



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

## The Secret of the Strength

— by Peter Hoover

### CHAPTER 16 On with the Message

*Oid, oid, lo que nos manda el Salvador.  
Marchad, marchad, y proclamad mi  
amor.*

*Pues he aquí, yo con vosotros estaré  
Los días todos hasta el fin os guardaré.*

*Id, id por el mundo. Id, Id y predicad el  
evangelio,*

*Id, id va adelante el todopoderoso Sal-  
vador.*

*¡Gloria, gloria aleluya a Jesús!*

*¡Gloria, gloria aleluya a Jesús!*

*Nuestras almas él salvó, nuestras  
manchas él lavó,*

*¡Proclamemos pues, a todos su amor!<sup>1</sup>*

The mighty strains of a missionary hymn stopped me beneath the window of the chapel where my students were in chorus practice. In passing I had caught the words and they held me transfixed.

*Mirad, mirad, la condición del pe-  
cador,*

*¡Qué triste es! ¡Qué llena de dolor!*

*Sin luz, sin paz camina hacia la eterni-  
dad,  
Y no conoce el gran peligro en que  
está.<sup>2</sup>*

The message gripped my heart, as always. Only this time more so. It was a missionary hymn. Dry leaves swirled through the dead grass of December. The hills of Santa Ana, El Salvador, stood above great spreading trees along the road through Zacamil. I thought of the bombs we had heard at close proximity a few nights before. (They had bombed a bank close to the mission in the capital city.) I thought of the rattle of machine gun fire, bullet-pocked bunkers on floodlit bridges, helicopters flying in formation at tree-top level, heavy artillery pointing down on all sides, buses with tires shot out and laden with bombs set across the highway, and tiny houses flying white flags.

*Salid, salid, embajadores del Señor,*

*Buscad, buscad el pobre pecador.*

*Aprovechad el tiempo que el Señor nos  
da,*

*Pues pronto el día de salud acabara.<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>2</sup> Look, look at the condition of the sinner! How sad it is! How filled with pain! Without light, without peace he walks toward eternity and does not know the danger he is in!

<sup>3</sup> Go out, go out, ambassadors of the Lord! Search for the poor sinners. Make good use of the time the Lord gives you, because the day of salvation will soon be over!

I knew that the young people singing this song were conscious of its words. Many came from non-Christian homes. A number of them were orphaned in early childhood. Numerous boys had been inducted into the army and had either escaped or explained their way out of boot camp by proving to the generals their Christianity.

*Id, id por el mundo. Id, id y predicad el  
evangelio.*

*Id, id va adelante, el todopoderoso Sal-  
vador...<sup>4</sup>*

So soon they would be back in the cities to put this song to practice. First-generation Anabaptists singing a missionary hymn—how I loved the spirit of these Salvadorean and Guatemalan young people! Theirs was the spirit of Christianity's oldest extant missionary hymn, written by an Anabaptist in Moravia in 1563.<sup>5</sup>

“The Swiss Brethren movement began,” observed a scholar, “because Conrad Grebel had the courage to make an unreserved personal commitment to this ideal (the ideal of a voluntary Christian community) regardless of the

<sup>4</sup> Go out, go out into all the world! Go out and preach the Gospel! Go out and follow your Saviour who goes before you...

<sup>5</sup> *Die Lieder der Hutterischen Brüder*, pp. 650-652

<sup>1</sup> Take heed, take heed to the Savior's command! March on, march on, proclaiming his love! He said he would be with us and keep us unto the end of the world. Go out, Go out into the world! Go out and preach the Gospel! Glory hallelujah to Jesus! He saved our souls, he washed away our sins. Let us proclaim to all the world his love!

consequences...Where others shrank from adoption of the full New Testament ideal because of fear that it could not be carried through in practice, as for instance, Luther, Grebel acted. He chose to follow the vision without calculation of possibilities or practicalities, believing that the truth commands: it does not merely advise.”<sup>6</sup>

The Anabaptists sent out *Sendboten* (messengers) at once, even though the task of evangelism has never been carried out under greater difficulty. An eye-witness of the beginning of the Anabaptist movement in Switzerland wrote:

Suddenly one saw a great many people, as though ready for a journey, girded with ropes, passing through Zürich. In the marketplaces and squares they stood and preached a better life, conversion, freedom from guilt and brotherly love.<sup>7</sup>

Every Anabaptist messenger, if caught, faced torture and death. No roads were safe. They travelled on foot, through forests and mountain ranges, and preached by night. They were the only evangelical missionaries of their time. Every European country prohibited them. Coming from underground churches that had little or no money, they could not depend on regular support. But they “steadfastly witnessed to the Word of the Lord, by life and work, by word and deed. They spoke with power of the kingdom of God. They called all men to repentance, to turn to God from the vanity of the world and from a sinful and wretched life. God gave his blessing to this work and it was carried out with joy,” wrote Kaspar Braitmichel of the Bruderhöfe in Moravia, in the mid-1500s.

The messengers went out with joy, but many did not return. Sent out two by

two, they took leave of their wives and children, hoping but not really expecting, to see them again on the earth. They simply went out and preached at the cost of their lives. Menno Simons wrote:

We desire with burning hearts that the true Gospel of Christ would be preached throughout all the world. We desire that it may be taught to all men as Christ commanded, even at the cost of our life and blood.<sup>8</sup>

Kaspar Braitmichel wrote:

We practice the sending out of Christian messengers like the Lord commanded, saying: “As My father sent me, so send I you. I have chosen you and ordered you to go out and bring in a harvest.” To carry this out we send servants of the Gospel every year to all the countries to which we have a reason to send them. These men visit those who desire a better way of life, who eagerly seek and ask for the truth. Spies and hangmen notwithstanding, we visit those who seek, by day and by night, at the cost of the messengers’ necks, their bodies, and their lives. In this way, the Lord, like a good shepherd, carries his flock together.<sup>9</sup>

Roman Catholic authorities accused Josef Schlosser, Anabaptist messenger imprisoned in Poland in 1579, of being a deceiver of the people. “If you would be a good man,” the authorities said, “you would stay in your own country and leave other people alone.”

To this Josef replied, “I deceive no one. The reason we go out into all countries is to obey the command of Christ to call people to repentance and to help those who want to lead a better life.”

So great was the hunger for the Gospel in Poland that they had to hide Josef in

stocks in the castle dungeon to keep people away from his cell. In spite of the authorities’ dire threats, these people had been coming in a continuous stream to hear what he had to say.

### Filling the Lord’s House

Hieronimus Kral, Anabaptist messenger imprisoned in a dungeon in Austria until his clothes had completely rotted away and he had only his shirt collar to send to his friends as a sign of his continued steadfastness, wrote:

We are not sent out for anyone’s harm or disadvantage. Rather we are sent out to seek the salvation of men and to show them the way to repentance and conversion.<sup>10</sup>

This sending out, in obedience to the command of Christ, continued year after year. Not only the men went. Leonhard Dax, a converted priest of München in Bavaria, joined the communities in Moravia. On the Sunday before St. Martin’s day in 1567, they sent him out with his wife Anna, Ludwig Dörker, Jakob Gabriel Binder, Jörg Schneider, and a sister called Barbara from a new Bruderhof at Tawikovice near Mährisch-Kromau. Not long afterward they fell into the hands of the Protestant authorities at Alzey on the Rhine, 500 miles away.

Political unrest did not stop the messengers. In 1603, after years of oppression, plundering, and terror during the Hungarian revolution, the Anabaptist communities of that country sent six messengers to East Prussia on the Baltic Sea. Sailing from Denmark, they were captured by a Swedish ship and taken to Sweden. Only after much difficulty did they reach their destination—a group of seekers in the Vistula Delta.

“We preach where we can,” said Menno Simons toward the end of his life, “both by day and night, in houses and

<sup>6</sup> Harold S. Bender, *Conrad Grebel*, (Goshen, 1950) pg. 213

<sup>7</sup> From Joseph von Beck, *Die Geschichts-Bücher der Wiedertäufer in Oesterreich-Ungarn...*(Vienna, 1883).

<sup>8</sup> *Die oorsake waerom dat ick M. S. niet of en late te Jeeren, ende te schrijuen...*ca. 1542

<sup>9</sup> *Geschichtsbuech*, ca. 1570

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

in fields, in forests and wastelands, in this country and abroad, in prisons and bonds, in the water, the fire and on the scaffold, on the gallows and upon the wheel, before lords and princes, orally and by writing, at the risk of possessions and life. We have done so for many years without ceasing.”<sup>11</sup>

Invited or not invited, the Anabaptists preached the truth. Klaus Felbinger, a south German messenger wrote:

Some have asked us why we entered the territory of the duke of Bavaria. I answered: “We go not only into this land but into all lands as far as our language extends. We go wherever God opens a door. We go wherever God directs us to hearts who earnestly seek Him and who are tired of the ungodly life of the world. We go to those who wish to amend their lives. To all such places we go and will go.”<sup>12</sup>

Kaspar Braitmichel wrote:

Since God the Almighty desired to build His house and cause His community to increase, He always provided a way of grace that more souls found their way out of the desolate and apostate nations into the brotherhood so that the Lord’s table and house were well filled.<sup>13</sup>

### The World Upside Down

The greater the first Anabaptists’ joy in the Lord and in one another, the greater their desire to bring souls into Gemeinschaft with Christ—and the worse the persecution they faced. Luther called them *Schwärmer* (swarmers). Both Protestants and Catholics called them vermin, gangsters, and thieves. Sebastian Franck wrote in 1531:

The Anabaptists spread so rapidly that their teaching soon covered the land....They soon gained a large following and baptized thousands... They increased so rapidly that the world feared an uprising by them, though I have learned that this fear had no justification whatsoever.<sup>14</sup>



The Gospel of the Kingdom spread throughout Europe in the 16th Century, as on this back street in Strasbourg, through aggressive person to person contact, and prayer.

Heinrich Bullinger, Reformed clergyman of Zürich, and bitter opponent of the Anabaptists reported that “people run after them as though they were living saints.” Feared, admired, or cursed, the Anabaptist movement could not be ignored. Wolfgang Capito, a Protestant leader in Strasbourg, wrote in 1527:

I frankly confess that in most Anabaptists piety and consecration may be seen. They are zealous beyond any suspicion of insincerity. What earthly advantage could they hope to gain by enduring exile, torture, and unspeakable punishment of the flesh? It is not because of a lack of wisdom that they are somewhat indifferent toward earthly things. It is because of their divine motivation.<sup>15</sup>

Listening to Christ’s command to go out and preach the Gospel to all nations, the first anabaptists followed Him...

## Chapter 17 On to Witness

Among the dairy farms at Goes on the Dutch island of Zuid Beveland, Joost Joosten grew up singing. He excelled in Latin at school, but his heart was in the songs he sang, and his parents found a place for him in the choir of the village church.

People noticed him when he sang—fair-haired boy with a clear voice—and liked him. In 1556, King Philip II of Spain visited the Netherlands. They gave him a high mass at Middelburg and called upon the choir from Goes to sing. Joost had turned fourteen. The king saw and heard him. After the mass he said: “Bring me that boy. He must go back with me to Spain!”

But Joost did not want to go to Spain to live in the richest royal court in Europe. He wanted something far better. He hid for six weeks until they gave up looking for him and the king was safely gone. Then, when he was out of school, he made known his desire to follow Christ. An Anabaptist messenger baptized him in a secret meeting, and the king’s officials started looking for him again.

They caught Joost in 1560 and put him in jail. Four interrogators from the Holy Office of the Inquisition came to question him. On five sheets of paper Joost wrote for them what he believed. He also wrote songs and sang in jail.

The inquisitors had Joost pulled on the rack. They had hot steel rods turned through his knees and pushed through his legs until they came out at the ankles. But his heart could not be moved.

<sup>11</sup> *Opera Omnia Theologica*, (Amsterdam, 1681)

<sup>12</sup> *Abgeschrift des Glaubens welchen ich, Klaus Felbinger, zu Landshut den Herrn daselbst für mich und statt meines mitgefangenen Bruders zugestellt habe*, 1560

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

<sup>14</sup> *Chronica, Zeytbuch und Geschyichtbibel*, (Strasbourg, 1531)

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in C. A. Cornelius, *Geschichte des Münsterischen Aufruhrs* (Leipzig, 1860).

Then the court convicted him and sentenced him to death.



The village of Goes, in Zeeland, as seen from the church tower, today.

They made a little house of straw on the town square. The people came by boat, on horseback, and on foot to see. They lined the streets and the sides of the square, surrounded by soldiers to hold them back...and waited.

The soldiers brought him in chains. The people had not seen him so pale or so thin before. Then suddenly, what was that? He was singing!

Joost Joosten was singing again...the same clear voice...A man's voice now ...and some of them recognized the song he sang. It was one he had written as a new Christian: "Oh Lord Christ, in my mind I see you standing always before me!"

They put him inside the little house of straw. He was still singing when the flames roared up. It was the Monday before Christmas, 1560, and Joost Joosten was eighteen years old.

## Witnessing

"Hans Koch and Leonhard Meister witnessed at Augsburg, Anno 1524...an old man and a youth witnessed at Amsterdam...Thomas the printer witnessed at Koln am Rhein, Anno 1557."

Witnessing to whom? Of what?

At first glance these *Ausbund* song headings may bring to mind the Anabaptists' witnessing in court, or their willingness to speak with others of what they believed. But on second glance it becomes clear that "witnessing" in the sixteenth century involved more than it usually does today.

The Mennonite church into which I was baptized went "witnessing" once a month. My first turn came on a warm July evening in 1977. I travelled to London, Ontario, with a group of brothers in my friend's Monte Carlo. Soft Evangelical music from the rear speakers calmed my trepidations as we entered Highbury Avenue and neared the intersection of Richmond and Dundas streets in the heart of the city. It was Friday evening. Tracts moved fast among throngs of pedestrians while the lights came on. Some sneered. Some asked questions. Most people respectfully took our *Just for You* tracts. A Jewish college professor asked us thoughtful questions. His wife, he said, was a Mennonite from Manitoba. Then, after we ran out of literature, we shared our impressions on the long ride home.

This, for us was "witnessing."

The first Anabaptists did it otherwise. An eye-witness account from the mid-1500s reads:

The nine men knelt on the green meadow. Blood flowed over the sword. Three women were drowned. One laughed when they put her into the water. Then we buried them all together in one deep grave...There was much weeping. Many people cried to God that he would give rest to the departed souls. But others mocked, saying they were the devil's horde and served the Antichrist...

This was done on Friday morning. Many important people had come riding in. They came lightheartedly, but we all went home in tears. I cannot describe everything I saw.<sup>1</sup>

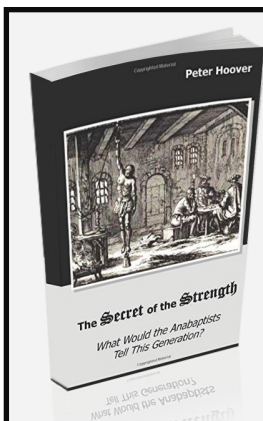
Menno Simons wrote:

If Socrates could die for his beliefs, if Marcus Curtius and Gaius Mutius Scevola could die for the city of Rome and the good of the state, if Jews and Turks brave death for the laws of their fatherland, why should I not offer my soul for heavenly wisdom? For the brothers? For what Christ has established?<sup>2</sup>

"Witnessing" to the first Anabaptists was to give one's life for what one believed.

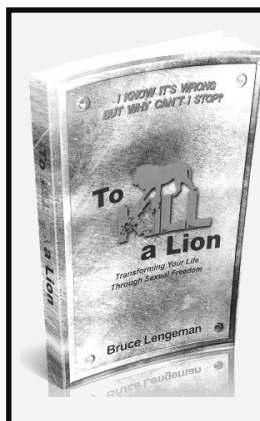
<sup>1</sup> *Ausbund*, 26

<sup>2</sup> *Christelycke Jeringhen op den 25. Psalm*, ca. 1538



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I recently asked the question, “What was most influential in your becoming a believer: the fear of hell, or the love of God?” Overwhelmingly, it was the love of God.

Many of us have heard warnings preached and vivid descriptions of hell given from the pulpit, striking terror into our tender hearts, and often leading to the perception of God as a cruel master who would condemn us for any infraction of His numerous rules and expectations.

Many a “conversion” was not much more than a way to escape hell coupled with a dread that we would have a very difficult time trying to make it to heaven. The road was hard and God was demanding.

Unfortunately, preachers and teachers today still deliver the same message. Street preachers often preach hell. Not surprisingly, they turn many people away from anything to do with God.

How should we present God to a lost and dying world? We should do as Jesus did. He went out of His way to mingle with the worst of sinners. He was a friend to sinners. He did not condemn the woman who was caught in adultery. He preached a message of hope to those who thought they could never be good enough. They heard and gladly received His message.

It was the religious ones who, as Jesus Himself said, “*For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers*” (Matt 23:4). Jesus re-

served His condemnation for those who were righteous in their own mind and rejected others.

Our message should be a message of hope and encouragement. I tremble at the thought of preachers, then and now, who entirely misrepresent the God who so loved the world that He gave His only son to die so we could be saved. How do you think a God of love feels to be so misrepresented?

Ok, so should we not give warnings? Yes, but what warnings? It is out of character to warn of God’s wrath (which is for the children of disobedience) without first giving a clear message of God’s love and mercy.

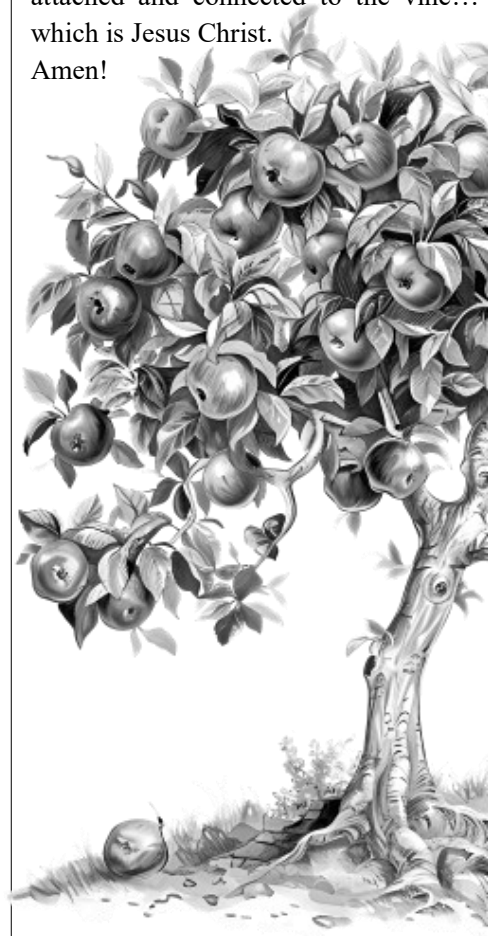
Our message must clearly represent the God of love. Our life must represent the same. I preach about the love of God. I occasionally preach a message on hell to give an honest picture of God’s complete fairness. He is just and holy. He has offered to save us from our sins by becoming disciples of Jesus. If we reject His offer to make us holy and righteous, He will also reject us.

For years and years, I didn’t understand repentance. I thought that repentance was filled with agony as a person would weep and go through much turmoil trying to achieve a state that would pass for repentance. Repentance is simply turning around and walking in a different direction, just like the prodigal son did. When he did, he was met with a dose of the love of God like he had never seen or heard before. He will meet all of us and welcome us the same way if we come to Him for help.

The real conversion happens when we change from a bad tree to a good one. God will do a complete and thorough job of making us into a new creature. The result is that we start to bear good fruit, whereas before, the fruit was, as they say, here in Honduras, “malo.” It was bad.

First make the tree good and the fruit will be good. Or, if the tree remains corrupt, then, no doubt, the fruit will be corrupt. What many preachers did was to try to force corrupt trees to bear good fruit. It cannot happen. The good fruit can only come from branches firmly attached and connected to the vine... which is Jesus Christ.

Amen!



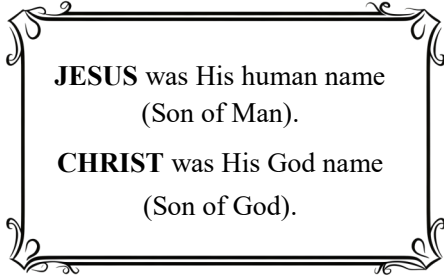
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Mat 1:16 says,

*“And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born **JESUS, who is called CHRIST.**”*



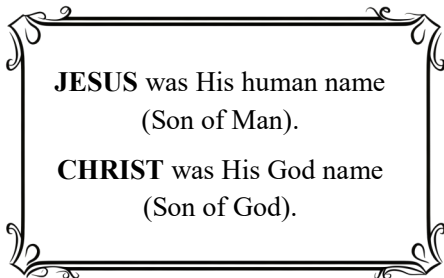
**JESUS** was a reasonably common name in His day. Often, the name Jesus came with a qualifier so the reader would understand which Jesus was being spoken of. The apostle Paul writes about another man, *“Jesus, which is called Justus...”* (Col 4:11).

When **JESUS** said to His followers, *“...I am the bread which came down from heaven...”* His followers replied, *“...Is this not **JESUS, the son of Joseph?...**”* (Jn 6:41, 42).

When Judas was getting ready to betray **JESUS, JESUS** asked,

*“...Whom seek ye?”* And they answered, *“...**JESUS** of Nazareth...”* (John 18: 4, 5).

The phrase "**Son of Man**" is used eighty-four times in the New Testament. Except for one instance, it refers to **JESUS** in his human form.



When **JESUS** asked his disciples, *“..Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?”* They said, *“...Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets”* (Mtt 16:13, 14).

But then **JESUS** asked His disciples, *“...But whom say ye that I am?”* Simon Peter spoke first and said, *“...Thou art the **CHRIST, the Son of the living God**”* (Mtt 16:15, 16).

*“Then, charged He His disciples that they should tell no man that He was **JESUS the CHRIST**”* (Mtt 16:20).

When Satan approached Jesus at the end of His fast, he asked,

*“...If thou be the **Son of God, command that these stones be made bread**”* (Mtt 4:3).

John wrote,

*“And I saw, and bare record that this is the **Son of God**”* (John 1:34)

Luke wrote,

*“And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art **Christ the Son of God...**”* (Luke 4:41).

When **JESUS** cried out with a loud voice and gave up the ghost, the veil of the temple was split in two from the top to the bottom. It was then that the Centurian said,

*“...Truly, this man was the **Son of God**”* (Mark 15:39).



What was it like for **JESUS** to be the **CHRIST** in the flesh?

As **JESUS—the Son of Man**—, we are told,

*“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom...”* (Luke 2:40).

As **JESUS—the Son of Man**—we are told,

*“...they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions”* (Luke 2:46).

As **JESUS—the Son of Man**—we are told,

*“And **JESUS** increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man”* (Luke 2:52).

As both **JESUS** and **CHRIST**, He had the ability to function as either the **Son of Man** or the **Son of God**. That being understood, He mainly chose to function as the **Son of Man**.

To gain a deeper understanding of this concept, let’s take a look at when **JESUS** was on the verge of being betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. In this instance, it seems obvious that **JESUS** could have acted as the **Son of God** and avoided death.

However, Matthew writes:

*“Then said **JESUS** unto him ... Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions (72,000) of angels?”* (Mtt 26:52-53).

It was as if **JESUS, the Son of Man**, had an unlimited credit card account. At any given time, He could have switched to **CHRIST, the Son of God**, and ended the scoffing, spitting, whippings, the crown of thorns, and being hung on the cross.

Let’s consider who died and rose again: Was it **JESUS** or **CHRIST**? Think about it and then read Mark 8:31:

*“And He began to teach them, that the **Son of Man** must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.”*

In John 9:35–38, **JESUS** asked the blind man to make a commitment.

*“**JESUS** ... said unto him, Dost thou believe in the **Son of God**? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? And **JESUS** said unto him, Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He*

*that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.*"

In Acts 8:37, the Ethiopian eunuch wanted to be baptized. Philip said,

*"...If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."*

Peter proclaimed,

*"And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God"* (John 6:69).

*"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God..."* (1 John 5:1).

*"She (Martha) saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world"* (John 11:27).

We will end with 1 John 5:12-13, where John writes,

*"He that HATH the Son [of God] HATH life; and he that HATH NOT the Son of God HATH NOT life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may KNOW that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."*

*"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is anti-christ, that denieth the Father and the Son"* (1 John 2:22).

*"And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world"* (1 John 4:3).

The author invites you to text or call with questions or comments!  
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## A Child's Memory of Their Mother

A 4-year-old says: My mommy can do anything.

A 7-year-old says: My Mom knows a lot. A whole lot!

An 8-year-old begins to think: My Mom doesn't know quite everything!

At 12 years of age: Oh, naturally my Mom doesn't know that either.

At 14 years old you hear: Mom? She is just hopelessly old fashioned.

I finally made it to 21: Oh, that woman is so far out of date! What did I ever expect out of her?

A 25-year-old gets out of college and starts thinking: Maybe my Mom knows a little about life, but not that much.

A young 30-year-old thinks: We ought to find out what Mom is thinking.

At 35: A little more patience might be in order. Let's get Mom's assessment before we do anything else.

How did I get to 50 already? I wonder what Mom would have thought about that. She was pretty dog-gone smart in her own way.

Sixty years is now a reality: Mom knew a lot more than we thought she did. Dad said she graduated first in her class from the school of hard knocks.

A 65-year-old sits with their walker in hand and ponders: You know, I would give anything if Mom could be here today so I could talk this over with her. I really miss her!

Sound familiar? How do those Mothers all get so smart?

—by Tom Dilgard

## A PRECIOUS GEM

Sympathy for others

Is a trait we all shall need.

Showing kindness and compassion,

Will sow much gospel seed.

Those who have not cultivated

This worthwhile loving goal,

Will never find the pleasure

Of fulfilling life's true role.

If we really know our Savior,

And learn to think like Him.

Then this grandest of ambitions

Will seem a precious gem.

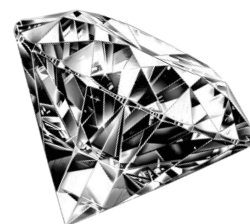
For when we follow Jesus,

We find the secret of our living

Is found, in reality,

In a constant life of giving.

by:  
Kathryn  
Search



On occasion, readers will ask me why I don't just "leave the Mennonites." Some of them ask from the viewpoint of, "Why would you stay in a denomination that is doing all these things that are so wrong?" This group of people has already walked away because of some of these very reasons.

Another group says, "If you don't like the way we do things, why don't you just find another denomination?" Many in this group are the older generation that believes "the way we do things has worked well for us so far, why change anything?" This group of people does not like when others point out things that are viewed as discrepancies within our culture. They prefer to have those who disagree with any Anabaptist practices to just leave. Who wants to have someone in the midst of our controlled environment that keeps speaking out of turn and pointing to things we don't like to have pointed out?

Then there are others who, like myself, see a hope for change and stay with an idealistic expectation that if enough of us speak out and pray for change, change will come.

Often when people leave the Anabaptist faith, they leave because of one of the following two reasons. Some leave because they feel too many things are wrong within our culture and they see no hope for change. Others leave because they spoke up too much and are pushed out.

Years ago, I found myself leaning into the first category. I seriously considered walking away from the Anabaptist heritage altogether because of the very things I write about on this blog. But in an attempt to find some answers to why we do some of the things we do, I began to read a lot of our history. Reading and researching Anabaptist history because I *wanted to know* was very differ-

ent than being in school or at some Anabaptist conference and being forced to listen.

As I read, I found myself agreeing with so many of our core beliefs. For example, I am more of an Arminian than Calvinist.

I also believe in believer's baptism. In other words, belief in Jesus as the Son of God and repentance should come before baptism.

I believe in loving my enemies, returning good for evil, and also refusing to take up the sword to fight and kill. We call that "non-resistance."



Conservative Anabaptists believe everything in the New Testament is for us today. We believe it is the Word of God, and we do not believe that parts of it don't apply today. That is why we still practice the head covering, we don't ordain women, and we will not endorse homosexuality. I agree with this.

There are also many things within our culture that I love. We believe in hard work and keep our family life and marriage as a high priority. We notice the needs of others and believe in meeting those needs—whether that means giving our time and physical labor or giving to meet a monetary need. We believe in living a simple life so that we have extra to give. We don't attempt to follow the world in all its sin and wrong desires, but we would rather live a lifestyle that follows Scriptural principles.

We have traditions of loving to sing and teaching our children to sing. We believe in studying the Bible and knowing what it says. We teach it to our children and have Bible memorization as a high priority. We believe in discipleship and helping those who desire to learn.

Do we always do these things perfectly? Obviously we don't. We are a fallen people. Despite our best efforts, we stray from the original intent of our cultural habits and tend to become a rigid, works-oriented people. We have even allowed some of our good traditions to become more important to us than Biblical commands.

Does that mean I should walk away because I see things in our culture that are being done wrongly? Should I leave and try to find another denomination that is a little closer to perfect than ours? That is a question that each person must ask themselves.

For me, I found the answer to that question to be no. Yes, I could probably find groups with at least some of those core doctrines to be the same. But probably not all of these same core beliefs would be there.

Some of our cultural traditions could probably also be seen in other denominations, but they would likely also have other traditions that I would not agree with. Just as we can never find a perfect church, we will never find a perfect denomination. We must know what our core beliefs are and be a part of the denomination that reflects those. We must also be a part of a church within that denomination that has traditions and a culture that is most like our own.

Does that mean we must accept every tradition and belief? If there are things that are not aligned with the Bible, we cannot turn a blind eye to it. We cannot allow our love for our people and cul-



ture to blind us to discrepancies within our groups. No matter how much God loves us, He will not overlook sin in our lives. In fact, God chastens those He loves.

So if we love our people and culture, why would we not also then desire change in those areas that are causing others to stumble instead of pretending we are without fault?

Every Anabaptist writer that dares write anything negative about our traditions finds themselves under fire from our people. We face ridicule, anger, scorn, and people suggest that maybe we should leave. Sometimes we are even blatantly told that leaving should happen soon. We are accused of causing dissension, we are told we are losing our faith or falling into heresy.

Many have left. Many more will leave. How stubborn will we be? Why can we not stop being so defensive and consider that since we are not a perfect people, our churches will not do everything perfectly and our denomination may not have everything perfectly aligned either?

If God had the apostles writing to the early churches to correct them and address things they were falling away from within the first century, how much more are the churches today susceptible? We can easily see beliefs and practices that have gone amiss in other churches and denominations, but are we unwilling to even consider that we may have areas that need to change as well?

Instead of taking a stubborn stand against any writer or preacher who dares question or point to discrepancies, why can't we humble ourselves and take a deep inward look? If our beliefs and practices have strayed from Scripture, we need to know it. And we need to change if we see areas we have strayed in.

We want to be known as a people who walk in humility and are willing to take correction and reproof. But how willing are we really when it is something that has been ingrained in us for the past century or more? Are we really willing to humble ourselves and pray, asking God to reveal it to us if there is some-

thing we need to change in the way we do things? Are we willing to turn from it if He reveals it to be true? Some of the most deplorable sins in our midst are a consequence of these areas that we refuse to even consider that we may be wrong in.

How long will we stiffen our necks and refuse reproof? How long will we judge unjustly those who differ slightly from us in traditions? How long will we accept teachers that teach in opposition to God's Word by twisting Scripture to make it fit our traditions?

It is time we take a stand for Truth.

*"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates. Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth."*

2 Corinthians 13:5-8

## Judgement

—by Gerald Hochstetler

Another thought from the 3 hour wooden bench experience. You have a lot of time to think, when you sit for 3 hours.

I was always taught there is a GREAT judgment day coming. A day when all life's activities are going to be on full display for all to see and hear. As a kid sitting on that bench, I always imagined a huge crowd and finally, dreadfully, I find myself before God. All is exposed.

I don't spend a lot of time in end-time Bible study, I'm too busy with the here and now. I occupy myself and read the Bible to get answers for THIS day. That keeps me busy. I figure if I'm a friend of His now, it doesn't really matter how the future plays out.

If there is such a day, it's going to be a horribly embarrassing day for me. When I was a kid, I was determined to keep myself half-decent. Judgement Day always haunted me.

My good intentions didn't work out well at all. I have a HORRIBLE past. If there is such a day, I well deserve a good embarrassment.

But that thought just does not seem right to me. From the bits and pieces of scripture as I seem to understand it, to God, as I know Him, it really does not seem to coincide with the gospel.

Judgement is going on as we speak. This is the time for kingdom transformation. This is the day, in this life, that

we move from the earthly kingdom to a spiritual kingdom.

Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. I really believe Him to be the perfect sacrifice, that we may be presented before God as Holy. I really believe Him to be my cloak of righteousness. I really believe that I am hidden in the precious Son of God. I really believe God looks for one thing—all that is hid in Christ Jesus.

*"For ye are dead, and YOUR LIFE IS HID with Christ in God"* (Col 3:3).

Why would God dig up the past for those who are hidden in Him? The GREAT judgement is going as we speak. Today is the day of salvation!

# From Darkness to Light: My Journey to the Saving Grace of Jesus Christ

—by Mahlon Miller

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

I never imagined my life turning out the way it has. If you had told me years ago that I’d be where I am today—free, forgiven, and walking in the grace of Jesus—I would have struggled to believe it. My journey has been full of twists and turns, highs and lows, but through it all, God’s love never let me go. This is my testimony—not of how I found God, but of how He found me.

## Growing Up in Tradition

I grew up in an Amish community where faith was a way of life. From a young age, I was taught to work hard, be respectful, and obey the Ordnung—the set of unwritten rules that governed our lives. I memorized scripture, attended church faithfully, and tried my best to be a good person.

But something always felt... missing. I knew about Jesus, but I didn’t really know Him. I believed in God, but my faith was based more on fear than love. I constantly worried—was I good enough? Had I done enough to be accepted by God? Deep down, I knew the answer. No matter how much I tried, I still sinned. I still fell short.

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

The sermons at church taught me that God was holy and just, but I rarely heard about His grace. I thought salvation was something I had to earn. If I followed the rules, worked hard, and lived humbly, maybe—just maybe—God would accept me.

But that kind of thinking led me into a cycle of striving, failing, feeling guilty, and trying harder. I kept wondering how much was enough. How could I ever be certain that I was saved?

## A Heart Filled With Doubt

I remember sitting in church one Sunday, listening to the minister preach about obedience. He said that the way to heaven was through keeping the ways of our forefathers and living a separated life. But as I looked around, I saw people—good people—who seemed just as uncertain as I was. I heard prayers that sounded more like desperation than confidence.

One day, I asked an elder in the community, “How can I know for sure that I’m going to heaven?” His answer was, “We just have to do our best and hope that God has mercy.”

That didn’t sit right with me. Hope that God would have mercy? Did Jesus die on the cross just so we could hope we were saved?

*“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life...” (1 John 5:13).*

The Bible says we can know we have eternal life, not just hope. But at the time, I didn’t know where to turn for answers.

## A Season of Rebellion

I began questioning everything. If salvation was by works, why did Jesus say, “It is finished” on the cross? If we had to earn our way to heaven, then why did the Bible say that salvation is a gift?

The more questions I had, the more restless I became. I started looking for answers outside of my community. I read the Bible on my own, looking for verses about grace, faith, and Jesus’ sacrifice.

But instead of waiting on God, I took matters into my own hands. I thought

that maybe the world had what I was looking for. Maybe freedom meant breaking away from the strict rules and living how I wanted.

So I ran. Not just physically but spiritually. I turned to things that promised happiness but left me empty. I thought I was escaping religion, but all I found was more bondage.

Sin always looks appealing at first. It promises pleasure, freedom, and fulfillment. But in the end, it only brings emptiness. I learned the hard way that no matter how far I ran, I couldn’t outrun the ache in my soul.

*“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12).*

## Breaking Point

I will never forget the night everything changed. I had hit rock bottom. I had made choices that hurt people I loved. I had let down those who trusted me. More than anything, I felt like I had let down God.

I sat alone, overwhelmed by the weight of my failures, and finally broke.

“Jesus... if You’re real... if You still want me... I surrender.”

I had nothing left to offer Him. No good works. No righteousness of my own. Just a broken, sinful man desperate for mercy.

And in that moment, I felt something I had never felt before—peace.

*“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).*

Jesus didn’t ask me to clean myself up before coming to Him. He didn’t demand that I fix everything first. He simply said, “Come.” And when I did, He welcomed me with open arms.

That night, I realized that salvation wasn't about what I could do for God. It was about what He had already done for me.

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



### The Power of His Blood

For so long, I had tried to earn forgiveness. But Jesus didn't die on the

cross so we could work for our salvation—He died to give it to us freely.

*“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace”* —(Ephesians 1:7).

When I finally understood His blood was enough to cover my sins, I experienced freedom like never before. No more striving. No more fear. Just complete trust in Jesus as my Savior.

### A New Life in Christ

Since that day, my life has never been the same. I no longer live in fear of not measuring up. I know I am saved—not because of anything I have done, but because of what Jesus did for me.

Does that mean life is easy? No. I still face struggles. I still fall short. **But now, I know that my salvation doesn't depend on my performance—it depends on His finished work on the cross.**

*“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”* (Romans 10:9).

### An Invitation to Grace

To my Amish brothers and sisters, I share this not to condemn but to invite. I know what it is like to strive, to fear, and to wonder if you are truly saved. I know the pressure to follow traditions, to live up to expectations, and to keep up appearances. But I also know the freedom that comes from surrendering it all to Jesus.

If you have ever wondered whether you are truly saved or if you have ever felt the weight of trying to be “good enough,” know this: Jesus is calling you.

Salvation is not found in tradition. It is not found in church membership. It is not found in anything we do. It is found in Jesus Christ alone.

The door is open. The invitation is given. His grace is enough.

In His Love, Mahlon Miller



## 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.

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.

The fear of the Lord 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 fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction”* (Prov 1:7).

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## May

### When Fear Paralyzes

Author J.R.R. Tolkien once wrote, “A man that flies from his fear may find that he only has taken a shortcut to meet it.” In this message, Chip Ingram will help us confront this intimidating emotion as he continues his series, *Experiencing God’s Presence*. Learn from Psalm 46 what we, as Jesus’ followers, can do to stand our ground when feelings of fear come.

### Made Whole by God

(part 5 of 5)

This is the final message in a five part series by Duane Sheriff.

### The Day You Get Your Life Back

1,991 years ago, a Galilean carpenter turned Rabbi, who’d been crucified and buried for three days, arose and walked out of his tomb alive! In a moment that changed history forever, Jesus revealed His death-defying life for all the world to see! Message by Philip Miller.

### James 1:1-3

Real faith. What is it? How should we live because of it. Discover these answers in the book of James as presented by J Vernon McGee.

## June

### When Confusion Obstructs

Have you ever traveled somewhere new and gotten utterly lost? Chip Ingram explains how that can happen to us spiritually. God’s Word gives us clear and specific directions when confusion threatens to distract us.

### The Mystery and Power of Foot Washing

(part 1 of 3)

Brother Duane Sheriff uncovers the spiritual significance of foot washing. Through this act, we see the mirror image of the spiritual cleansing of our minds and bodies, the concept of being born again, and the Holy Spirit’s constant renewal of our inner selves.

### Teach Us to Pray

One of the greatest privileges we have as a child of God is the fact that we can come to God in prayer anytime, anywhere, with anything. In Christ and by the Spirit we have total, unrestricted access to the Father.

### What Do Mormons & Jehovah Witnesses Believe?

(part 1 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.

## 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.”

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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

*“When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep” (Acts 7:54-60).*

Persecution will come. Will you stand? Our world is in serious trouble, for it is ruled by the prince of darkness, whose goal is to steal, kill, and destroy.

A time is coming, when it will mean death to be a Christian, perhaps very shortly. In several countries, this is already the case. Are you willing to die?

God's children have been and always will be persecuted. Direct persecution comes from the government or another authoritarian figure outright and deliberately creating pain, suffering, or death, directed at God's people. Indirect persecution can come in many forms, such as by slandering, mocking, belittling, etc. There has always been a degree of persecution and always will be.

*“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12).*

Do you think that by following Christ you will leave this world unscathed?

Jesus said, *“...In the world ye shall have tribulation...” (John 16:33).*

Paul said, *“...for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus” (Gal 6:17).*

Stephen did not go looking to die for Christ. Indeed, to do so is nothing short of a martyr complex. He preached the gospel, and such was their hatred for him that they set up false witnesses against him. His faith never wavered, nor did his love and compassion for these men.

Man seeks a reason, a cause to live, and will not willingly lay his life down for no reason. Our human body fights against death. We want to live. So how could Stephen die this painful, agonizing death? Go back to Acts 7:55:

*“But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.”*

Stephen was full of the Holy Ghost. God was with him, for God was in him. He knew who He was! Stephen knew where he was going! He knew that killing his body was the extent of their power!

*“And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do” (Luke 12:4).*

Stephen looked up into heaven and saw the glory of God. His affections were set on things above, not on the things of this world! Through faith, he looked beyond his pain. He saw the finish mark. His race was nearly won! Nearing death, Stephen saw the One who gave him his breath, and very soon, he would be face to face. He had found that God's grace was sufficient in life, and remained sufficient as he neared death!

Stephen saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. The patriot of this world says, “I'll die on my feet before I live on my knees!” Stephen was willing to die on his knees. He saw his Lord standing! Jesus was not oblivious: His face was set toward Stephen. What a way to die!

Consider the Apostle Paul. He was kept chained in a dark, cold dungeon, waiting for his execution. Early one morning, he awoke from his sleep and heard, THUD, THUD! “What was that?” he wondered.

A key rattled in the lock. A big Roman soldier swung open the door.

“Paul!” He barked.

“Yes,” Paul replied.

“Get up! You're coming with me!”

“Uh, ok,” Paul replied. “Why so early? Where are we going?”

“Haha!” The soldier grinned. “Today you die, Paul! I'm here to take you to the square. I'm taking your head off. This is going to be fun!”

“Really?” Paul replied. “Hold on, let me grab my hat!”

They step out into the prison hall. As the soldier led him out, Paul couldn't help but smile. A whistle broke his lips. Bewildered, the soldier looked at Paul and asked, “You must not understand. You realize I'm taking you out to kill you, right? How can you be so joyful? Not many people recover from a beheading!”

Paul stopped whistling. He turned and looked at the soldier, and with a twinkle in the eye he said, “This is nothing new. I die daily!” (1 Corinthians 15:31)

What did both of these men have, that they could face death in such a way? Jesus! They knew who they were. They knew where they were going!

Paul said, *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21).*

They knew they lived in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom they were called to shine as lights in the world (Philippians 2:15).

Will you be able to stand? Do you have real salvation? Does the Spirit of God live within you, so that with Christ and because of Christ, you can stand... and you will?

It is worthwhile to ask why you need Jesus Christ, especially if you consider yourself a Christian who already believes in Him. Here are twelve reasons you need the Lord Jesus Christ now and forever.

## 1. TRUTH

The truth is in Christ. He is the truth.

*"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jn 14:6)*

You cannot know truth without Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul says all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him (Col 2:3; Eph 4:21).

To make sense of anything, you need Jesus Christ. Your pursuit for truth ends with Christ and is not exhausted just because you heard the truth of the gospel.

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

## 2. LIFE

If you are reading this, you are alive and may think that Jesus Christ has nothing to do with it. However, the life you now have was given to you, and it is destined to end. The life that comes through Jesus Christ has no end. If you enjoy life and want to continue, you need Jesus Christ. There is no life without Him. To live is Christ. Eternal life is through Him.

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

## 3. DEATH

None of us escapes death. The science we have about death tells us that we are all dying a little bit each day. No science describes what happens after you die. There is revelation from God who

sees the invisible, lives in the immaterial, and knows what happens in secret. In His resurrection, Jesus Christ defeated death for any man who follows after. Death did not hold Him and today He offers this power to ALL WHO BELIEVE what He did for them on the cross.

*"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20).*

## 4. SIN

Everyone sins, including the most self-righteous religionists and church-goers. Without Christ, what becomes of our sins? They must be accounted for. Without Christ, they are all accounted to you. The judgment has already been made against you, and your sentencing day will arrive when you die. We need the man Jesus Christ to atone for our sins.

*"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).*

We need Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to mediate between God and us.

*"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5).*

Through Christ's shed blood, we have forgiveness. As long as sin is still present, we need Jesus Christ, or else it would be unrighteous to forgive anyone for sins.

## 5. PEACE

Peace is something every man desires, but is elusive. We are unable to provide what we need in life, but we can have peace through Jesus Christ by faith.

*"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ro 5:1).*

We can also have the peace of God work in us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

*"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Php 4:7).*

## 6. HOPE

Without Christ, there is no hope. Without Christ, the best hope anyone has is to seek as much pleasure as possible before their clock runs out. What vanity! This is little more than the last meal of a man on death row! With Christ, we have the hope of glory greater than anything we can achieve. It is the glory of God and the promise of inheritance through Christ. Jesus Christ is our hope. (1 Tim 1:1)

## 7. GRACE

We would not have any of these things if it were not for God's grace giving them to us freely. Grace is unmerited/unearned favor, kindness. What would we do without God's grace? God's grace teaches us to live godly in this present evil world.

*"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Tit 2:11,12).*

Grace is necessary for you to continue, and God's grace is in Christ Jesus providing what you cannot.

## 8. SUFFERING

One of the greatest problems in the world is suffering, and without Christ there is no solution for much of it.

Modern science can alleviate some pain and suffering, but cannot eliminate it. How do we deal with suffering? Christ suffered and died with us when He lived, and He now is exalted above all things. He comforts those who trust Him, learn from Him, and join Him in the fellowship of His sufferings.

*"For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ" (2 Cor 1:5).*

## 9. STRENGTH

Some people are stronger than others. But there always seems to be someone or something more powerful in this life to overwhelm you. Only some of us have great physical strength. Yet, what of the inner strength needed to make right choices, to live each day, and to resist evil. How does one go on? Jesus Christ provides this strength when all things are done through Him.

*"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Php 4:13).*

## 10. PRAYER

Someone who does not pray does not think they need God for anything. A prayerful man is a man who sees their need for God. Without Christ, prayers are heard and not answered. Prayers are answered through Christ in us.

*"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph 3:20).*

## 11. JOY

It is amazing how many people think they don't need the Lord Jesus Christ because they find joy in their life now without Him. We might as well say that we have no need of the sun because we have light bulbs. The sun lasts much longer, is much brighter, has more benefits, and we only need one! Rejoice in Christ, and your joy will be full. With-

out Christ, we are playing with sparklers. Through Christ, we can find joy in God.

*"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).*

## 12. CONSOLATION

Many people try to find consolation (comfort) in many things in this world. Yet, only one thing brings consolation forever, and it is found only through Jesus Christ.

*"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace" (2 Th 2:16).*



## CONCLUSION

Perhaps you think you don't need Christ because you see Christians who live like they don't. Do not let this fool you. Many Christians have not yet learned all that they need from Him and are busy seeking their own things and not the things of Christ.

*"For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Php 2:21).*

When you acknowledge your need for Jesus Christ, God can supply all you need. Why would someone reject Christ and lack all these things? The

need for Christ is greater than anything else, but it is easy to ignore your greatest needs when you don't know how to meet them. What is most important gets reduced to those needs that you can fulfill: food, money, temporary happiness. The greatest needs of mankind remain unfulfilled if you don't have Christ. Your life will be without all the above.

Every man needs the Lord Jesus Christ. Not every man knows. Now you know. What will you do now that you know?

Your need for Jesus Christ can be met by believing the gospel, and that Christ supplies everything you need for salvation, life, truth, and joy. Christ can be in you today, providing forgiveness, strength, the hope of glory, grace, and consolation freely when you believe He provided what you need in this life.

*"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" (Ro 3:22).*

*"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1Cor 15:1-4).*

*"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" (Eph 1:13).*

*"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).*

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## **Why Are Religious People so Stubborn?**

—By Dan Wilson

*“And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; and saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles” (Acts 22:17-21).*

Why? Why are church people who are supposed to love God, know the truth, and follow wherever He leads, always the hardest to teach?

Jesus tried and they killed Him. Paul wanted to try and God said, "No, they will not accept what you have to say."

What is the problem with religious people? They should be the easiest to reach and teach. They should be open and willing to go wherever God leads and believe whatever God reveals. How could it possibly be easier to reach a pagan Roman or a heathen Greek?

Last night I listened to a former Mormon explain why she is now an atheist. Her first reason was this: "Have you

ever noticed that most religious people follow the same religion that their parents do?" In her mind, this was evidence that everyone is just following family traditions; thus, there is no truth to any of it. What she failed to realize is why people do this.

This woman is married. Why is she married? People just get married because everyone else does. Furthermore, half of marriages end in divorce. The majority of marriages that don't end in divorce are not happy. Experts say only 20% of marriages are happy and fulfilling for both people. So, marriage must be a scam, right?

Just because something is messed up and most people follow what their parents did, does not make that thing bad.

In fact, the entire New Testament is about the very real struggle between true faith in God and bad religion.

The reason why religious people are the hardest to reach is because they think they know. They have an inherited system of beliefs that they assume are correct.

My son came home from school a few years ago with some new math. I was not impressed. Why? Because I already had a method that I had learned that worked for me. It was familiar. It seemed much simpler. It would have

been easier for me to accept this new method if I had never learned another way.

There is another reason why the Jews specifically had such a hard time. For them, nation/government, religion, and family were tightly intertwined. To change a belief affected everything and turned their entire world upside down. That's a hard sell. Tradition was blinding for them. The cost of considering a different perspective was too high.

Non-Jews have less of these issues in both spheres. Why am I pointing this out? Because I don't want us to think less of the Jews or judge them harshly. They were born into their circumstances. I also want us to examine ourselves and see what it is in our lives that might be holding us back or blinding us to what God is trying to tell us, or where He is trying to lead us.

God had a long-range plan. He wanted to use the Gentiles to show the Jews the power of God to change lives.

One more thing. Paul didn't agree with God. He didn't see it like God saw it. We all face this. We see what we see, but God sees all.

If there is anything we need to pray for in our own lives, it is humility, which gives us the ability to hear Him and surrender when we don't agree.