



The Amish Voice

MAP ♦ 575 US Highway 250 ♦ Greenwich, OH 44837 ♦ (419) 962-1515 ♦ November 2023

The Secret of the Strength

— by Peter Hoover

a continuation of:
CHAPTER 7
On to Conviction

Go Ahead!

Suddenly, not just in Augsburg, but in Nikolsburg, Strasbourg, Wassenberg, Amsterdam, Antwerp . . . everywhere throughout the German lands of Europe, seekers felt that *now* was the time. The time to get up and follow Jesus was *now*—no matter who was with it or who was not, who gave permission or who did not.

In Zurich, it had already happened two years before, on the evening of January 21, 1525. Conrad Grebel, Georg Blaurock (an ex-priest from Chur), and several others had found their way through the back streets to the house where Felix Manz lived. Then, according to the *Aelteste Chronik*, this took place:

And it came to pass that they were together until fear rose up within them and came upon the gathering. They were constrained in their hearts. Then, they got down on their knees before the highest God in heaven. They cried to Him because He knew

their hearts. They prayed that He would help them to do His will and show His mercy to them because flesh and blood or human instigation had not brought them to this place. They well knew that their patience would be tried and that they would have to suffer for this.

After the prayer, Georg of the house of Jakob got up. He had asked God to show him His will. Now, he asked Conrad Grebel to baptize him with the correct Christian baptism upon his faith and testimony. When he knelt down with this desire, Conrad baptized him because, at that time, no servant had been ordained to handle such a work. After this, the others asked Georg to baptize them, which he did upon their request. In this way they gave themselves together to the name of the Lord in high fear of God. They commended one another to the service of the gospel. They began to teach and hold the faith, to separate themselves from the world, and to break themselves off from evil works.¹³

Only a few months earlier, Conrad Grebel had written to Thomas Muntzer urging him to go ahead and do what was right:

Go ahead with the Word and establish a church community with the help of Christ and His teachings, as we find in Matthew 18 and lived out in the epistles. Use determination and common prayer, and make decisions about faith and life without commanding or forcing the people into anything; then, God will help you and your little flock to real sincerity.¹⁴

In 1525, Conrad encouraged the Reformed pastor of Hinwil in Switzerland:

Do not have respect of persons! Do not worry about the authorities. Just do what God has told you to do.¹⁵

When Melchior Hofman presented his beliefs to Christian, Duke of Denmark, and four hundred representatives of the nobility and clergy in the Chapel of the Barefoot Friars at Flensburg in Holstein, they threatened to punish him

¹³ From the entry for 1525 under the heading: *Georg vom HauB Jacob oder Blabrock sampt etlichen gleerten ersprachten sich aus Gottes wort vom rechten Tauff unnd begert e einer vom andern getaufft zu werden weil sie kein verordneten Diener dises wercks darzu nit heten.*

¹⁴ *Ein Brief an Thomas Muntzer*, September 5, 1524.

¹⁵ From a statement made to Hans Brennwald, August 9, 1525.

severely. But he said: “All the scholars in Christendom cannot hurt me. Even if God would permit that you should treat me violently, you cannot take from me more than this robe of flesh, which Christ will replace with a new one on the day of judgment.”

The Duke was surprised. “Is this the way you talk to me?” he asked.

Melchior replied: “If all the emperors, kings, princes, popes, bishops, and cardinals should be together in one place, nevertheless, the truth shall and must be known to the glory of God.”

“Who stands with you?” asked the Duke of Denmark.

“No one that I know of,” answered Melchior Hofman. “I stand alone on the Word of God, and let all men do likewise!”

Once the conviction to follow Jesus had taken control of their hearts, there was nothing the Anabaptists could do but *go ahead* at the price of their lives.

Disobey the Church?

To oppose the world to follow Jesus was one thing. But to oppose the church was another—and after a thousand years of authoritarian teaching, the Anabaptists had to overcome a deeply rooted feeling of guilt before they could do so.

The first Anabaptists were not leaving the old corrupt church of the Dark Ages. They were leaving the new “Biblical” and “evangelical” church of Huldrych Zwingli in Switzerland. But in following Jesus, they got to where it made no difference. They could walk only with a church that followed Jesus; wherever it did not, they felt “constrained in their hearts” to disobey it. For Menno Simons, the courage to do so became the turning point of his life.

For two years, Menno Simons had lived with a problem. He was a Catholic

priest, but he doubted whether the wafer and the wine in his hands really turned into Jesus’ body and blood. “Such doubts,” he told himself, “must come from the devil.” But he could not get rid of them. They did not go away until he turned to the New Testament in desperation.

Menno Simons did not question the authority of the church. He hoped the New Testament would confirm it and help him become a better Catholic. To his dismay, it did the opposite. The more he read, the hungrier he got for the truth, and the more he realized how far from Jesus his church’s teaching was. Eventually, his inner conflict reached a climax. He had to decide which authority would rule his life: the church or the Word of Christ.

In reality, Menno would have liked to obey them both. He had always “known” that disbelief in church doctrine meant eternal death. Then, he found a book Martin Luther had written as a young man. In it, Luther taught that one is not damned if he disobeys the church to obey the Bible. Slowly, that truth soaked in. And gradually, it led to a greater truth—that one is not damned even if he disobeys a “Biblical” church to follow the example of Jesus. Once he placed the Word and example of Jesus above all human authority, Menno felt free to leave both the Roman Catholics and the Protestants behind, to be baptized like Jesus, on confession of faith. “Then I surrendered myself, body and soul, to God,” he wrote. “I committed myself to His grace and began to teach and baptize according to the contents of His holy Word. I began to till the vineyard of the Lord with my little talent. I began to build up His holy city and temple and to repair the tumble-down walls.”¹⁶

¹⁶ *Een Klare beantwoordinge, over een Schrift Gellii Fabri . . . 1554*

Disobey the Government?

Huldrych Zwingli said, in a public debate at Zurich, Switzerland, in 1523: “The authorities dare not call for anything but that which the holy and unchangeable writings teach. If they fail to do so and adopt some other course, which I do not expect, I would preach against them severely, with the Word of God.”

But Zwingli did not keep his word when he came to the test. His government, in cool defiance of his words, called for precisely that—infant baptism and the continuing of the mass—and Zwingli backed down. He did not want to make trouble (or lose his position) by being more “Biblical” than his government would allow. Two months after he made the above statement, there was another debate in Zurich. Zwingli proposed to leave the matter of whether to celebrate mass in the hands of the city council. Then Simon Stumpf, a supporter of Conrad Grebel, got up and said: “Master Huldrych, you do not have the right to place the decision on this matter into the hands of the government, for the decision has already been made. The Spirit of God has already decided. . . . If the government adopts a course that would be against the decision of God, I will ask for His Spirit, and I will preach and act against it.”

The first Anabaptists felt free to disobey the government whenever they needed to do so to follow Jesus. And patriotism, for them, was a thing of the world.

Eccentrics and Individualists?

Some time ago, after I spoke about the Anabaptists following the voice of inner conviction, a Christian woman asked me: “But how would that work? How could we maintain our unity if we just let everyone go out and follow their convictions?”

Another question that must be asked is, “How does it work if we don’t?”

The first Anabaptists believed that unity is not the result of group consensus. It is the result of many individual commitments to Jesus. It is not the work of men but a gift from God. They believed that true unity can be nothing but “*the unity of the Spirit*” that comes from Gemeinschaft with Jesus (Eph. 4:3). Such unity, they believed, cannot be forced nor regulated, for the Spirit of God is like the wind that “...*bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth...*” (John 3:7-8).

By 1527, the Anabaptists had already published two books about man’s freedom of choice and his duty to obey the voice of Jesus within him. In Augsburg, Hans Denck wrote:

Everyone should know that in matters of faith, we should all proceed in a free, voluntary, and uncompelled way.¹⁷

Kilian Auerbacher, from Moravia, wrote:

Christ’s people are a free, unforced, and uncompelled people, who receive Christ with desire and a willing heart. ...What people believe is not to be forced but is to be accepted as a gift of God.¹⁸

Menno Simons wrote:

Christ alone is the ruler of the conscience, and besides Him, there is no other. Let Him be your emperor, and His holy Word your law. You must obey God before the emperor and hold what God says above what the emperor says.¹⁹

That this teaching rocked the founda-

¹⁷ *Was geredt sey*. . . 1526

¹⁸ *Ein Brief an Martin Butzer*, 1534

¹⁹ *Dat Fundament des Christelycken leers*...1539

tions of every European establishment—church, state, and family—can well be understood. If what people believed was not the “God-ordained authorities” business to decide, whatever would become of society? If people were free to believe what they wanted to believe, to obey what they felt led to obey, and to follow the voice of conviction within them whenever and however they wanted to follow it...what would become of public order? Of the church? And of the laws of the land?

The Protestant Reformers woke up with their eyes round. They roused themselves with a roar. Joining forces with the Catholics and the church of the Dark Ages, they responded to this “heresy” with a tidal wave of persecution, hatred, and “holy” rage, the likes of which had not been seen before, nor since.

This was sedition! This was high treason! “Unauthorized men preaching on the street corners,” wrote Martin Luther, “are a sure sign of the devil.”²⁰

John, Duke of Saxony, made a law to at once stop secret baptisms and communions. Imagine! Baptizing or celebrating communion without the church’s consent! Without properly authorized men in charge! In secret! Not in church buildings but in private homes! This, wrote Luther, is blasphemy, blasphemy, blasphemy...and after his book *Of the Sneaky Ones and the Corner Preachers* came book after book and sermon after sermon loaded with his bitterest invectives against the Anabaptists who “dared to take the Scriptures into their own hands and overthrow the authority of the church.”

The “Sitzrecht”

Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformers did not have a problem with the Anabaptists because they called for changes in the church. Everyone was

²⁰ From *Von den Schleichern und Winkelpredigern*, 1532

calling for changes. Luther himself was a leader in making them, and he, with the other Reformers, was only too willing to sit down (at the beginning) and “lay everything out on the table” to discuss it. But when Luther and the Reformers discovered that the Anabaptists were committed to making changes with or without the church’s consent, their “friendliness” turned to alarm.

The reformers believed there was only one way to make changes in church practice. That was by presenting “new ideas” to the God-ordained leaders of the church. Working with the church and its leaders, changes could be made “in a God-fearing, honest, and orderly way.”²¹

The Reformers did not require (like the church of the Dark Ages) total agreement with its practices. They were quite lenient in offering the Anabaptists the freedom to believe what they wanted as long as they obeyed the church and practiced what its leaders saw fit to allow.

The Reformers appreciated the way the Anabaptists lived and frequently said so. They asked the Anabaptists to help them toward greater holiness and fear of God in the state churches. On several occasions, Luther acknowledged the Anabaptists’ steadfastness, and the other Reformers wrote about their holiness, sobriety, and excellent reputation among the people.

But what the Reformers could not tolerate—what made them fearful, and eventually furious, with the Anabaptists—was the Anabaptists’ high regard

²¹ An idea expressed, for example, in Justus Menius, *Der Wiedertauffer Lehre und Geheimnis*, of 1530, Urbanus Rhegius’ *Widerlegung des Bekenntnisses der Munsterischen neuen Valentinianer und Donatisten und zur Neuen Zeitung von den Wiedertauffern zu Munster*, of 1535, in Luther’s instructions to the pastors of Saxony, and in his other writings and published sermons against the Anabaptists.

for inner conviction and low regard for the voice of the church. “This heretical persistence in following an inner word,” thundered Martin Luther, brings to nothing the written Word of God!”

In a sense he was right.

The first Anabaptists did not follow the Scriptures and their “correct interpretation,” like Martin Luther wanted them to be followed. They followed a man. And in following him instead of Luther’s church or Luther’s Bible, they got their hands on the thread that pulled the fabric of civilization apart. This, the Reformers correctly discerned, and it made them desperate enough to pass the death penalty upon them.

Huldrych Zwingli began, and Martin Luther kept on violently denouncing the “stirring-up spirit” (*aufrührerischer Geist*) of the Anabaptist movement, which they found, above all, in their “silly teaching” of the *Sitzrecht* (the “sitter’s right”).

The first Anabaptists took the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 14: 30-31 literally: “*If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.*” They called this the “sitter’s right” and calmly implied that they, when moved by inner conviction, had as great a right to speak and to act as any pastor, priest, reformer, bishop, or pope. This audacity, this “*Sitzrecht* from the pit of hell,” Martin Luther and his friends believed, could be dealt with only by fire, water, and the sword.

“Even though it is terrible to view,” Martin Luther admitted, he gave his blessing to the death sentence upon the Anabaptists, issued by the elector, princes, and landgraves of Protestant Germany on March 31, 1527. The sentence was based on the following four points:

1. The Anabaptists bring to nothing the office of preaching the Word.
2. The Anabaptists have no definite doctrine.
3. The Anabaptists bring to nothing and suppress true doctrine.
4. The Anabaptists want to destroy the kingdom of this world.

“For the preservation of public order,” both Martin Luther and Huldrych Zwingli promoted the elimination of the Anabaptists through capital punishment as a matter of utmost urgency. They accused the Anabaptists of a crime against the public, “not because they taught a different faith, but for disturbing public order by undermining respect for authority.”

Philipp Melancthon, Luther’s close friend and adviser, wrote: “The Anabaptists’ disregard for the outer Word and the Scriptures is blasphemy. Therefore, the temporal arm of government shall watch here too and not tolerate this blasphemy but earnestly resist and punish it.”

Urbanus Rhegius, the Reformer of Augsburg, wrote: “The Anabaptists cannot and will not endure Scripture.” Within twenty years, no less than 116 laws were passed in the German lands of Europe which made the “Anabaptist heresy” a capital offense.

On to Strasbourg and Worms

Called to court by Urbanus Rhegius in the fall of 1526, Hans Denck decided to flee. He found his way through the Swabian Alps and up the Rhein to Strasbourg. Here, where the Protestant rulers of the city had a reputation for tolerance, he hoped to find a place to stay. But they gave him none.

Instead, they called him to court. Alarmed by his insistence on following Jesus, they told him to leave once more, in the dead of winter. It was December, 1526. The day after his departure, Wolfgang Capito, the Reformer of

Strasbourg, wrote to Huldrych Zwingli:

Hans Denck has disturbed our church very much. His apparent sacrificial life, his brilliance, and his decent habits have wonderfully captivated the people...He left yesterday. His going left some disturbance behind, but the remaining problems can easily be settled with diligence and caution.

From Strasbourg, Hans Denck traveled through Bergzabern where he visited the ghetto and publicly invited the Jews to follow Jesus, and from there to Landau and Worms.

The venerable city of Worms, the seat of Catholic bishops on the Rhine River since 600. A.D., had turned Protestant just the year before. One of its new Protestant pastors was a young man who was Hans Denck’s age, by the name of Jakob Kautz.

Hans and Jakob soon became friends, even though their activities were not the same. Hans stayed in seclusion in an old city house, translating the Hebrew prophets into German. Jakob preached every Sunday to great throngs of people in the Protestant churches of the city until the call of Jesus—“Follow me!”—made it impossible for him to continue his career.

They called Jakob to court in March 1527 to warn him. But he could not change his preaching. He followed Jesus, and the situation with the church grew steadily worse. By June 1527, Jakob was ready to tell everyone where he stood. He tacked a sheet of paper with seven statements to the door of the cathedral and invited all who cared to discuss them with him in a public meeting:

1. The word which we speak with our mouths, hear with our ears, write with our hands, and print onto paper is not the living, true, eternal Word of God. It is only a witness pointing to the inner Word.

2. Nothing external, neither word, sign, sacrament, or promise, has the power to assure the inner man, comfort him, or make him sure that he is doing what is right.
3. The baptism of infants is not of God. It is against God and His teaching given to us through Christ Jesus, His beloved Son.
4. In the sacrament of the Lord's nighttime meal, the literal body and blood of Christ are not present. Our tradition here in Worms is wrong. We have not been celebrating the sacrament in a proper way.
5. Everything that died with the first Adam comes back to life in a better way with the second Adam, that is, with Christ who walks on ahead of us. Everything unfolds and opens up in Christ. Everything becomes alive in Christ.
6. Jesus from Nazareth did not suffer for us in any way; He did nothing to satisfy God for us, as long as we do not follow Him in the way He went before us—unless we follow the commands of the Father, like Christ follows them—every man according to his ability.
7. Like Adam's outward biting into the forbidden fruit would not have hurt him nor his descendants if his inner being would not have been involved in the disobedience, so the outer suffering of Christ is no redemption nor work of grace for us if there is no inner obedience and desire within us to obey the will of God.²²

On the day appointed, June 13, 1527, Jakob Kautz appeared with Hans Denck and Ludwig Haetzer on the town square at six o'clock in the morning to tell everyone what he believed. It was mar-

²² *Sieben Artikel zu Worms von Jakob Kautzen angeschlagen und gepredigt. Verworfen und widerlegt mit Schriften und Ursachen auf zwen weg, Anno MDXXVII.*

ket day, and a great crowd gathered to hear him.

Jakob explained to the people what he had written in the seven statements. He told them that their struggle to find the "right church" and to be good Christians was in vain, as long as they were not moved by the Spirit of God within them. Many turned to Jesus and sealed their covenant with Him in baptism at Worms. But it made trouble. . . .

Two Protestant pastors of the city tacked seven other statements to the door of the church. They contradicted Jakob Kautz and Hans Denck, calling the people back from "following their own ideas" to following the voice of God-ordained church authority. Two weeks later, on July 1, 1527, they expelled the "troublemakers" (including Jakob Kautz and Hans Denck) from the city, and a day later, a book appeared: *A Faithful Warning from the Preachers of the Gospel at Strasbourg, against the Statements of Jakob Kautz*. Even Huldrych Zwingli took the time to refute the "troublemakers" in writing, and of the believers at Worms who followed Jesus into baptism, more than one hundred were soon put to death.

Jakob Kautz baptized twenty believers in the nearby town of Alzey. From here, others went out to teach and baptize. The Kurfurst Ludwig V set a bounty on their heads. His men caught fourteen Anabaptists, beheading the men at Alzey and drowning the women. When a kindhearted bystander tried to comfort the victims in their distress, Ludwig's men caught her too, and burned her alive. Three hundred and fifty believers died in a short time, but more than one thousand two hundred escaped to find refuge in Moravia. A great number of them joined the community at Auspitz, led by Philip Plener.

Only a Movement

Neither the Roman Catholics nor the Protestant Reformers could see a

church in the Anabaptist movement. All they saw was an assortment of "perverted sects" whose leaders were eccentric individuals, "unbelievably stubborn" and "wildly obstinate" heretics "who have forsaken much but can never forsake themselves."²³

About Menno Simons, John Calvin said: "Nothing could be prouder, nothing more impudent than this donkey." Perhaps, if we would have been in his shoes, we would have seen it that way, too.

The Reformers came from a comfortable background of "group conviction" where everyone submitted to the leaders and believed like everyone else. The first Anabaptists rejected "group conviction." They believed that just as everyone needed to repent and believe on his own, so the "light of God" (inner conviction) was a personal matter.

The Reformers believed that faith got handed down, like tradition, from generation to generation, and that it was imparted from parents to children in baptism. The first Anabaptists rejected this "historic" and "handed-down" faith. They believed that faith was of the Spirit and that the Spirit's moving could no more be preserved nor handed down than the wind can be preserved in a box, or the current of a river in a jar.

The Reformers, influenced by humanism, believed that along with "group convictions," it was all right to have some "personal convictions," provided one did not make an issue out of them and kept cooperating with the church. But the first Anabaptists rejected "personal convictions" when they "let loose" and truly surrendered their personal ideas, views, and rights to Jesus.

All they had left was the inner conviction that it was right to follow Jesus. This conviction alone gave them direc-

²³ The Reformer, Martin Bucer's description of Pilgram Marpeck.9

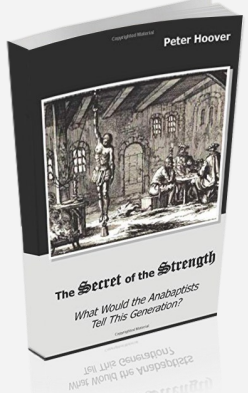
tion on what to obey and what not to obey, what to believe and what not to believe, what to do and what not to do, and how to understand the Scriptures. This conviction alone led them to submit themselves one to another in the freedom of allowing all men to follow Jesus “in an uncompelled way.”

How could they build a church like that?

They couldn't. Nobody can...except God. And God does not “build churches” the way people do. He moves. He is a Spirit. God is the Spirit that moves in Jesus and in those who live in Gemeinschaft with Him. The church is a movement, moving from age to age, from place to place, and from people to people, wherever God finds broken hearts, truly surrendered, in which to dwell.

The Jews looked for an earthly kingdom with an earthly Messiah. After a few centuries, the Christians went the way of the Jews. “...*But the kingdom of God,*” Jesus said, “*cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.* (Luke 17:20-21).

For some time, right after the Dark Ages, this “inner kingdom,” the Kingdom of Heaven, came down to touch the Anabaptist movement. It touched it with the clear light of conviction that shone from the face of the miller's son, sixteen years old, who could say at the price of his life: “God does not want me to do that.” And it led the first Anabaptists . . .



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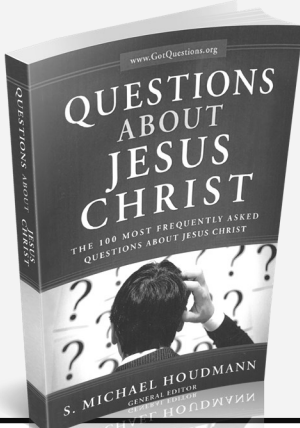
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The Amish Voice

Was Prayer the Difference?

—by Gerald Hochstetler

I have often wondered why one thief believed and hoped while the other laughed. Why? I wondered if the one might have had a praying mother.

Maybe he had a mother who prayed, and prayed, and prayed, and after so many years, she gave up in despair. Perhaps the night before he was to be crucified, she wept and prayed one more time, but at this point, she was really, really weak in her faith. Her son was a hardened criminal. Her son was doomed, so she might have thought.

Maybe she died of a broken heart, having had big dreams and hopes for her son. Maybe. We don't know.

Why did the one thief suddenly have the inspiration to HOPE? Why did he believe that this guy next to him just

may be the answer to his problem? Why was one thief moved to hope while the other laughed? Why do some people reach out and believe while others laugh?



Whatever the situation, if there was such a mother, can you imagine her surprise when they met in heaven?

Can you imagine the surprise when Momma discovers that behind every detail in

her son's life was God? God was moving, and perhaps the cross was the final setup to answer her prayers and bring her son into the fold.

I really believe there will be “BIG” surprises just inside those beautiful heavenly gates. Yes, sir! I believe so!

When we see HIM, we shall be like HIM. Then we will know.

In the Bible, Egypt is a picture of bondage, depression, slavery, oppression, and darkness. For four hundred years, God's chosen people suffered under the hand of Pharaoh. But in Exodus 2, God heard their groaning and remembered His covenant with Abraham.

In the process of time, God led His people out of bondage and severe oppression. Once free, God promised His people that if they opened their mouths wide, He would fill them. That seemed simple enough! Right?

Thought:

Open your mouth a little, and I will fill it partially. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it with a large portion. Close it, and you will get nothing.

As simple as it may have been, Israel rejected God's offer. Instead, they strove to fill their own mouth with the things they wanted. Therefore, God gave His people up to their own hearts' lust and allowed them to walk in their own counsel, their own purposes, and plans.

If Israel had opened their mouths and allowed God to fill them, He would have subdued all their enemies and

If only Israel had opened their mouth wide ... but they would not hearken to His voice.

PSALM 81

10. I *am* the LORD thy God, Which brought thee out of the land of Egypt. **Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.**
11. But **my people** would not hearken to my voice...
12. So **I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: And they walked in their own counsels.**
13. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, *And* Israel had walked **in my ways!**
14. **I should soon have subdued their enemies, And turned my hand against their adversaries.**

turned His hand against their adversaries. He would have fought every battle on their behalf and conquered every war. Israel would have slept well at night, felt protected, and overflowed with the goodness of the Lord their God.

Church, open your mouth wide! God wants to fill it. He wants to subdue your enemies and fight your adversaries. He wants to fight all your battles. Will you let Him do it?

Fathers, mothers, and grandparents, will you open your mouth wide?

Pastors and missionaries, will you open your mouth wide?

Children and teenagers, will you open your mouth wide?

Business owners, will you open your mouth wide?

If you would like to discuss this article further, the author would be delighted to hear from you by text or phone call!

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God rarely keeps us in the same season for long because His desire is for us to grow in our faith and fully depend on Him. What is it like when He calls you to step out of your comfort zone and all you have to hold onto is Him? God will very rarely allow you to see the whole picture at once. If you had the details, it wouldn't require faith and dependency on Him!

One of the best ways to increase our faith is to listen to others relate their story of when they stepped out into the unknown and God did a mighty work in them and through them. Won't you join us as we hear from 20 every-day, ordinary people who responded when God beckoned them. If you come expecting God to move in your life, you will leave a changed person, on fire for God!



Testimonies / Home-Cooked Meals / Gospel Singing / Children's Program / Fellowship

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

1 Corinthians 3:10–15

Intro: As our journey through the events surrounding the end times continues, we come to an event that will take place in Heaven while the Tribulation Period is going on here on earth. When Jesus returns for His church in the Rapture, the world will be thrown into a time of Great Tribulation, but while this is happening on earth, there are two great events that will be taking place in Heaven. It is these two events that will be the focus. These two events are **The Judgment Seat of Christ** and **The Marriage Supper of the Lamb**.

I would like for us to take some time to look into the event known in the Bible as the Judgment Seat of Christ. This is an event that is spoken of in several passages of Scripture. Notice **2 Corinthians 5:10** and **Romans 14:10–12**. These passages, along with the passage I am preaching this morning, all speak of the same event. They refer to a time when every child of God will stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and give an account of their service to the Lord.

I don't mind telling you that when I think of that event, I do so with a bit of dread. I know that there will be plenty to answer for in that day. However, I also want you to know that there will be far more for us to look forward to than there will be for us to fear! For it is on that day that the fruits of the journey are rewarded. It is that day when we may hear the Lord Jesus say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant." It is that day that I want to preach about for a time this morning. I would like for us to spend some time

together in this passage as we think about **Heaven's Coronation Day**.

I challenge every person in this room to allow the Lord to speak to your heart this morning. I want you to be ready when that day arrives. This passage reveal three aspects of that great day that we need to notice today. Allow me to share them with you now.

It will be:

I. A Day of Intimate Discoveries (v. 10–13)

(Ill. Paul describes the Christian life as a building. He tells us that he laid the foundation, but it is our responsibility and duty to build on that foundation. It is our duty to build correctly! **Note: verse 11 makes it clear that this is an event that is for believers only! In other words, if you aren't building from your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you will not be at the Judgment Seat of Christ, but you will either be in the Tribulation or you will already be in Hell! My lost friend, I need to remind you that you are one day closer to eternity than you were yesterday! You need to prepare to meet God!**)

(Ill. With that in mind, let's see what will be discovered about the saints of God on that day.)

A. Our Methods Will Be Discovered (v. 10)—Paul tells us that "**how**" we built on the foundation will pass under the microscope of God in that Day. The whole idea of this verse is this: ***When the Lord saved your soul, He placed you on the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Since the very moment you were saved, you have been building a life. This life can either be a thing of glory to the Lord, or it can be a thing of disgrace before the Lord. When we stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will answer for how***

we have built our lives.

(Ill. At this point, it may help us to understand this better if we define just what we are talking about. In Paul's day, in every city there was a place called the **Bema**, or **judgment seat**. ***It was from this raised platform, usually in the center of town, that announcements were made, judgments rendered and commendations handed out.*** It was at the Bema Seat that rewards were given out to the winners of the Greek games. It was here that their crowns were given to them. All public proclamations came from this **Bema** seat. So, we must not think that it was only a place for fear and trembling. Certainly some were rebuked when they came here, but many others were rewarded and blessed. Christ's seat of judgment is no different!)

(Ill. There are two issues that will not be addressed at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Those issues are:

1. **Salvation**—That was forever taken care of at the moment of conversion. Nothing can ever change the state of the believer's soul. If a person is saved, they are saved forever! Ill. No lost person will appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ. There will be another Judgment that takes care of the lost sinner. If you are here, you are saved!!!

2. **Sin**—Sin was taken care of forever at Calvary when the Lord Jesus died, **John 19:30!** When Jesus died, He died for **ALL** the sin of the world—**2 Cor. 5:21**. Now, when a sinner places his faith in the Lord Jesus for salvation, all his sins are forever taken care of! They will not be mentioned when we arrive here! **Hallelujah, that is enough to shout about!!!**

(Ill. What will be dealt with is the manner in which we have lived this earthly life, from the moment of our conversion until the day we died, or

were raptured. It will be about how we used the *responsibilities, privileges* and *opportunities* we were given by the Lord Jesus as we journeyed through this world. Perhaps it would help us to remember that every born again believer is a “**steward.**” That is, we are the servants of God. He has placed in our hands His ministry to the world. To accomplish this ministry, the Lord has given each of us certain things.

1. He has given us 24 hours in every day.
2. He has given us money.
3. He has blessed us with gifts and abilities to use for His glory.
4. He has given us opportunities for service and for ministry.

Our Master, the Lord Jesus, has entrusted us with His business and He will require that each of His stewards give an account of their service unto Him when He returns. The Bible tells us that we are the “**stewards**” of God—**1 Pet. 4:10**. It also says that as stewards, we are to be found faithful—**1 Cor. 4:2**. We will answer for the lives we are living in this world. Is that clear enough? This judgment will not determine whether or not you get into Heaven. That was decided when you received Jesus as your Savior. This judgment will not take into account your sins. They were paid for at the cross. When we sin in this world, we reap the consequences of those sins, but the sins themselves were completely paid for by the Lord Jesus at Calvary!!!)

B. Our Materials Will Be Discovered (v. 12)—This verse tells us that there are two possible categories of materials from which we can construct our spiritual house.

1. **There Are Worthy Materials—*Gold, Silver and Precious Stones.*** These refer to things that are **precious, valuable, beautiful and hard to come by.** These are also things that survive and even thrive in the fire. These

picture the kind of works that the Lord will bless in that day, and the kind of works that every believer should have in his/her life as they journey through this world.

2. **There Are Worthless Materials—*Wood, Hay and Stubble.*** These refer to those things that are **temporary, ugly, cheap and easy to come by.** They would speak of things that are done out of the will of God, or things that are done out of a mean spirit, or things that are done out of selfishness, etc. They differ from the other materials in that each of these is immediately destroyed by flames. These refer to the kinds of activities that we should avoid as believers.

(Ill. Just how does one determine the difference between works that will burn and works that will endure the flames of judgment? That may be easier to answer by telling you of some areas that are sure to be judged by the Lord.

1. **How We Treat Others—*Heb. 6:10; Matt. 10:41–42***
2. **How We Exercise Authority Over Others *Heb. 13:17; James 3:1***
3. **How We Use Our God-given Abilities *1 Cor. 12:4; 1 Cor. 12:11; 1 Pet. 4:10***
4. **How We Use Our Money *2 Cor. 9:6–7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Mal. 3:8–10***
5. **How We Spend Our Time *Psa. 90:12; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5; 1 Pet. 1:17***
6. **How Much We Suffer For The Lord *Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17; Matt. 5:11–12; Mark 10:29–30.***
7. **How We Run The Race God Has Chosen For Us *Heb. 12:1; 1 Cor. 9:24; Phil. 2:16; Phil. 3:13–14.***
8. **How Effectively We Control The Old Nature *1 Cor. 9:25–27.***
9. **How Many Souls We Witness To And Win To Jesus *Pro. 11:30; Dan. 12:3; 1 Thes. 2:19–20.***
10. **How We React To Temptation *James 1:2–3.***

11. **How Much We Love The Rapture *2 Tim. 4:8.***

12. **How Faithful We Are To The Word Of God And To The Flock Of God *Acts 20:26–28; 2 Tim. 4:1–2; 1 Pet. 5:2–4.***

(Note: I am indebted to Dr. H.L. Willmington for much of the preceding outline.)

C. Our Ministry Will Be Discovered (v. 13)—Verse 13 lets us know that all of our works will be put to the fire. Somehow, the Lord will apply the fire of His judgment to the things we did in this life and they will be made “**manifest.**” This word means that they will be “**Made known publicly.**”

(Ill. As we travel toward Heaven, there are those among us who have all the appearance of having plenty of good works in their life. However, behind the things they do is a self-serving motive. Their works will burn. There are others who do things and others see them and say they do them to be seen. However, behind their works is love for the Lord. They do what they do to glorify God. Their works will abide! What I am trying to say is that you cannot look around you this morning and tell much about a person’s works by what you see. However, on that day, there will be no hiding from the truth! Every motive, every work, every secret thought, every self-serving motive will be revealed for all to see! The fire of Christ’s judgment will make the truth known!)

(Ill. I am sure that there are sermons which I have preached that will burn up when I stand before the Lord. Maybe I preached them to “tickle” someone’s ears. Maybe I preached them to make folks thing highly of me. I am sure that many of the things I have done in the name of the Lord will burn up before my eyes on that day. I cannot change the yesterdays of my life, but I can do something about the tomorrow’s, and so can you!)

(Ill. What is the bottom line? Our cats will all be out of the bag when we stand before Jesus and face Him in Judgment!)

II. A Day of Intense Delights (v. 14)

(Ill. While many things dealt with at the Judgment Seat of Christ will be unpleasant, not everything will be bad! In fact, for many, the Judgment Seat of Christ will be the moment when all their trials are made worthwhile. It will literally be their crowning moment!)

A. **A Potential Is Mentioned**—The first part of this verse tells us that there is the potential that some part of our works will remain after they have been put to the fire. Wouldn't it be a glorious thing to see some of what you did for Jesus actually remain? Many will! What happens to your works all depends on you!

B. **A Promise Is Mentioned**—Those things that remain will be the basis for rewards. The Lord Jesus will honor us by giving us rewards for the things we do for Him. That is almost beyond belief, but the Bible tells us five crowns that are available as rewards to the faithful saint of God. Those crowns are:

1. **The Incorruptible Crown**—Awarded for faithfulness to the Lord—**1 Cor. 9:25**.
2. **The Crown Of Life**—For the person who endures and overcomes temptation—**James 1:12**.
3. **The Crown Of Rejoicing**—This is the soul winners crown—**1 Thes. 2:19**.
4. **The Crown Of Righteousness**—This will be given to those who anticipate and live in the light of the return of Jesus—**2 Tim. 4:8**
5. **The Crown Of Glory**—This will be given to the faithful ministers who give themselves to lead and feed the flock of God—**1 Pet. 5:4**.
6. We need to understand that every deed done in the name of Jesus will be blessed and rewarded over

there. Men may not see the value of your service, but rest assured that Jesus takes perfect note and that He will reward you fairly for your sacrifice for Him. (Ill. **Mark 9:41**) (Ill. **Matt. 25:34–40**)

7. God will apply the fire of His judgment to our works, and those that were done for Him and for His glory alone will pass the test and we will be rewarded accordingly.

(Ill. Why is He going to give us crowns? The answer is found in **Revelation 4:9–11**. We will cast those crowns at His feet to honor Him!)

III. A Day of Immense Disappointments (v. 15)

A. **The Pain That Is Mentioned**—While some of our works will remain, others will be destroyed before our eyes. This will surely be a painful time for every believer. There will be many tears shed right here!

(Ill. Thankfully, after this event is passed, Jesus Himself will wipe the tears away, and the past life will be remembered no more—**Rev. 21:4**)

B. **The Price That Is Mentioned**—*“he shall suffer loss”*. This means that the believer will lose the reward he could have earned had his life been what it should be. Some would teach us that even earned rewards will be lost. However, considering that God is just, this probably refers to what the believer *“could”* have earned. Many of us will see rewards earned by others that could have been ours as well, if we had only been faithful too.

(Ill. I don't know about you, but I want to be as faithful as possible so that I might win every reward that I can. The reason is not so I can parade around Heaven with my crowns and trophies and show off. The reason is that I may have more to give back to Jesus, thus enhancing His glory! That is what this thing is all about! The Master rewards the servants and the servants in turn use

those things to glorify Him! That is what this whole thing boils down to! If I will live my life to glorify the Lord God here, **1 Cor. 10:31**; then I will have crowns to lay at His feet there, adding even more glory to the Lord, **Rev. 4**.)

C. **The Promise That Is Mentioned**—Notice again that the believer who may see his works burn will still be saved. I cannot stress it enough that the issue here will not be about salvation! This was settled when you received Jesus. Now, some might take this and say, “Well, I'm saved! I can do as I please and live any way I want to and it doesn't matter.” If you are really saved, you won't think like that! If you are really saved, there will be a part of you that will long to please the Lord. If you are saved, despite your best effort, there will be times when you will serve the Lord. If you are saved, you will prove it by living for the Lord, at least some of the time!

(Ill. I thank God that I am saved forever. I thank Him that nothing can ever change that! However, I want to have something to show for my life when I arrive there. I do not want to see everything burn up. I want some crowns to lay at Jesus' feet. How about you?)

Conc: Well, if these verses have taught us anything, they have taught us that there are two ways to ruin a good building: A faulty foundation and faulty materials.

Of the utmost of importance today is for every person in this room to determine what foundation they are building on. Only those houses built on the Lord Jesus Christ, His death and His resurrection will stand, **Matt. 7:24–27**. All other will perish in the waves of God's great wrath. Are you saved? Be sure before you leave this building today!

Continued on Page 15

There are many examples of unbelief throughout the Bible. There is not enough space to write them all, so for now we will look at a few examples from the book of Acts.

We read in Acts chapter 7 that Stephen preached the history of the nation of Israel (Jews) to the Jews. We are Gentiles. It started because they accused him (Stephen) of speaking blasphemous words against Moses and against God (Acts 6:8-14).

They became angry when he called them stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears (verse 51), and they stoned him to death. Here we can plainly see the Jews had an unbelieving heart; they rejected the truth of God.

In Acts chapter 13, We read that Paul and Barnabas were also speaking to the Jews (verse 16). They told the Jews their own history, so they might believe. Who doesn't believe in their own history? Paul tells them:

"Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent" (Acts 13:26).

Paul is trying to encourage them to believe so they can have salvation. Paul continues:

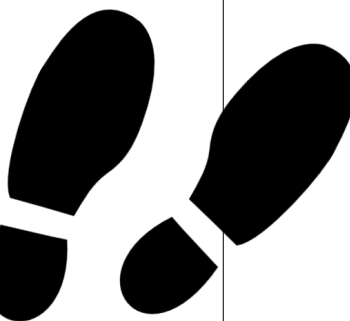
"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man (Jesus Christ) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him (Jesus) all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39).

Here he is telling them to believe/trust in Jesus to be justified, not in Moses' law. Elsewhere, Paul says:

"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:11).

"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you (Jews): but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46)

My friend, do you think you are unworthy of everlasting life as the Jews did? God doesn't think so. God wants everyone to have eternal life. God's will today is:



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

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles said:

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

God made a way for all men to be saved by sending His Son to the Cross. He shed His blood for the sins of the whole world. It is a free gift (Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8). Do you believe this?

God set the Nation of Israel aside because of their unbelief. (Romans 11:20,32). Today, Israel is a fallen nation (Romans 11:11). The Jews no

longer have a special standing before God because of their unbelief. (Romans 2:11) Friends, let's make sure that we aren't a part of that unbelief.

"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).

Notice that the Gentiles who believed received eternal life; they had a believing heart.

"But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts" (Acts 13:50).

The Jews rejected Paul and Barnabas just like they rejected Stephen. They had done the same to Jesus Christ when He walked among them.

They (the Jews) had an unbelieving heart. Friends, let us check our hearts and ensure we don't have an evil heart of unbelief before it is too late. Let us not follow in the same footsteps as the Jews. Instead, let us learn from their mistakes. Let's believe in what Jesus Christ did on the cross for ALL our sins.

**Let's believe the truth,
not reject it!**

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth..." (Romans 1:16).

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12).

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November

What is the World Coming to?

(part 1)

In this message, Adrian Rogers gives insight into what this world is coming to, and how we are to conduct ourselves as we near the Last Days.

What is the World Coming to?

(part 2)

When You're Lonely In Marriage

Feeling lonely in marriage? Dr. Greg Smalley offers ideas to help you resolve conflict, start talking about what you're carrying—and move back together.

What Are the Two Key Ingredients for Successful Relationships?

(Part 1 of 2)

Rick Warren invited Emerson Eggerichs to speak at Saddleback Church on the topic of relationships. Presented to more than 20,000 people. Listen in as Emerson focuses on three areas.

December

Reconnecting in Marriage

Life has a way of moving us into being roommates in marriage when we want to be soulmates. Ron Deal talks with Dr. Greg Smalley about how to stay deeply connected.

Two Key Ingredients for Successful Relationships

Part 2

Rick Warren invited Emerson Eggerichs to speak on the topic of relationships. Listen in as Emerson focuses on three areas.

A Call for Christian Modesty

(1 of 2)

In today's sexually confused culture, what does the Bible have to say about modesty? Have we allowed feminism and the sexual revolution to taint our view of Scripture? Join us for this two-part series on the Biblical standard of modesty. — Pastor John Marino

Spurious Correlations, Cause or Occasion?

What causes my depression, what causes my anxiety, what causes my addiction? Given the abundance of secular theories on psychology, what does the Bible have to say? How can we navigate the abundance of theories and come to a right conclusion? Pastor John Marino

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

The Invisible War Spiritual Warfare 101

(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

The Invisible War Spiritual Warfare 101

(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.

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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

—part 4— Dividing Paths

Our history begins after the split of the “Ammannisch Leit” (Amish) from the remaining Anabaptists (Mennonites) in 1693. In the years following, there were a few failed attempts to reconcile the two groups.

The Amish developed clearer direction regarding clothes and outward appearance. They started as a small group in the Alsace region as well as in Palatinate and Switzerland. In the following decades, they grew and spread rapidly to the western parts of Germany and one community even settled in Austria. The Amish often lived in the same areas as the Mennonites, but had little contact with them.

The reasons for migration were mainly two: on the one hand, the growth of the Amish; on the other hand, conflicts with local or national authorities. Often, the Amish did not own their farms, but were leaseholders. These benefited both parties: the Amish were tolerated and protected, and the landlords had loyal tenants for their estates.

In church matters, the Amish had practices, such as strict shunning, that the rest of society did not understand. This made them outsiders. On the other hand, they tried to have good relationships with their neighbours. Sometimes one partner would join the Amish while the other would remain a state church adherent. As a result, the relationship of the Amish towards mainstream society became ambiguous.

Migration

Some Amish families moved further to the Netherlands, North America, and Eastern Europe because of persecution

and international diplomacy. In 1711, the Swiss Bernese government shipped four boats of Amish to the Netherlands. The Mennonites nearly refused to ride on the same ship, and the few that did eventually travelled south to the Palatinate.

Already, a decade before the division, a Mennonite couple had migrated to Germantown, Pennsylvania. In the following decades, many accepted the invitation of William Penn, a Quaker from England, to come to his colony for religious freedom. The Quakers them-



Photo by Katherine McCormick on Unsplash

selves were also a persecuted minority. It is unclear when the first Amish left for “the new world.” The first significant emigration was in 1737 when 21 Amish families sailed for Pennsylvania on ‘the Charming Nancy.’ Within about three decades, approximately 100 households followed. Others moved east towards Galicia (now southern Poland) and Volhynia (today part of Ukraine).

Church discipline

Several meetings about church discipline were held in the 18th century—the last one in 1779 in Essingen, at the home of the respected elder Hans Nafziger. The confession of faith printed in the *Martyrs Mirror* was confirmed, and guidelines for clothing (no fancy clothes or stylish grooming) and

economically caring for each other were outlined. Many Amish who migrated took the Essingen discipline with them, thereby shaping Amish identity. Even though scattered over continents, the Amish remained united.

Migration to the New World

Crossing the Atlantic to North America was not easy in those days. Storms and disease regularly caused delay and death. Small children and older adults often died during the long journey which could take 60 to 90 days.

About 70,000 German-speaking Europeans came through the port of Philadelphia decades before the American Revolution; the Amish being one small part of this group which mainly consisted of Lutherans and Reformers. English speaking people quickly named them the “Pennsylvania Dutch” (a incorrect translation of “Deutsch” – German). The dialect they soon developed was named this way

as well.

The first identifiable Amish settlement was in what later would be central Berks County, Pennsylvania. In the 18th century, other settlements were developing in Lancaster County, Mifflin County, Chester County, Somerset County and what would later become Lebanon County.

For the most part, the Amish did not live close to the Mennonites and held “very fast to the outward and ancient institutions,” according to a letter written to someone in the Netherlands. Their main occupation was farming, with some being millers or tanners. Life wasn’t easy for these first settlers, but the Amish relied on mutual aid and built strong communities.

Continued in Next Issue

Genesis 9:20-26

- 20 *And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard:*
- 21 *And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.*
- 22 *And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.*
- 23 *And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness.*
- 24 *And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him.*
- 25 *And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.*
- 26 *And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant*

Ham's character is malicious, a gossip, fault finder, slander, and an accuser. Now, who is the father of all these? The devil!

What was Ham's motivation, and who was his motivator? Like Jesus told the Pharisees, *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do"* (John 8:44a). Like father, like Son!

Ham couldn't help the fact that he saw his father's nakedness, but he did have a choice. He could have done as his brothers did, covered his father, and gone on his way; no one the wiser.

What does a Ham think they gain, by

destroying another person, by flaunting another person's shame and vulnerability? Is it a joke to them, or something deeper? Perhaps a Ham operates this way due to a tremendous lack in his own soul.

Does condemning me make you righteous? (Job 40:8 - paraphrased).

Noah had 950 years of life, but this is who he is remembered for? No man ought to be defined by his past. Anyone can find dirt on another if that is the focus. I know dirt can be found on me; I know the life I lived before Jesus found me.

God never mistakes the moment, for the man!

A Blanket Carrier focuses on a person's virtues and strengths, rather than focusing on his weakness.

Shem and Japheth knew OF their father's nakedness, but they did not STUDY his nakedness.

"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Corinthians 8:13).

A Blanket Carrier exercises mercy and grace, even while confronting sin and shame when working with a weaker vessel.

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

A Blanket Carrier recognizes the value of a soul, regardless of how stooped in the filth of the gutter the individual is, for he knows that but for the grace of God, he would still be there himself.

A Blanket Carrier sees what God sees, the worth of a fellow human being, regardless of whether that individual contributes to society, or not. An orphan in Mexico, that cannot contribute

to society, is of no less worth than you or me!

A Blanket Carrier seeks peace and pursues it. He does all he can to live peaceably with all men. His focus is love and restoration!

Here I will use a non-sin-related scenario to symbolize being tempted and falling. Living in northern Canada, suppose I'm attacked by a hungry grizzly bear. He works me over and leaves me struggling for my life. I previously had two kidneys, one on the left, and one on the right. Now, my left kidney is on the right, and my right kidney is somewhere just south of my throat. The Grizzly is just wrapping up his happy meal of my leg, when Ham comes along.

What do I not need?

- I do not need a lecture. (Why were you in the bush without a rifle?)
- I don't need to be ignored.
- I don't need to be reported on. (Hey guys, come check out Harold! That bear really did him in good!)

What is happening to me while this takes place? My life is ebbing away, it's nearly over...

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1-2).

Help me. Restore me, considering the bear is still nearby.

This is in reference to a saved man with a heart after God that has fallen.

Remember, if he is saved and out of fellowship with God, he is carrying a burden and he doesn't need you to add a burden to that burden.

What else do I not need?

- ♦ I don't need to be shot. I am in the body. Shooting me creates a loss felt by the body. Do you condemn me? If you condemn me, you are condemning you. I'm a part of you!

The church is the only army in the world that shoots its wounded. Christians have a way of crucifying living saints, worshiping dead saints, and shooting wounded saints.

Shem and Japheth set the garment upon their shoulders and walked backward. They did not see their father's nakedness. Doesn't that sound like bearing another's burden?

Practically put for today, they did not see the sin. Their focus was not on the sin; the focus was on covering the sin. Now, I am NOT advocating to cover sin up or to sweep it under the rug, but to come alongside privately with a heart of love and restoration, without

shaming and running the man down publicly and purposely.

Though Shem and Japheth covered their father, they did not ignore him.

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).



"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8)

Love covers a multitude of sins. Love doesn't ignore the sin. Love aches for

the wounded brother. Love doesn't flaunt the man's sin. Love doesn't turn the sin into the focus. Love reaches out, just as the love of God reached down!

"Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (1 Timothy 5:20).

"Rebuke before all." Is this contradictory to love covering a multitude of sin? No.

Rebuke carries the thought of striving for the other's repentance and restoration of a brother. Not flaunting, but rebuking; the desire to see the brother whole again and living in victory.

Do you have what it takes to protect the vulnerable and shamed, and come beside a wounded brother, even if you stand alone? Do you know what you and the ridiculed gain by doing so? You gain a brother. You gain the deepest of friendships!

Let's be Blanket Carriers!

Coronation Day...continued from Page 10

If you are on the right foundation, what kind of materials are you building with? Are you using gold, silver and precious stones? That is, are you building a life to the glory of God? Are you building with good actions and attitudes? If so, then won't it be a blessing to see those things stand the test and bring honor to the Lord? Maybe you are using wood, hay and stubble. If so, you know that your works are going to burn up before your eyes. You will miss out on some of the glorious things God has for those who are faithful stewards. Wouldn't you like to scrap that shabby house this morning, tear it down in this altar and with God's grace begin to build a house that will honor Jesus both here and in the hereafter? The choice is yours, but the reality remains: Heaven's Coronation Day is coming. How it turns out is all up to you.

END

How Long Will it Be?

I have such a longing
To see my Savior's face
When my life is over
After I won the race!

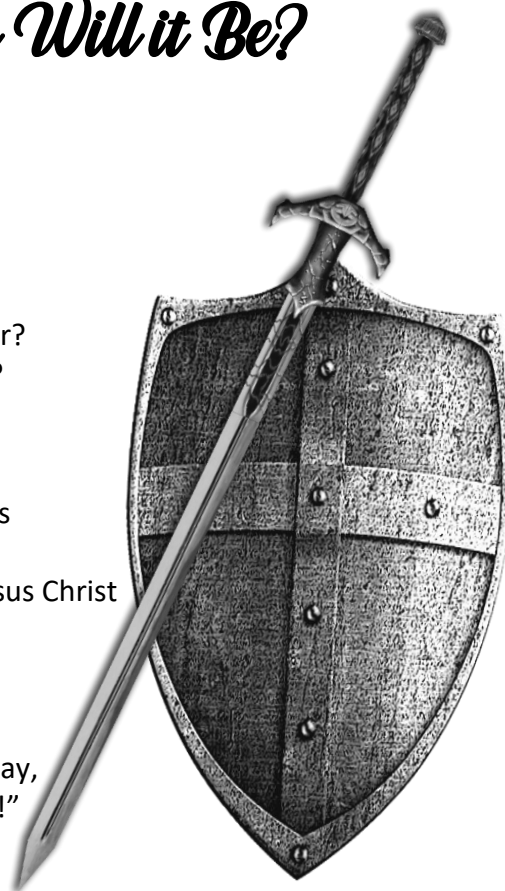
(Chorus)

How long can it be, my Savior?
How long will it be, my Lord?
Until I hang up my shield,
And put away my sword?

Though trials and tribulations
Have often come my way,
But through the power of Jesus Christ
My enemy, I did slay!

When my life is over
And the battle's won
What joy to hear my Savior say,
"Welcome home. Well done!"

— Author Unknown



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What is True Brotherly Love?

—by Al Fry

To me, this is a deep thought-provoking question. Do I practice it?

According to Jesus:

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:37-39).

This seems impossible and is impossible without Jesus in our hearts. Even then it isn't something that happens without much prayer and conscious choices. Can we truly love one another if we think our neighbor, friend, fellow church member, etc. must do, think, speak, dress, and live like we do? Are we not judging a person if we think like that?

These are questions every born-again, Spirit-led believer will eventually ask. Do we then justify ourselves, or do we go to the Word and ask God in the Spirit what the answers are? Jesus said:

“But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless” (Matt 12:7).

Is there any way that doesn't mean that we are not to force our opinions on others?

Does the Word of God give us the right to force others to live as we do, or forfeit becoming members and participating in communion with us? Do we have the fear of God in us if we are not afraid to do these things?

These are serious questions. I believe if we are doing these things without God's blessing, permission, and instruction to do them, we are living in sin. Please, brothers, read the Bible and pray for the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit in all your decisions in life. Let's live out our faith like the early Anabaptists, follow Jesus, and always ask before interacting with others, “What would Jesus do and/or say?”

Brotherly love is consoling and comforting the hurting, the grieving, and the broken-hearted. Brotherly love is waking up each day and choosing to do or be someone special to someone who needs us, whether they are a Christian or not. Jesus healed one of His arresting malefactor's ears. Do we think that man was loving Him? I like to think that he changed his life and became a follower, all because of brotherly love. If we do not have brotherly love, we have nothing.

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as

sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

Paul is using the word charity here with the meaning of brotherly love. Brotherly love does not ever allow us to condemn nor look down upon someone if they don't look, think, act, believe, and live like we think they should.

Jesus stayed so far away from that mindset that we have no choice but to do the same if we want to meet Him in heaven and live for Him today! When I think about how brotherly love works and looks, I envision a gathering of two or more people sharing their hopes, plans, struggles, questions, thoughts, feelings, and how they worship God with zero fear of being ostracized, looked down upon, or singled out regardless of who they are. How can the Anabaptist vision that our forefathers so strongly believed in that they gave their lives for be restored?