there is nothing that will stand before God.¹⁰

Conrad Grebel wrote to a friend in 1524:

Do your utmost in preaching the Word of God without fear. Set up and defend only the institutions that are of God. Count as precious only that which is good and right, only that which can be found in the pure, clear Scriptures. Then reject, hate, and curse all proposals, all words, all opinion, and all institutions of all men, including your own.¹¹

¹⁰ From *Enchiridion oft Hantboecxken van de Christelijke Leere ende Religion, in carte somma begrepen ...* 1564

Michael Sattler wrote:

Let no one tear you from the order that is laid down in the Scriptures, the order sealed by the blood of Jesus and witnessed to by many of His followers.¹²

The Word in Their Hands

Martin Luther condemned the Anabaptists for “taking the Word of God into their own hands.” His charge was not without foundation.

The first Anabaptists rejoiced in “*that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes ... and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life*” (1 John 1:1). They took Peter literally where he said that “no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.” They believed that no church leaders nor denomination held the exclusive right to handle the Word of God. And they believed that the written word was for all to hear, see, touch, and understand. Conrad Grebel wrote in 1524:

¹¹ From a letter to Thomas Miintzer, September 5, 1524.

¹² *Ein Sendbrief an die Gemeine Gottes in Harb*, 1527

Just as our forefathers fell away from the true God and the knowledge of Jesus Christ and of the right faith in Him...so today, too, every man wants to be saved by a superficial faith without fruits... In the same error, we, too, lingered, as long as we heard and read only the evangelical preachers. But after we took the Scriptures into our own hands and consulted them ourselves on many points, we have been instructed.¹³

Grebel criticised Martin Luther for his “irresponsible sparing” of the German populace by not giving them the Scriptures to handle and interpret for themselves. Grebel saw Luther as guilty of “hiding the Word of God, mixing the commands of God with commands of men, and damaging and frustrating all that comes from God.”

The Word Prohibits What It Does Not Command

The first Anabaptists believed that churches do not have the right to make rules about things on which the Scriptures are silent. Conrad Grebel, who frequently mentioned

¹³ Letter to Thomas Muntzer, 1524.

the “example and commands” of the Scriptures (*Beispiel und Geboten*), wrote:

Whatever we have not been taught by clear teaching and example we should take as something completely forbidden, just as if it were written: “Do not do this.” If the apostles did not do it, we should not do it either.¹⁴

Dirk Philips wrote:

Whatever God has not commanded, that He prohibits us to command. Therefore all worship and practice that is not instituted by a direct command of God is wrong, no matter how many human arguments defend it.¹⁵

Menno Simons wrote:

Beware of all innovations and teachings that do not come from the Word of Christ and His apostles.... Point to Christ and His Word at all times. Let all those who would introduce anything more than what Christ teaches in His Word be anathema. “*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*” (1 Cor. 3:11).¹⁶

The Old and the New Testaments

The Protestant Reformers, the first Anabaptists believed, got the old and the new covenants of God confused because they did not approach the Scriptures through Jesus. They tried to climb in some other way, through the “doctrines” of Paul, through the laws of Moses, or

through the Old Testament prophets. This made them “thieves and murderers.” It made them take wrong examples from the wrong people, and led them to use the written Word in a way that did more harm than good.

The Protestant Reformers failed, for instance, to follow Jesus’ example in loving his enemies because they looked to David’s example in war. They did not follow Jesus’ example in economics because they looked to Abraham and Job. They did not understand Jesus’ kingdom because they looked at the kingdom of Israel.

The Anabaptist servant of the Word, Hans Pfistermeyer, testified before the Swiss authorities at Bern in 1531:

The New Testament is better than the Old. The Old was fulfilled and interpreted by Jesus. Jesus taught a higher and better way and made with his people a new covenant. I make a great difference between the Old and New Testament and believe that the New Covenant which was made with us is much better than the old that was made with the Jews.¹⁷

In a public debate at Frankenthal in the Kurpfalz in 1571, the Anabaptists said:

The Old Testament writings offer strong proof that Jesus is the true God and Saviour of whom all the prophets testified....Moses points us forward to Christ our Saviour... We believe that the New Testament surpasses the Old. The parts of the Old Testament that can be reconciled with the teachings of

Christ we accept... If teaching necessary for salvation and a godly life was not taught by Christ and the Apostles, but is found only in the Old Testament, we would like to see it.¹⁸

Dirk Philips might have expressed the same willingness, but he did not expect to see anything like it. He wrote:

False prophets disguise their teachings by appealing to the letter of the Old Testament, which consists of figures for things to come. Whatever they cannot defend by the New Testament they try to establish with the Old. This has given rise to many sects and many false religious forms.¹⁹

Afraid of the Word

In Canada, where I spent my childhood, some believed that people who “read the Bible too much” got strange ideas, lost their minds, or left the church. One older man explained it like this, “The Bible is like a stream. As long as you are content to drink from the surface, its water stays clean and pure. But if you get in too deep, you stir it up, and its waters become muddy and unfit to drink.”

The first Anabaptists faced similar logic. For a thousand years the church of the Dark Ages had convinced the people that the Scriptures were dangerous. The people had come to believe that if an “unlearned” man handles the Bible, he may offend God and bring damnation upon his soul.

Following Jesus, the first Anabaptists lost these fears. They no longer worried about “getting in too deep” or about bringing condemnation upon themselves. Veit Grunberger, Ana-

¹⁴ From a letter to Thomas Müntzer, September 5, 1524.

¹⁵ *Enchiridion*, 1564

¹⁶ *Kindertucht. Een schoon onderwys ende Jeere, hoe alle vrome alders haer kinderen (nae wtwijsen der schriftueren) schuldich ende ghehouden zijn de regieren, te castyden, te onderrichten, ende in een vroom duechdelick ende godsalich Jeeuen op te voeden. ... ca. 1557.*

¹⁷ From *Ein christenlich gesprach gehalten zu Bernn zwischen den Predicanten und Hansen Physter Meyer von Arouw den Widertauff, Eyd, Oberkeyt und andere Widertoufferische Artikel betreffende*, 1531.

¹⁸ From *Protocoll, Das ist Alle handlung des gesprechs zu Franckenthal inn der Churfürstlichen Pfaltz, mit denen so ma*¹⁹ *Enchiridion*, 1564.

¹⁹ *Enchiridion*, 1564.

baptist messenger arrested at Salzburg in Austria in 1576, mentioned in a letter from prison that he hoped to learn at least one hundred chapters from the New Testament by memory. He regretted that he had not known the Scriptures sooner so that he could have memorized the entire New Testament.

The Anabaptists started with the Gospels, but they did not neglect nor minimize the remainder of the written Word. "Read the epistles with diligence," wrote Wolfgang Brandhuber. "Ask God to help you understand them and He will teach you all things if you attend His school and accept His discipline."²⁰

"When we hear or read the Scriptures, it is just as if we heard the Lord Christ or his apostles speaking to us," wrote Leupold Scharnschlager. "Everyone knows that the materials with which they are written are in themselves dead ink and paper, but if we comprehend them right, they are more than that."²¹

The Scriptures helped the first Anabaptists into Gemeinschaft with Jesus. They felt totally at home in the Scriptures. But they feared them, too, when people misused them.

Heinz Kraut, Anabaptist messenger from Frankenhausen in Thuringen, fell into the hands of Martin Luther's men on November 20, 1535. Resolving to win him over to their side, the Lutherans imprisoned him at Jena and had their best scholars, Kaspar Kreutzinger and Philipp Melancthon dispute with him.

The Lutheran scholars quoted scripture after scripture in defense of their

positions. Finally Heinz could keep quiet no longer. "You, Master Philip," he said, "have killed more people with your dead Scriptures than have all the hangmen in Germany!"

The Lutherans answered by beheading Heinz Kraut at Jena on January 26, 1536.

"The Scriptures are valuable for those who use them right," testified one Anabaptist at the Regensburg trials in Bavaria. "But their misuse is the source of all heresy and unbelief. To the scribes and the Pharisees the Scriptures were not a guide to Christ, but a hindrance and eventually a punishment."²²

"Man's salvation is not to be bound to the outer word," stated another Anabaptist defendant at Regensburg. "Salvation is a matter of the inner Word alone." And to this, Ulrich Stadler added that it is dangerous to bring people to depend on the outer word because it "makes an idol out of the preacher, out of the writings and out of their words. But all these are merely images, signs, or tools."²³

Bold with the Word

Because they had full confidence in the Word of Christ and in their Spirit-led understanding of it, the first Anabaptists lost their fear of men. Before the court that sentenced him to death, Michael Sattler said:

We will be convinced through the Scriptures. If we see that we are wrong, we will gladly bear our punishment. But, if according to the Scriptures, we are not wrong, then I hope before God that you will all change your minds and allow yourselves to be taught.

At this the judges "stuck their heads

together and laughed." Michael's request to use the Scriptures in their original languages as a basis for discussion seemed ridiculous to them. "You shameless and renegade monk," sneered the presiding secretary, "Shall we dispute with you? We'll let the hangman do that!"

When the chief judge, Count Joachim von Zollem, asked him if he wanted to receive a just sentence, Michael replied: "Servants of God, I am not called to judge the Word but to be a witness for it... We are ready to suffer for the Word of God whatever punishment you lay upon us. We will stand fast on our faith in Jesus as long as we have breath, that is, until we can be shown from the Scriptures a better way."

"Yes, you will be shown," retorted the secretary. "The hangman will show you. He will dispute with you."

"I appeal to the Scriptures," was Michael's last reply.²⁴

The Word and the Cross

After a recent church division, one minister said: "The other group wants to live only by the Word of God. You know, that is a dangerous position for a conservative church to take."

He was right. Living only by the Word of God is dangerous. The day Menno Simons decided to do it, he became a hunted man. Dutch authorities set a price on his head. Giving him a bed became a capital offence. He fled by night. He preached much. He suffered much and finally died, an old man with a crutch, banished to the cold windswept moors of Schleswig-Holstein along the Baltic Sea. But Menno was not sorry: "Which of the two shall we follow?" he asked. "Shall we follow the truth of Christ

²⁰ *Sendbrief*, 1529

²¹ From *Erleütterung durch auszug aus Heiliger Biblischer schrift. . . zu dienst und fürderung ains Klaren urteils van wegen unterschied Alts und News Testaments. . . genant Testamenterleütterung*, ca. 1544.

²² Quoted in Hermann Nestler, *Die Wiedertauferbewegung in Regensburg*, 1926.

²³ *Vom Jebendigen Wort und geschriebenen* ... ca. 1530

²⁴ From the eyewitness account of Klaus von Gravenack.

Jesus, or shall we follow the lies of the world? If you answer that we should follow Jesus, your judgement is right. But the result for the flesh will be anxiety, the loss of our belongings, arrest, banishment, poverty, water, fire, sword, the wheel, shame, cross, suffering, and bodily death—then eternal life. If you answer that we should follow the world than you judge wrong. Even though the result of such a choice brings us honor and liberty, even though it brings us ease and material advantages, it ends in eternal death.”²⁵

The cross the Anabaptists carried was heavy. But they carried it for the Word, dressed in a garment dipped in blood, who led them...

CHAPTER 10

On to a New Life

“In Christ Jesus neither the cutting away nor the foreskin is of any value, but a new creature,” wrote Menno Simons on the title page of his book *Of the Heavenly Birth and the New Creature* in 1556. He quoted Paul. And with Paul and Menno Simons, the Anabaptists rejected all external means of salvation.

Salvation for the Anabaptists was Jesus. To be saved was to turn to Him in the heart and follow Him in a new life, like Hans Betz who got converted and baptized at Donauwörth, in the Frankische Alb, in 1530.

Hans was a young man with many friends. He learned how to run a loom and earned a good wage in a linen shop. Old enough to know what happens in town at night, he took part in it. He thought he had a good life and that he enjoyed it... but he felt guilty.

Then an Anabaptist messenger came to town. Hans heard him speak and felt an inner call. He repented of his sins, got baptized, and gave up all he had to follow Jesus.

After some time, Hans found a place among a community of believers at Auspitz in Moravia. When they needed to flee he fled and was captured with them. His captors threw him into the dungeons of the castle at Passau on the Danube. There he had time to write his testimony:

In the beginning, God created me to be his child. He created me clean. He gave me his image when I was still in my mother's womb. But when I was born onto the earth I lost my goodness and was robbed of the innocence God had given to me. I grew up in the world, surrounded by all the impurities of sin. I sought only possessions and money, which are against God. Whatever my eyes lusted after, I sought in my heart....

Even though the law of God within me resisted the common sins in which I lived, I did not obey it. I was perverted from the bottom of my heart. My mouth could speak only bad things, and my vices were many. Even though my spirit would have been willing to stay away from sin, I was too weak in the battle and soon found myself lying on my side. The good that I wanted to do I could not accomplish because the power of sin kept forcing me to do wrong. I led an uncontrolled life, driven by the lusts of my heart. I lost God's gift and sinned to the limit. Then the law of God judged me, and even though it was given for life, it condemned me to death.

When I recognized the law of God, I began to see the magnitude

of my sins, my vices, and my shame. The law wounded me and condemned me to death and hell. There, surrounded by sin, death and hell, I looked for God and He brought me to life again. He moved me with His law to where I found again the grace which I had lost for so long a time....

The law taught me to recognize sin and drove me back to God's gift, given in Christ. I would not have known what sin was if God had not spoken to me. Like sin rules the man who lives in it, God's grace rules the man whom Christ bears again. He is led out of all sin to live in what is right.

When the law wounded my conscience, I began to cry for God's grace and mercy. I began to cry to Him to help me out of my sin and to accept me once more as His child for His mercy's sake.

God, in His grace, heard through Christ my cry. He brought me out of death, forgave my sins, took me again as His son, and through Him I overcame sin when He made me new. Because I had fallen from God through sin and come under His wrath, he bore me again as His child. He bore me in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the man in between, so that I would not be lost.

No one comes to God unless God draws him. Therefore He shows us Christ so that none of us will run away from Him when we see through the law the punishment we deserve.¹

Adam and Jesus

“Jesus Christ, through His obedience, undid the disobedience of Adam and all his descendants,” wrote Menno Simons. “And by His pain-

²⁵ *Verclaringhe des christelycken Doopsels ...* ca. 1542

¹ *Ausbund*, 112

ful death, He restored life.”²

“That which Adam lost, we find again in Christ, beautifully adorned and clear,”³ wrote an Ausbund writer.

What did Adam lose?

The first Anabaptists believed that Adam, when he sinned, lost his innocence. They believed that innocence is a gift of God and that we are all born with it. But when we grow up and lose our innocence, we lose the image of God, which can only be found again in Christ.⁴

Coming to Jesus, the Anabaptists believed, is coming back to the love, the freedom, and the innocence of childhood. Sin, and the laws made to control sin, no longer affect us in Jesus. In Jesus we live above sin and above the law, compelled by nothing but love. Wolfgang Brandhuber, shortly before they killed him at Linz in Austria, wrote:

If we want to be one with God, we need to be one with His will (Christ Jesus). That happens when we tell Him about our great needs

² *Dat Fundament des Christelycken leers...* 1539

³ *Ausbund*, 51:6

⁴ After Balthasar Hubmaier (who wrote two books on the subject: *Von der Freyhait des Willens* and *Von der Freywilligkeit des Menschens*), Hans Denck was the Anabaptist who wrote most about man’s problem with guilt and his freedom to choose. In his book, *Was geredt sey* . . . (1526), Hans taught that God created us to fulfill his desire for voluntary obedience, as opposed to the blind obedience of a log or a stone. He did not believe that God forces us to obey him, but that he permits sin so that we need to use our freedom of choice. Like Balthasar Hubmaier, Hans believed that only our flesh (our natural desires) became corrupted in Adam’s fall, and that our spirits became prisoners of our flesh. Sin is a kind of sickness. To recover from it, we must surrender ourselves totally to God. Only then can our spirits dominate our unwilling flesh. Only then can we keep the law of love in / obedience to God and live a new life.

and when we tell Him that we love Him. If we love Him we keep his commandments because love - if it is love - comes from the heart. How could true love be anything but from the heart? And love continually seeks love, like the bride in Solomon’s song who can sing and speak of nothing else.

True Christianity works on nothing but love. It needs no law because it fulfills the commands of God out of pure love and exercises itself in this day and night. It leaves everything earthly behind. It despises everything earthly to the pit, and asks: “Why bother with that?” It seeks because it loves. The more it loves, the more it seeks to be loved—engaging itself to the Beloved One and peering out through the lattice work to watch Him come from afar.⁵

Hans Betz, before he died under torture in 1537, at Passau in Bavaria, wrote:

Christ shows us the law of God for man: “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” He shows us what is good and what is bad so that we may live in a different way. Christ is the fulfilment of the law that was given in figures to Moses. All the figures of the law end in Christ because Christ is the law. To obey the law,



Rottenburg am Neckar, where Michael Sattler and his wife died through fire and drowning. Wilhelm Rabel (Reublin), born and raised here, baptised many, and a community of believers took shape in the nearby village of Horb.

⁵ *Sendbriel* 1529

says Christ, is to love God with all the strength of our souls, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. In these short commands the law is gathered up in Christ.

Faith and love, out of a pure heart, says Paul, is the sum of all commands. The one who lives in God’s love is a disciple of Christ and knows the truth. Love is kind and friendly and does no one harm. It bears everything and keeps away from sin.... This is how the law and the prophets are fulfilled in Christ our Lord. This is the way He has shown us that leads to the Father and eternal life...⁶

A Turning Around

The first Anabaptists spoke often of being born again. Menno Simons quoted Jesus: “...*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*” (John 3:3, 5). Then he wrote:

Listen! These are not words invented by men. They were not resolved or decided on in any church council. These are the words of the Son of God! The Word is powerful and clear and means not only Nicodemus, but all of Adam’s descendants who have come to a mature age. It is too bad that the Word has been hidden by the ugly yeast, the dung of human commandments, human rules, and human interpretations to such an extent that scarcely one or two out of a thousand is left who understands the heavenly birth anymore.⁷

A new birth, a heavenly birth, a baptism of the Spirit—the first

⁶ *Ausbund*, 112

⁷ *Een corte vermaninghe van de wedergeboorte* ... ca. 1537

Anabaptists used all of these terms, but none more often than the term *Bekehrung* (conversion), which, in German means literally “a turning around.” They got the word from the German Gospel of Matthew: “Unless you *turn yourselves around* and become like little children you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

Hans Betz wrote:

Listen to how one receives Christ. You need to make a covenant with Him. In the depths of your heart, you need to turn from sin. Then you will be clean. Christ will come to you and show you His Spirit—and He will bear you again.⁸

Menno Simons wrote:

If you wish to be saved, your earthly, carnal, ungodly life must first be made new. The Scriptures with their admonitions, their reproof, their accounts of miracles, ceremonies, and sacraments teach us nothing but repentance. If you do not repent, there is nothing in heaven or on earth that can help you, for without true repentance we comfort ourselves in vain....

We must be born from above. We must be transformed and made new in our hearts. We must be transplanted from the unrighteous and evil nature of Adam into the true and good nature of Christ, or we can never in all eternity be saved by any means, be they of men or of God. Whoever has not truly repented and found a new life (I speak of those who are of the age of understanding) is lost.

This is unmistakably clear. Everyone who does not wish to be deceived should guard this in the little chest of his conscience.⁹

An Ausbund writer wrote:

Listen, all you Christians who have been born again! God’s Son, from the Kingdom of Heaven, died on the cross and suffered death and shame. Let us follow Him! Let us take up our cross!

The blood of Jesus washes away the sins of those who leave all to follow Him, and who believe on God alone—even though they have sinned much. The Holy Spirit is given to those who believe and are baptized, if they follow Christ. With the Spirit, they kill the flesh and find peace with God.

Those who are washed and made free from sin with the blood of Christ walk in the Spirit with broken hearts. The Spirit rules them and shows them the way. Therefore, purified children of God—born again—keep yourselves pure! Let no man deceive you! The one who does right is right. The one who sins is a slave to sin.¹⁰



Maeyken Wens, arrested at Antwerp in 1573 wrote beautiful encouraging letters to her husband, her children, and to her friends. Her fifteen-year-old son, Adriaan, watched, but fainted, as they burned her at the stake on the morning of Oct. 6, 1573. Afterward, he dug through the ashes for the tongue-screw with which they had kept her from speaking—as a remembrance of his mother.

No Turning Back

The first Anabaptists could not talk about the new life without mentioning *Gemeinschaft* with Christ found through suffering with Him, and the need of total *Gelassenheit* (letting go). The material on this subject is vast. It is overwhelming, by far, the most popular theme of the Anabaptist writings of southern Germany and Austria. I will quote only Hans Betz who drew a parallel between the Christian’s surrender and Lot leaving everything behind when he left Sodom to begin a new life.

Hans Betz wrote:

Let us fight valiantly on, pressing toward the prize. The one who turns to one side or the other will perish with Lot’s wife who turned to look back, feeling sorry for the possessions she left behind.¹¹

Let him who has laid his hand on the plough not look back! Press on to the goal! Press on to Jesus Christ! The one who gains Christ will rise with Him from the dead on the youngest day... Remember Lot’s wife! When she looked back, she was punished by God and became a pillar of salt. Let this be your example, you who have chosen the Way. Do not turn around! Do not look back! Declare yourselves for Christ and go ahead! If you overcome, you will live with Him in eternal joy!¹²

No Cheap Grace

“The proud world wants to be Christian too,” wrote an Ausbund writer. “But the world is ashamed of the cross. The world says: ‘No. That cannot be. Why should we suffer if the sufferings of Christ were enough to redeem us from our sins?’ Oh blind

⁸ *Ausbund*, 107:22

⁹ *op. cit.*

¹⁰ *Ausbund*, 114

¹¹ *Ausbund*, 113:18

¹² *Ausbund*, 111:11-12

world, you will be put to shame! Your faith will not save you! Repent! If you do not want to suffer forever, come out from among the world and sin no more!”¹³

Othmar Roth of Sankt Gallen in Switzerland wrote in 1532:

Man, are you tired of being sad?... Leave the world! Leave your possessions! Leave your goods and your money! The one who thinks of death chooses the best and Christ earns grace for him.

It is difficult for the one who loves to talk to get to know himself. If he would think of who he is, he would not have so much to say. Look at yourself! Leave the rest. Do not gossip. Be quiet... so that in the end you may not be put to shame.

What you measure out will be measured to you. Christ treats all men fairly. No sin remains unpunished. Therefore, fear God and keep his commands. No good deed remains without its reward. Pray for grace, early and late, and pray that we may be spared. If you want to be saved, keep away from sin! To be carnally minded is death. Leave the world! Leave your possessions! Leave your goods and your money! The one who thinks of death chooses the best and Christ earns grace for him.

God will not forsake the one who lives in the truth. God is ready to hear us if we hate sin. Oh Jesus Christ, it is Your spirit that comforts us. Do not leave us! Be merciful to us and intercede for us... as we near the end of time.¹⁴

Menno Simons wrote:

With a sincere heart we desire to die to sin, to bury our sins with Christ, and to rise with Him to a new life, just as our baptism signifies. We seek to walk humbly and in a holy way with Christ Jesus in this covenant of grace...For even as the death of our Lord would not have profited us, had He not risen from the power of earth... so it will not help us anything to bury our sins in baptism if we do not rise with Christ from the power of sin unto a new life.¹⁵

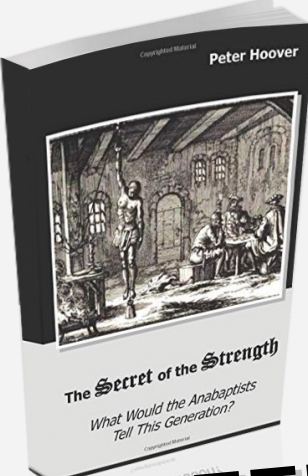
Once they discovered a new life in Christ, the Anabaptists moved ...

¹³ *Ausbund*, 79:10

¹⁴ *Ausbund*, 58

¹⁵ *Dat Fundament des Christelycken leers...*1539

The Secret of the Strength
Continued...Chapter 11 in May Issue



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ALL ALONE

Have you ever felt alone,
All alone,
As if in a desert home?
Where no one cares or knows,
All alone,
Your heart so full of woes.
No one sees your sorrow,
All alone,
How will you face tomorrow?
If in this world you seem
All alone,
The Lord can still redeem.
He will never leave you
All alone,
In love He will receive you.
Then you'll never, ever be
All alone.

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Peaceful Neutrality

In the previous issue, we discovered that the Amish lost many members to other churches that preached evangelical revivalism but remained who they were: a close-knit community with an emphasis on a faith that was shown by a Christian lifestyle rather than a personal conversion experience.

Towards the end of the 18th century, the Amish and other peace churches were again tested on their non-resistant convictions. In the eyes of the Tories (the Americans who remained loyal to the British crown) and the rebels, members of peace churches were a threat because they did not side with either of them. These fighting and arguing parties often felt that whoever was not with them was against them.

As an alternative to going to war, many governments offered peace churches the opportunity to hold a collection to “assist the Common Cause” instead of taking up arms. Many churches agreed on this compromise, but a few people refused because the specific purpose of the collection was not revealed.

As a result of the Amish refusing to swear an oath of allegiance to the new government, they lost the right to vote.

Even though this right was eventually given back to them, most current-day Amish still do not vote.

Matthew 5:37 states, “*But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*” Because of this, the Amish felt that they had to hold the pledges they once made to the British government when moving into English (British) colonies even though they saw the absurdness of the high tax the British government was collecting.

Some young people were attracted to the rebel’s side because of their aim for freedom and independence. A few even decided to join the fighting troops, which must have been devastating to their parents and grandparents, who had fled Europe to avoid military service. As a result, these individuals left – or simply never joined – the Amish church.

Precarious Position Around 1800

As the Amish completed the first century as a distinct people group, their existence was little surer than in 1693. In North America, the Amish barely maintained their numbers after more than a half-century of settlement. The challenges of establishing new homes, re-

sponding to revivalist overtures, Patriotic war, and the new wealth and freedom of mobility that had resulted from immigration had each taken a toll.

Genealogical studies show that none of the Amish immigrant families were able to retain all of their children in the church. In fact, less than 40 percent of the first generation continued in the Amish tradition. Although some 500 Amish adults and children had arrived in Pennsylvania before the Revolution, by 1800, there were likely fewer than a thousand Amish in the new United States, even though many had large families.

Several decades earlier, an Amish immigrant had written to European friends advising them to come to America because “in this country is a very good living.” Many Amish had survived and prospered in colonial Pennsylvania, even though this had carried its own temptations. At times, living in America had meant becoming American, with all its revivalistic and patriotic ‘trappings.’ Still, the Amish had persisted, and after 1800, they would welcome a new wave of European immigrants eager to join that “good living” in America.

Continued in May 2024 issue...

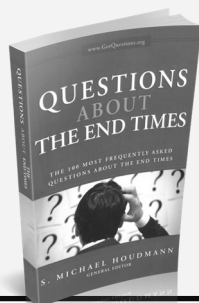
Questions About The End Times

The 100 Most Frequently Asked Questions about the End Times

Wars. Rumors of wars. Blood moons. Natural disasters. Terrorism. Current events are sometimes like watching pieces of a puzzle fall into place. God's purposes will stand. What He has decreed will come to pass. This book will point you consistently to the Bible for answers.

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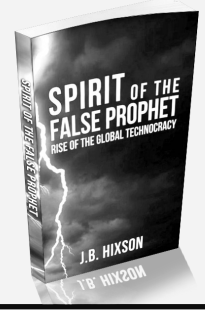


The Spirit of the False Prophet

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?

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info@stepoutoftheboat.org

March 13-16, 2024

575 US 250, Greenwich, OH 44837

At the Step Out of the Boat Conference:

- ◆ You will hear stories and testimonies from others about what happened when they stepped out of the boat.
- ◆ You will hear preaching from a variety of men, starting in the first chapter of Galatians and ending in chapter 4.
- ◆ You will receive unlimited encouragement to continue your journey in life.
- ◆ You will be challenged in your faith and walk with God.

During the conference, you will have many opportunities to connect with other believers from different cultures and backgrounds. You will be challenged to become a generation influencer for the kingdom of God!

It's easy for us to get caught up in the day-to-day. We lose focus on God and eternity. The pressures of life can be so enormous between relationships, bills, work, and managing our homes that we can forget to take a moment to stop and listen for God's voice in the chaos.

*Are you ready to grab God's hand and
agree to go wherever He leads you?*

The Basic Details of the Conference:

- ◆ The Step Out of the Boat Conference will feature 20-25 speakers who will encourage you with their life story.
- ◆ The conference also offers a children's ministry so that you can focus on the speakers, and your children can have fun, make new friends, and learn more about Jesus.
- ◆ We hold family-style meals and encourage fellowship with one another.
- ◆ Bring your children and your spouse, and invite your friends and neighbors!

Schedule:

Day 1: Wednesday Evening, March 13—6pm to 8:15pm

Day 3: Friday, March 15—9am to 7:45pm

Day 2: Thursday, March 14—9am to 7:20pm

Day 4: Saturday, March 16—9am to 12:00pm

Register Today:

- ◆ Single Person: \$110
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- ◆ Family: \$220 (children, age 5 and under are free)

Call our office at (419) 962-1515, go online to StepOutOfTheBoat.org, or send a check to MAP, 575 US Highway 250, Greenwich, OH 44837. Your registration fee includes meals, conference sessions, gift cards for volunteers, and more.

Please note that tickets are non-refundable. Cancelled tickets will be donated to those who are unable to pay their registration fee.

The following article was taken from
The Topical Sermon Notebook, End Times
 by Dr. Alan Carr, Lenoir, NC.
www.sermonnotebook.org

Revelation 19:11–21

Intro: For about 6,000 years, the human drama has been unfolding. Since the day man sinned in the Garden of Eden, the whole of history has been moving toward one tremendous event. That event is the day when Jesus Christ returns to this world in power and glory to reign on the throne of David, **Isa. 9:7; Luke 1:32.**

When Jesus was here on the earth, He made many promises to His followers, but perhaps none is so great as His promise that He will indeed return to this earth one day, **Matt. 24:27–30.** In fact, the last recorded words of the Lord Jesus in the Bible are these, **“Surely I come quickly.”, Rev. 22:20!**

The fact of the matter is, Jesus is coming again! We have already seen that He will return in the Rapture to claim His people and take them to Heaven, **John 14:1–3; 1 Cor. 15:51–52; 1 Thes. 4:13–17.** However, just as every coin in your pocket has two parts, so does the return of Jesus. The first part is when He returns in the clouds to receive His bride and the second part is when He returns in glory to defeat His enemies and to reign upon the earth. It is this event that we want to focus on this morning.

Many famous men have left us their legacy in their words. For instance, Nixon said, **“I am not a crook.”** But, he was! Bush said, **“Read my lips, no new taxes!”** But, there were! Clinton said, **“I didn’t have sexual relations with that women.”** But, he did! The point? Most men’s words are just that: Words! However, the words of Christ

are truth! Everything He has ever said is true. And, when He tells us that He is coming again, you had better believe it!

I want you to know this morning that **The King Is Coming!** He is returning to this earth some glorious day to reign in peace and glory upon this earth. You need to be sure that you are ready to meet Him when He comes the first time so that you can come back with Him when He returns the second time! Let’s spend some time together in these verse as we think on the thought: **The King Is Coming!**

I. His Coming Will Be Visible

(v. 11–16)

(Ill. When the rapture takes place, it will be so sudden and so swift that people will not even know what has taken place. Like a thief in the night, Jesus will come and steal away His jewels from the earth and will take them to Heaven. The rapture will not be a visible event. However, when Jesus returns the second time in glory and power, everyone, everywhere will know about it, **Rev. 1:7.** Look at what these first verse tell us about this visible event.)

A. The Appearance Of Jesus (v. 11–13, 16)

(Ill. These precious verses tell us something of what Jesus will look like when He returns to the earth the second time. Notice what the Bible says about The Appearance Of Jesus.)

1. v. 11–12 **His Nature**—From this description, it is clear to see that Jesus is a little different than He was the first time He came!

a. **He Is Full Of Glory** (v. 12)—This verse tells us that Jesus Christ wears on His head many crowns. These are not crowns like the Anti-Christ wore! In **Rev. 6:2**, we are

told that he was “given” “a” crown. The word used there refers to a victors crown, a “**stephanos**”. Very literally, it has reference to the olive leaf crowns that were given to the victors in the Greek Olympic games.

On the other hand, Jesus wear many crowns. This word is “**diadems**” and refers to the crowns of royalty. While Anti-Christ had to be given a crown, Jesus already wears them!

(Ill. Jesus is already King of Kings whether men acknowledge that fact or not! People can pretend that Jesus isn’t Lord, but one day, His sovereignty will be revealed with great power and glory!)

This verse also says that **“His eyes were as a flame of fire.”** This speaks of His holiness! When He returns the second time, He come not as a meek and lowly Lamb, but He returns as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He returns not in humility, but in power, authority and glory!

(Ill. What a difference there is between the Jesus of the first advent and the Jesus of the second advent. The first time, He came as a servant, **Phil. 2:5–8.** The first time, He came, He was despised and rejected of men. He was a man of sorrows. He appeared to be nothing more than one more man among millions of other men, **Isa. 53:2–3.** The first time He came, no one but a handful of common people even took note of Him. The first time He came, those who hated Him without a cause saw to it that He was put to death!

However, things are different this time around! Now, He doesn’t appear as a servant, but as a King! Now He hasn’t some to suffer, but

to render judgment. Now, He has not come to die, but He has come to visit death upon all those who have defied Him and despised Him! He has returned in power and glory!)

(Ill. What a glorious Savior we serve this morning! God help us to see His as He is and worship Him accordingly! By the way, there are some in this room who need to receive Jesus as their Savior! You have the choice today to meet Him as Savior. There is coming a day when you will be forced to acknowledge Him as King. Today is a day of mercy, that will be a day of wrath! Which do you want?)

b. He Is Faithful And True (v. 11)

—I am sure for many that it looked like Jesus would never return, but He is **Faithful and True!** He can be depended on to keep His Word forever! What He says He will do, He will do!

(Ill. That Anti-Christ, like all other world leaders rose to power riding the back of lies and false statements. However, when Jesus appears, there are no attempts to prove that He is Who He claims to be. He shows up as a King and the world now knows it is true!)

(Ill. Just a word to the saints: Friend's always remember that you can trust Jesus! He will always Keep His Word. If He has made you a promise, claim it with the knowledge that He will surely bring it to pass! Just keep trusting Him, He is Faithful and True!)

c. He Fights In Righteousness (v. 11)

—All down through history, there have been wars. Many have been fought for foolish reasons. In fact, all wars boil down to one thing: sin! They all come from the fact that men want to be God. They try to place themselves in a position where they will be in total charge of

the world. When they do this, other men stand up and say, "No, you will not reign over us!" And, a war is the result.

(Ill. Jesus, on the other hand, wages righteous war! His cause is a just cause! He fights the battle of the Lord! We may like to think of Jesus as a Man of peace, and He is the Prince of Peace! However, the Bible also makes it clear that He is a Man of War, **Ex. 15:3!** Certainly, God will pursue peace, but if man will not repent, there will come a day when that man must do battle with the Lord. He will not allow unrighteousness and sin to go unchallenged! He will make war with the enemies of God!)

2. v. 12–13, 16 **His Names**—When the Lord Jesus returns, three new names are attached to Him. These names reveal much about His character and Person.

a. **The Name Of Mystery** (v. 12)—The Bible tells us that Jesus has a name written on Him that no man can know. It seems that refused to know the Name of Jesus except as a by-word, now they cannot know Him at all!

(Friend, the time to know Jesus is now! He is revealing Himself to men as the Savior of the sinner's soul. However, there is coming a day when men will not be able to know Him as Savior, but only as Judge! I beg you to call on the name of Jesus while He is still saving souls. Do not wait until He returns in judgment. In that day you will not even be able to know His Name!)

b. The Name Of Ministry (v. 13)

—He is also called the Word of God. This is the name of His ministry. Ever since He stepped onto the scene, Jesus has ministered through His Word. In **Genesis 1**, He

merely spoke and this vast universe and all it contains came into being. When He walked in this world, He made the Word of God live in the eyes of men, **John 1:1, 14**. When He returns in power and glory, He will speak the word and all His enemies will be slain before Him in that day!

(Ill. My I say to you that Jesus is ministering right now through His Word! It is the Word of God that reveals our sins. It is the Word of God that points us to a redeeming Savior. It is the Word of God that tells us how to live! Today, that Word can be such a blessing in your life! However, if you refuse to receive the Word of God and come to Jesus for salvation. One day, you will face the Word of God in judgment. In that day, it will contain no words of mercy for you, but only damnation and judgment. Today is the only time you really have to get ready to meet the Lord, **2 Cor. 6:2.**)

c. The Name of Majesty (v. 16)

—This verse tells us that when Jesus returns, He will have a name embroidered on the thigh of His garment. This name is a title that He has always deserved, but has one which has never been acknowledged by men. In fact, while He was here on earth, His own people refused to acknowledge Him as King, **John 19:15**. Pilate, the Roman Governor, placed a cruel mocking title over His head as He hung on the cross, **Matt. 27:37** which read, "**THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.**" My friends, Jesus is far more than just the king of the Jews, Jesus is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords! One day, He will return in power and the world will be forced to admit that which they have always denied: that Jesus is indeed King! What a day that will be!

(Ill. My friends, have you made that admission yet? Have you bowed before Jesus as the King of Kings and as the Lord of Lords? Have you received Him into your heart? I keep coming back to this, because it is so important! What you do about Jesus will determine what He does with you! You need to be ready, for the King in Coming!)

B. The Armies Of Jesus (v. 14)—

Every king has an army and the Lord Jesus is no exception. He has an army that large and of a special nature. Notice how His army is dressed. They are wearing “fine linen, white and clean”. There is no armor and no mention of them having weapons. Isn’t this a strange way of sending soldiers into battle? Well, it would be if it were any other army! But, this is the army of Heaven and the King, Jesus Christ, does all the fighting Himself!

(Ill. Who is in this army? Well, the attire gives us a little clue. Look at

verse 14 and then look at verse 8. It would appear from the apparel that this army is the Bride of Christ. In other words, it is made up of you and me. We will be riding in that army when the Lord Jesus returns to claim victory over His enemies. If you don’t know how to ride a horse, don’t worry, you’ll know then!)

C. The Armaments Of Jesus (v. 15)—

When Jesus returns to fight this battle, He doesn’t bring guns, tanks, artillery, or nuclear weapons. He merely brings His Word! Remember that His Word is “*sharper than any two-edged word.*”, **Heb. 4:12**. It has the power to help men and it has the power to judge men. Instead of needing vast arsenals of weaponry, all Jesus needs is a Word and His enemies are forever defeated! Notice the words of **Isaiah 11:4**, “*But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth,*

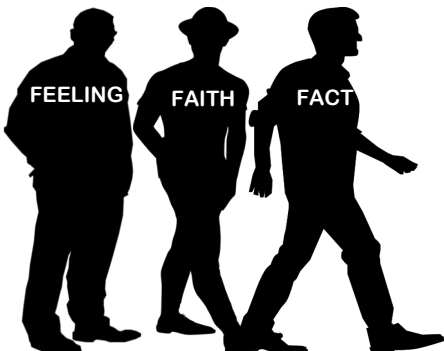
and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.”

(Ill. It is mentioned here that Jesus will “rule” with a rod of iron. The word “rule” means to shepherd. After His enemies are defeated, the Lord Jesus will establish His Kingdom and He will lead the peoples of the earth like a shepherd leads his flock. He will, in that day, lead them beside all the still waters and He will cause them to lie down in the green pastures. He will be a shepherd to all men!)

(Ill. It is also mentioned that Jesus will tread the winepress of the fierce wrath of God. What a picture this is! Like a man crushing grapes under his feet to force them to release their juices, so the Lord Jesus will crush this world under His feet and He will crush all the life out of every opponent of righteousness and God. It will be a terrible day!)

(Ill. Are you ready for His coming? Are you saved?)

Continued in May 2024 issue...



Feeling, Faith, and Fact

Three men were walking on a wall,
 Feeling, Faith and Fact,
 When Feeling had an awful fall,
 Faith was taken back.
 So close was Faith to Feeling,
 He stumbled and fell too,
 But Fact remained,
 And pulled Faith back
 And Faith brought feeling too.

—Unknown—

Mountains & Valleys —by Gerald Hochstetler

I have fought depression all my life. In these valleys or low, low, times of my life, I have begun to see a pattern. I write my best in the valley. I am less critical in the valley. My hope always becomes a hope that hopes in God alone.

On the mountain top, so quickly and so easily, I begin to believe in myself and MY abilities, and quickly, I become critical of others. I entertain thoughts like, “If they would get their life together, then they, too, could walk on the mountain top.”

What I am finding is that each valley experience makes the mountaintop experience less about me and more about God. I am not on this mountain because I deserve it or because I am more talented. I am enjoying a won-

derful mountaintop experience because of God’s grace and mercy. The journey with God involves both the mountaintop and the valley. He is God of the whole journey.

Remember the LORD your God. He is the one who gives you the power to be successful. In Deuteronomy 8, God said to remember, because we tend to forget. Believing that it is God who has given me the ability to be successful is not something that comes automatically. It’s usually something learned. Thus, God has to remind us.

God knows exactly what we need to create in us the person He wants us to be. For me, that involves some pretty dark valleys. But it is good. Because God is also the God of the valley.

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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.

April

How to Gain Deliverance from Demonic Influence

(part 1)

Chip Ingram shares what he believes is the most powerful weapon God has given every believer to combat the forces of evil, and he will tell you how to use it to protect yourself from demonic attack.

How to Gain Deliverance from Demonic Influence

(Part 2)

What do you do when you suspect someone you know is under demonic influence. Should you do anything at all, or is this kind of thing reserved for the "professionals?" Join Chip Ingram as he tackles the important and controversial subject of deliverance ministries.

Who's Behind the Shadow Government?

Questionable figures really are creating a deep state and a shadow government. Can this fit into an end-time Biblical scenario? (Alex Newman joins Jan Markell)

Praying with Authority

Learn how to confidently, yet humbly approach the throne of grace with your petitions while giving God the opportunity to glorify Himself in your circumstances.

May

A Preview of Things to Come

Jan Markell talks to Tim Moore and Nathan Jones about the convergence of signs of the times. The rapture is the ultimate apocalyptic event.

The Rescue!

Pastor Mark Henry and Mondo Gonzales discuss the imminent Rapture of the church. They explain the problems with various rapture timing theologies.

How You Can Be Sure You Will Spend Eternity with God

(part 1)

We discuss the vital teaching the Bible offers on this important topic. You'll be encouraged and equipped to better know the Lord and to share Him with others. (Dr. John Ankerberg)

How You Can Be Sure You Will Spend Eternity with God

(part 2)

It is vital to ask the question, "Am I sure that I will spend eternity with God?" This program will further your understanding of God's gift of salvation in ways that will help you confidently serve Him today. (Dr. John Ankerberg)

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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

I used to unquestioningly believe whatever I was told. A few years back, there became a point in my life where some things I had been taught did not make sense. Just like politics, we heard it this way, then we heard it another way also, so which way was correct? Some things that were said in church left me wondering, is that true? What is truth? Where do I find out what the truth is? I concluded that the Bible is the ultimate truth because it was given to us by God, and He is our creator. He is Lord of lords, King of kings!

I started to read and study to see if things were so. What I found was shocking because what I had been taught my whole life did not agree with what the Bible clearly taught. What a letdown! I was devastated! I had to make a choice. Was I going to believe what man told me or what God told me in the Bible?

The Bible says, *"God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar"* (Romans 3:4). It also says, *"That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God"* (1 Corinthians 2:5)

The Bible tells us that ALL Humans are wicked, sinful, liars, etc. Why do we so easily put our trust in humans instead of God? Throughout my life, I can remember hearing, "Read the Bible, but not too much." Only the devil or one of his people would say something like that.

If a person thinks he won't know he is saved until he gets to heaven, it is going to be too late for him! How sad! The Bible says, *"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God"* (Romans 8:16). This is how a person knows that they are "saved." When someone doesn't know they are saved, it is because they are not saved. Only saved people go to

heaven. Unsaved people do not go to heaven. They go to hell!

In the same chapter, the Bible says, *"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you (when saved). Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his (unsaved)"* (Romans 8:9). Now, I must ask, do you have the Spirit of God inside of you? I hope you do!

What about the teaching, "We must never boast that we are saved"?

When we are saved, we do not boast about it because we know we are unworthy and deserve hell. We are saved because of what Jesus did, not what we did or do. Once a person trusts/believes what Jesus Christ did on the cross, He imputes His righteousness to our account. That is what saves us. It's not what we do...because then we could boast! *"Not of works, lest any man should boast"* (Ephesians 2:9). It's NOT because of any works we do, because then we could boast! We must understand that!

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness....." (Romans 10:10).

"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).

This is exactly what happens when someone believes unto salvation. God saves and seals them at that moment. Have you believed? I hope and pray that you have. If not, please do so today!

To say that there is no such thing as knowing you are saved is incorrect. The Bible clearly teaches it! Therefore, we must believe it! *"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy

2:4). God's will is for all men to be saved. The word saved is a Biblical word whether we like it or not. It's not just a common expression that is used today.

After salvation, does a person still sin? Yes, absolutely! Read Romans chapter 7. The apostle Paul (the apostle for us Gentiles) still had trouble doing things he didn't want to do. *"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not"* (Romans 7:18)

When a person becomes saved, God separates his body from his soul and spirit. *"In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ"* (Colossians 2:11). Our soul and spirit can no longer sin, but our body (flesh) does. This is why we get a new body when we go to heaven. Sin will not be in heaven.

We use the expression, "so-and-so got saved last night." Some think it would be better to say, "So-and-so made a start to serve God last night." No, it would not be better because "a start to serve God" is not Biblical; becoming saved is. See, it doesn't matter what you or I think. What matters is what God has said.

Another often-heard phrase is, "Only the judgment will reveal who is saved." *"Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God"* (Matthew 22:29). There is more than one judgment in the Bible.

When a person is saved while he is still here on earth, God places him into the body of Christ at that moment (1 Cor 12:13), which means he is also translated. *"Who hath delivered us from the*

power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). While still on earth, a saved person is already in the kingdom. The only thing a saved person will be judged for is for rewards (1 Cor 3). His judgment will be for the good deeds he has done for the Lord, not for salvation, but for the good works he did AFTER salvation. The great white throne judgment in Revelation 20 is for unbelievers (unsaved people), who will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone. Saved people will already be in heaven before this judgment.

If you were to die today and God would ask you, "Why should I let you in?" what would your answer be?

Would it be:

- ⇒ Because I did good works?
- ⇒ Because I was water baptized?
- ⇒ Because I went to church?
- ⇒ Because I did my best?
- ⇒ Because I was a member of the Amish church?
- ⇒ Because I drove a horse and buggy?

You get the idea. There are many more responses that a person could give, but there is one thing in common: the word "I." Using the word "I" is boastful, making all of these answers wrong! We are saved by grace through faith, putting our trust in what Jesus Christ did on the cross. He died, was buried, and rose again on the third day. Only by placing our complete trust in what Jesus Christ did makes us righteous. We can do nothing to save ourselves.

"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). A person must have this righteousness, and if they don't, they are not going to heaven.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5)

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3).

The only way possible to go to heaven is to have Jesus Christ's righteousness! Please become saved today before it is too late! Again, if a person dies and is still unsaved, according to the Bible he will go straight to hell.

Are you willing to chance this – to wait until you die and then realize it's too late? Remember the story in Luke 16 when the rich man was in hell begging Abraham to send someone back to tell his five brothers? It was too late!

"(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation)" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

The Bible says now is the day of salvation, not when you die!

All of this was written with a concern for souls! Eternity is forever.

WE MUST GET IT RIGHT!

Preach the Gospel!

—by Joe Keim

For though I be **free from all men**, yet have I made myself **servant unto all**, that I might **gain** the more.
And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might **gain** the Jews;
to them that are under the law, ...that I might **gain** them that are under the law.
To them that are without law...that I might **gain** them that are without law.
To the weak became I as weak, that I might **gain** the weak:
I am made **all things to all men**, that I might by **all means** save some.
And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof **with you**.

—1 Cor 9:19-23—

If we followed Paul's strategy, if we were more concerned about gaining souls for Christ than being right, if we stepped out of our bubble long enough to understand and learn from others, if we placed the value of others above our own ... the weak, lawless, and those under the law might suddenly desire to know more about Jesus and get saved.

Esther and I often marvel at how God has given us so many opportunities to share and preach in a variety of settings. Some settings are familiar. Some settings have been very awkward. Some settings have been brutal.

We have preached in police departments, health departments, hospitals,

universities, Baptist, Amish, Mennonite, Church of Christ, Pentecostal, and Catholic churches. Some were little country churches. Some were big churches. Some were house churches, barns, in the woods, and leather and furniture shops. I value every setting we have ever had the chance to share in.

Here is why:

We have preached the gospel. It never mattered who we spoke to. We were there to tell what great things the Lord had done in our lives and how they, too, could have a relationship with the Savior who died for the world so that men, women, and children could be set free from sin, shame, and bondage.

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When Our Nation Mocks God

—By John Weaver

In 1957, as a small Amish boy, I started my first grade in the brand-new Walker Twp. Elementary School in Juniata Co Pa. Our teacher read from the Bible and prayed as we began the day. I spent three of my years in this public school.

Soon thereafter, a series of lawsuits went to the Supreme Court attacking the First Amendment, which guarantees the freedom of religion. Through arrogance, great ignorance, or both, the Supreme Court interpreted it to mean freedom FROM religion, not freedom OF religion. Prayer was no longer allowed in the public schools.

Some years later, Ronald Reagan stated, "The First Amendment was not written to protect people from religious values; it was written to protect those values from government tyranny." In the 60-plus years since then, our country has made serious errors. We have ignored and replaced God with our wisdom, which is, in reality, foolishness.

Jesus said that God made us male or female, and there was to be marriage between those two, and what God joined together, let not man put asunder. We have ignored His word and have done things our way. First, divorce and remarriage. Then, same-sex marriage. Now, if a person is not satisfied with their gender, we have decided to play God and change it for them. So,

we try to make a male from a female or a female from a male.

God said that sex is reserved for married couples only. We ignore His word and promote the opposite. All these things create problems that we have tried to fix our way. We have created a welfare system that rewards single women for having children - not holding the man responsible but forcing the taxpayer to foot the bill. Then they decided just to kill the babies; cheaper that way. We are moving farther from God's plan. We, as a country, have mocked God. And He said we will reap what we sow when we do that.

In 2020, we were faced with an epidemic that resulted in man again trying to do things without God. A small, unseen virus caused mankind to make decisions that destroyed the nation's economy. Undoubtedly, the suffering caused by the cure was more significant than the problem.

So, what am I proposing? It is simply that we, as God's people, hold the keys to the answer. Never forget this verse: *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land"* (2 Chronicles 7:14).

"Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases" (Psalms 103:1-3) Certainly this includes the coronavirus. God wants to do that for us. It's a part of healing our land. Amen!

It is not the arrogant governors who don't want God around who are called to repent. He calls Christians to humble themselves and pray. The nation made the horrible choice sixty years ago not to allow public prayer, but it does not affect God's people. We are a called-out people, so we can pray. We can repent. We can turn from all wickedness we have allowed or embraced.

God said we reap what we sow. As a nation, we are reaping what has been sown. We will see the hand of God more and more moving to punish the nations that forget Him and blessing those who obey and submit to His will: probably not as much whole nations as righteous ones within nations. God does not forsake His people.

In these last days, may God's people let their light shine and pave the way to show a lost and dying world the Jesus that the world has largely rejected. Jesus said that if He is lifted up, He will draw all men to Himself. Let it be so.