



MAP ♦ 575 US Highway 250 ♦ Greenwich, OH 44837 ♦ (419) 962-1515 ♦ Sept 2025

## The Secret of the Strength

— by Peter Hoover

### CHAPTER 18 On to Peace

More than the pungency of curing meat and wood smoke greeted those who entered the back room of Matthias Fischer's house in Augsburg on August 24, 1527. Matthias was a butcher. But on this day, he had no meat to trim nor sausages to stuff. With his wife and children, he had cleaned up his shop and gotten ready for an Anabaptist meeting to take place in his house. Little did he know that it would be the most important and longest remembered meeting of Anabaptists in southern Germany.<sup>1</sup>

Jakob Kautz, the ex-Protestant preacher, came from Worms. Hans Hut, Jakob Wideman, and Hans Schlaffer came. Eucharius Binder and Old Eitelhans Langenmantel came with Hans Denck, Jakob Dachser, and around sixty other messengers from the mountainous forests and walled cities of central Europe.

Some who came had been scholars or priests. Some had been wealthy land-

owners. But among all those assembled, none had left a more illustrious career behind him than Leonhard Dorfbrunner, a Teutonic knight from Weissenburg in Franconia.

Trained to fight, Leonhard Dorfbrunner's future in the Emperor's army had seemed secure—until the Spirit of God spoke to him and another fight began: a fight between good and evil in his soul. Leonhard, in the early 1520s, turned to God and decided to become a priest. But the priesthood did not satisfy him. The more he learned of

they threw him into prison. Then, rejecting his knighthood, Leonhard learned the knife smith's trade and found his way to Steyr in Austria. There, in the summer of 1527, Hans Hut baptized him and sent him out as a messenger.

#### An Unarmed Knight

No longer on horseback, nor with sword, halberd, or dagger in his belt, Leonhard Dorfbrunner set out on the most dangerous mission of his life. He set out unarmed to teach people a strange new way of life.

Travel through the forests of central Europe required preparation in the sixteenth century. Just after the peasants' war, with freeloaders and highwaymen on the loose, one had to travel armed. Leonhard, choosing the way of Christ, determined to offer the other cheek and return good for evil.

By August, he got to Augsburg and attended the meeting in Matthias Fischer's house. The brothers gathered there sent him and Hänslin Mittermeier of Ingolstadt on a teaching journey to Linz and the bishopric of Salzburg. Everyone got an assignment. Brothers left two by two in every direction, and within three



Anabaptists from Augsburg, in Bavaria, quickly carried Jesus' good news of peace through southern Germany, Austria and beyond. But city authorities (under the Reformer, Urbanus Rhegius) allowed them no peace at home. After many arrests, public floggings, and executions, the believers' community dispersed—while their witness for peace lives on.

Christ's gospel, the greater became his desire to follow Him in the way of peace. He began to read the gospel and preach to the people in German, but

<sup>1</sup> The meeting that has come to be known as the "Martyrs' Synod."

months, the flames of their martyr's fires began to light up the town squares of Salzburg, Rattenburg, Brunn in Moravia, Schwatz, Weissenburg, Vienna, Augsburg, Passau, and Linz.

Leonhard Dorfbrunner, before setting out for Linz, spent some time with persecuted Anabaptists in the city of Augsburg itself. All the leaders of the little congregation by the gate of the Holy Cross were in jail. The authorities did their best to stop further activities. They arrested all Anabaptists they could get their hands on. They shouted at, hit, and brutally tortured whoever did not escape. Elizabeth Hegenmiller had her tongue cut out, and they burned Anna Benedikt's cheeks through before they drove her out of the city in the spring of 1528. But Leonhard Dorfbrunner, trained in the martial arts, did not fight back. He simply left.

Within a few weeks, they caught him at Passau on the Danube. Pulled on the rack, Dorfbrunner suffered in silence. A new Christian, baptized less than a year earlier, he had already baptized three thousand others. He was a strong man, on fire with the zeal of youth. But, like Christ, he "turned the other cheek" to his tormenters and forgave them. They burned him at the stake in January, 1528. Then, a short while later, a new book appeared in Augsburg.

### Vengeance is of God

The new book, published by Philipp Ulhart, was an Anabaptist statement on why Christians do not fight. Because of dangerous times, the author's name did not appear in it.<sup>2</sup> But it was the definite testimony of women like Elisabeth Hegenmiller and Anna Benedikt, and of men like Leonhard Dorfbrunner, who gave up their lives rather than defend themselves. It was the testimony of the whole church at Augsburg that suffered

with Christ in the process of getting to know Him, and that became like Him in His death.

The little book from Augsburg begins with a reference to what the Protestants taught about bearing arms:

Luther and his men use the Scriptures to persuade the common people to take up arms and to defend themselves. They get the people to trust, body and soul, in the force of arms, and they cause lords and cities to rise up against the emperor. What a terrible shedding of blood when false prophets and their followers begin to fight in the name of God! (Jeremiah 6, Ezekiel 22, 23).<sup>3</sup>

God has appointed no power or rulers on the earth except Caesar. Caesar and his worldly government will rule on the earth until their time is up, as predicted by Daniel (Daniel 11), when the wrath of God will come upon all men (Isaiah 24). All flesh needs the power and control of Caesar.

Jesus Christ, however, does not rule or judge in earthly matters or in earthly kingdoms. No matter whether His followers get treated good or evil, they pay back nothing but patience and love. They are willing to submit everything they have, even their bodies and their lives, to earthly powers, that is, everything which has to do with what they believe. No man may use force or rule over others in matters of faith in Christ, for it is not earthly lives, but eternal life which is at stake. God Himself will not take eternal life away from any creature in heaven or on earth (Romans 8, Matthew 10).

<sup>3</sup> All excerpts from the Augsburg booklet taken from the *Aufdeckung der Babylonischen Hurn und Antichrists alten und neuen gehaimnuß und gewel...*ca. 1530

### Nothing but Christ

The writer of the Augsburg booklet stated his purpose clearly:

I want to present to you professing "evangelicals," you teachers and preachers, nothing else but the crucified, patient, and loving Christ.

Then, the writer described how knowing Christ frees us from the love of possessions, and thereby from the very source of strife and self-defense:

To know Christ and His teaching is to live no longer after the flesh. It is to hang no longer onto our possessions, and to be born again—through which we die to all earthly things. He who hangs onto his old life and possessions will lose them. But he who gives them up comes to possess eternal life (Matt 19). He puts every thought of self-defense behind his back, offers to carry the cross for his master and Lord, Christ, and does this faithfully with all meekness, love and patience (Matt. 11) like the lambs of God...

Where Christ's teaching and life take over, fleshly rule and power ends. Where people, on the other hand, are ruled by the flesh, Christ must leave, like He left the land of the Gadarenes (Matt. 8). Christ had to leave the land of the Gadarenes because His work affected their business (their hog operation), something which needs to be taken into account if we want to be saved...

The loss of property is a small thing to give up for the love of God and our fellowmen. But it is the fear of losing possessions that deceives the whole world. It is that which binds the love of God and the love of man on the earth.

<sup>2</sup> Research has pointed, in recent years, to Pilgram Marpeck's authorship of the booklet.

If Christ must leave, like He left the village of the Gadarenes, unrighteousness takes over, love grows cold (Matt. 24), selfishness (*Eigennützigkeit*) takes over, and all men suffer. It is easy to see how blind, senseless, selfishness destroys the whole world, but men would much rather tolerate it than they tolerate sincere, loving Christians. They hate those who try to free them from the devil's destructive power. Oh, blind Gadarenes! The whole world is blind!

### Self-Defense and *Eigentum*

The writer of the Augsburg booklet wrote:

Those who think they possess their goods (*eigentum*) want the government to protect them. They think it necessary to use force to keep peace and to protect their own possessions and the possessions of others. In fact, all use of force comes from the possession of property. From the holding of property comes all government and force in the world. But the communities of Christ (*die Gemeinen Christi*) are not based on the holding of property, but on Christ. They are subject to Christ before all else.

Therefore, those who are spiritual concern themselves with keeping spiritual peace, and those who are of the flesh concern themselves with holding onto their possessions in a fleshly peace.

God only permits, He does not promote the use of worldly force. The use of force does not come from that which is good, but from that which is evil, and God only tolerates it out of necessity. God knows that if He would take the use of ungodly force out of the world, society would become totally chaotic. So, for the good of His chil-

dren who must also live in the world, He lets it go.

### A Better Peace

For the sake of peace among the rebellious children of Israel, God gave the sword to Moses to enforce His laws. Joshua, David, and others were given the sword for the same reason—to keep an outward, temporary peace among unconverted men. But Christ and His followers have another calling. Christ does not bring the peace of Moses, nor an outward peace of the flesh. Rather, He calls His followers to have peace one with another and says: *"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth..."* (John 14:27)

The Lord Most High, Christ Jesus, did not come to rule, force, judge, accuse, or have anyone accused before Him. Rather, He came to serve, and to allow Himself to be ruled over, forced, accused, judged, condemned and mistreated. He is the mirror into which we must look if we want to see whether we resemble Christ or not. If we would do so, the question of whether we should take part in worldly government would soon be resolved!

The selfish also try to justify themselves with love for their neighbors. They ask: "Shouldn't we defend our neighbors when they are in danger if we can do so? Hasn't God made us responsible to do this? God told us not to ignore our neighbors when they are in need, and to treat others like we want them to treat us.

Using such human logic, Simon Peter took it upon himself to defend Christ. But listen to what Christ did: He reached out and healed the man whom Peter, using worldly force, had struck (Luke 22). Christ does not want the kind of love that causes oth-

ers to get hurt or despised. Rather He wants to see us loving and not hating our worst enemies (Luke 6), no matter what they do to us...

True Christians help whom they can, whether friend or foe, as long as no one gets hurt by their help. The spirit of brotherly assistance will never be wanting among them. In fact, Christ's followers are so dedicated to help others that they would be ready to die for them. Complete love in Christ reaches out to friends and enemies. It is the result of freedom in Christ and spiritual union with Him.

### Three Swords

The first Anabaptists believed God gave three kinds of authority to three groups of people. The first sword was that of the world. The second was that of the Israelite nation, and the third was the spiritual sword of the Christian community.

Clemens Adler, from Austerlitz in Moravia, wrote:

Since Christians are to forgive all misdeeds, why should it be necessary for them to exercise capital punishment? It is a matter for the heathen to sit in judgement over people's lives. Yet, some have the notion that we should do this, either by authority of the law of Moses or of the worldly government, neither of which are of any concern to Christians...From all of this it is easy to judge who are Christians and who are not. For our neighbors, those that carry swords, have the notion that they are Christians too, but their actions prove otherwise...Indeed, they are neither heathen, Jews, nor Christians; they do not themselves know what they are, but confuse the sword of the world, Moses, and Christ and patch them all together—like mixing

cabbages, peas and turnips. Oh, the blindness!<sup>4</sup>

Hans Denck wrote:

So it is with the teaching and work of Moses, David and all the patriarchs. However good they may be, where the love of Christ has outshone them with something better, it is necessary to regard them as bad...So, the zeal of Moses when he slew the Egyptian who did violence to the Israelite was, in a sense, good, because he struggled for the right against the wrong. But, had Moses understood, or genuinely possessed perfect love, he would have rather let himself be killed on behalf of the Israelite, his brother, than to have murdered the Egyptian, his brother's enemy.<sup>5</sup>

The Augsburg booklet stated:

To God, all earthly kingdoms and estates are nothing but pens full of pigs—pigs that root up and destroy his vineyard (Psalm 80). And all those who rule over, protect and manage these pig pens are nothing but swineherds, because outside of Christ there is no faith, neither among Jews, Gentiles, or professing Christians (John 15, 2 John 1, 3 John 1).

To the evil world belongs the evil sword. Evil rulers in the world must rule in their evil way to protect the evil of private property. In this way, a semblance of peace is maintained among the ungodly, for Christ can have nothing to do with Belial (2 Cor. 6). But, the peace of Christ is something totally different. It has nothing to do with satisfying the flesh or hanging onto property. Rather, it is that which allows us to live great joy and peace in the midst of our friends

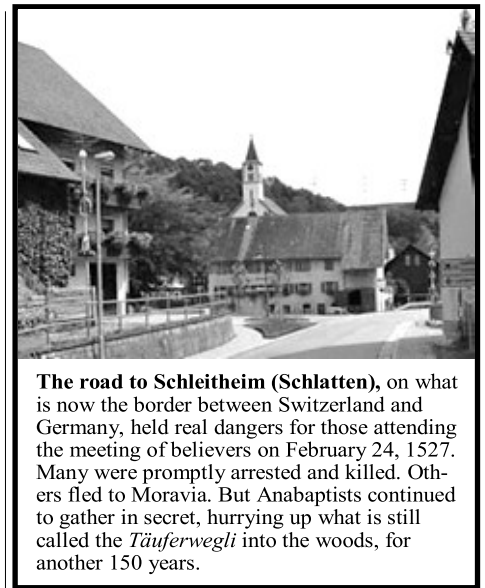
and enemies, no matter how things go. This is the peace of Christ of which He spoke: "...*My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth...*" (John 14:27)

No sword nor worldly force was used by the first Christians until the days of the emperor Constantine. Christians did not believe in using the sword and Christ had not given permission to anything more than the sword of the Word. Whoever went beyond that, in the days of the early church, was considered a heathen or an infidel. But the pope, as a servant of the church, married the church to the Leviathan of carnal power—supposedly doing Christ a service. Then the Antichrist was born and the mystery of iniquity began to appear (2 Thess. 2), which had been hidden for a long time previously.

### The Peace of Christ

The first Anabaptists did not use the negative term nonresistance. They spoke only of *Wehrlosigkeit* (being without defense) and it was this defenseless response of men like Leonhard Dorfbrunner, the converted knight, that struck other knights and military men to the heart. Truly, it "heaped coals of fire" upon their heads as Paul had predicted (Romans 12:20-21). It clearly revealed who was on which side of the struggle. "A lamb does not bite a wolf," declared the Anabaptist Adrian Henckel when they arrested him in the Hartz Mountains of Central Germany.

From the beginning of the movement, most Anabaptists did not question what Christ wanted them to do about war. They refused to fight. In 1530, Hans Herschberger, a young Swiss believer, was called upon to defend his Protestant canton. Hans stoutly refused: "I would not fight against anyone, not even against the Turks."<sup>6</sup>



**The road to Schleithem (Schlatten),** on what is now the border between Switzerland and Germany, held real dangers for those attending the meeting of believers on February 24, 1527. Many were promptly arrested and killed. Others fled to Moravia. But Anabaptists continued to gather in secret, hurrying up what is still called the *Täuferwegli* into the woods, for another 150 years.

Anabaptists meeting at Schleithem, Switzerland in 1527, believed the sword was for the world and the Word of God for the church. They wrote:

We are agreed as follows concerning the sword: The sword is ordained of God outside the perfection of Christ. It punishes and puts to death the wicked, and guards and protects the good. In the Law, the sword was ordained for the punishment of the wicked and the same sword is now ordained to be used by worldly rulers.

In the perfection of Christ, however, only the ban is used for a warning and for the excommunication of the one who has sinned, without putting the flesh to death—simply the warning and the command to sin no more.

Now, it will be asked by many who do not recognize this as the will of Christ for us, whether a Christian may or should employ the sword against the wicked for the defense and protection of the good, or for the sake of love.

Our reply is unanimously as follows: Christ teaches and commands us to learn of Him, for He is

<sup>4</sup> From *Das urteil von dem Schwert mit unterschiedlichem gewalt dreier fürstenthum der Welt, Juden und Christen...* (Austerlitz, 1529).

<sup>5</sup> From *Von der Wahren Liebe...* 1527.

<sup>6</sup> From the *Basler Aktensammlung*, IV p. 337

meek and lowly in heart and so shall we find rest to our souls...

Secondly, it will be asked concerning the sword whether a Christian shall pass sentence in worldly dispute and strife such as unbelievers have with one another. This is our united answer: Christ did not wish to decide on or pass judgement between brother and brother in the case of the inheritance, but refused to do so. Therefore we should do likewise.

Thirdly, it will be asked concerning the sword: Shall one serve as a civil authority if called on or elected to the office? The answer is as follows. They wished to make Christ king but He fled and did not reject the ordinance of His Father. We should do as He did and follow Him so that we shall not walk in darkness....

Finally, it will be observed that it is not appropriate for a Christian to serve as a worldly ruler because of these points. The government rules according to the flesh, but the Christian according to the Spirit. Their houses and dwelling remain in this world, but the Christians' citizenship is in heaven. The weapons of their conflict and war are carnal, and against the flesh only.

But the Christians' weapons are spiritual, against the fortification of the devil. The world's people come around with steel and iron, but Christians with the armor of God, truth, righteousness, and the Word of God.<sup>7</sup>

Hans Hut, and many Anabaptists with him, thought Christians would take up arms after the Lord returned. But whatever would happen then was not of primary importance. Menno Simons expressed a more characteristically Anabaptist feeling when he wrote:

Antichrist wants to defend and assert his cause with the Sword, but Christ Jesus has no sword or weapon other than suffering with His Holy Word. Oh bloody cruelty, which exceeds the cruelty of unreasoning animals! For man, the reasoning creature shaped in the image of God, born without fangs, claws, and horns with a sickly tender flesh...as a sign that he is a creature of peace and not of conflict, is so full of hatred, cruelty, and bloodshed that it can neither be conceived, spoken nor written. How far, how far, have we departed from the teaching and example of our Master who taught and sought only peace, saying: "*Peace I leave with*

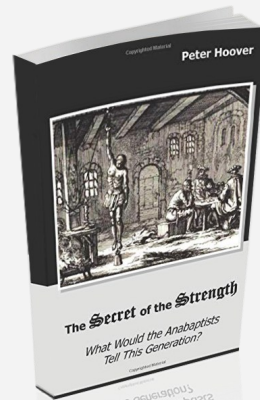
*you, my peace I give unto you*" (John 14:27)<sup>8</sup>

In the same writing, Menno Simons summed up the Anabaptist non-resistant position when he wrote:

Our wagon fortress is Christ, our weapon of defense is patience. Our sword is the Word of God, and our victory is free, firm and undisguised faith in Christ Jesus. Iron, metal, spears and swords we leave to those who (alas) consider men's and pigs' blood of about the same worth!

Converted like Leonhard Dorfbrunner to the way of peace, the Anabaptists moved ...

<sup>8</sup> *Dat Fundament des Christelycken leers...*1539



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<sup>7</sup> *Brüderliche Vereinigung...*1527

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How perfect or righteous does one have to be to enter heaven?

Is being 80% perfect good enough, or does God require better? Does He require 90% perfection?

If we turn to the scriptures for our answer, we will learn that God requires 100% perfection. This means absolute obedience to His laws without any exceptions. Even the smallest mistake falls short of His standard.

*“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all”* (Ja 2:10).

*“...Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them”* (Gal 3:10).

The truth is, not a single human being has ever been able to keep the whole law. Not even one person. This accounts for billions and billions and billions of human beings that have lived and died. This accounts for you and me.

*“There is none righteous, no, not one”* (Ro 3:10).

*“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* (Ro 3:23).

I’ve heard people say, “Well, if I try my best, if I reach 90% perfection, God will make up for the remaining 10%.” However, let me be clear: if you hold this belief, you will be very disappointed on the day you die and stand before a holy and righteous God.

The Bible describes two kinds of righteousness, which separate the over 8 billion people in the world into two groups: the saved and the lost.

1. Group #1 is trusting in and covered in their own righteousness.
2. Group #2 is trusting in and covered in God’s righteousness.

## Which Righteousness are You Covered with?

### 1) Matthew 5:20

*“For I say unto you, that except **your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees**, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven”*

In this verse, Jesus is emphasizing that merely following religious rules and outwardly appearing righteous, as the scribes and Pharisees did, is not enough to enter the kingdom of heaven. To put it bluntly, wearing a certain kind of clothing pattern, using a horse and buggy for transportation, and belonging to the Amish church is not enough.

Those rules and laws may please your parents, the person sitting next to you in a church service, and the bishop of the community, but they hold no value in the eyes of God.

### 2) Isaiah 64:6

*“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all **our righteousnesses are as filthy rags**...”*

In comparison to God’s perfect holiness, we are all impure and imperfect. Even our best efforts to be righteous and good are like filthy rags when measured against God’s required righteousness. The passage clearly highlights the idea that human attempts at righteousness are not enough and are flawed.

Remember when Adam and Eve’s eyes were opened in the Garden of Eden? They immediately realized that they stood naked before God, illustrating for us that we cannot hide anything from God. What Adam and Eve did next is exactly what most humans do today.

*“...they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons”* (Gen 3:7).

Did the man-made apron, or Adam and Eve’s self-righteousness, cover their flaws? No, it did not. Let me take it a step further: could Adam and Eve have come up with a single man-made rule to cover and hide their sinfulness? Absolutely not!

It took the shedding of blood to cover man’s sins. If we read just a few more verses, we will learn that God sacrificed an animal, made coats from the skins, and clothed both of them. Look! This is amazing!

*“Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothed them”* (Gen 3:21).

What can we learn from this?

1. Human beings go to great lengths to justify their sins, clothing themselves in self-righteousness. While this self-righteousness may appear good on the outside, sound right, and put one in right standing with the Amish church, it will do nothing for you on the day of judgment.
2. God requires His righteousness to cover our sinfulness. His righteousness is 100% holy, perfect, and pure. Those who die and are covered in God’s righteousness will spend eternity with God.

Now, let’s keep reading.

### 3) Romans 10:3

*“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**”*

Just like Adam and Eve, the Jews ignored God’s righteousness and went about creating their version of righteousness. They put together a man-made system, similar to an ordinance letter, and held each other accountable

to it rather than submit themselves to God's righteousness. Later, Paul wrote:

*"[Jesus] Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross" (Col 2:14).*

Jesus took all those man-made ordinances with Him to the cross. When the Romans drove the nails through Jesus' wrists and feet, those long lists of *ordinances* got nailed to the wood. That was 2,000 years ago. Stop reaching back and trying to take them off. Leave 'em there. They were contrary to us, distracting, and false worship. They did nothing for us. In fact, all those self-righteous *ordinances* stood in the way and kept men from submitting to God's righteousness.

#### 4) Titus 3:5

*"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"*

Adam and Eve did not deserve to be clothed in God's clothing. Neither do you! Nor do I! We are the ones who rebelled, God didn't. And yet, God, in His great mercy, clothed Adam and Eve with His holiness and His perfection. Today, God wants to do the same for you. Will you stop following your own righteousness and submit to God's righteousness?

#### 5) Philippians 3:9

*"And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"*

Some day you and I will die, just like the rest of mankind. A moment later, we will each stand before God. At that point, we will either be found wearing our own righteousness or God's right-

eousness. Which will it be? According to the passage we just read, the righteousness of God is received by faith alone.

#### 6) 2 Corinthians 5:21

*"For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"*

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me..." What was in this cup that made Jesus plead with the Father to remove it? What was in this cup that caused Him to sweat drops of blood? I believe it held the world's most dreadful, vile, evil, and wicked sins. I also believe that within that cup, you would have found self-righteousness and man-made religious systems.

As we know, it was not the Father's will to remove the cup. Jesus went on to not only take our sins upon Himself, but the scripture points out that He literally became my sin. Then, He suffered the wrath of God for my sin. He became what I was, so I could become what He is; that is, 100% holy, righteous, and perfect in the sight of God!

#### 7) Romans 3:22

*"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"*

Once again, the scripture teaches us that it is impossible for you and I to be justified (made righteous) before God by our acts of holiness. We need God's righteousness, which only comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

*"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" (Eph 2:8-9).*

This righteousness of God, which we have been reading about, is a gift from

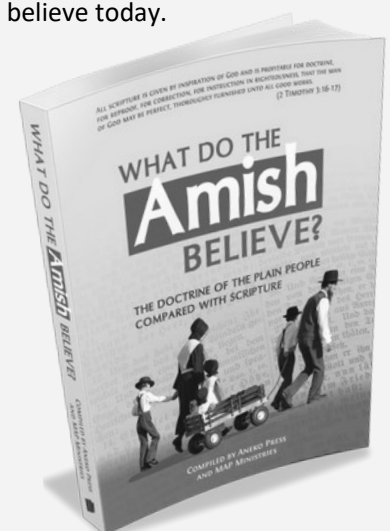
God. It is received by faith alone, by God's grace alone, and in Christ alone. There is nothing more you can add to what Jesus has already paid for in full. Stop trying! Stop adding! Just believe and then rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

#### Romans 10:9-10

*"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto [God's] righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation... For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"*

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## Work Out Your Own Salvation

—by John Weaver

*“... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12b).*

This is a part of a verse that is often taken out of context. When I, my wife, and several other couples had come to the realization that we could NOT attain salvation by our works, it seemed like this scripture was encouraging us to do the opposite. One thing this did for us (and it still should) was to cause us to search the scriptures to see if these things were so.

The passage becomes a bit clearer with the following verse added:

*“...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil 2:12b-13).*

It is God who works in us, not our works that bring about a changed life. It is only when we allow God to work in us that there can be an outworking. It is God’s power in, and then God’s power flowing out. Then it can bless many.

This is a bit like Jesus taught in John, when He said:

*“...out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (Jn 7:38).*

Many of us have desired this. In reality, it seemed like after much effort, all we could get was a tiny trickle. So what was wrong? Well, let us again search the scriptures.

*“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (Jn 7:37-38).*

Oh yes! For the rivers of water to flow out, there has to be an inflow. To start that inflow, we have to drink. Before we drink, we need to be thirsty. It is then that we can have those rivers of living water flowing. Again, it is God who works in us to will, and to do of His good pleasure.

I had a brother tell me yesterday that he is just a PVC pipe for God to use. Water from God comes in, then flows out from him to as many as he preaches to. Satan would like to cap off that pipe,

but as the water keeps flowing, he has no chance.

There are many things that God wants to work in us, and then we allow those things to work out of us...

- ⇒ like holiness. God says, *“...be ye Holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16)*. How do we become holy?
- ⇒ or sanctification. What is that?
- ⇒ or regeneration. What is that?
- ⇒ or how do old things pass away and all things become new?

Glory to God, all of these things God desires to work in us, so that there can be an outflow and touch many lives.

**Thank you, Lord! It is only what You put into me that enables a river to flow out. I am not the source. I am the vessel. I need to come to Jesus, the fountain of living water, and desire or thirst. Then drink. Then the water can flow out and touch many lives.**

Always, always give God the glory, because it is He who works in me to do His will. Thank You, Lord, for Your goodness to us.

## Walk in the Spirit

—by Gerald Hochstetler

This God-journey has been quite the journey for me, and it continues. The past ten years have become intense as I began to understand the difference between the body, soul, and spirit, and understand what was going on inside of me. I learned how to separate my emotions from my spirit. It is my spirit that has been rebirthed, not my body, which houses my spirit and my emotions.

Understanding the existence of each is of great value and helps your walk in the Spirit, which is REAL Christianity.

All of us have tried to Christianize the firstborn. We naturally go there. It’s

hard work, and it operates out of law. You love, forgive, and do many things because you must, and for your own benefit. You will get burned out and say things like, “God and Christianity don’t work.”

How well I know. Twice, I made a conscience decision to leave the church world for good. I even told God to get out of my life. Ha, ha! God is good. From the day I was born till today, He continues to draw me. Even when I was drunk, I would find myself humming the old hymns. I simply could not get away from Him.

Let me tell you, God’s way is beautiful. It WORKS! Carnal Christianity sucks.

In this spirit realm that we are called to walk in, it is a new world. Our only hope for overcoming the flesh realm is in the spirit world.

Lest you think I have lost my mind and gone weird, here’s your scripture:

*“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Gal 5:16).*

This is not something that happens automatically. If it did, there would be no need to tell us to do it.

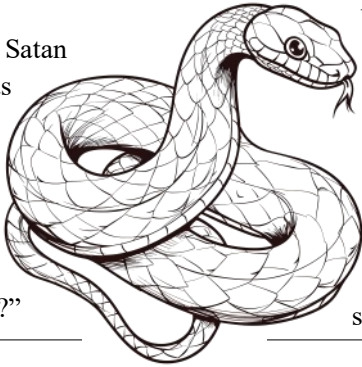


# The Serpent in the Garden

—by Joe Keim

According to Genesis, it appears that when God created the serpent, He went above and beyond other animals. The serpent was more subtle (crafty, cunning, deceitful) than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. Unlike other beasts of the field, the serpent could talk—carrying on conversations with both God and humans. It also had legs and could walk like humans.

For some reason, Satan chose the serpent as his puppet. It was through the serpent that Satan zeroed in on Eve in the garden, asking, “Has God said?”



Jesus often used questions to penetrate religious mindsets. I do the same when speaking with those entrenched in religious systems. It is the best way to challenge men and women to question their false beliefs.

Back to the serpent.

While I do not like to touch or even be around snakes, I have come to understand that they are just like any other beast of the field. The snake is not the devil, as I once thought. It was merely a tool or puppet Satan worked through. Because the serpent allowed itself to be used by Satan to bring destruction to our world, God cursed it. He said:

*“And the LORD God said unto the serpent, ‘Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life’” (Gen 3:14).*

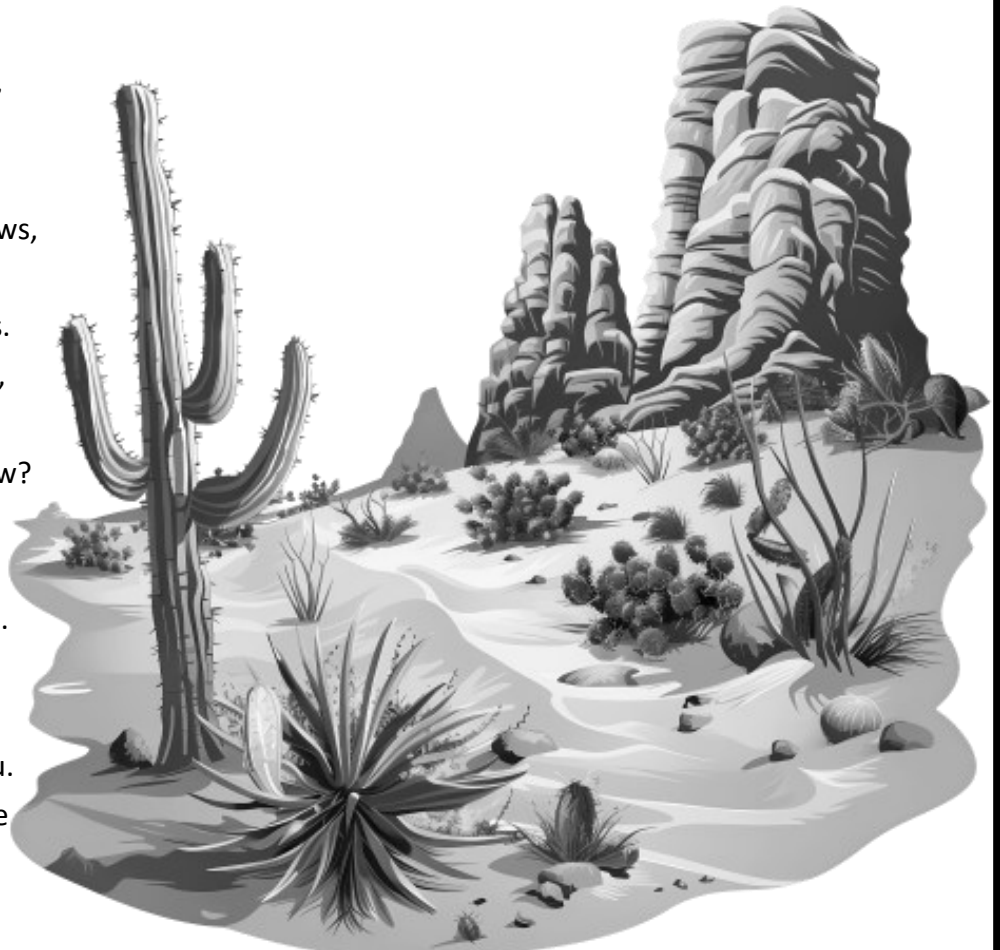
The meaning here goes far beyond the physical serpent that Satan used to speak his lies. It applies directly to the devil himself. Satan is cursed, and there is enmity between him and mankind. Even those who partake in the devil’s schemes despise him.

The author invites you to text or call with questions or comments!  
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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.

—by Katherine Search—



*“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father” (Jn 14:12).*

What are these greater works?

Jesus is speaking of quantity, not quality. Binging a soul to Jesus through evangelism is a greater work than walking on water or raising the dead! The people Jesus raised died again. When you bring a soul to Jesus, he passes from death unto life; eternal life!

On the day of Pentecost, more souls were brought to Jesus in one day than during His entire ministry. These 3,000 souls who passed from death to life were far greater than walking on water!

What was the work of Jesus?

God is *“not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9b).

*“That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved”* (Jn 3:15-17).

*“As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do”* (Jn 17:2-4).

*“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Lk 19:10).

The primary work of Jesus was NOT to raise the dead. It was NOT to feed the hungry. It was NOT to walk on water. It was NOT to turn water into wine, though He did those things. Jesus’ primary work was to seek and to save that which was lost! That’s why He came! That’s why He died a most cruel death on a hellish Roman cross! That’s why He rose from the dead!

Therefore, any church that focuses on feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, or clothing the naked, yet does NOT endeavor to bring souls to Jesus, is either a dead church, a dying church, or no church at all! All they are doing is making the world a better place for a given individual to go to hell from! Evangelism is to the church what wood is to a fire! Remove the wood, there is no fire!

Why did Jesus perform miracles?

*“But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him”* (Jn 10:38).

Jesus performed miracles so that those who did not believe in Him would know and believe that He was God!

Why do men chase signs and miracles?

*“And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation”* (Mk 8:12).

*“Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it”* (Mt 12:38-39a).

Consider this.

*“Ye are of your father the devil, and*

*the lusts of your father ye will do”* (Jn 8:44a).

*“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts”* (Ja 4:3).

Men chase signs and miracles because they are evil and adulterous. They seek power and the prestige of their own lust, the pride of life. The devil is behind this lust. As the devil does, his children desire the same. Do you wish to perform miracles so that lost men would know that Jesus is in you, so that they may believe in Him, or so they glorify you?

But here’s the thing,

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

They don’t need to see miracles by you if you are the miracle.

*“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it”* (Jn 14:13-15).

Do you want your prayer heard? Is there anything you are asking God for? No matter how small or how great it is, the motive MUST be as Jesus’ was; that the Father would be glorified! Miracle chasers are in it for THEIR glory! Anything less is of the devil. Anything less is of the flesh!

Notice what else Jesus said. *“Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do!”* Who will do it? HE will! To whom do miracle chasers give credit for miracles (or so-called miracles)? To themselves! I performed! I did! Are you sure? It just may have been by the devil!

Never, never point men to miracles! Instead, point men to the One who performs miracles: Jesus! No saved man can deny having seen at least one mira-

cle, for his salvation is the greatest of miracles! Do you want to see a miracle? Then tell others of Jesus, witness the life-changing transformation of a man pass from death unto life, then praise and glorify God!

*“Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (Jn 6:28-29).*

Believe! This is the work that God would have of the lost! Because of that, tell others of Jesus! That is the work of the saved! The two are inseparable!

#### Conclusion

*“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev 22:17).*

What is the ministry of the Spirit? To convict the world of sin and of judgment! To draw all men unto Jesus!

The Spirit pleads, “Come!” Then He commands, “Go! Go tell others, ‘Come!’”

## Lifelong Commitment

For couples who are eager to throw in the towel and call it quits after the infatuation wears off because things aren't “perfect,” here is some food for thought.

Lifelong commitment is not waking up every morning to make breakfast and eat together. It is not a clean home filled with laughter. It is not cuddling in bed until both of you fall asleep.

It is someone who steals all the covers and snores. At times, it is slammed doors and a few harsh words. It is stubbornly disagreeing and giving each other the silent treatment until your hearts heal, and then offering forgiveness. It is coming home to the same person every day that you know loves and cares about you because of, and in spite of who you are. It is laughing about the one time you accidental-

ly did something stupid. It is about dirty laundry and unmade beds. It is about helping each other with the hard work of life. It is about swallowing the nagging words instead of saying them out loud. It is about eating the easiest meal you can make and sitting down together at a late hour because you both had a crazy day. It is when you have an emotional breakdown and your love lays down with you and holds you, and tells you everything is going to be okay...and you believe them. It is about loving someone even though they sometimes make you absolutely insane.

Lifelong commitment is not always easy. Sometimes it is hard. But it is amazing, and comforting, and one of the best things you will ever experience!



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## September

### **Better Together** (part 1 of 6)

Duane Sheriff answers the question of what a man is and what a woman is and describes how a man and woman together reflect God's image. Marriage is spiritual, and it is a type and shadow of the institution of Christ and His church.

### **Better Together** (part 2 of 6)

Duane Sheriff continues to review the differences between a man and a woman. It is through our differences that unity occurs in marriage, and we become one flesh that bears fruit. We also examine the top five reasons "who not" to get married.

### **What Do Mormons & Jehovah Witnesses Believe?** (part 4 of 5)

Dr. John Ankerberg travels through his previous programs to discover what the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints really believe.

### **James 1:14-19**

Can one person make a difference in this world? According to Dr. J. Vernon McGee, you can if you follow God's lead. Dr. McGee shares the incredible stories of John Wesley and Florence Nightingale.

## October

### **Better Together** (part 3 of 6)

Brother Duane Sheriff shares his personal experiences regarding the top five reasons why people get married and then provides counterpoints with the top five reasons people should get married according to scripture.

### **How Eric Scalise Found Hope in Christ**

Dr. Eric Scalise, President of Hope for the Heart, shares his story of finding hope in Christ amidst an unusual upbringing. The son of a diplomat, Eric lived in multiple countries and shares the unique experiences he had growing up and how the Lord often interrupted his plans and directed his steps.

### **What Do Mormons & Jehovah Witnesses Believe?** (part 5 of 5)

Message by Dr. John Ankerberg.

### **James 1:19-22**

"Think before you speak." It is easier said than done, right? Hop aboard the Bible Bus as Dr. J. Vernon McGee tells us that God gave us two ears and one mouth for a purpose and shares what God's Word has to say on the subject of being "quick to hear but slow to answer."

## November

### **Better Together** (part 4 of 6)

When we do not understand the purpose of marriage, we can abuse, misuse, or frustrate marriage. In this message, Brother Duane shares the biblical purpose of marriage.

### **Q&A with Haley and Dustin**

Haley and Dustin discuss how to cope with depression, practical do's and don'ts for helping others struggling with mental health issues, as well as tips for reigniting your relationship with God during a spiritually dry season of life.

### **Grieving with Hope**

Haley and Dustin share biblical truths that can anchor you in times of grief. They discuss their personal stories of loss, misconceptions about grief, and provide practical guidance on what it looks like to grieve with hope and help others who are mourning a loss.

### **James 1:22-25**

James 1:22 says, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." In this study, Dr. J. Vernon McGee explains how Christians can take these words to heart and put them into practice in our everyday lives.

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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

# Feedback and Response

1

A Plowman's Academy student wrote a note questioning if a person who walked away from their faith had truly been a Christian. Someone she greatly admired departed from their faith and it shook her. Here is our response:

It is a serious bump in the road when someone you have admired, trusted, and looked to for spiritual guidance has seemingly walked away from their faith and left you scrambling to be certain your faith is real and doesn't fade away. By your words of admiration for your friend, it sounds like he has made a lasting impact on your life.

As always, God's Word has the answer. Jeremiah 17:9 is familiar:

*"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?"*

We can readily agree that our own heart is deceitful and wicked, but struggle to believe that people we admire also have deceitful and wicked hearts. In fact, Matthew 7:22-23 tells us that many will deceive themselves into thinking they have eternal life, but will be rejected.

*"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."*

The apostle Paul faced a similar situation. Demas was a fellow laborer with Paul (Phil 1:24) and was in Rome during Paul's first imprisonment (Col 4:14). Yet in 2 Timothy 4:10, we read:

*"For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world..."*

To be associated with Paul during the first century was no small thing. Demas stood with Paul...until he didn't.

At the last supper, the disciples reclined around the table. Jesus told them that one of them would betray Him.

*"And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto Him, 'Lord, is it I?' And He answered and said, 'He that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born.' Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, 'Master, is it I?' He said unto him, 'Thou hast said'" (Matthew 26: 22-25).*

None of the twelve knew which one of them would betray Jesus. They didn't whisper to each other that Jesus was likely talking about Judas Iscariot. Instead, each of them doubted themselves and began to ask Jesus if they would be the betrayer.

Two avenues of thought exist regarding those who, like Demas, Judas, or your friend, give evidence of commitment to Christ and later openly reject Him.

1. Some think these people had the appearance of life but were not truly born again – like the seeds in the parable which sprouted but did not bear fruit, and then died off.
2. Others believe that people can truly be saved and then reject their salvation.

In your search for answers, set aside the things that you believe to be true about your friend and consider the following verses:

*"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain..." (John 15:16).*

*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. 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, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:11-14).*

*"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).*

*"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 John 2:19).*

*"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10: 27-29).*

*"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).*

The radical reformation that began Anabaptist history was a time of realigning with scripture on many points. The early Anabaptists desired to radically follow Scripture on all points regardless of persecution. Just like the earliest persecution of the Church, their persecution came from the religious groups who were in power at that time.

If Anabaptists had practiced their faith and their re-baptizing of adults quietly, they probably could have avoided much persecution. Instead, they went out and preached, trying to convert and baptize as many others as possible. They took Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19 very seriously:

*“Go ye therefore, and **teach** all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”* (emphasis added).

They wouldn't be quiet! (The title “Quiet in the Land” definitely would not have described them.) They examined scripture to see how Jesus and the early church did things, and they followed what they read. When a new believer converted, he was baptized immediately and publicly.

The religious leaders were against the rebaptizing of adults. Even if they had accepted it, the fact that the Anabaptists were not examining the converts enough (or letting the leaders do the examining) or waiting for the right time would have been problematic.

Anabaptists pointed back to scriptural accounts of baptism. When Jesus was baptized (Mtt 3:14-15), He asked John to baptize Him, and John questioned it.

*“And Jesus answering said unto him, suffer it to be so **now**: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness...”* (emphasis added).

This account and all the other baptisms recorded in scripture followed immedi-

ately upon the request of the converts.

As time went on, especially during the Dark Ages, the church began a policy of examining a convert seven times before baptism was allowed. They also would baptize converts at only two specific times: Easter and Pentecost.<sup>1</sup> Anabaptists, on the other hand, would give teaching and instruction for several hours, or in some cases, several days. When the student came to believing faith, they were baptized immediately.



Early Anabaptists saw no conflict between pouring and immersion. They did both. Where the baptism happened did not matter either— in rivers or ponds, barns, caves, mills, forests, or wherever they happened to be.

Anabaptists tied faith, repentance, and baptism together and did not postpone any of the three. They could not wait to baptize until a more convenient time because there was no convenient time. They were baptized at once because they believed baptism is the outward testimony of the inward new birth itself.<sup>2</sup> Anabaptists believed strongly that the new birth and baptism were both incomplete by themselves. So, they always tied both together in one event.

<sup>1</sup> Menno Simons, *Dat Fundament des Christelycken leers* . . . 1539 “We are informed by those who know history that baptism and the time of its administration was changed. In the beginning of the holy commune, people were baptized in ordinary water. They were baptized as soon as they professed the faith and on the confession of their faith, according to the writings. Afterward a change was made. Church leaders began to examine people seven times before baptizing them. After that they were baptized only at two special times, at Easter and Pentecost.”

<sup>2</sup> Peter Hoover, *The Secret of the Strength*, chapter 12 “On to Commitment”

They didn't think if they baptized a sinner, it would immediately make him a saint, nor did they wait until someone had proven themselves to be a saint before they baptized them. They just baptized people who confessed faith in Jesus as their Savior and expressed a desire to follow Him. Only repentance and faith were necessary for baptism. From this, Anabaptists expected the Christian life to spring forth.<sup>3</sup>

## Anabaptists and Baptism Today

Flash forward five centuries later. Today, Anabaptist beliefs look a bit more like those of the religious leaders who persecuted the early Anabaptists for their beliefs than they look like the beliefs of their Anabaptist forefathers. Most conservative groups today baptize about once a year. Even then, baptism is only for those who have gone through an instruction class and meet all the requirements of church membership. Conversion and baptism have been separated. Converts must, once again, prove their worthiness of baptism (today by their dress standard and lifestyle) before they can be baptized.

How did this lapse happen again? In part, I believe it came about a couple of centuries after the first Anabaptists, when Instruction Class was first introduced. Originally, Instruction Class was **not intended for new converts**. It was a class started for the purpose of bringing young people **to conversion**.<sup>4</sup>

I can easily see that it became a requirement for young people because the churches wanted to be sure that **all**

<sup>3</sup> Peter Hoover, *The Secret of the Strength*, chapter 11 “On to Baptism”

<sup>4</sup> Peter Hoover, *The Secret of the Strength*, chapter 12 “On to Commitment” In the footnotes (number 3) of this chapter “No Anabaptists held ‘instruction classes’ for converts. Instruction classes for the young people (*Jugendunterricht*) did not develop until centuries later. Even then, they were not intended to be classes for ‘converts.’ Their purpose was to bring young people to conversion and baptism. This is still their stated purpose in Old Order Mennonite churches.”



young people understood well. Soon, it became a requirement for all converts, young and old. Something that was started with perfectly good intentions easily became an extra-Biblical requirement for all believers—just as it did in the Dark Ages.

We do want converts to understand what repentance and faith are before they are baptized, but does it need to be a three to six-month class? Could it not be explained in a couple of hours? Young people who have already been taught by their parents are ready for baptism as soon as they decide to follow Christ. Even those who don't have a lifelong teaching can ask questions if

there are areas they don't understand. Who of us understood everything when we converted? Does that not come in the weeks, months, and years following conversion?

Did not Jesus Himself say:

*“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall **teach** you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”* (John 14:26)?

Anabaptists used to stand out from the rest of the religious groups mainly because of their radical willingness to baptize or re-baptize any new believers

immediately upon conversion. Today they are known to be the opposite of that. We want people to prove that they are “true Anabaptists” before we will baptize them. And the only thing that seems to make us Anabaptists is our dress and separated lifestyle. We equate the outward look and separated lifestyle to be evidence of true faith.

History has a tendency to repeat itself. Who will be the radicals this time? Who will turn back to scripture and realign themselves concerning baptism—regardless of religious persecution? Will this be the generation of Anabaptists to again take a Biblical stand?

END

*“And Levi made him (Jesus) a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, ‘Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?’ And Jesus answering said unto them, ‘They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’”* (Lk 5:29-32).

Dear God, help us to HATE the sin of self-righteousness. Help us to see how EVIL and ABHORRENT it is in your sight. Help us not to have EVEN A SMELL of it in our lives.

# How Life Works

—author unknown

Begin with a cage containing four monkeys. Inside the cage, hang a banana on a string, and place a set of stairs underneath the banana.

Before long, a monkey will approach the stairs and climb toward the banana. When he does, spray ALL the monkeys with cold water. After a while, another monkey will make an attempt. As soon as he touches the stairs, again spray ALL the monkeys with cold water. Pretty soon, when a monkey approaches the stairs, the other monkeys will try to prevent it.

Now, put away the cold water. Remove one monkey from the cage and replace it with a new monkey. The new monkey sees the banana and attempts to climb the stairs. To his shock, ALL of the other monkeys beat the crap out of him. After another attempt and attack, this monkey knows that if he tries to climb the stairs, he will be assaulted.

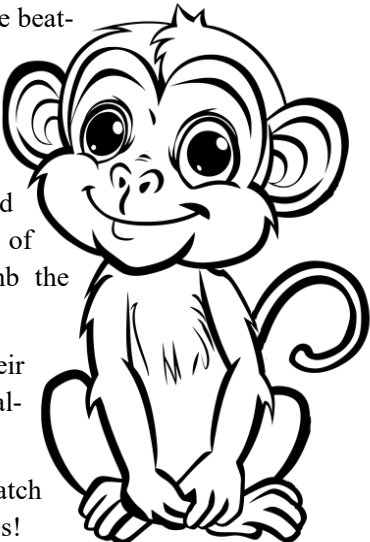
Next, remove another of the original four monkeys, replacing it with a new monkey. The newcomer goes to the stairs and is attacked. The previous newcomer takes part in the punishment, with enthusiasm, because he is now part of the "team."

Finally, replace a third original monkey with a new monkey, followed by the fourth. Every time the newest monkey approaches the stairs, he is attacked.

Now, the monkeys that are beating him up have no idea why they were not permitted to climb the stairs, nor do they know why they are participating in the beating of the newest monkey. Having replaced all of the original monkeys, none of the remaining monkeys will have ever been sprayed with cold water. Nevertheless, not one of the monkeys will try to climb the stairs for the banana.

Why, you ask? Because in their minds, that is the way it has always been!

Sometimes we just have to scratch our heads and laugh at ourselves!





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## Eternal Beings

—By Jonas Brenneman

Some things are so common and universally experienced that we never stop to consider them or their implications. They are absorbed in our daily routine as just being part of life. But what if they tell us something about who we are?

Consider time. I have a routine that I follow most days. I wake up and am not surprised that it is morning. Something within me expects the mornings to come consistently. No one thinks, “Oh, I was not expecting a new day!” or “I just can’t believe that the sun is setting again!” It would be a much greater surprise if the day didn’t progress as it always has.

We go throughout the day and expect night to come. Sometimes we are surprised at how soon night comes, but at the same time relieved, because we are ready to rest.

We are not surprised that days consistently progress the way they always have. It would be a much greater shock if that pattern were interrupted. This gives us a clue that we are temporal beings.

An argument could be made that we have evolved to adapt to the twenty-four-hour cycle of time; an equally persuasive argument could be made that we have been designed to fit into a

twenty-four-hour day cycle. But before we get hung up on this point, let us consider another point that shows us that we are eternal beings.

We are constantly surprised by the passing of time. So often we hear people exclaim “I can’t believe this year is almost over!” or “Summer went by so fast!” These surprises only increase as a person grows older. In one sense, one would imagine that as a person experiences more of the passing time, they would grow more accustomed and be less surprised, but the opposite is true.

We are always surprised by the passing of a loved one. When my father’s mother passed away, I can still remember him saying, “I knew she was going to die, and I had been trying to prepare myself for it, but it doesn’t matter how long a person prepares themselves, the death of someone they love always comes as a shock.”

Why are we always so surprised? Death is one of the sure things in life. Out of the billions and billions of people who have lived, only a handful are said not to have died, yet death is still a shock.

Why is death such a surprise when it is so common? Maybe it is because humans are good at deceiving themselves and always want to believe things will turn out differently. But it would still be a difficult argument to sustain to say that the majority of people consistently deceive themselves in the same way.

### **A better explanation would be that humans were created to be eternal.**

God created us to exist forever. Death comes as an interruption to the natural order of things, and that is why it is consistently a surprise.

