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## The Secret of the Strength

— by Peter Hoover

### CHAPTER 17

#### On to Witness (part B)

##### Christ the Faithful Witness

Following Christ the Amen, the faithful and true witness (Rev. 1:5 and 3:14), the Anabaptists became witnesses with Him. Holding to the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 12:17 and 19:10), the Anabaptists overcame their fear of death. Their highest honor became the privilege of testifying for Christ at the cost of their lives (Rev. 20:4).

Menno Simons wrote:

The heavy cross of Christ is the mark of the true church, the cross which is carried for the sake of His Word. Christ said to his disciples, “*And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake...*” (Mtt 10:22). Paul wrote: “*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*” (2 Tim 3:12). The cross was the mark of the first church. Now it is that again, here in the Netherlands.<sup>3</sup>

All who wish to go in by the right door, Christ Jesus, must sacrifice all they have. They must take upon themselves the heavy cross of poverty, of distress, of disdain and sorrow and sadness. They must follow

the rejected, the outcast, and bleeding Christ ..until through great tribulation they enter the kingdom of God.<sup>4</sup>

##### Preaching and the Cross

“The yoke of Christ is easy and His burden is light,” taught the Anabaptists, “but His cross is heavy.”

Preaching that does not involve cross-bearing looks suspicious.

Menno Simons wrote:

Do not hope that the time will come when the Word can be preached without the cross. Oh no! It is the Word of the cross and it will remain that to the end. The Word has to be preached with much suffering and sealed with blood...If the head had to suffer torture and pain, how shall His members expect peace? If they called the master of the house a devil, will they not do so to those of His household? Christ said, “*And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake...*” (Mtt 10:22).<sup>5</sup>

Conrad Grebel wrote:

Christians who believe right are sheep in the midst of wolves— sheep for butchering. They must be baptized in fear and distress, sorrow, persecution, suffering, and death.<sup>6</sup>

A large part of the *Ausbund* consists of encouragement for Christians carrying the cross. One of Menno Simons’ most meaningful books is *The Cross of the Holy Ones* published in 1554.

##### Hated Without a Cause

“*We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed*” (2 Cor 4:8-9). The first Anabaptists believed it necessary to bear in their bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus so that His life might become apparent in them.

Menno Simons wrote:

With my wife and children I have endured misery and persecution for 18 years...While they (the Protestant preachers) repose on beds with soft pillows, we hide in out-of-the-way corners. While they listen to music at weddings and banquets, we listen for dogs to bark, warning us of impending arrest. While they are greeted as doctor, lord, and teacher, we are called Anabaptists, night preachers, deceivers, and heretics. People salute us in the name of the devil. While they are handsomely rewarded for their services with large incomes and good times, we get fire, sword, and death.<sup>7</sup>

Leonhard Schiemer wrote:

We are scattered like sheep without a

<sup>3</sup> Een Klare beantwoordinge, over een Schrift Gellii Fabri...1554

<sup>4</sup> Eyne troestelijke vermaninge van dat lijden, cruyze, vnde veruolginge der heyligen...1558

<sup>5</sup> Dat Fundament des Christelycken leers...1539

<sup>6</sup> Ein Brief an Thomas Müntzer, September 5, 1524

<sup>7</sup> Een Klare beantwoordinge, over een Schrift Gellii Fabri. . . 1554

shepherd. We have left our houses and lands and have become like owls of the night, like game birds. We sneak about in the forest. Men track us down with dogs, then lead us like lambs back to town. There they put us on display and say we are the cause of an uproar. We are counted like sheep for slaughter. They call us heretics and deceivers.<sup>8</sup>

Christoph Bauman, a Swiss Anabaptist wrote:

Where shall I go? I am so ignorant. Only to God can I go, because God alone will be my helper. I trust in you, God, in all my distress. You will not forsake me. You will stand with me, even in death. I have committed myself to Your Word. That is why I have lost favor in all places. But by losing the world's favor, I gained Yours. Therefore I say to the world: Away with you! I will follow Christ.

It was long enough, world, that I floated about in you, oh treacherous sea. You deceived me long enough. You detained me. While I was a slave to sin, and wronged God, you loved and honored me. But now you hate me. I have become a spectacle to the world. Everyone in every place shouts "Heretic!" after me, because I love God's Word. But I have no greater treasure than God's Word, so I will not allow myself to be turned from it—to be turned away from my God and my Lord. I will keep on being "obstinate."

I have no place left to me on the earth. Wherever I go I must be punished. Poverty is my fortune. Cross and sorrow have become my joy. Bonds and imprisonment have become my garment. Such is the heraldry of my king!

Even among animals of the forest I find no rest. People chase me up and drive me away. I cannot come into any house. People drive me out. I must duck and dodge and creep about like a mouse. All my friends have forsaken me. All streets are barred for me. The people are determined to capture me as

soon as they find me. I suffer at their hands. They rough me up and beat me. They hate me without a cause.

The people begrudge me the crumbs from their tables. They are unwilling to let me drink water from their wells, and they do not want me to enjoy as much as the light of the sun. I have no peace among them. They will not let me enter their doors. They are ashamed of me because I choose to follow Christ.

I am sold into the hands of my enemies and betrayed above all by those to whom I have done the most good. I served them cheerfully by day and by night. But now they lead me like a lamb to the slaughter. I sought their salvation but they rejected my efforts. They curse me for it and drive me away. They drive me into distress...out of their houses, their fields, their woods, and their forests. Wherever I lodge they chase me out. They treat me brutally. They hunt me like a man hunts a deer. They set traps for me and search for me, ready to hit me over the head, stab and bind me. I am forced to forsake my shelter and go out into the rain and the wind.

Even those who want to be Christians condemn me. Because of God's name they expel me out of their church. The hypocritical masses make a fool out of me. They say I belong to the devil and that I do not have a God. They do all this because I hate their sectarian and treacherous ways, and because I avoid the way of sin people raise a great cry after me: "Heretic, get out of here!" They throw my past sins before me and say: "Let the hangman dispute with him!" They put me on the rack and torture me. They tear my body apart.

God, will you not kindly look into this and see what the people are doing? I commend myself to you and leave myself in your hands.<sup>9</sup>

The cross was heavy, but the Anabaptists gladly endured it to gain eternal joy. Leonhard Schiemer ended his description of the Anabaptists' tribulation with these words:

Oh Lord, no tribulation is so great that it can draw us away from You...Glory, triumph and honor are Yours from now into eternity. Your righteousness is always blessed by the people who gather in Your name. You will come again to judge the earth!<sup>10</sup>

Christoph Bauman's account ends likewise with words of mercy and hope:

God, I pray from my heart that You would forgive the sins of those who trouble me. And do keep all Your children safe, wherever they are in this valley of sorrows—driven apart, tortured, imprisoned, and suffering great tribulation. Father, most precious to my heart, lead us into the promised land. Lead us out of all pain and martyrdom, anguish, chains, and bonds into Your holy community. There You alone will be praised by the children You love: those who live in obedience to You! Amen.<sup>11</sup>

### What About the Children?

Every parent who joined the early Anabaptist movement knew what his decision would bring upon his family: poverty, suffering, and most likely flight. Parents knew at baptism that their finding peace with God could well leave their companions in a widowed state or their children as orphans. Along with the joy of seeing sons and daughters baptized came the dread of seeing them burned at the stake.

Menno Simons wrote:

Believing parents are minded like this about their children: they would a hundred times rather see them in a deep dark dungeon for the sake of Christ, than sitting with deceptive priests in an idol church, or in the company of drunken dolts in a tavern. A hundred times rather

<sup>8</sup> *Ausbund*, 31:4-5

<sup>9</sup> *Ausbund*, 76

<sup>10</sup> *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> *op. cit.*

would they see them bound and dragged before the court, than to see them marry rich companions who do not fear God—feted in dances, song and play, pomp and splendor and musical instruments. A hundred times rather would they see their children scourged from head to foot for the sake of the Lord than to see them dressed in silks, jewelry, or costly trimmed and tailored clothes. Yes, a hundred times rather would they see them exiled, burning at the stake, drowned, or being pulled apart on the rack for righteousness' sake than to see them live apart from God—than to see them be emperors or kings, only to end up in hell.<sup>12</sup>

### The Flame of God

Martin Luther and his colleagues met at Speyer on the Rhein in 1529. They gathered to define the evangelical liberties of the new Protestant states of Germany, and to establish the Protestant church in “peace, liberty, and the blessing of God.” At the same meeting they passed a resolution: “Every Anabaptist, both male and female, shall be put to death by fire, sword, or in some other way.”

But Martin Luther and his colleagues could not carry out their plans at once. Neither could the Roman Catholics, Huldrych Zwingli, nor John Calvin. The flame of the Anabaptist movement, instead of flickering out, grew brighter.

Kaspar Braitmichel wrote:

The authorities wanted to extinguish the light of truth, but more and more kept getting converted. They caught men and women, young men and girls—everyone who gave himself up to the faith, and who separated himself from the ungodly affairs of society. In some places all the prisons were full. The persecutors wanted to frighten them, but they sang in prison and were so joyful in their bonds that the prison keepers feared instead. The authorities no longer knew what to do with them all...

The Kurfürst arrested—due to the emperor's mandate—around 450 believers. His subordinate, the Lord Diedrich von Schonberg, had many Anabaptists beheaded, drowned, and killed in other ways at Alzey. His men searched for them, dragging them from the houses of the city and leading them like sheep to the slaughter in the city square.

Of these believers, not one recanted. They all went joyfully to their death. While some were being drowned and beheaded, the rest sang while they waited their turn. They stood strong in the truth they professed and sure in the faith they had received from God. A few of them whom they did not want to kill right away, they tortured by chopping off their fingers, by burning crosses into their foreheads, and through many other evil means. But the Lord von Schonberg finally asked in despair: “What shall I do? The more I sentence to death the more there are!”<sup>13</sup>

The stronger the winds of persecution, the higher leaped the flames of the Anabaptist revival. German courts soon discovered that the joyful testimony of Anabaptist believers during public executions stirred the masses. This led to the gagging of the condemned and in some cases the screwing of their tongues to the roofs of their mouths or the calling in of military bands to keep the crowds from hearing what they said. But the first Anabaptists' witness could not be extinguished. Even with their tongues cut out, their hands tied behind them, and a bag of gunpowder pulled up beneath their jaws, they could lift a finger and smile.

Companies of mounted soldiers authorized to kill Anabaptists on the spot roamed through southern Germany. At first there were four hundred soldiers, but the number soon had to be increased to a thousand. The chronicle of the brothers in Moravia, at the end of a report of 2,173 people put to death for what they believed said:

No man was able to take out of their hearts what they had experienced. The fire of God burned within them. They would die the most violent death. In fact, they would have died ten times rather than forsake the truth to which they had married themselves. They drank from God's fountain of the water of life and knew that God would help them to bear the cross and overcome the bitterness of death.<sup>14</sup>

### Powerless Against the Truth

The first Anabaptists comforted one another with the promise that men are “powerless against the truth” (2 Cor. 13:8), and that no enemy could do to them what God would not allow. Kaspar Braitmichel wrote:

God said through the prophet that whoever persecutes His people pokes Him in the eye. God allows such people to make many plans, but He does not allow them to carry them all through. David sang: “*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed... He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh... Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure*”. (Psalm 2:2-5).

God lets those who persecute His children dig their own grave. He lets the stone they throw up fall down onto their own heads. God meets those who make plans against Him in such a way that it becomes clear what is happening—for glass cannot smash the rock. Neither can a flying piece of paper or a bit of straw withstand a roaring flame.

Many times God allows those who persecute His children to go ahead with their plans for a while in order to prove the faithful. The faithful need to drink from the cup of suffering until it is empty. But in the end, those who persecute God's children must drink their own mud soup and crunch down the bits of broken glass they have prepared for others.<sup>15</sup>

When they beheaded the seven Ana-

<sup>12</sup> *Van dat rechte christen ghelooue...* ca. 1542

<sup>13</sup> *Geschichtbuech*, ca. 1570

<sup>14</sup> *Geschichtbuech*, ca. 1570

<sup>15</sup> *op. cit.*

baptists at Schwäbisch-Gmünd, Berthold Aichele, provost of the Swabian League, was the man in charge. Berthold was a ruthless killer, the man who ordered the massacre of the believers at the Mantelhof in Württemberg who got caught in a meeting on New Year's Day, 1531.

By the mid-1530's, Berthold could boast of having killed at least forty messengers and one thousand, two hundred other "Anabaptist heretics." But God spoke to him through the lives of his defenseless victims. He saw their faces as they died and heard their testimonies, including that of the miller's son.

Finally, after the public execution of the messenger Onophrus Griesinger<sup>16</sup> at Brixen in South Tyrol, he could take no more. Convicted mightily, he lifted his hands toward heaven and cried to God for mercy. In a loud voice for all those assembled to hear, he promised before God never to lay hands on an Anabaptist again.

The lamb, Christ Jesus, overcomes!

<sup>16</sup> Onophrus Griesinger, beheaded on October 31, 1538, had, before his conversion, been the clerk of a mine in the archbishopric of Salzburg. He led large numbers to the Lord throughout the Austrian Alps. Caught several times, eluding spies and with the price of eighty guilders on his head, he held large unexpected meetings in public places and directed refugees to the Bruderhöfe in Moravia. After a three-day communion service in the jurisdiction of Schöneck in 1538, they caught him and threw him into the castle dungeon at Brixen. Tortured on the rack and by other means, he wrote six hymns before his death.

## Where, O death, is Your Sting?

Johannes Faber, Dominican friar of Heilbronn in Baden-Württemberg wrote:

How does it happen that the Anabaptists so joyfully and confidently suffer the pain of death? They dance and jump into the flames. They see the flashing sword without dismay, and speak and preach to the spectators with big smiles on their faces. They sing psalms and hymns until their soul departs. They die with joy, as if they were in a merry company, and remain strong, confident, and steadfast until their death. Persisting defiantly in their intention, they also defy all pain and torture.<sup>17</sup>

Johannes Faber concluded that the Anabaptists' courage must be the result of "a powerful deception from hell's dragon." But the Anabaptists knew better.

South German authorities beheaded Gotthard of Nonnenberg and Peter Krämer at the Windeck castle in 1558. A song in the *Ausbund* tells about their deaths:

The people were surprised. They said, "What is this? They go to death willingly, even though they could be free." Gotthard answered, "We do

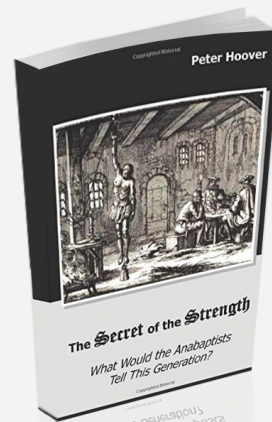
<sup>17</sup> From *Von dem Ayd Schwören. Auch von der Wiedertauffer Marter. Und woher es entspringe, dass sie also fröhlich und getröst die pein des Tods leiden. Und von der Gemeinschaft der Wiedertäufer*, published in Augsburg in 1550.

not die. Death just leads us to heaven where we shall be with all of God's children. We have this as our sure hope. Therefore we enter the gates of death with joy!"<sup>18</sup>

Witnessing fearlessly to their faith, the Anabaptists followed Christ...

<sup>18</sup> *Ausbund*, 21:12

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## Don't Lose Focus

—by Joe Keim

The Lord has been speaking to my heart. He said: "Joe, you and all others who have been born of the Spirit are in a race that began 6,000 years ago in the Garden of Eden. Your goal is to pass the message of faith on to the next generation. Do not get distracted by the world and all of its temporary possessions, nor by the runners next to you. Keep your eyes on the goal!"

As I thought about this important task, I couldn't help but remember the ones before me - Abel, Noah, Moses, Ruth,

Joseph, the apostle Paul, Lydia, and so many others who passed the message of faith on until it got to you and me. Some of our forefathers hid in dungeons, were beheaded, sawn in two, drowned, and burned at the stake. They refused to drop out of the race. Their goal was to pass the message on so it would get to you...to me.

This challenges me to do the same and causes me to challenge you. We must not lose focus. We cannot give up. The apostle Paul wrote:

"...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb 12:1).

May we all be able to say, with Paul, at the end of our race:

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim 4:7).

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

*“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed”* (Isa 53:5).

Let’s break this down.

⇒ **But: The word “but” addresses what was previously stated in 1-4.**

Even though He was “a root out of a dry ground,” and “hath no form nor comeliness that we should desire him,” and was “rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” and even though Israel hid their “faces from him,” “despised, and...esteemed him not,” He still bore our griefs and carried our sorrows and was smitten of God (Isa 53:1-4). So, we see the back story of this man, Jesus, who went to the cross despite all the negative things shown to Him. Why?

⇒ **He was wounded for our transgressions:** Israel had transgressed God’s law (Jos 7:11, Jud 2:20, 1Ki 8:50, 1Ch 5:25, Ez 10:10, Is 43:27, and more). The atonement was for Gentiles as well, but a universal atonement was not known at this time, as it was still a mystery (Eph 3:5).

**ATONEMENT** is always made for man’s sin problem. *“And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins”* (Lev 16:16).

**ATONEMENT**, n. (Webster’s 1828 dictionary)

1. Agreement; concord; reconciliation, after enmity or controversy. Rom. 5.
2. Expiation; satisfaction or reparation made by giving an equivalent for an injury, or by doing or suffering that which is received in satisfaction for an offense or injury; with for.

3. In theology, the expiation of sin made by the obedience and personal sufferings of Christ.

*“And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement”* (Ro 5:11).

## Is healing in the atonement?

*“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses”* (Mt 8:17).

⇒ **That it might be fulfilled:** The reader quickly notices the change of quotation where Isaiah reads, “borne our griefs and carried our sorrows,” Matthew quotes, “took our infirmities and bear our sicknesses.” It is a common, established literary principle that any author may freely quote their own work. Assuming that the author knew the original intention of what he wrote, and if he wishes to give a “loose” quotation, he is entitled to it. In Matthew, the Holy Spirit gives a second meaning to Isaiah’s words. There is no contradiction.

As Matthew quotes the text, it is apparent that healing is in the atonement. To avoid or to say otherwise would not be sound Bible exegesis.

The passage in Isaiah is on the atonement, even if the passage in Matthew is referring to Christ’s active obedience in the flesh before the atonement. However, we see people carry the reasoning a little further than intended. If healing is in the atonement, as well as salvation for sin, why can’t anyone by faith avail themselves of it? After all, do we not avail ourselves of salvation by faith?

The argument is logical. It is so seemingly reasonable that it is accepted blindly by millions and reinforced with such texts as 1 Corinthians 12:9. However, let us not stop here. Let us exam-

ine the atonement. Are healing and salvation the only things Christ took care of when He died? Not quite. When we examine the atonement carefully, we suddenly discover:

1. He died for the curse God placed on nature. Thorns came from this curse: the very thorns jammed on His head.
2. He died for the curse placed on animal life. Animals were vegetarians before the fall, and they return to this state in the future (Is 11:6-8, Is 65:25) when the work of the atonement is complete.
3. He died for the curse placed on the world itself, for He is said to have bought this world by His blood as well as purchased the redeemed sinner (Mt 13:43, 46, 1 Cor 6:20).
4. In short, He did not only die for sin, but for sickness, poverty, cruelty, damnation, destruction, and even physical disturbances that resulted from sin (Ro 8:20-23).

Can we find the correct meaning of healing in the atonement? Yes. We can see where and when as we diligently compare scripture with scripture. Notice where and when these positive effects of the atonement will take place.

Isaiah 53 is where the atonement is prophesied. Is 65:17, Rev 21:4, and Rev 22:3 talk about former things passing away and the “curse” being removed, and Is 65:25 gives the time period as “the new heaven and the new earth. The healing of the atonement is realized at the same time as the other earthly curses are lifted (long after the church, the body of Christ, has gone to heaven). The believer today gets their atoning healing when they receive their new body. Israel receives their atoning healing when the new heaven and the new earth come into play. We are not Israel, we are the body of Christ (made

up of Jews and Gentiles).

- ⇒ Has the earth been redeemed from the curse of thorns and thistles? NO!
- ⇒ Are the wolf and the lamb feeding side by side in safety and harmony? NO!
- ⇒ Is the lion eating straw for lunch? NO!
- ⇒ Have we as believers received our new bodies? NO!
- ⇒ Are death and disease eradicated? No!

The effects of the atonement, when realized, are 100%, not partial. Not a little bit. Complete!

Healing is in the atonement, but we do not get the benefits of the atonement until the curse is gone. Remember, it is the curse that sickness is connected to.

Today, the “curse of the law” is the only curse that is broken! *“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree”* (Gal 3:13). The curse of the law is punishment in hell for sin.

Only one of the benefits of the atonement is available for the believer today: the completed benefit of salvation (salvation by grace through faith: Eph 2:8). The completion of the benefit of our new body, free from sin and disease, will be realized either at death or the rapture of the church (Phi 3:20, 21, Ro 8:23, 2 Cor 5:8).

- You cannot claim by faith for a lion to start eating straw, but this is in the atonement.
- You cannot claim by faith that your body will not rot in the ground, but a new body is in the atonement (1 Cor 15:44)
- You cannot claim by faith that all the earthquakes and tidal waves will stop, but this is in the atonement.

- You cannot claim healing by faith, but this in the atonement.
- But you CAN claim salvation (by faith) as part of the atonement!

In short, God can heal you, and, praise the Lord, He may heal you. If He does, He may do it by medicine (1 Tim 5:23, Is 38:21), or without medicine (Acts 3:7), or He may leave you sick (2 Tim 4:20, 2 Cor 12:5-8), but the healing connected to the atonement is an entirely different physical healing. Jesus healed those He touched 100% of the time (to fulfill prophecy). His words, not mine. The divine healing of today is random, sporadic, and rare compared to all the illnesses caused by man’s original sin. The purpose of the atonement was to remove a curse. When we pick and choose what part of the atonement is available for today rather than prayerfully study God’s word, we can find ourselves wishing something into existence falsely, rather than accepting it as it is.

Another aspect of healing is found in the book of Revelation. This healing will be done by satanic means.

*“And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast”* (Rev 13:2-3).

To understand that Satan does have some ability to heal, we cannot discount that there will be healings done that, quite possibly, are not of God. Remember, signs and wonders are replicated by Satan to deceive the children of God, and to give the illusion that he and his satanic plan are to be desired. He has a course for this world to follow, and Paul refers to it as the “mystery of iniquity” and is already at

work in the world today (Eph 2:2, 2 Thes 2:7).

⇒ ***He was bruised for our iniquities:*** (Ex 20:5, Lev 10:17, Lev 16:21, 1Sa 15:23, and more).

⇒ ***The chastisement of our peace was upon him:***

**CHASTISEMENT**, n. Correction; punishment; pain inflicted for punishment and correction, either by stripes or otherwise. (Webster’s 1828 Dictionary).

Jesus was **chastised** (beaten) so that Israel would have **peace**, but ultimately for all who trust both gospels, the gospel of the kingdom (earthly), and the gospel of grace (the heavenly).

*“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men* (Luke 2:14).

*“But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile”* (Ro 2:10).

*“And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven* (Col 1:20).

Notice both groups are mentioned (the heavenly group and the earthly group, Jew and Gentile).

⇒ ***And with his stripes we are healed.*** We see nothing in the explanation of this prophecy regarding any type of physical healing. It is 100% about SIN: **“our transgressions,” “our iniquities.”** It is Matthew/Jesus who brings physical healing into the equation (Mt 8:17).

**Death**, as we know, is directly connected to disease (physical as well as spiritual). Adam sinned in the garden, and he was sentenced to both a physical death as well as a spiritual death.

*“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest*

thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17). (physical)

“Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell” (Prov 23:14).

The YOU: part of your three-part being, the soul, is the part that goes to hell (spiritual).

Sin, as we know, is what brought death on all mankind.

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Ro 5:12).

“That as **sin hath reigned unto death**, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Ro 5:21).

“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether **of sin unto death**, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Ro 6:16, and many more).

Mankind has a problem. Man was originally intended to live forever, but because of sin, man now dies. Remember, sin causes both physical and spiritual death. Both need to be healed.

What the atonement did for mankind was to offer a remedy for both physical death and spiritual death.

## The Healing

Physical death was clearly not eradicated by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, as we continually see death claiming the lives of human beings through sickness, disease, and other methods that can kill the flesh of men. Where the physical healing related to death comes into play is that the death of Christ offers mankind the opportunity to live forever by giving him a new body that cannot die, called a celestial body.

“There are also **celestial bodies**, and **bodies terrestrial**: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another” (1 Cor 15:40).

Celestial bodies are bodies designed to live forever in a heavenly realm. Terrestrial bodies are designed to live forever in an earthly realm.

The celestial body is given to the person who trusts the gospel of grace and is placed into the body of Christ by the Spirit. We do not take possession of the celestial body until either death or the rapture, but it is part of our inheritance, also referred to as our redemption.

“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Ro 8:23).

The other aspect that the atonement does for humanity, is that upon trusting in the gospel of grace as described by Paul in 1 Cor 15:1-4 (trusting in the death burial and resurrection of Christ alone for remission/forgiveness of sin), we not only get a new celestial body free of disease and all the effects of sin, but we also get the imputed righteousness of Christ, solving the spiritual problem of hell.

“Now it was not written for his (Abraham’s) sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it **shall be imputed, if we believe** on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Ro 4:23-25).

Do you see the word “offences?” This is exactly what His death/sacrifice was for, the “healing” of our sin problem (offences) and the result (death). Simply trusting this could be offered as “good news” to mankind. Since the beginning, it has been about either eter-

nal death or eternal life.

We can also see Paul using the word “heal” in describing Israel’s blindness and their conversion.

“For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, **and I should heal them**” (Ac 28:27).

Clearly, this is not about Israel’s physical healing of disease, but that of their spiritual healing. We can also see Peter addressing this subject, quoting this exact verse to prove his point.

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Pe 2:24).

Man has had a sin problem from the beginning, and that problem is death: both physical and spiritual. Man is eternally facing separation from God, his creator. Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection are the CURE for this eternal problem. To assign any temporary healing from sickness to the sacrifice of the cross (atonement) would be a slap in the face of Christ, and would be making it about something temporary, rather than eternal.

Are we guaranteed blessings? Yes! But they are heavenly, not earthly. (Earthly = Physical / Heavenly = Spiritual)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath **blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ**” (Eph 1:3).

If the enemy can get us to focus on something dead (flesh), then he can take our minds off the eternal, because pampering our dead flesh can become all-consuming.

“Therefore **we are buried with him** by baptism into death: that like as



*Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Ro 6:4).*

*“For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Romans 6:11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Ro 6:7-8)*

Does God physically heal today? Of course. God can do whatever He desires to do. He can choose to heal or not heal. It is strictly at His choosing and discretion. The physical healings of Jesus, the 12, and Paul are known as “Apostolic Healing.” They were done

as a supernatural, outward sign proving that they and their message were from God. After their authenticity had been established, there was no need for God to continue to endue His messengers with these signs, and we can see them begin to diminish. Here are a few examples:

*“...Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick” (2 Ti 4:20).*

*“Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities” (1 Ti 5:23).*

*“Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour...that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy*

*on him” (Ph 2:25-27).* Paul could no longer heal.

A healthy understanding of the atonement and how it affects our healing will give us a greater understanding of precisely what was accomplished on the cross and how we should live our daily lives. Fixing our eyes in a heavenly direction rather than an inward or outward physical way will give freedom and a desire for that which is spiritual rather than that which is temporal.

*“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col 3:1-3).*

## The Clothing We Wear Matters

—by Joe Keim

Adam and Eve had just eaten from the tree. Their eyes were now open, and they saw things they had never seen before. Immediately, they were ashamed and embarrassed.

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

Fig leaves...

- = a manmade system
- = temporary
- = depression, guilt, doubt
- = false humility

Made themselves aprons...

- = self-righteousness
- = boasting about self
- = flawed
- = justifying self before God

After a while, God came to the garden in the cool of the day. The text doesn't say, but my guess is that God looked Adam and Eve

squarely in the eye and said, "So, you think those dirty, rotten, smelly aprons will make you righteous before Me?"

God did go on to say:

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

God's coat of skin...

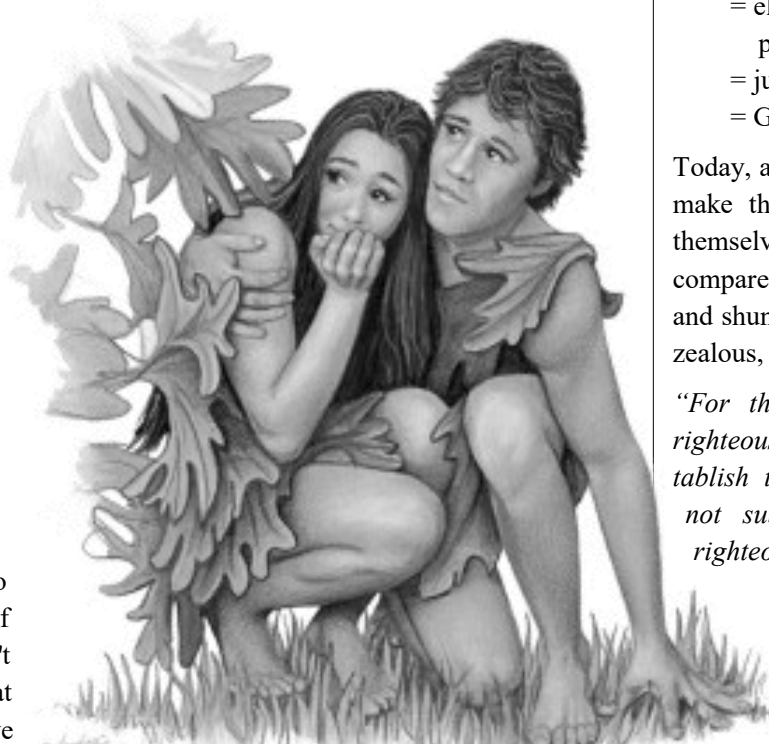
- = required a sacrifice
- = required bloodshed
- = was perfect, holy, and without blemish

God clothed them...

- = the work of God
- = eliminated all boasting on man's part
- = justified man before God
- = God's righteousness

Today, as crazy as it seems, people still make their own aprons. They justify themselves before God, they boast, compare themselves with others, ban and shun each other, feel miserable, are zealous, angry, rigid, and harsh.

*“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” (Rom 10:3-4).*



The author invites you to text or call with questions or comments!  
(419) 651-6813



## Dealing With Pain From the Past

—by John Weaver

I have felt called to address this subject for a long time, but I find it difficult. It is like a splinter that was never removed. The pain continues.

Abuse of any kind is horrible. Sexual abuse is probably the worst of the worst. For a person to become so perverted that they will take away the innocence of a child to satisfy their own lust is beyond comprehension. Yet it happens. Not just out there. It is rampant in the church. God help us.

Jesus said concerning a child: *“But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea”* (Mt 18:6). It would be much, much better.

God probably literally has a special place in Hell for the unrepentant abuser. We can and should believe God when He said, *“...Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord”* (Rm 12:19).

Now, for my message: How does a person deal with the horrible pain that comes from abuse? Horrible, often perverted abuse, or maybe other kinds of

abuse: physical, emotional, whatever. It is painful. It hurts deeply. How can a person deal with, or cope?

We must...we must...LET GO.

Jesus said, *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”* (Mt 11:28-30).

Don't forgive for the abuser's benefit, but for yours. To let go, to forgive, will set the captive free. The captive is you.

*“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed”* (Jn 8:36). Release the past and then wholeheartedly embrace the future with Jesus. He will comfort your soul. He will guide you and, unlike mankind, He will never let you down.

The daily news is filled with articles about those who are and were abused and the men who abused them. Bad as it is, it can be expected out there. When those who profess Christianity and do such things...there are no words. Lord, help us.

My heart goes out, even beyond words, to the victims of abuse. I endured abuse (not sexual) as a child and beyond. Many years later, I faced my pain and hurts. I acknowledged that it was painful, that it hurt. But then I chose to release, let go, just let go. Release anyone who hurt me. When I did, oh, the release! I was free.

I embraced a relationship with Jesus. The past had no hold on me anymore.

I know that these words I have written are inadequate to the victim of abuse. However, we really have just two choices: We can let go, or we can hold on. By holding on, we continue to relive the nightmare. By letting go, we can start to heal. The choice is ours.

There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus. No, not one. No, not one.

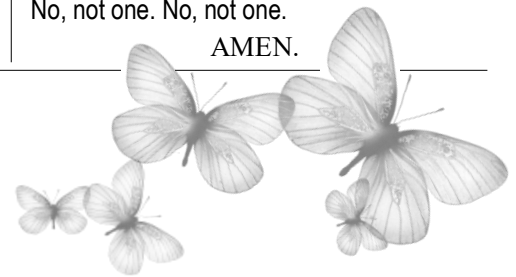
None else could heal all our souls' diseases. No, not one. No, not one.

Jesus knows all about our struggles. He will guide till the day is done.

There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus. No, not one. No, not one.

AMEN.

*“He healeth the broken in heart,  
and bindeth up their wounds.”* (Psalm 147:3)



## He Who Has Jesus Has Life

—by David Bird

When we have Jesus, we have life—eternal life. Eternal life is not just a life that will last forever, it is the life of God Himself.

It is amazing to think that we can actually have the life of God—almighty God, dwelling in us!

God wants EVERY person to have and experience His Life, so He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world.

In John 3:16, Jesus said:

*“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.”*

We cannot have eternal life by attending church or trying to live a good life.

We can only **have it when we have JESUS—when we have turned away from sin, believe that He died for our**

sins, and surrender our life to Him (Mk 1:15). When we do that, God's Spirit comes into our life and we are saved. We have eternal life (Jn 3:3).

We now follow Jesus by the power of His Spirit, doing what He says and keeping His commandments.

God can then use us to do His will and build His kingdom on earth (Matt 6:9-10).

# The Danger of a Religious Life Without a Relationship With God

Written by Mahlon Miller

## Why Following Jesus Must Be Personal, Not Performative

In every generation, the church faces a quiet but critical threat—not from the outside world, but from within its own walls. It is the danger of religion without relationship: of knowing the language of faith, the rhythm of church culture, and the performance of spirituality...all while slowly drifting from the heart of God.

This is not a modern problem. It was the same issue Jesus confronted when He walked the earth—people who followed traditions, yet didn't follow Him—systems that were full of rituals, but empty of love. True Christianity was never meant to be a system—it was always meant to be a surrendered walk with Christ.

## The Appearance of Godliness Without the Power of God

In the religious world, appearances can be deceiving. A man can attend church every Sunday, quote Scripture, and serve in leadership—and yet be far from God. Paul warns of this.

*“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Tim 3:5).*

The danger here is subtle. It's not rebellion—it's routine. It's the quiet slide from intimacy with Jesus to mere religious motion. “Religion will let you hide. Relationship with Jesus will call you to be real.”

## Pleasing People or Pursuing Christ?

Many religious environments unintentionally train people to perform for approval—whether from leaders, congregations, or culture. But God never called us to perform; He called us to pursue. Consider the piercing question:

*“For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal 1:10)*

If the foundation of our faith is people's approval, our faith will fall when their opinion changes. But when Christ becomes our anchor, we can walk in freedom. “The crowd may cheer today and crucify tomorrow—only Christ remains constant.”

## Legalism Without Love Produces Death, Not Life

Jesus didn't come to earth to reinforce man-made religion—He came to set captives free. Yet, in many environments, faith gets reduced to rules. When obedience is detached from love, it becomes legalism.

Jesus reserved His strongest words not for sinners, but for the religious:

*“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Matt 23:27-28).*

Outward righteousness means nothing if an inward relationship is missing. A cleaned cup on the outside can still carry poison within. “God is not impressed by performance; He is moved by purity of heart.”

## Jesus Came for Relationship, Not Ritual

The gospel is not an invitation to religion—it's an invitation to relationship. To walk daily with Christ. To hear His voice. To rest in His grace. To love Him above all else. John gives this simple but powerful instruction:

*“Abide in me, and I in you” (Jn 15:4).*

Not “do more.” Not “try harder.” But abide. This is the heartbeat of a true believer. “Religion says, ‘Do this to earn.’ Jesus says, ‘Abide in Me, for I already paid it all.’”

## True Freedom Is Found in Christ Alone

While religion binds people in guilt and constant striving, a relationship with Jesus brings rest, identity, and power. Not power to impress people, but power to walk in holiness and truth.

*“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).*

That's not theoretical freedom. That's real, deep, soul-level freedom that comes only through knowing Christ personally. “Religion may change your behavior. Only Jesus can change your heart.”

## What God Really Wants From Us

God is not looking for polished performances or spiritual resumes. He is looking for hearts that are fully His. Romans captures this beautifully:

*“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom 12:1).*

He wants your life—not just your Sunday. He wants your love—not just your lip service. He wants relationship. “God doesn't just want to be part of your life—He wants to be your life.”

## Final Thoughts: Come Back to the Center

If you find yourself tired, burned out, or numb in your walk with God, it may be because you've been operating in reli-

gion rather than relationship. The good news is this: Jesus is still calling. Still waiting. Still welcoming us to come, sit at His feet, and be with Him.

Let go of the pressure to perform. Strip away the religious layers. Return to your first love.

Because in the end, it's not about how religious we appear—it's about whether we know Him at all.

*"Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven..." (Mt 7:21).*

May our lives not just speak of Him—but reflect that we walk with Him.

**END**

None of these flowers set out to become a flower. All they do is feed on the nutrients God provides. Their existence is totally in the hands of HIGHER powers. I think about that often when I see these happy flowers.

— Gerald Hochstetler



## No Answers —by Gerald Hochstetler

I have learned, or I should say, I am learning, that God often doesn't give the answer. We want answers. One plus one equals two. We want to read the Bible that way. We pray. We want answers.

But do you want to know what's really happening? In our seeking, praying, and studying, He is growing our faith. When there is faith, you silently trust. In faith, you believe and enjoy peace. The object becomes our Lord and Savior rather than the answer.

This is why Stephen looked to heaven and saw angels while stones were knocking him to death. Stephen didn't have an answer. He had God.

I have been SO MAD at God because of the vagueness that sometimes surrounds my life. In fact, for a while, I let it drive me away from God. But now I am beginning to see vagueness is God-ordained. It keeps us at His feet.

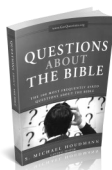
I have a brother who often says, "I don't know" when the conversation turns to God. Some might consider that unspiritual, but he doesn't need to know. He is okay with just trusting. That trust has spoken volumes to me.

# Got Questions?

The God who created us and who loves us has given us the answers to life's most pressing questions in His Word.

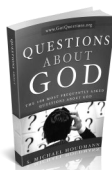
**Got Questions?** is a resource that answers questions explicitly from a Biblical perspective, with solid theology.

S. Michael Houdmann, General Editor, has a BA in Biblical Studies from Calvary Bible College and an MA in Christian Theology from Calvary Theological Seminary.



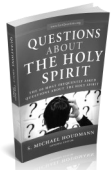
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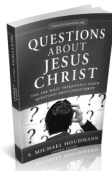
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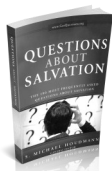
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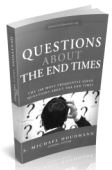
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## July

### Getting Love Right

Like many of Jesus' stories, the Parable of the Good Samaritan is given in a specific setting. Jesus isn't telling a random story; it is a story with intent. Message by Phillip Miller.

### The Mystery and Power of Foot Washing

(part 2 of 3)

Brother Duane Sheriff reveals the profound spiritual significance of foot washing, an act steeped in mystery and divine power. Jesus' ultimate sacrifice washes and cleanses us by the Word of God, and through Jesus' sacrifice, our deepest transgressions are pardoned, unveiling God's profound love for us.

### What Do Mormons & Jehovah Witnesses Believe?

(part 2 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 1:3-11

Why do God's people suffer? Dr. J. Vernon McGee says that question is "the big issue of life—because it gets right down where you and I are moving today...right down where the rubber meets the road."

## August

### The Mystery and Power of Foot Washing

(part 3 of 3)

Brother Duane Sheriff explains the spiritual significance of foot washing and its cleansing power. This act by Jesus reveals profound love, humility, and forgiveness, even towards those who would betray Him.

### What Do Mormons & Jehovah Witnesses Believe?

(part 3 of 5)

Dr. John Ankerberg teaches what the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints really believe.

### James 1:3-13

If you or someone you love is suffering, this study is for you. During times of testing and trial we are tempted to ask, "Why, God?" But what we really need to remember is that God's answer is always, "Trust Me." Message by J. Vernon McGee.

### James 1:13-15

When unexplainable tragedies come into our lives, often the first thing we do is look for a cause. Some people blame God—others blame each other—and some even blame themselves. But who's really responsible? Message by J. Vernon McGee.

## 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.

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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

American Church people at large have no idea how to encourage or empower others to apply truth. If they realized the impact the body could have, we'd have the beginning of a transformation.

Instead, we have become weak, functionless pew-sitters/pulpit-talkers. How do you build muscle? By using it. How do you become better at using the gifts God has given you? By using them. How does the body grow stronger? Through regular action where all members participate.

Form follows function. Not the other way around. If the function is to operate as a body, the form must necessarily allow for all the members to function.

*"If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you" (1 Cor 12:17-21)*

The body is not a man-made institution, which cannot possibly be a member of the body. The body is an organism formed by God with Christ as the head, not an organization formed by men with a man or group of men at the head.

New Testament leadership is plural and is not for the purpose of command and control but for facilitating.

The New Testament ekklesia was primarily relational, focused on people and their shared life in Christ rather than being centered around institutions or formal structures. Following are key aspects of this relational approach:

## 1. Organic Community

The early church was an organic com-

munity, growing naturally from the relationships and shared faith of its members. Believers met in homes (Acts 2:46, Ro 16:5, 1 Cor 16:19), and their gatherings were marked by warmth, informality, and genuine care for one another.

## 2. Mutual Ministry

Every member of the body had a role to play and a gift to contribute (1 Cor 12:7, Ro 12:4-8, Eph 4:11-16). Ministry was not the responsibility of a few leaders but was shared among all members. This mutual ministry fostered interdependence and a strong sense of belonging.

## 3. Relational Discipleship

Discipleship was relational and often happened in the context of everyday life. Older believers mentored younger ones, modeling the Christian life and providing guidance and encouragement (2 Tim 2:2, Titus 2:3-5). This relational approach allowed for personal growth and the passing on of faith and values.

## 4. Shared Life

Believers shared their lives together, spending time in one another's homes, eating together, and caring for one another's needs (Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-35). This shared life fostered deep bonds and a sense of family among believers.

## 5. Decentralized Leadership

Leadership in the New Testament church was decentralized and focused on serving the community rather than exercising authority (Mtt 20:25-28, 1 Peter 5:1-4). Leaders emerged naturally from within the community and were recognized for their character, wisdom, and spiritual maturity.

## 6. Flexibility and Adaptability

The early church was flexible and adaptable, able to respond to the needs and challenges of its members and the wider community. This adaptability was possible because the church was

not burdened by rigid structures or institutional bureaucracy.

## 7. Priesthood of All Believers

The New Testament teaches the priesthood of all believers (1 Pe 2:5, 9), meaning that every Christian has direct access to God and is responsible for ministering to others. This concept emphasizes the relational nature of the church, as each member is both a minister and a recipient of ministry.

## Practical Implications for Today

**Home Churches and Small Groups:** Meeting in homes or small groups can foster a more relational and intimate atmosphere, allowing for genuine sharing, mutual care, and participatory ministry.

**Relational Evangelism:** Sharing the gospel in the context of personal relationships can be more effective and natural than institutional evangelistic programs.

**Organic Leadership:** Allowing leadership to emerge naturally from within the community and focusing on servant leadership can create a more relational and egalitarian dynamic.

**Shared Meals and Fellowship:** Regularly sharing meals and spending time together can strengthen relationships and foster a sense of community.

**Mutual Ministry and Gifts:** Encouraging every member to discover and use their spiritual gifts for the benefit of the community can promote a culture of mutual ministry and interdependence.

In summary, the New Testament ekklesia was relational, focused on people and their shared life in Christ. This relational approach fostered a sense of community, mutual care, and participatory ministry, allowing the church to function as a dynamic and interconnected body.

*“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). —Jesus*

What is truth? This question has been asked many times throughout the history of humanity, and each time it’s asked, it’s a question that deserves at least an attempt to discover the meaning of it.

A dictionary will give the definition something along the lines of “being in accordance with the actual state or condition of something.” However, the abstract and precise nature of such a definition leaves us wanting a more practical way of understanding it.

One of the reasons we struggle with the question of truth is how we perceive things. We as humans gather information about the world around us through our senses. We see, we smell, we touch. Our senses are constantly taking in information, and we process it to gain an understanding of the world we live in. Even non-physical concepts are put in terms of the senses so that we can understand, or “make sense” of them. I can say that time is passing by or time is moving slowly, but time is not a physical object that I can see or feel passing by. I accept that it is, but to help me understand and talk about it, I use words that relate to the senses because that is how I process information about my world. The topic of truth is challenging to describe because it is an abstract thing, so we have to find ways to talk about it to make “sense” of it.

Another problem we face in our pursuit of truth is our lack of information. We rarely have all of the information on any subject. Often, we are forced to draw conclusions or make the best guess we can because we can’t get all the information we need. Doctors run into this problem constantly when they have a patient who has symptoms that are not common. But it’s not just doctors. Everyone experiences this. What time do I leave for work to get through traffic? Will my car last another year?

How will I have enough money for rent next month? So often we make the best guesses we can, but we never have all the information to know with absolute certainty.

Truth can seem elusive since we are limited by how we gather and process information, and by not having nearly enough information. How can we pursue truth in a meaningful way where we can objectively say something is true? How do we prevent the subjectivity that comes with every person having a slightly or radically different perspective from the next person? Sometimes it feels like that moment when you’re sitting in a car at a red light and you look over at the vehicle next to you, and you know that either you are moving or the other vehicle is moving, but you don’t know which one.

Truth is the way things are, regardless of how we perceive them to be. The reality of something exists regardless of my right or wrong perception of it. How we perceive things might be weak and often hindered, but that does not change their existence or substance. When I hear the wind pass through the leaves of a tree, I could think that the tree is making the sound, and even perhaps be convinced that the tree is talking or breathing. My perception of the tree is not going to change the reality of the tree or what is causing the sound. Whatever the tree and the wind are, and whatever interaction they have, exists in reality, regardless of my perception.

Jesus made a very interesting claim on the subject of truth. He says that He is truth, not just that He knows all truth, but that He is truth. If we apply the argument that I just made about truth, then Jesus is reality. This is what the Apostle Paul thought too, when he wrote this about Jesus: *“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and*

*for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Col 1:16-17).* Reality, then, is an outflow and held together by the primary reality, or truth, that is Jesus.

How is this relevant to us, and how does this help us in the pursuit of truth? If we genuinely want to see reality as it is, we must see it from Jesus’ perspective. We have to see humans as He sees them. We have to see the world from His perspective as much as possible. This is obviously difficult, since we are still limited in the way we perceive reality. Another way to approach this is by allowing ourselves to pursue truth and knowing that the more we understand reality, the more we are seeing it from Jesus’ perspective. If we allow ourselves to follow truth where it will take us, then, eventually we will end up with Jesus. If I hear the wind in the tree, and I seek the reality of it, then it will lead me not only to the cause of the sound, but the cause of the material that made the sound, and the one who made the material that made the sound.

There is still a question that remains: how does truth set us free? I think one of the great weaknesses of humans is how easily we are deceived. We believe something that does not correspond to reality, and the biggest problem is that we don’t know that we are deceived. We think what we believe is true. Scammers and marketers take advantage of this by convincing us of something that may turn out to be the opposite. Deception can very easily hold us captive. Many people are convinced that drugs will make them happy or likable, when in truth, the drugs are destroying them. When they can finally see the truth, they can be set free. The more we discover truth, the more we are set free from deception and are living in reality as it actually exists. And the more acquainted we become with the One who is truth, the more we see reality as it actually is, and the more we are free to live in that reality.

*“God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor 1:9-10).*

*“Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:2-5).*

The apostle Paul found it necessary to write those passages back then and for us in our day.

I write this article with a heavy heart, and as a great-grandfather who was with the youth group back in 1966 when the New Order split off the Old Order here in Lancaster County, PA. What we saw back then was another split off the first split, then another one, etc. We must recognize that we have an enemy in our midst, Satan, who is against everything that is good. So, what is good in a church? Love, peace, and unity. Liebe, friede, und inikeit. We have to understand that the battle is in the spiritual world. See Eph 6:10-17.

We are now on the brink of a major split in our Lancaster Community. The problem is not with our school children, nor with our youth, nor with the lay people (families), but with our ordained leaders, our Bishops, who we will refer to as shepherds. The lay people are hollering for truth when a shepherd does some ungodly acts. One example: when a shepherd hires two other shepherds to come and take dienst away from one of his mit diener without a vote of his church people or the other two ministers. Another example, a shepherd attempts to punish a born-again believer

who is a part of a Bible study group, and his only choice is to lie or be put in the bann. More than anything, we want truth.

In Ezekiel 34, the prophet Ezekiel is blaming the shepherds of Israel for not feeding the flock and ruling the people with force and cruelty. Not feeding the flock simply means not giving the truth.



*“Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them” (Eze 34:10).*

*“And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David (Jesus); he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd” (Eze 34:10).*

Jesus is the head of the church. Praise the Lord!

January 2025 is the 500 year anniversary of the start of the Anabaptist movement, of which we are all descendants. Ironically, an Amish preacher said recently that we have come full circle and are now operating our churches somewhat similarly to the Catholic Church back then. Three things are about the same.

- 1) We have formed a hierarchy, with different levels of leadership, seniority, lay people, etc.
- 2) Forbidding Bible study groups,

which the Catholics were very hard against, is an act of Satan to keep people ignorant of the truth. The late Reverend Kenneth Hagin said, “Our faith cannot grow beyond our knowledge and understanding of the Word of God.”

- 3) Justification by faith, a doctrine that the Catholics don’t believe in because their rules and rituals tie in with their hope of salvation.

Justification by faith is a very interesting subject. The Apostle Paul writes more on that theme than any other writer. Where did he learn it? It was directly revealed to him by Jesus Christ on his Damascus Road encounter. (See Acts 9.) It has been said we cannot understand salvation if we don’t understand imputed righteousness, how Christ’s righteousness is counted to our account by faith. (See Romans 4.) The other belief is to hope we can be good enough to go to heaven. So let’s repent and return to the Anabaptist belief that Christ is the head of the church and the church is subject to Christ.

Imputed righteousness resonates with my soul. I had been an average (good) man, but I always had this nagging feeling, “Am I going to be good enough to meet God?” One warm Sunday afternoon, a group of us were visiting and the subject turned to imputed righteousness. I was listening intently, then I asked, “What are you talking about?” The answer was, “Go read Romans 4.”

I had been a regular Bible reader, mainly in German. My question was answered. I am not good enough to go to heaven unless Christ’s righteousness is imputed by faith into my account. I was over 50 years old, having attended the Amish Church all my life, but never heard of imputed righteousness or justification by faith.

I have asked for my name to be withheld because I don’t want my name to have any part in anybody accepting or rejecting this article.



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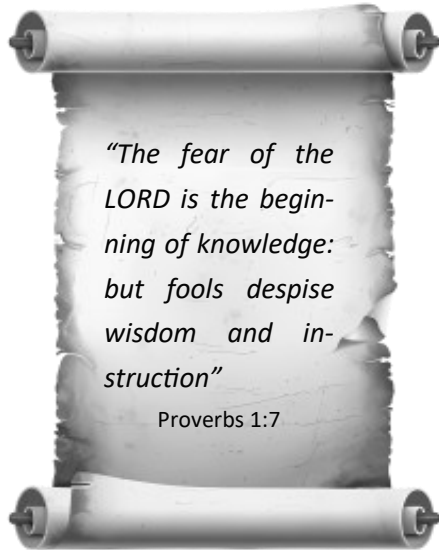
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## Wisdom

—by Terrell  
McCullers

Think of someone you admire more than anyone else. Now, imagine this person coming to speak with you. How would you feel? Excited, nervous, a bit afraid, maybe in a state of wonder? Of the numerous responses you could have, the best would be humility — submitting yourself to whatever wisdom might be given to help you.



*"The fear of the  
LORD is the begin-  
ning of knowledge:  
but fools despise  
wisdom and in-  
struction"*

Proverbs 1:7

This scenario is just a mere fraction of what King Solomon teaches in the Book of Proverbs. If trust is the beginning of wisdom, then Solomon offers the foundation for wisdom in the opening prologue — the fear of the Lord. Wisdom is recognizing my capacities and limits as a human and living under the guidance and authority of One who is wiser and greater than myself.

Trust is having confidence in and reliance on another. The fear of the Lord is learning to live within that reliance. It is what maintains trust and invites you deeper into a relationship with God. It is a deep respect for who God is and His way of living in this life. It is a wonder to behold and a love to surrender under. It is woven into the fabric of creation and calls upon all those who have ears to hear and eyes to see.

Once we begin to trust God and His definition of good and evil, inhabiting His vision for life with wonder and surrender, we start to embody wisdom.

## The Value of Time

—unknown

To realize the value of FOUR YEARS:  
Ask a graduate.

To realize the value of ONE YEAR:  
Ask a student who has failed a final exam.

To realize the value of ONE MONTH:  
Ask a mother who has given birth to a premature baby.

To realize the value of ONE WEEK:  
Ask an editor of a weekly newspaper.

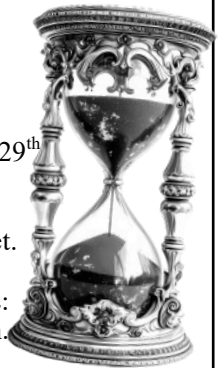
To realize the value of ONE DAY:  
Ask the person was born on February 29<sup>th</sup>

To realize the value of ONE HOUR:  
Ask the lovers who are waiting to meet.

To realize the value of ONE MINUTE:  
Ask a person who has missed the train.

To realize the value of ONE SECOND:  
Ask a person who has just avoided an accident.

To realize the value of ONE MILLISECOND:  
Ask the person who won a silver medal.



***Time waits for no one. Treasure every moment you have.***



Yesterday is history.  
Tomorrow is a mystery.  
Today is a gift...  
That's why it's called ...  
the present!