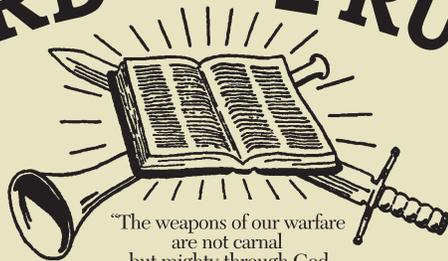


The SWORD and TRUMPET



"Blow ye
the Trumpet
and warn
the People."

"The weapons of our warfare
are not carnal
but mighty through God
to the pulling down of strongholds."

"Take the Sword
of the Spirit
which is
The Word of God."

Guidelines



NORMAN G. KOLB

NOVEMBER 2005

\$1.50

The Sword and Trumpet

Founded in 1929 by Geo. R. Brunk I

Vol. LXXIII

NOVEMBER 2005

No. 11

SWORD AND TRUMPET GUIDELINES monthly magazine is a faith ministry directed by a Board representing various constituencies of the Mennonite Church. It is committed to defending, proclaiming, and promoting the whole Gospel of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. It emphasizes neglected truth and contends for “the faith which was once delivered to the saints.” This publication exposes and opposes doctrinal error which compromises that faith and leads to apostasy.

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THE SWORD AND TRUMPET (USPS 615-540) is published monthly by *The Sword and Trumpet*, Inc., P. O. Box 575, Harrisonburg, Va. 22803-0575. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisonburg, Va. SUBSCRIPTION RATES: 1 year US \$12.00, 2 years US \$20.00. Bulk rates on the basis of US \$9.00 per year. Add US \$3.00 per year for countries outside USA and Canada. Telephone (540) 867-9419 or 867-9444. FAX (540) 867-9419. E-mail address: swandtrump@verizon.net.

Person of the Month:

Norman G. Kolb (1916-2005)

Norman G. Kolb was born March 24, 1916, to John W. and Anna B. (Good) Kolb in Spring City, PA. Norman was one of four children in the Kolb family, the others being two boys and a girl.

Norman went to school through the eighth grade. Then in the 1930s he attended a short term at Eastern Mennonite College.

In February of 1939, at the age of 23, he was married to Ellen M. Eck. In time God blessed their home with the addition of two sons and a daughter.

Brother Kolb lived and farmed for most of his life in the Spring City area but farming was not the only activity to which he gave his time.

Ordained, Norman pastored several churches in Franconia Conference. He also taught for five years at Lancaster Mennonite High School, as well as teaching at numerous Winter Bible Schools over the years.

As part of his service to the broader Mennonite church community, Brother Kolb served for several years as overseer in the Western District of Franconia Conference. He also served for many years on *The Sword and Trumpet* board.

For all of his areas of ministry, Norman Kolb may have touched the lives of more people by his weekly exposition of the Sunday school lesson on his radio program, *Sunday School Meditations*, than in any other way. This program was aired for 31 years from 1965-1996, and was heard well beyond the borders of Pennsylvania.

Tragedy struck the Kolb home when in 1992 Norman's wife, Ellen, went to be with the Lord. Seven years later, in 1999, Brother Kolb moved to Fairmount Homes in Ephrata, PA, where he lived out the rest of his earthly pilgrimage.

He went home to heaven February 25, 2005.

—Gail L. Emerson

A Sin for Which There Is No Excuse

by Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

“So that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful” —Romans 1:20, 21.

We come to consider the second sin in this text. May the word which I may have to say about it, be blessed to many of my hearers by the power of the Holy Spirit! Have you ever thought of it in this light before—that men were without excuse because when they knew God they were not thankful? *Unthankfulness is a sin for which there is no excuse if it be attended with knowledge.* I fear there are thousands who call themselves Christians, who are not thankful, and yet they never thought themselves very guilty on that account. Yet you see these sinners were without excuse, because they were guilty of a great sin before God, and that sin was unthankfulness. I tremble both for myself and you when I see want of thankfulness thus set in the front rank of sins. How is it that we may be unthankful?

I answer, first, there is in some a want of gratitude for mercies possessed. They receive many blessings without making a note of them or even seeming to know that they have them. Their daily mercies seem to come in always at the back door, where the servants take them in, and never tell their master or mistress that they have arrived. They never receive their mercies at the front door with grateful acknowledgments; but they still continue dumb debtors, daily owing more, but making no attempt at a return. The Lord continues to bless them in things temporal, to keep them in health and strength, aye, and to give them the means of grace and spiritual opportunities. And they live as if these things were so commonplace that

they were not worth thanking God for. Many professors are of that kind—recipients of countless mercies, but destitute of such common thankfulness as even beasts might manifest. From them God hears no song of gratitude, no chirp of praise, though birds would charm the woodlands with their minstrelsy;¹ these are worse than the dumb driven cattle, or the fishes in the brook, which do at least leap up and mean their Maker’s praise.

Some show this unthankfulness in another way, for they always dwell most on what they have not got. They have manna, and that is angels’ food; but then they have no fish, and this is a ready theme for grumbling. They talk very loudly of “the fish we did eat in Egypt,” and lament those ample feasts provided by the muddy Nile. Moreover, they have none of those delightful vegetables—the leeks, and the garlic, and the onions. They have none of these rank² luxuries, and therefore again they murmur and call the manna “light bread.” They put this complaint over and over again to Moses, till Moses must have been sick of them and their garlic. They said that they could not get leeks, and cucumbers, and onions, and that they were therefore most hardly done by, and would not much longer put up with it. Thankless rebels! And have I not known some of God’s servants say that they enjoy much of the presence of their Lord, but they have no riches; and so they are not among the favored ones. Over their poverty they fetch a deep groan. Some

1. **minstrelsy**—the art, occupation, or practice of playing an instrument or singing.

2. **rank**—strong scented.

live in the presence of God, so they tell us, and they are full of divine delights, but yet they are greatly afflicted with aches and pains, and all the dolours³ of rheumatism, and therefore they murmur. I admit that rheumatism is a dreadful pain enough, but at the same time to dwell always on the dark side of things, and to forget our mercies, is a sad instance of ingratitude. We are few of us as thankful as we ought to be; and there are some people who are not thankful at all, for instead of a song concerning their mercies, their life is one long dirge⁴ for their miseries. Must we always hear the sackbut?⁵ Is the harp never to give forth a joy-note?

Some show their unthankfulness by fretting under their supposed ills. They know from Scripture that even their afflictions are working for their good, yet they do not rejoice in the prospect, or feel any gratitude for the refining process through which the Lord is passing them. Heaven and perfection are left unsung, but the present processes are groaned over without ceasing. Their monotonous note is always this pain, this loss, this burden, this uncomfortable sensation, this persecution from the world, this unkindness from the saints, and so on; all this goes to show that, though they know God, they do not glorify Him as God, neither are they thankful.

We can be guilty of unthankfulness, also, by never testifying to the goodness of God. A great many people come in and out of your houses; do you ever tell them about God's goodness to you? Did you ever take up a single ten minutes with the tale of the Lord's lovingkindness to you? Oh, what backwardness there is to testify to God as God and to all His goodness and love! Our mouths

are full of anything rather than the goodness of the Lord. Shame on our wicked lips!

Some fail also in their singing of God's praises. I love to be singing in my heart, if I may not sing with my tongue. Is it not a good thing for you housewives, when you are about the house, to sing over everything? I remember a servant that used to sing at the washtub, and sing in the kitchen; and when someone asked her why she was always singing, she said that if it did not do anything else it kept bad thoughts out of her mind. There is a great deal in that; for bad thoughts are bad tenants, who pay no rent and foul the house. I knew a dear old Methodist preacher, who is now in heaven, who when he came downstairs of a morning was always tooting a bit of a hymn over, and he did the same in the barn and the field. I have passed him in the street and noted his happy melody; indeed he was always singing. He never took much notice of anybody, so as to be afraid of being overheard. Whether people heard him or not did not make much difference to him.

He was singing to the Lord, not to them; and so he wells⁶ on singing. I do not think that he had much of a voice or an ear for music, but his soul was made up of praise, and that is better than a musical education. God does not criticize our voice, but He accepts our heart. Oh, to be singing the praises of God every minute of our lives and never ceasing therefrom! Do you not think that many fail in this respect? They are not preparing for heaven, where all is praise; or they would take up the joyful employment at once.

It is plain that many are not thankful to God, for they never praise Him with their substance. Yet

3. **dolours**—physical sufferings; pain; grief.

4. **dirge**—a song sung at a burial.

5. **sackbut**—Some scholars believe the sackbut was the seven-stringed lyre used in Babylon. Spurgeon associates it with sorrow and grief.

6. **wells**—pours forth.

when the Jew was thankful, he took care to give a portion to the house of the Lord: before he would eat of his corn, he would send his sheaf to the sanctuary. If we are grateful to God, we shall feel that the first thing to do is to give of our substance an offering of thanksgiving to the Most High. But this does not strike some people, whose religion is so spiritual that they cannot endure to hear of money, and they faint at the sound of a collection. Their thankfulness rises to singing a hymn occasionally, but it never goes as far as giving a button to the cause of God. I am afraid their thankfulness is not worth more than what they pay to express it: that is to say, nothing at all. God, deliver us from such a state of heart as that, and may we never, in any of these senses, be found amongst those professors, of whom it is said that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were they thankful.

They knew God, but they glorified Him not as God, neither were they thankful. And the first result of it was that *they fell into vain imaginings*. If we do not glorify God, the true God, we shall soon be found setting up another god. This vain-imagination business is being done quite as extensively now as in Paul's days. Depart from the inspiration of the Bible, and from the infallibility of the Spirit of God who wrote it, and where will you go? Well, I cannot tell where you will go. One wanders into one vain imagination, and one into another, till the dreamers are on all sides. I expect to see a new doctrine every day of the week now. Our thinkers have introduced an age of inventions, wherein everything is thought of but the truth of God. We do not want these novelties. We are satisfied with the Word of God as we find it. But if you do not glorify God as God, and are not thankful to Him for His teaching, then away you go into vain imaginations.

And what next? Well, *away goes the mind of man into all sorts of sins*. The chapter describes unnatural lusts and hor-

ribly fierce passions. Men that are not satisfied and thankful—men that have no fear of God before their eyes—it were a shame for us to think, much more to speak, of what they will do. A heart that cannot feed at God's table will riot somewhere. He that is not satisfied with the cup that God has filled will soon be a partaker of the cup of devils. An unthankful spirit is, at bottom, an atheistic spirit. If God were God to us, we should not be unthankful to Him. If God were glorified in our hearts, and we were thankful for everything that He did, we should walk in holiness and live in submission. And if we do not thus behave ourselves, the tendency will be for us to go from bad to worse, and from worse to the very worst. This has been done on a large scale by nations, whose downward course of crime began with want of thankfulness to God. It is done on a smaller scale by individuals, to whom departure from God is the beginning of a vicious career. Get away from God, and where have you gone? If you do not love Him and delight in Him, whither will you stray? May the Lord tether us fast to Himself and even nail us to the cross.

It seems that these people, of whom Paul wrote, fell into all kinds of bitterness, such as envy, murder, deceit, malignity, whispering, backbiting, hating of God. They became spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, and so forth. Well, if your spirit is not sweetened by the adoration and the love of God, it will grow bitter. If love does not reign, hate will rule. Look at unthankful people. Hear them talk. Nobody's character is safe. There is no neighbor whom they will not slander. There is no Christian man whom they will not misrepresent. The very angels of God would not be safe from suspicion if they lived near to people of that kind. But when you glorify God as God and are thankful for everything—when you can take up a bit of bread and a cup of cold water, and say

(continued on page 6)

From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

Matthew 5:3-14 The Beatitudes by Jesus Christ

by Aaron Lapp

JESUS THEN,	AND NOW — MODERN CHRISTIANITY
3. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.	Blessed are those slain in the spirit, for they shall fall over on the floor.
4. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.	Blessed are those overtaken with “holy laughter”; they shall have the Toronto blessing and people will be awed at them.
5. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.	Blessed are those who assert themselves and demonstrate their freedom before men to do as they please—their lusts shall be stimulated.
6. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.	Blessed are they which go to concerts and banquets and all manner of sporting events rallies, for they shall drown out all conviction.
7. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.	Blessed are they which gravitate to the rich and popular, the high life and the fast lane, for they eventually shall not hear the cries of the poor.
8. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.	Blessed are they which can do all the above, for they shall take great leaps of faith.
9. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.	Blessed are they who have relegated Bible doctrine to conference study committees and slanted seminars with presupposed outcomes that agree with the masses, for they will give them great peace in the churches.

JESUS THEN,	AND NOW — MODERN CHRISTIANITY
10. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.	Blessed are they which keep nodding the head during pacifying dialogue, so that change from a solid doctrinal base to a fluid, shock-absorbing, easy-believism transition can be done in a faster, compromising unity.
11. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.	Blessed are ye, when the opposing political party will revile you, and advertise maliciously against you, that God will bring in the money for a counter campaign and your advertising can be a form of "witnessing," and your men and women can win public office and make a big hit for righteousness.
12. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.	Rejoice, and claim the victory. It is only a matter of time. This is the way men of renown have overtaken God's institutions in the past and made them relevant to people's wishes. Your reward is great in the following of the masses given to you and you will go down in the books of church history as one of the great statesmen of the church.
13. Ye <i>are</i> the salt of the earth . . .	Ye <i>were</i> the salt of the earth. The salt <i>has</i> already lost its savor. The momentum of change will carry you for generations, but the wheels will eventually fly off by reason of all this salt without savor.
14. Ye <i>are</i> the light of the world. . . .	Ye <i>were</i> the light of the world . . . "Our light is going out . . ." "Where are <i>we</i> ?" "Can anyone explain this darkness?" "We ought to get persons from our colleges to have seminars on 'Coping and Adjusting to This Oppressive Darkness.'" "Lord . . . where are <i>You</i> . . . ?"

SIN WITH NO EXCUSE . . . cont'd.

with the poor Puritan, "What, all this, and Christ too?"—then are you happy, and you make others happy. A godly preacher, finding that all that there was for dinner was a potato and a herring, thanked God that He had ransacked sea and land to find food for His children. Such a sweet spirit breeds love to everybody, and makes a man go through the world cheerfully. If you give way to the other order of feeling and do not glorify

God, but quarrel with Him and have no thankfulness for His mercies, then you will suck in the spirit of the devil, and you will get into Satan's mind and be of his temper and by-and-by his works you will do. Oh, brothers and sisters, dread unthankfulness! Perhaps you did not think that it was so bad, but it is horrible! God help you to escape from it! ■

—From sermon #1763, delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

NOVEMBER 6, 2005

The Conversion of Saul

Acts 9:3-18

Possibly few events in history have so affected the world and the church as the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. There, on the road to Damascus by a dramatic expression of divine power, God turned a persecutor of the church into a preacher of the faith he once sought to annihilate. Saul was a sincere man, wholly dedicated to a cause he felt was right and, after his conversion, was no less earnest in his defense of the faith. God knew what He was getting when He got Saul. He got a dedicated workman.

Today's text will be enhanced by a reading of 7:58; 8:1-3; 22:1-20; 26:9-19 and the first two verses of Chapter 9. You will also notice that from Chapter 13 on, the Book of Acts is devoted exclusively to Paul and his ministry. He was one of the most significant personalities of the first-century church and carries tremendous influence even to today through his writings.

As Chapter 9 begins we find Saul breathing out fire and threatenings against the "disciples of the Lord," on his way to Damascus to bring any believers he found there bound to Jerusalem to face trial, imprisonment, and possible death. "But," Paul said in writing later to Timothy, "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."

Saul's dramatic conversion experience

began with a blinding flash of light and a demanding voice from heaven inquiring as to his purposes. Saul was dumbstruck. "Who are you, Lord?" He recognized this as the intervention of a divine being. The voice responded, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." Then He told him to go into Damascus and wait for further instructions.

While Saul fasted and prayed and pondered for three days, God was preparing another man to guide him further. Ananias was not too keen on confronting this man Saul, whom he knew to be a persecutor of the believers. Nevertheless, at the Lord's insistence, he went and had the privilege of leading Saul to fuller understanding of new life in Christ.

Notice how Ananias greeted Saul: "Brother Saul." In spite of previous fears he had come to the realization through God's explanation that Saul, the former destroyer of the faith, was now a fellow believer. This acceptance tells us much about the character of Ananias, and likely why God chose him for this task.

Saul's physical sight was restored and his spiritual insight underwent a complete transformation. Notice in the verses immediately following our text how he spent time, likely with instruction, among the disciples and then launched his life-long preaching ministry in the synagogues of Damascus. God had His man and Paul, as he was later called, went on to become one of the most influential Christians this world has ever seen. He serves as a challenge to us of what God

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can do with a person wholly dedicated to doing His will.

For thought and discussion

1. Few have experienced as dramatic a conversion as Saul, but then, as someone has well said, “God doesn’t use a cannon to shoot a fly.” How did He get your attention?
2. There is no fanaticism like religious fanaticism. Saul portrays this principle. What are some examples from today?
3. Saul needed to make some serious adjustments in his thinking. What factors aided him?
4. Ananias’ obedience, in spite of personal trepidation, resulted in untold blessings for many generations. Explore the ramifications of obedience, or disobedience, to God’s call to service.
5. Are you living up to your full potential for the cause of Christ? Discuss things that hinder full commitment.

NOVEMBER 13, 2005

The Gospel to Europe

Acts 16:6-15

Acts 13 and 14 detail Paul and Barnabas’ first missionary journey. Acts 15 describes the Jerusalem Conference at which the issue of circumcision for Gentile believers was discussed and settled. After returning to Antioch Paul and Barnabas continued their preaching and teaching ministry. Then after awhile Paul felt it good to revisit the churches they had established on their first missionary tour. At this point Paul and Barnabas split company over the controversy of taking John Mark along. So Paul took Silas and set out. (Read 13:1–16:5 where today’s text picks up.)

As Paul and Silas journeyed, they delivered to the churches the decrees resulting from the Jerusalem Conference, and encouraged believers in the faith. Being

stopped by the Holy Spirit from going into Bithynia and preaching in Asia, the missionary group, now including Timothy (verses 1-3), came to Troas on the Asian coast of the Aegean Sea.

There, in a night vision, Paul saw a man of Macedonia, a Greek, beckoning him to cross over the sea and preach the gospel to them. Paul, taking this as divine leading, immediately set out. That act of trust set in motion events which have benefited most of us studying this lesson. With Paul’s landing at Neapolis, the gospel message landed on the European continent. Many of us have become beneficiaries of that act.

After landing at Neapolis, Paul and company crossed the mountains to Philippi, some 10 miles distant. Philippi was the “chief city of that part of Macedonia and a [Roman] colony.” On the sabbath the missionary group went out to the riverside to the place of prayer. There was apparently no synagogue in Philippi, but those who worshiped God had a gathering place by the riverside. It seems this group consisted mostly, if not totally, of women. One wonders where the men were, especially the man of Paul’s vision.

As Paul witnessed to this group the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, a wealthy merchantwoman from the Asiatic town of Thyatira. She became the first convert to Christianity on the European continent. The first expression of her newfound faith was an act of hospitality, welcoming the missionary entourage into her home. It is also interesting to note how her faith affected her family. They, too, came to faith and were baptized. (See also verse 40.)

As this missionary tour began, the group consisted of Paul and Silas (15:40). At Lystra Timothy was added to the team. In verse 10 we note an interesting shift in personal pronouns. It is rather obvious that at this point Luke, the chronicler of the Book of Acts, joined the mission team. (See Acts 1:1; Luke 1:1-4.) From subsequent references in the Book

of Acts it appears certain that Doctor Luke accompanied Preacher Paul through the rest of his journeyings, all the way to Rome. (See 20:6; 21:1; 27:1; and 28:16.) He was a faithful and dedicated co-worker.

For thought and discussion

1. Review Paul's previous travels and the experiences which brought him to the place of today's lesson. A map will be helpful.
2. How does the Holy Spirit prompt and guide believers today? How do we determine God's leading?
3. Review again the continuing outward spread of the gospel. Note how far it went in just a few short years. Look at a map of the New Testament world to get a view of its scope.
4. The first convert in Europe was a wealthy businesswoman. Read to the end of the chapter to see how the gospel impacted others in Philippi.
5. Discuss the value and advantages of teamwork in sharing the gospel message.

NOVEMBER 20, 2005

Workers Together in the Gospel

Acts 18:1-4, 18-21, 24-28

As our lesson opens, Paul is still on the European continent, having just arrived in Corinth. In verses 18-21 we find him sailing back to Ephesus, on the Asian continent. Verse 24 picks up again in Ephesus, after Paul had departed, and closes with Apollos preaching in Achaia, again on the European continent. Be sure to map out these routes with the help of a Bible atlas. In spite of what we would call primitive traveling conditions, these early Christian missionaries covered large distances.

In Corinth, Paul found fellow Jews of the same occupation. Aquila and his wife Priscilla were in Corinth as a haven, hav-

ing been recently expelled from Rome by the Emperor Claudius. Paul linked up with them in the trade of tentmaking. Although many times Paul depended on the churches for support (see question #1) he used this occasion to provide for himself. (See also 1 Corinthians 4:12 and 1 Thessalonians 2:9.)

Note, though, in verse 4 Paul's real purpose in Corinth. He was regular at the synagogue on the sabbath, reasoning with both native Jews and Greek Jewish proselytes. The centrality of Paul's message was the risen Christ. (See Acts 17:1-4.)

After a year and a half in Corinth Paul left, following an uproar instigated by unbelieving Jews, and sailed for Ephesus. Aquila and Priscilla accompanied him and remained there after Paul left again, ending up in Antioch. From Antioch Paul later set out on his third missionary journey, strengthening the churches he had established on previous journeys. (See verses 22 and 23.)

In verses 24-28 the focus shifts from Paul to Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos. And here again we see the importance and value of teamwork in the ministry of the gospel. Apollos, a Jew, was born in Alexandria in Egypt, and had for some reason found his way to Ephesus. He was a learned man, eloquent and persuasive in speech. But as he spoke out in the synagogue, Aquila and Priscilla realized something was lacking in his spiritual experience and understanding. His message was incomplete. It went as far as the baptism of repentance, but stopped short of the baptism with the Holy Spirit and a full understanding of the work of the Messiah. (See Acts 19:1-6.)

So Aquila and Priscilla took him aside, likely to their own home, and explained to him "the way of God more perfectly." Barclay says: "The result was that Apollos, who already knew Jesus as a figure in history, came also to know Him as a living presence; and his power as a preacher must have been increased a hundred-fold."

When Apollos planned to pass over to Achaia, the brethren in Ephesus wrote letters of commendation and recommendation, thus paving the way for his further ministry. Apollos filled a vital role in sharing the message of Christ and strengthening those who had already come to faith, all because Aquila and Priscilla took the time to instruct him further in the ways of the Lord. That's the beauty of Christian teamwork.

For thought and discussion

1. Have you ever wondered where these first-generation missionary teams got the resources for their extensive travel? Do a study of this. Acts 15:3; Romans 15:24; 1 Corinthians 16:6; and 3 John 5-8 will be helpful.
2. Look at the various occupations open to the Christian. Which ones best lend themselves to Christian witness? Discuss.
3. What is the central message of the gospel? Do we sometimes get sidetracked into peripheral issues and thus obscure the heart of the gospel? What do you think?
4. Someone has said that a lot more would get done if we weren't so concerned over who got the credit. Note how this principle plays out in the experience of Aquila and Priscilla with Apollos, who undoubtedly outshone them in ministry.
5. The spread of the gospel is a cooperative effort, as we see from this lesson. What is your role in the furtherance of the gospel message in our day?

NOVEMBER 27, 2005

Paul's Farewell Message

Acts 20:17-28, 36-38

As you read Chapter 19 and the first part of Chapter 20 you will notice that Paul was on the move. However, he did put down roots temporarily at several places long enough to establish and stabi-

lize churches. His heart cry was for faithfulness and steadfastness in the churches. (See 20:28-31.) This third missionary journey of Paul's took him back over the churches he had established on the continents of Asia and Europe.

As today's lesson begins we find him enroute to Jerusalem after ministering in Asia and Macedonia. (See 19:22; 20:1-3, 16.) From Miletus he sent word for the elders at Ephesus to meet him there. He was aware that this would be his last contact with them and he wanted to give them words of encouragement in their ongoing work. Ephesus was close to Paul's heart, having spent two years there teaching, working miracles, and establishing the church. His desire was to see it continue as an outpost of the gospel in the midst of the heathen influence in Asia.

In addressing the Ephesian elders, Paul first defends his ministry among them, asserting that his one and primary purpose had been to preach the message of salvation among them. He reaffirms how he had given himself unsparingly to the work, even in the face of persecution by unbelieving Jews. His ministry was both public and private, reaching many in Ephesus and surrounding areas. (See 19:10.)

"Now," he said, "I'm on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what I will face except that the Holy Spirit has warned of trouble ahead." (See 21:10-14.) But then in verse 24 Paul utters his great affirmation of commitment to the cause of Christ. Whatever lay ahead he would face with the confidence that he was in the Lord's will, accomplishing the task for which the Lord had called him. He was unafraid and unmoved by words of warning.

Paul declares himself to have done all in his power to make the gospel message clear and plain at Ephesus. The burden was now on them. He also issues a warning and a challenge to the elders: Take heed to your personal spirituality, and take care of the flock God has entrusted to your care. It is the task of leaders to nurture the flock in spiritual develop-

ment even to the point of self-denial, but not at the cost of personal spiritual development. Paul had modeled this principle for them. (Read verses 29-35.)

Paul was also aware that seductive influences would creep into the church, attempting to destroy unity. He warned the elders to be alert and attentive in defending the church from those who sought its destruction, and to be certain to teach and model the full spectrum of the gospel message.

After Paul's speech they knelt for prayer. Then they fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, weeping. Paul they would see no more. They then accompanied him to the ship. This was it. They were on their own—with Paul's teaching and blessing. It was now up to them to carry on. The torch was passed.

For thought and discussion

1. Review again, with the aid of a map, the great distances traveled by Paul in his ministry of evangelism. How does

his commitment impact our lives? Are we doing all we can with the resources at our disposal?

2. Correlate Paul's statement in Acts 19:22, about seeing Rome, with subsequent events that eventually took him there. Did he even dream he would go as a prisoner? (See 20:22, 23; 21:4, 10-13.)
3. Paul's total commitment serves as inspiration and challenge for believers of all eras. Discuss why we seem to see so few as dedicated in our day. How can we improve?
4. Think about the burden on church leaders to maintain both personal spirituality and minister effectively to the church. How can we best help them in their work?
5. The work of the church is ongoing—aged leaders pass on; new ones take up responsibility. Think about ways to assure constant and careful replacement of leadership in the church. Perhaps discuss with your class. ■

Separated Unto God

by J. C. Wenger



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Death of the Dream

Israel began withdrawing settlers from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in August, 2005. A desperate effort by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to foster peace in the nation, to many Israelis it is the death of a passionate, lifelong dream. Many religious Jews settled in the new lands gained in 1967 because the venture gave their lives meaning—they were part of the conquest of the land God had promised to their people millenniums ago.

Just over half of the Israelis support the pullout. Citizens of Israel enjoy life in a modern, industrial state that boasts a healthy economy. Weary of their 40-year military occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, many Israelis realize that their “dream” has been a nightmare for the Palestinians. Now they just want a democratic nation that is stable, wealthy, and “normal”—with normal defined as being responsible for your own destiny.

And yet, something seems to be lacking. What can secular Israelis really believe in? Jewish writer Alona Kimchi, who describes herself as “tragically secular,” says about the settlers, “Listen, they’re always so passionate. It’s very sexy. What can you belong to, being secular? What big idea? What strong feeling can you cling on to? At this moment, when such strong forces are moving, you don’t have much to say. It’s very difficult to get passionate about anything.”

—from *Newsweek*

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The Life-Giving Power of Love

During the 18th and 19th centuries, orphaned infants and young children placed in institutions faced deathly peril. For example, the Hospital of the Innocents in Florence took in 15,000 babies in two decades. Ten thousand died before the age of one. In the years between 1862 and 1875, an orphanage in Buffalo saw over half of their residents die before age one. It was thought that germs were to blame; elaborate procedures were developed to allow caregivers to care for children with as little human touch as possible. In spite of their sterile environments, the children kept right on dying. In the early 20th century, psychologist John B. Watson, famed as the founder of behaviorism, taught that parents (and everyone else) should not kiss and cuddle children—it spread germs **and** caused emotional neediness.

Then psychologist Harry Harlow appeared on the scene. Harlow performed original experiments on baby primates to see if they needed love or merely physical care. Could a baby be successfully raised in total isolation? These studies were cruel to the primates involved, but the results were revealing. Given the choice, baby monkeys always chose a cloth “mother” that felt maternal over a wire “mother” that fed them milk, making dashes to the wire mother only for a quick drink. Through many experiments such as this, Harlow showed that even baby primates have a profound need for love

that can only be communicated by touch.

Children need to be cuddled, kissed, and swung in circles. There is something mysterious in these primordial activities that strengthens little children, making their immune systems more robust.

Harlow's fight against the establishment eventually changed child psychology. The changes that resulted from his work brought love and life to the world of children, especially those living in institutions. Undoubtedly, the lives of many orphans were saved.

The love parents and other caregivers have for children requires sacrificial and altruistic behavior to be put into practice. This is the kind of love Christianity demands. This is love that literally gives life. —from *Books & Culture*

* * * * *

Counter-Cultural Parenting

Who is going to raise your children, you or the popular culture? You get to decide. According to Rod Dreher, almost all media: television, movies, and print, is designed to separate you and your children from your values and instill consumerist values in their place. Those who want to cultivate strong, independent minds should avoid television, because it tends to suppress the critical, dialectical processes necessary to good thinking. Television tends to be dramatic and emotional, prone to foster instant gratification and sentimentality, while it does not cultivate abstract thought.

Dreher states that we are well into the dusk of a new Dark Age, a time of decadence, passion, dissolution, and cultural fragmentation. During Europe's Dark Ages, the Irish monasteries kept the Christian faith and the humane traditions of the West alive. As Christians we must see our homes as monasteries, preserving the light of truth for the future. —from *Touchstone*

NOVEMBER 2005

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Which Is the Pseudo-Science?

When President George W. Bush was asked on August 1 whether Intelligent Design (ID) should accompany evolution in public-school science curriculums, he responded: "Very interesting question. You're asking me whether or not people ought to be exposed to different ideas, and the answer is yes." The President's comments moved ID more squarely into the mainstream.

Also recently, more than 400 establishment scientists (from Princeton, Cornell, UC-Berkeley, UCLA, and Purdue) have signed a statement declaring their skepticism "of claims for the ability of random mutation and natural selection to account for the complexity of life." —from *WORLD*

* * * * *

Six Days Shalt Thou Labour

The seven-day week is a significant contribution to human civilization and well-being. Where did it come from? Nowhere but the Bible. Our system of days, months, and years is based directly on the movements of the earth, moon, and sun in relation to one another, but the week is "a very artificial construct." It seems that the early Hebrews' emphasis on the week and the concluding day of rest was unique to them. Nothing in science or logic seems to point toward a grouping of days by seven or a day of rest. As the Jewish calendar was incorporated into Christianity, the seven-day week spread over the world. When the Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, he established the seven-day week in the Empire.

Roman Catholicism also made an important contribution to the world calendar. In 1582, Pope Gregory called for reforms in the calendar which had gotten out of kilter. The Gregorian calendar was quickly adopted in Catholic

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countries, but Protestant and Orthodox countries were slow to accept the system. Britain and its American colonies did not adopt the new calendar until 1752, and Russia did not until 1918, when the Communists overthrew the Orthodox czar.

—from *The Daily News-Record*, Harrisonburg, VA

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Lonely Old Age

In Japan, it is becoming popular for old people to keep baby dolls as companions. In this nation of few children, and an aging population, doll manufacturers have found a market selling dolls to the elderly. One called the Yumel doll looks like a little boy, has a vocabulary of 1,200 phrases, and sells for about \$80. When his bedmate pats the little lad’s chest, he says, “I feel so good, goodnight,” before falling asleep.

—from *Touchstone*

* * * * *

The Judgment of God

Douglas Jones and well-known classicist Douglas Wilson have written an article in the journal *Credenda/Agenda* in which they state their position regarding homosexual marriage within society. They feel that Christians should not attempt to ban same-sex marriage or try to impose it; instead they look upon homosexuality as God’s judgment against the church for failing to promote biblical fatherhood. They write, “So we openly accept homosexual marriage in the civil realm as God’s means of undermining that civil realm, and we accept that He has done this in judgment for wicked fathering within the Church.” Jones and Wilson say that the only remedy is to restore right worship and biblical fatherhood.

—from *WORLD*

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Men Without Chests

In his book, *The Abolition of Man*, C. S. Lewis wrote about the universal moral law code understood by all peoples at all times. This he called the Tao; it was revealed to man through both natural law and special revelation.

The Tao has always been considered important in the education of society’s young, that is, until recently. Though both our Greco-Roman and our Judeo-Christian heritage recognized the value of the Tao, modern Western educators have rejected it. According to them, the Tao is not scientific. Also, morality is culture-specific rather than universal, and a religious concept like the Tao has no place in public education. Today, most educators teach morality as a personal choice, not as universal truth.

However, C. S. Lewis wrote that in every person there is perpetual war between the head (reason) and the belly (appetite). The belly would win every time, if the head was not aided by the chest, the seat “of Magnanimity, of emotions organized by trained habit into stable sentiments.” In other words, the chest is the seat of the Tao. When, as in modern education, the Tao is not developed, the chest shrivels, leaving the head easy prey for the belly.

Not only must the young student be taught the difference between virtue and vice, he must be taught how to **feel** about different behaviors. When very young, he must be trained to feel good when he does what is right, and to feel internal disgust when he does what is vicious. Humans are fallen creatures, and their emotions must be trained—this strengthens and expands the chest. The well-developed chest enables reason to rule over his own appetites.

—from *Touchstone*

A Look at Church Discipline Through the Anabaptists, the Early Christian Writers, and the New Testament

by James Thurmond

ANABAPTISTS

Two very important historical events started a reformation in the Church. Around 1450 the printing press was invented and around 1500 a man named Erasmus translated the Bible into modern Greek. This made the Bible available to the scholars of the time. One of the printers of this Bible dubbed it the "Textus Receptus" or the Bible available to all. This made the Bible available to priests in a language that they had been trained in. This caused many problems for the Catholic Church. Martin Luther translated the second edition of this Bible into German. It was also the basis for the Geneva and Bishops Bibles as well as Tyndale's and the King James version (and others).

About the same time that Luther started the Reformation in Germany a man named Zwingli began the Reformation movement in Switzerland. He coined a phrase, *Sola Scriptura*, Only Scripture. He soon left this basic belief and became involved with the leadership of the time and began to negotiate with them on matters of doctrine. Some of his student/followers were very upset that he was leaving his base of strong biblical doctrine. They were convinced that the Scriptures, and not man-made church doctrine, must be followed. An organizational meeting was held on January 21, 1525, and the Swiss Free Church was born. The primary leaders at this meeting were Conrad Grebel, who died in 1526; Felix Manz, who died as a martyr in 1527; and George Blaurock, who was severely beaten and banished from Zurich in 1527, only to be burned to

death in the Tirol in 1529.

After their deaths the mantle of leadership fell upon a former Benedictine monk named Michael Sattler. It was Sattler who pulled together the scattered and confused Swiss Brethren and led them to settle upon what was a Biblical faith and way of life. These Swiss Brethren became widely known as the Anabaptists. A meeting was held at a village in Schaffhausen called Schleithem in 1527. Seven articles were worked over and adopted unanimously by the brothers and sisters that were present. Some excerpts from the seven articles follow:

- 1) Baptism is to be given to people who have repented and believe on Christ, who manifest a new way of life, who "walk in the resurrection," and who actually request baptism.
- 2) & 3) Deal with the Lord's Supper with particular emphasis on reclaiming from any form of sin any brothers or sisters who have strayed from Christ's way of love, holiness, and obedience. *Those who are overtaken by sin should be twice warned privately, then publically admonished before the congregation.*
- 4) Reject the world and its sinful practices.
- 5) The qualifications of a Pastor (Shepherd).
- 6) Nonresistance.
- 7) Swearing of oaths.

Many people died because of these beliefs. I could not find any dissension of these beliefs among the Anabaptist writers such as Grebel, Sattler, Philips, Simons, etc.

Approximately 100 years later (1632) a

more definitive Confession of Faith was written. This was known as the Dortrecht Confession of Faith. This confession of faith was adopted by the northern churches in Holland and then translated into French and German and adopted by the ministers of the churches in France, Germany, and Switzerland. It then came to North America and was adopted by a conference of Pennsylvania Mennonite ministers in 1725.

Section XVI of this document deals with discipline (page 43 of the *Martyrs Mirror*). The reasons given for discipline are:

- 1) A little leaven goes through the whole loaf.
- 2) As an example that others may fear.
- 3) To keep the Church pure.
- 4) To bring no dishonor to the Church so that those without will take no offense.
- 5) That the sinner may not be condemned with the world, but become convinced in his mind and be moved to sorrow, repentance, and reformation.

The Dortrecht Confession of Faith was in effect until the General Conference Mennonites decided it was time to restate the doctrinal position of the Church in terms of today's issues. This watered-down Mennonite confession of Faith was printed in 1963. This confession was declared to be a restatement of the Dortrecht document. In the 1963 document, Article 8 deals with discipline. Article 8 states, "We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has given authority to His Church to exercise discipline. The purposes of discipline are to lead each member to full stature in Christ, to restore to full fellowship the members that fall into sin, to clarify for all members the meaning of discipleship, to promote the purity of the Church, to warn the weak and immature of the serious character of sin and disobedience to God's Word, and to maintain the good name and witness of the Church before the world. In the work of discipline the

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Church employs public teaching, private counseling, intercessory prayer, earnest warning and rebuke, and sympathetic encouragement. If disobedience persists, the church may withhold the right to commune until the individual repents. The Church must, with a deep sense of loss, recognize that the one who goes on to full apostasy and spiritual ruin has severed his relationship with Christ and His body. The standard in church discipline is the Word of God as interpreted by the brotherhood. The entire congregation should share in the work of discipline and seek earnestly to win the fallen member."

THE EARLY CHURCH WRITERS

Why are the beliefs of these early Christian writers important? Because early Christian testimony holds that many, such as Clement of Rome, and Polycarp, personally knew the Apostles of Jesus. They were approved by the Apostles and appointed by the Apostles to positions of Church leadership. Modern students of Church history must largely depend on these and other early Christian writers for information of major import, such as who wrote the New Testament documents and how the Christian canon of Scriptures came into being. Furthermore, these early Christians' interpretation of the Scriptures is among the most valuable commentary on Scripture anywhere. To be sure, none of these writers claimed divine inspiration: nor did they equate their own writings with Scripture. They did, however, claim that they were faithfully passing along the faith that the Apostles had delivered to the Church.

Clement of Alexandria. A learned Christian teacher at Alexandria, Egypt, who was in charge of the catechetical school there. Origin was one of his pupils.

"If one must censure, it is necessary also to rebuke. For it is the time to wound the apathetic soul. I do not mean

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mortally, but salutarily, securing exemption from everlasting death by a little pain.”

“The Physician is not evil to the sick person because he tells him of his fever. For the Physician is not the cause of the fever; he only points out the fever. Likewise he who reproves is not ill-disposed towards him who is diseased in soul. For he is not the cause of the transgressions on him. He only reveals the sins that are there.”

“God does not punish, for punishment is retaliation for evil. Rather He chastises—for the purpose of good.”

“He forbids us either to salute such persons or to receive them in our hospitality. Yet, this is not harsh in the case of a man of this sort. But he admonishes Christians neither to confer nor dispute with those who are not able to handle divine things with intelligence, lest through them they be seduced from the doctrine of truth.”

Tertullian. Fiery Christian writer in Carthage, North Africa. He may have been an ordained presbyter. He wrote numerous apologies, works against heretics, and exhortations to other Christians . . . nearly all of which are in Latin.

“In the same place also, exhortations are made. Rebukes and sacred censures are administered. That is because the work of judging is carried on among us with great seriousness . . . and you have the most notable example of judgment to come when anyone has sinned so grievously as to require his severance from us in prayer, in the congregation, and in all sacred matters.”

“But it will be said that some of us, too, depart from the rules of our discipline. In that case, we count such persons as no longer Christians.”

“In this example of a leper . . . (the law) prohibited any contact with a person who was defiled with sin. The Apostle also forbids us to even eat food with such a one. For the taint of sins can be communicated as if contagious, wherever a

man mixes himself with a sinner.”

“All of the frenzies of passions beyond the law of nature—impious toward both the bodies and the sexes—we banish not only from the threshold, but from all shelter of the Church. For they are not sins, but monstrosities.”

“You [the Bishops of the Church] reply that communion is indeed denied to sinners—particularly those who have been polluted by the flesh. But you say it is only for the present. You say they are to be restored as a result of penitential pleading, in accordance with the clemency of God that prefers a sinner’s repentance to his death.”

Origen. A pupil of Clement of Alexandria, who took over the famous catechetical school in Alexandria after the departure of Clement. He has been called the “father of Christian theology.” He was the most prolific writer of the pre-nicene church, dictating over two thousand works. “How can the medicine of permissiveness profit anyone? What if a physician hides the wound and does not allow the necessary remedy of time to close the scar? To not require repentance makes the way easier for new dangers. To do that is not curing someone. If we are honest, it is slaying him.”

“Those persons cannot remain in God’s Church who have not maintained ecclesiastical discipline—either in the manner of their life or in the peace of their character.”

“Do not be partakers with them. We must withdraw. Nay, we must flee from those who fall away.”

“We must separate from a believer who lives irregularly and contrary to the discipline. Paul said to the Thessalonians: ‘But we have commanded you, in the name of Jesus Christ, that you depart from all brethren who walk disorderly and not according to the tradition that you have received from us.’ ”

“The sinner must be publically reproved. In the first epistle of Paul to Timothy, it says: ‘Rebuke those who sin,

in the presence of all.’ ”

Iranaeus. Bishop of the Church at Lyons (in modern-day France). When he was a boy, Iranaeus heard Polycarp teach.

“Therefore, do not be partakers with them. Back then, the condemnation of sinners extended to others who approved of them and joined in their society. And the present case is still the same, for ‘a little leaven leavens the whole lump.’ ”

Apostolic Constitutions (compiled in 390).

“If anyone is convicted of having done a wicked action that causes the whole body of the Church and its teachings to be blasphemed, the Bishop must boldly reject such a person upon proof—unless the person changes his course of life.”

“In the present world, the righteous and the wicked are mingled together in the common affairs of life—but not in Holy Communion.”

“Sin that passes by without correction grows worse and worse and spreads to others. For ‘a little leaven infects the whole lump. . . .’ Likewise, one diseased sheep, if not separated from those who are well, infects the rest. Therefore, if we neglect to separate the transgressor from the Church of God, we will make the ‘Lord’s house a den of thieves.’ For it is the Bishop’s duty not to be silent in the case of offenders.”

“If anyone hardens himself, ‘tell it to the Church. However, if he refuses to listen to the Church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.’ In other words, receive him no longer into the Church as a Christian, but reject him as a pagan. However, if he is willing to repent, receive him. For the Church does not receive a pagan or tax collector to communion. . . . As to those who are convicted of any wicked action and have not repented—you should view them as tax collectors or pagans. However, if they later repent and turn from their error—we permit such ones to enter the Church—but only to hear, until they

show fruits of repentance. However, do not let them be admitted to communion and prayer. Rather, let them depart after the reading of the law, the prophets, and the Gospel—that by such departure they may be made better in the course of life.”

THE NEW TESTAMENT

It is very difficult to decide where to start and where to stop quoting New Testament Scriptures pertaining to discipline. I will start with the statement that as I study the Anabaptists and the early church writers I find one great thing in common: they both interpret the Scriptures as close as possible to the way that they are written—no fancy involved interpretations, only a simple belief that the Bible says what it means and means what it says.

On the Christian brother that falls into sin.

Matthew 18:17—“If he refuses to hear them, tell it to the Church. But if he refuses even to hear the Church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.”

Luke 17:3—“If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.”

1 Corinthians 5:11—“But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother, but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.”

1 Corinthians 5:6—“Don’t you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?”

2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15—“If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.”

1 Timothy 5:20—“Those who are in sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.”

2 John 10, 11—“If anyone comes to

you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.”

1 Corinthians 5:12, 13—“What business is it of mine to judge those outside the Church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. Expel the wicked man from among you.”

1 Corinthians 5:5—“Hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.”

Titus 3:10—“Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.”

James 5:19, 20—“My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.”

I have not exhausted the references to discipline in the New Testament. I only want to point out that the beliefs and practices concerning discipline of the 1st- and 2nd-century Christians and the

Anabaptists, as well as the churches practicing discipline over the centuries, are well-founded in the Scriptures.

This study has been done to show that there are very strong reasons for discipline in the church. If we truly love each other we will do everything possible to ensure that we all make it to the ultimate goal . . . eternity with Jesus Christ. The word *judgment* should not be confused with rebuke, admonish, correct, etc. Tolerance can actually cause eternal punishment for the offender and can in no way be equated to love. We must love our brothers and sisters enough to discipline them as necessary in order that they may not be lost. It is my fervent prayer that if I fall into sin that my brothers and sisters will love me enough to discipline me. ■

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Biblical Nonresistance for Our Day

*To define practical applications of the doctrine
of nonresistance for everyday living.*

by David L. Burkholder

The doctrine of nonresistance, the nonuse of force to achieve one's ends, does not stand alone in the Christian economy, but is part and parcel of the broader, all-encompassing doctrine of nonconformity, the separation of the Christian from the world. As Christians we are *called out* of the world and its pattern, we are *transformed* by the renewing work of the Holy Spirit, and we are *challenged* to give our lives in total commitment and service to the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 12:1, 2). The Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthian Church not to have anything to do by way of fellowship or intimate relationships with the ungodly world system. To keep pure and to fulfill their Christian calling, followers of Jesus must disassociate themselves from any and all entanglements with the evil world system (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

The Apostle does make it clear in Romans 13, however, that Christians have the moral obligation of obedience to civil authority. However, this obedience is not to supersede the Christian's higher obedience to God. On the other hand, the Christian's obedience to God gives no room for the neglect of legitimate duties to the state, nor does it allow for only selective obedience to its laws. Only when the demands of the state are in direct conflict with the law and will of God does the Christian have the legitimate right to disobey.

These are important principles to

keep in mind when discussing the principle of nonresistance in relation to daily living. There are those professing Christians who, on the matter of participation in the military for instance, believe it their duty to obey the command of the state to bear arms in defense of its principles. They reason that in such cases the responsibility for taking life rests with the state and is not the personal responsibility of the individual. We believe this position to be in error. We believe the truly born-again, committed child of God cannot engage in armed conflict, and that to stand in opposition to such is a direct outgrowth of a commitment to the overarching principle of nonconformity to the world and its system in all areas of life.

While nonparticipation in war is arguably the most visible aspect of the application of the doctrine of nonresistance, its principles carry over into other areas of life as well: the use of civil law, voting, political office-holding, protests, boycotts, business/labor relations, and petitioning, to name several. As followers of the Prince of Peace, the Christian must follow peace in all human relationships. We are to be harmless, to exhibit love and a self-sacrificing attitude, be forgiving, generous, and helpful toward all men—friends as well as those who may count themselves our enemies.

There are Scriptural principles

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which will give guidance in making this doctrine practical in everyday living. These principles will apply and be useful in a variety of situations one faces in life. Nonresistance, it should be stated, is not simply a doctrine, a teaching, but is in every respect a total way of life. "Nonresistance," as Daniel Kauffman has pointed out in *Doctrines of the Bible*, "is but the outward manifestation of the peace of God within the soul." As such it touches every aspect of our lives.

We go to the Scriptures for an understanding of this important, and to some, radical doctrine. We will examine not only Christ's teachings, but His life as well. He is our example. He has shown us the way to apply His teachings. It is up to us, then, to make them practical in everyday living.

The teaching of Jesus in Matthew 5:38-48 is the classic passage on the teaching of the doctrine of nonresistance. Here Jesus brings into stark contrast His new principle of self-giving love with the old standard of equal retribution. The old law (v. 38), Jesus said, was a law of retaliation, tit-for-tat, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, life for life. Its purpose was for the offended to be able to exact justice equal to, but not exceeding, the offense. But Jesus quickly goes on to say that there's a better way, a higher, more noble way. That way He outlines in the following verses. The follower of Christ does not resist on the level of the world, with an attitude of revenge or retaliation, or with carnal force. He meets hate with love, violence with meekness, cursing with blessing. What a contrast!

In verse 39 Jesus says: "Don't resist the man who wants to harm you." Rather, turn the other cheek. Instead of taking revenge for an injury, be ready to suffer patiently a repetition of the same injury. Don't retaliate. Be ready to suffer abuse. In verse 40 He

states: If sued, give more than asked. The Christian does not stand upon his legal rights, nor argue when those rights are infringed upon. He voluntarily gives more than asked, thus leaving a testimony of generosity. When compelled, do more than required, v. 41. Go beyond mere grudging duty by the exercise of grace and cheerfulness in unfavorable circumstances. Such an attitude wins the favor even of our enemies. This is second-mile religion. Don't be miserly with your possessions; share freely with those in need, v. 42.

In verse 43 Jesus sets the stage for the teaching of His new ethic of love by contrasting it with the letter of the old law. "It hath been said" is the starting point. "Love your enemies," verse 44, is the new rule Jesus teaches, that love triumphs over hatred. Love seeks no revenge. Love does not pursue justice. Love, blessing, good deeds, and prayer are more effective than retaliation. This is agape love—unconquerable benevolence, invincible goodwill.

Those who follow these principles, Jesus says in verse 45, are the true children of the heavenly Father who dispenses His favor without measure on both the just and the unjust. True Christian love, vv. 46-48, Jesus says, will exceed natural law. It will extend beyond merely doing good to those who do good to you. There is no merit or reward in simply loving those who love you. But to really love those who do not love you in return calls for the highest kind of love—God's kind of love. The focus of Jesus' teaching in this passage is that love conquers hate, and that self-sacrificing love, rather than revenge or retaliation, is the way to peace, and must be the rule of the Christian's life.

Romans 12:17-21 gives further principles for good human relations. The Christian is to live openly and honestly before all men. The Christian is to live

at peace with all men. The Christian is not to retaliate. The Christian must leave vengeance in God's hands; it is His prerogative. The Christian shows love to his enemies by acts of kindness. The Christian overcomes evil by doing good deeds.

In 1 Peter 2:19-23 we have described the example of Jesus under test. He patiently endured taunts, ridicule, and physical suffering without answering back. In Matthew 26:51-53 we note that Jesus did not take advantage of the situation to get revenge or to retaliate. In Luke 23:33, 34 Jesus expressed forgiveness to those who crucified Him. There was no hint of revenge, retaliation or ill-will in the response of Jesus to those who so wrongly accused Him and crucified Him. He is our perfect example of patient endurance. His example is proof that love is stronger than hate. His life is a model for our own.

Perhaps we should ask before moving on to the application of this principle to everyday living, just what is the purpose, the goal, of the application of this principle of nonresistant love? Is it not to change the hearts of evil men by its exercise, to draw them to God who enables men to express such love in the face of hatred? Should not the highest goal of the Christian be to bring men to salvation in Christ? While retaliation, or the seeking of revenge, separates men, non-retaliating, self-giving love draws them together and provides testimony to the transformation of life possible through the Prince of Peace.

The Principle of Nonresistance Applied to Daily Living

Non-participation in war. In John 18:36 we read: *"Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."* By this

statement Jesus forbade His followers to use the sword to defend personal or national rights. Menno Simons said: *"The regenerate do not go to war, nor engage in strife. . . . They are the children of peace."*

Can the professed child of peace, a child of God, take judgment into his own hands and destroy the lives of others for any reason? No! Does it not seem absurd, for example, that Mennonites from America would face Mennonites from Europe on the battlefield in an attempt to destroy each other for the benefit of their country? And yet it so happened in World War II. Does not something seem wrong here? A strict adherence to the principles of Scripture and our traditional historical position would have eliminated such a situation. Young Mennonite men have been called "yellow bellies" for refusing to take up arms in defense of their country's principles. But suffering human persecution is far better than facing the judgment of God on those who are disobedient to His law of love.

Litigation is the use of civil law for the redress of wrongs. Does it stack up with the principles laid down in Matthew 5 for a Christian to seek redress for wrongs done to him at a court of civil law? Isn't it far better to suffer wrong, to face loss or damage than to retaliate by suing at law? To protect his testimony and to leave a positive witness to evildoers, the peace-loving Christian must have no part in civil suits. He will rather willingly suffer wrong for the privilege of maintaining his Christian integrity.

Voting, politicking, office-holding. Again, it does not seem consistent with the principles of the meek and quiet Saviour to become involved in the political process where slander, half-truths, and untruths are common fare. Political campaigns are focused on disqualifying one's opponent by whatever means possible. It does not ring true

with Christian testimony to become involved in the political process. One World War I conscientious objector was granted exemption solely on the fact that he had never voted in public elections. His companion was refused exemption because he had voted. To hold civil office would also be to compromise the principles Christ taught in the Sermon on the Mount. Civil office is based upon and upheld by the law of force. For the nonresistant Christian such involvement is out.

Jury duty. It is also inconsistent with the principles of Christ to sit in judgment of others in civil court. The Christian is to seek the spiritual welfare of all men, not use his influence to bring the weight of law to bear on an offender. How could a Christian help to condemn a man to death in court, and then refuse to go to war in the defense of his country? There needs to be consistency of life and practice. Jury duty is therefore incompatible with a profession of love for one's fellowmen.

Business/labor relations. It would seem impossible for a Christian to be part of a business where less than Christian principles are employed in dealing with employees, suppliers, or the public. Businesses often enter litigation to protect their rights or to defend themselves against wrong. Could a Christian be a partner in such a business? Hardly. Labor unions are based on the premise of using force to achieve their purposes. Their intent is to secure their benefits at the expense of others. Can you imagine Jesus being a card-carrying union member? I cannot. So, neither should I?

Petitions, boycotts, etc. The purpose of these is to bring forceful suasion to bear on situations in an attempt to change policies, hinder exercise of business or personal rights, to defame personalities or cause financial hardship. Jesus said we are to love those who do us wrong, not further

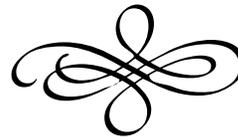
alienate them by sub-Christian actions. The peace-loving Christian will not involve himself in such activities.

Speech and attitudes. Often by a simple verbal expression or attitude we can undermine our profession of love toward our fellowman. The Christian must watch his attitudes and the expression of those attitudes in his speech. The Christian's duty is to seek the good of all men. We dare not destroy our influence by careless speech or un-Christian attitudes.

Conclusion. Nonresistance is perhaps best defined as that attitude of love which overcomes all tendencies to do wrong to another, whether deserved or not, and instead goes beyond normal demands to assure goodwill.

Jesus, our perfect example, suffered abuse, wrong, defamation and death, suffering in silence and even extending forgiveness and saving grace to those who abused Him. His was a perfect example of nonresistant love.

How about you? Are you exhibiting the way of love and peace in all human relationships? Is your purpose in life to seek the spiritual welfare of all mankind, regardless of their attitude toward you or treatment of you? Are you ready and willing to suffer the loss of property, or even of life itself, rather than to stand up for your rights in a court of law? Only then can you be called a truly nonresistant Christian. For the principle of nonresistance to be practical and valid and perpetuated in our day, we must support it by our attitudes, our actions, and our commitment to Christ and our fellowmen. May God help us to that end. ■



“At Ease in Zion”

by J. Mark Horst

Recently, while reading through the Old Testament Book of Amos, I was struck by similarities between the Israel of Amos’ day and much of what passes for Christianity today. (No, I am not suggesting that Israel and the church are synonymous!)

In Amos’ writings, he issues an urgent plea for repentance as the only escape from the impending judgment of God. Israel, at this time, was outwardly prosperous but inwardly corrupt and idolatrous. They continued with the temple worship and the sacrifices; but on their own terms, not God’s instructions. That sounds like much of the modern day “contemporary worship” movement with its focus on man rather than God.

Why do prosperity and apostasy seem to go hand in hand?

In Chapters 5 and 6, Amos issues a scathing denunciation of those who called themselves “God’s people” yet offered sacrifices to Molech and other false gods. In graphic terms he registers God’s disgust at their false worship.

Chapter 6 begins with these words: “Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria . . .” Verses 4 through 6 fill in the details of the life of luxury many were living. Those details mirror the living standards of many professing Christians today, and unfortunately, many see no problem with that.

But God is not unjust. In Amos’ day, God intended the nation of Israel to represent His person and character to the heathen nations around them.

Today, that responsibility has been given to the church. If the conditions Amos mentioned brought God’s judgment down upon Israel, how can we hope to escape if we follow in their steps?

Do we suppose that God will have a different message for us than He did for Israel?

Christians today are spending record amounts of money on extravagant houses, luxury vehicles, lavish entertainment, sports, hobbies, and more. And all the while, people the world over perish from the lack of basic necessities, and more importantly, the Gospel message itself. Do we somehow suppose that God will have a different message for us than He did for Israel in Amos’ day?

First Peter 4:17 reminds us that “the time is [near] that judgment must begin at the house of God . . .” Brothers and sisters, are we seeing the beginning of that judgment in the increasing advance of secularism in our day? That judgment will begin to separate between those who profess Christ and those who truly possess Him.

Paul urges us in 2 Corinthians 13:2, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.” As I put the microscope of God’s Word to my own life and lifestyle, I’m convicted that there is excess that needs to be trimmed away. What do you see as you evaluate your life? Will you and I be obedient to the promptings of the Spirit, or will we persist in our own way until we’re carried away captive? ■

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

The Sovereignty of God and Natural Disasters

by John Forry

When God created the earth, He mentioned six times during the week that what He made was “good.” When God completed His work of creation, He pronounced it to be “very good.” Every part of it was in perfect harmony with every other part—all perfectly formed. There could have been nothing that was not good: no struggle for existence, no disease or pollution, no physical calamities (earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, floods, etc.), no disorder, no sin or death.

After Adam and Eve sinned, nature fell and the ground was cursed. What was organized into a complex system during Creation week is becoming disorganized which ends in decay and disintegration. Every day we see the results of the curse: tidal waves—like the tsunami tragedy in Southeast Asia; and the one in Honduras; or the mudslides in Venezuela and more recently in California. Our world is experiencing numerous earthquakes each year which are not only increasing in number but also in intensity. Think also of the severe hurricanes we are having each year in the United States, with Florida being struck four times in 2004; and other parts of the world being devastated with extreme drought or with floods.

The question being asked by many people (including Christians) is, “Has God removed Himself from nature or what is causing these disasters?” We must distinguish between the immediate cause of these events and their ultimate cause. Earthquakes are caused by a problem beneath the earth’s crust; specifically, the top of the earth’s crust moves in one direction and the lower level moves in the opposite direction. Tornados are caused by wind and tem-

perature patterns; however, the ultimate cause of these events, directly or indirectly, is God. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things.

During the time of Job, God gave Satan the power to control lightning and a windstorm (tornado). It was not Satan’s lightning or tornado that brought destruction. God in His providence set the boundaries and Satan could only do what God allowed. It would appear that Job observed this by saying, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away” (Job 1:21).

There are times in Scripture that God is pictured as being in control of nature, even without secondary causes. When the disciples were fearful of drowning in the Sea of Galilee, Christ awoke from His sleep and said, “Peace be still,” and the Bible says, “The wind ceased, and there was a great calm” (Mark 4:39). The same Christ could have spoken similar words to the hurricane winds in Florida and they would have obeyed Him and the tidal waves of the tsunami in Southeast Asia could have ceased.

Let us consider the fact that “the heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1). That being true, the Lord does reveal His attributes through the positive side of nature, so why would He not use the calamities of nature also to reveal something about His other attributes? Nowhere in Scripture do we read that the Lord who created the stars and keeps them in line ever removes Himself from nature; if nature is to give us a balanced picture of God, we must see His judgment too.

The Psalmist said, “Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.

He causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasures” (Psalm 135:6, 7).

It was God who sent the Great Flood in Noah’s time. He determined the timing, the duration, and the intensity of the rain. It all happened as He decreed. The same God also sent the plagues in Egypt. He caused the sun to “stand still” so that Joshua could win a war. He sealed the heavens from rain for three years and six months and then brought rain in response to Elijah’s prayer. The Bible clearly indicates that it was the Lord who “sent out a great wind into the sea” that forced the sailors to throw Jonah overboard. Truly we can see that God is the ultimate cause of these disasters and which were for the most part acts of judgment upon sin; however, at times the righteous were victims of these judgments too. In the cause of Job’s children that perished in the storm, it was not because they were wicked, but because God wanted to test their father.

God uses nature to both bless and challenge us, to feed and instruct us. He does not always bless His faithful servants with prosperity, but He used prosperity as a factor in Job’s testing. Job had to be blessed in great measure before he could be tried in great extent. Since God stands behind nature, and calamities come according to His will and purpose, the question might be asked: Are we fighting God when we fight nature? The answer is no. Nature is not God. He is apart from nature. The Christian faith stands in sharp contrast to the belief of pantheism which teaches that “all is God and God is all.” When God created man, he was given dominion of the earth and told to “subdue it” (Gen. 1:28). After the fall, man began striving against nature, fighting against thorns and thistles, painfully working with the sweat of his brow. As stewards, we should control nature to the best of

our ability. Christians ought to be willing to help those who are in distress, doing what we can to save the lives of the sick and dying. While on earth, Jesus healed the lame and the sick and raised the dead. He challenged His disciples that helping suffering humanity was the same as helping Him (Matt. 25:45).

If the goodness of God is manifested in the blessings of nature, and His judgments are evident in natural disasters, the question may arise: Can we charge God with evil? Or, as is asked many times, how can a good God allow destruction and pain to come upon human beings? The answer to those honest questions is that God operates by a different set of rules. He is Creator; we are the creatures. He is the Giver of life, and He has the prerogative to take life. God says in Isaiah 45:7, “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil [physical calamity—AMP].” God alone can save and He alone can destroy. His long-term agenda is more than keeping people alive as long as possible—death and destruction are also part of His plan. “God’s ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts than our thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9). God doesn’t delight in human suffering, which would be contrary to His basic nature of loving mankind, but He does delight in executing His judgments. Deuteronomy 28:63 says “as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it.” The reason God said that is because He delights in defending His glory! Remember, we are finite beings; it is not our place to judge an infinite God. As clay we have no right to judge the potter. So, what are we to learn from the tsunami tragedy?

God said through the prophet Amos, “Shall there be evil in a city and the

Lord hath not done it?" (3:6). The word does not mean moral evil, but punishment for sin. These disasters are in the hands of Almighty God. Whatever part may be of Satan is only allowed by God. Thus when a disaster strikes, there is a lesson to be learned from it.

There are lessons from earthquakes in the Bible. The first earthquake mentioned is recorded in 1 Kings 19:11-13. The Lord sent a strong wind, an earthquake, and a fire to get Elijah's attention. God had chosen him to be a voice of thunder, fire, and condemnation to Israel because of their disobedience to God. When God spoke in a still, small voice to Elijah, it broke his heart. He reminded the prophet to be faithful to his commission and not to be concerned about the fruit. That was God's business. Another earthquake occurred when Jesus was crucified. In Matthew 27:51, 52 it says, "The earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened. . . ." Before the fall of man there were no earthquakes. Since sin entered the world, the earth was cursed and has been reeling under the destructive forces both of Satan's evil corruption and of God's divine judgment. When Christ died on the cross, He earned the right to take back the title deed to the earth from the hand of His Father. When God shook the earth at the death of His Son, He gave the world a foretaste of what He will do when He shakes the earth in judgment when Christ returns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The Bible also says there was an earthquake when Jesus arose from the dead: "And behold, there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it" (Matthew 28:2). The shock of the supernatural brilliance and of the unusual earthquake scared the soldiers, striking them with fear. It took a lot to scare hardened Roman soldiers, but it

paralyzed them and they became helpless, almost like dead men. Those holding the dead a prisoner became as dead! The fourth account of an earthquake is found in Acts 16:26 when the Apostle was in prison. ". . . there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's bands were loosed." We see here the power of Christ to overcome the bitterness of difficult circumstances. Their song was not one of deliverance but that of perfect contentment in bondage. As the result, God demonstrated His power in the earthquake as the means of making the jailer aware of his sins and setting Paul and Silas free.

As we look in the future, Jesus prophesied that in the end times there will be devastation throughout the world. Famines, pestilences, and earthquakes will increase. He also said that "iniquity shall abound" (Matt. 24:7, 12). We clearly see a parallel of the increase of sin and its effects on the natural earth. The full force of end time judgments will be much more severe. When God's final bowl of judgment is poured out, there will be a great earthquake; mountains will disappear; hailstones weighing one hundred pounds will fall upon the earth. During the Tribulation Period, hailstones weighing a talent apiece will break down the strongest houses and will destroy every living thing that is struck. Everything that man has ever built up is going to collapse (Revelation 16:17-21). So we learn from these illustrations in Scripture that natural disasters are under the sovereign control of God and can be used by Satan to his advantage.

There are a few lessons for us to consider for our spiritual understanding.

1. When disaster strikes, there is a great drive for unity. Indonesia contains the world's largest Muslim population. India is the world's largest Hindu country and Sri Lanka is almost 70

percent Buddhist. When the tsunami hit, there were more than 100,000 European vacationers in the vicinity. Such devastation brought a great outpouring of compassion and financial aid to these governments of the lands that were affected. With the longevity of rebuilding, there must be cooperation between the nations affected by the tsunami. This continued involvement of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians will have a bonding effect and create a new atmosphere of accepting one another. In these times of difficulty, people put aside their differences of faith and join hands for the common good. They even try to unify church bodies at the expense of doctrine and practice. The underlining goal of Satan, according to Bible prophecy, is to use natural disasters to produce manmade peace on earth.

From the beginning of time, man's dream was to create his own peace, live in harmony with his neighbor. In Genesis 11:4, there was an attempt toward a global religion by building a tower to heaven. Later, Nebuchadnezzar tried to unite the people religiously to bow and worship his image. The Apostle John saw a time coming when "all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him" (Rev. 13:8), meaning that all the religions of the world will be united in a one-world Church (except the believers—we will be gone) controlled by Satan. However much we may agree with the late Pope Paul II on his aspects of morality, we disagree with how he promoted unity among Christ-denying religions of the world. All it would take for the world's religions to unite under the leadership of Rome would be the Rapture of all true Christians.

2. Another lesson to be learned is that as greater disasters occur in the future, the more man's true nature of depravity is revealed. Revelation 9:20 says, "And the rest of the men which

were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands." We may ask why they will not repent? Paul answers that question in 2 Thessalonians 1:10, 11, "They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie," literally "the lie." Those who once understood the gospel and willfully reject it are now caused to accept the Antichrist. This shows us that fear in itself is not sufficient to drive a person to God.

3. A third lesson: death is inevitable. Likely we know of someone who was killed unexpectedly. Let us not forget that we too could die without warning. These experiences remind us of our mortality.
4. These disasters also remind us of the coming judgment. Jesus said in Luke 13:3, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." This doesn't mean that the unrepentant person will die in a similar disaster, but they will be swept into judgment without warning.
5. The final lesson is that we can escape the coming judgment by repentance. The travelers on the Titanic were designated either first, second, or third class. When the ship went down into the water, there were only two categories: saved and lost.

The Bible has the answer for what is happening in our world. Man is sinful and in need of salvation. God in His love and mercy has prepared a way of escape, not only from natural disasters, but also from eternal destruction through the person Jesus Christ. ■

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Practical Rules for Making Peace

by Harold S. Martin

Getting along peaceably with others is a skill that can be learned. There are a few basic rules that should help us “follow the things that make for peace.”

1. *Resolve to Be Humble in Attitude*

The Bible says, “All of you be submissive one to another, and be clothed with humility” (1 Peter 5:5). We must meet hostile people with an overflowing spirit of goodwill. We must become tender, teachable, childlike, and humble—determined to live peaceably with all persons—even those who have a cantankerous disposition. More than twenty times the New Testament commands us to show an outgoing kindness and generosity.

2. *Pray That God Will Bring Change*

God wants us to get along with each other. He urges Christians to be “at peace” with each other (2 Corinthians 13:11). Romans 12:18 says we should “live peaceably with all men.” In Matthew 5:9 Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” Romans 14:19 instructs us to “pursue the things that make for peace.” We should specifically pray, asking the Lord to help us find ways for getting along better with family members, with the boss at work, with obnoxious people, and with other persons in the church. It may seem at times as if our persistence in prayer is not making any difference,

but God is able to change attitudes, and to alter behavior—and He often does it in response to our prayers.

3. *Try to See the Other Person’s Point of View*

Every person is a unique individual, and some people have personalities that differ from ours. We get into trouble when we expect other people to be just like we are. Our fingerprints are not alike. Our bodily constitutions differ (some are comfortable at 75°; others at 65°). Our likes and dislikes are varied (some like foods that are bland and simple; others like them tart and spicy). And yet, in spite of these differences, God has a place for all of us. When Jesus chose the Twelve, He chose men of differing temperaments. Peter was outspoken; two were called “sons of thunder”; Andrew was a quiet man; Thomas was a doubter; Simon had even been a Zealot. And yet each had a significant part to play in God’s plan.

4. *Guard Carefully the Use of the Tongue*

The tongue is the mouth; it is in a wet place; it is easy to let it slip. And when we remember that the average person speaks more than 20,000 words a day (University of Minnesota survey), we can see how big a job it is to guard our tongues. Gossiping and slandering and exaggerating and mudslinging are all out of the question for God’s people.

5. Learn the Art of Communicating Charitably

We are to confront the person who has wronged us. Matthew 18 says, “Go and tell him his fault between you and him alone” (verse 15). Instead of losing tempers, raising voices, and pounding fists—we kindly and honestly approach the offending person and try to become reconciled. During the conversation: don’t interrupt when the other person is talking; don’t allow yourself to explode emotionally; state the issues clearly and don’t beat around the bush; speak the truth, but “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15); make the other person love you—not necessarily for what you say—but for how you say it. Usually when two persons communicate with each other, they discover that the offense wasn’t as bad as they thought; sometimes it never happened at all; and at other times, the individuals have become more penitent, and everything can be corrected without any further steps.

6. Practice Forbearance and Forgiveness

The Scripture says, “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any one of you has a complaint against another” (Colossians 3:13, partly from NJB). The word *forbearance* means “to put up with” or “to endure.” This implies that each of us in one way or another is likely to do something that might be trying to others. We come from differing backgrounds; we don’t always understand each other or agree with each other—about methods of training children, the time for starting church services, etc.—but we must “bear with” each other. Sometimes we would rather see something done another way, but for the sake of harmony we say nothing. Forbearance is “holding everything back.” Forgive-

ness, by the way of contrast, is “holding nothing against.” The word *forgive* comes from the base word *give* and it means “to give release” to another from the wrongs done to us. God forgives us completely when we come to Christ and trust Him as Saviour. He wipes out the record and restores us into a right standing with the Father. Now He asks us to forgive others who wrong us. Is that asking too much?

7. Acknowledge That Some Conflict Will Not Disappear

The instruction in Romans 12:18 says that we are to “live peaceably with all”—but the command is not absolute. The passage says, “As much as depends on you, live peaceably with all.” This implies that sometimes it is not possible to get along perfectly harmoniously with others. Just as it takes two people to disagree, so it takes two persons to solve a problem. If you try to reconcile differences, and the other person does not cooperate—you may have to accept the fact that (at least for now)—the tension will continue. But don’t give up. Keep on trying to get along with your critic. Never stop treating the other person kindly. Don’t let him entangle you in an argument. Remember that God may intervene—and bring peace later—even though a solution seems unlikely now.

The entire church is to *pursue* peace. These have been practical guidelines designed to help with that task. ■

—Taken from *BRF Witness*



A Biblical Response to “Panhandling”

by Nathan Zook

“Sir, could you spare 25 cents?”

“Excuse me, ma’am, I’m hungry and I need money for a sandwich.”

“My car ran out of gas and I need \$4 to get me to the next town.”

“The soup kitchen isn’t open in the evenings and I need to get formula for my baby. Could you give me a dollar?”

“I need \$10 to buy medicine for my aunt. Could you help me out a bit?”

At some point in our lives, most of us have had someone ask us for money because of a scenario similar to the ones above. Even those who live in the suburbs or rural communities often encounter someone asking for money when they visit the convenience store, hold street meetings in the inner-city, or visit a foreign country. Having lived in various inner-city neighborhoods for most of my life, I have faced these situations continually and have responded in various ways. However, I have not always felt right about how I have handled each scenario. Sometimes, I have given money and worried that I have contributed to someone’s drug habit. Or, I have not given money and then worried that maybe the person was telling the truth.

As the gap between rich and poor grows wider in this country and around the world, Christians will face these situations more and more often. I believe it is necessary for believers to delve into God’s Word for advice on these situations so that we can be prepared when we are tested. The response we choose will not only have an effect on the person asking us for money, but will also affect our testimony to others and our inner peace with God. I have chosen

several Scriptures that provide principles that can be used to inform our decisions when people ask us for money.

• ***“I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.”*** —Psalm 37:25

Some have taken this verse to mean that everyone who does beg is wicked. In actuality, this verse is more of a promise that the Lord will provide for the needs of the righteous. Jesus even refers to Lazarus as a “beggar” in His parable about the rich man. Lazarus, although a beggar, goes to paradise when he dies. It can therefore be assumed that his begging does not indicate he is a wicked man. In contrast, the rich man who involuntarily loses crumbs that provide for Lazarus’ sustenance is the one who is wicked and sent to eternal punishment.

• ***“And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.”***
—Matthew 5:41

When someone asks for help, rather than meeting their demands, this verse commands that we exceed their expectations. I am aware of several accounts of Christians who have applied this verse when people have asked them for gas money. One couple was exiting from a highway when they encountered two young women holding a sign asking for gas money. The couple volunteered to go the second mile by driving them to a gas station to fill up a container of gas for their van. The women agreed and were soon on their way. Prior to their departure, the couple had a chance to say

that because Christ had blessed them, they wanted to help the women in Jesus' name. The couple did not want to take credit for goodness, but rather to give glory to God.

Another experience of offering to go the second mile had a different result. A Christian man was approached on the streets of Baltimore by a woman asking for money to put gas in her car. She claimed she had been robbed and that her car was at a gas station. The man offered to walk her to her car and use his credit card to fill up her car's gas tank. She refused and walked away from him to ask other passersby for money. In this case, offering to go the second mile revealed that the woman may not have been telling the truth. The man felt at peace because he had offered to go above and beyond the woman's expectations.

- ***“Judge not, that ye be not judged.”***—Matthew 7:1
- ***“Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.”***
—Luke 6:30

As Mennonites, we often place a high value on being good stewards of the resources with which God has blessed us. As a result, when someone asks us for money, we may be reluctant to give in case we are financing someone else's drug, alcohol, or cigarette addiction. On one hand, giving money could do the recipient more harm than good. Plus, we are using the Lord's resources to fund wrongful vices. On the other hand, we are asked not to judge. Therefore, we do not need to feel responsible for interrogating the potential recipient or investigating their request.

If someone asks us for money for food or medicine, the best option would be to go with them to buy the food and medicine ourselves. However, due to our own time constraints or due to the nature of the request, this may not be possible.

Then, it would seem appropriate to give the gift of money rather than trying to trap the recipient in a lie or trying to determine the integrity of their request. By doing this, we will fulfill both the command to not judge and the command to give.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ does not ask us to be a police force to enforce good stewardship or to ensure that others do not commit vice. Rather, His commands are very straightforward. If you are asked to give, you are to give, but you are not to judge. An important component of these principles is to not have a patronizing or belittling attitude toward those to whom we are giving. Do not assume the person has arrived in this situation of need because of their sin, mistakes, ill-planning, etc. Personally, I can think of several instances where I had to resort to hitchhiking (begging for a ride) while traveling in other countries and saw no other option out of an unavoidable predicament.

- ***“Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms . . . Then Peter said, ‘Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.’ ”***—Acts 3:3, 6

This passage could be used as an excuse not to give money to those who ask for it. However, Peter would not have lied that he did not have money. It is very easy to brush off people who we suspect are panhandling. If they ask if you have 25 cents to spare and you say that you do not, be sure that you do not have a dollar bill in your pocket. As Christians, we need to be honest even with those who we believe are not really in need.

If we are truly like Peter and do not have money, then there is a second principle we can follow. We must take the time to find another way to help with

our available means. You may not feel you have the gift of healing as Peter did in this situation, but surely you have the means or knowledge to help out in another way.

For example, one young man I will refer to as "Pete" was waiting at a Greyhound station in Baltimore when another man asked him if he had \$4 to put toward a \$12 bus ticket to Washington, D.C. Pete told him about a train that would get to D.C. quicker for only \$6. As a result, Pete was able to help the man use the \$8 he already had, get to D.C. quicker, and save \$2.

Sometimes it will take creativity, time, and a lot of patience to meet another person's needs. While we are helping out other individuals, we can use the opportunity to open the door to witnessing. Jesus healed people and saved their souls. He is a great example of dealing with physical and spiritual

needs simultaneously.

As a Christian, our primary goal in interacting with people who are in need is to meet their needs. However, we need to be aware that these interactions have a definite effect on our own spiritual needs. Matthew 25:44-46 illustrates the destiny of those who do not take the time to meet the needs of others. It also reveals the destiny of the righteous who do sincerely seek to meet needs. *"Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."* ■

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The Ditches at Corinth

by Marcus Yoder

What are Satan's devices in entrapping the church or an individual believer? If the devil's intentions are to steal, kill, and destroy, then we must be alert not only to these aims, but also to his methods. In 2 Corinthians 2:11 Paul writes, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." This verse is in the context of the Corinthian Church and their interaction with a church member who was involved in gross sexual sin (see 1 Corinthians 5). I believe that this account presents several of the devices that Satan uses to trap us today: the first being tolerance and the second being its opposite, intolerance.

The first great tool of Satan is found in the fact that the Corinthian Church was **tolerant** of gross sin. Paul writes to these believers in 1 Corinthians 5 that he is upset with their continued tolerance of sin, for they were refusing to make a judgment call on sin. In this way, the Corinthians were allowing tolerance to destroy their witness and power as a body. Paul tells them that as believers they must not become tolerant of sin. In fact it seems that the Corinthians were not only tolerant, but were almost glorying in their tolerance.

As believers today, we are surrounded by a culture that says the height of our civilization is to be open-minded toward all people and all ideas. In the twenty-first century, we are to be tolerant of everything with the exception of the absolutes found in Scripture. I believe that there are several reasons for this shift to a so-called tolerant society. The first is the rapid influx of concepts and the resources to communicate them. We are so inundated with facts, ideas, and beliefs that we have become numb to anything morally upright. Because of

the sheer number of available beliefs, we take nothing too seriously.

The second reason for the shift to tolerance is the change from a community-based society to an intensely individually-based society. No longer does a society speak to the issues of the day; rather, each individual is free to choose the way in which he thinks he should live for maximum fulfillment and gratification. If this trend continues, the church will lose any remaining influence that it has to speak to current issues.

The final explanation for the swing to tolerance is the shift from anything authoritative to the preferential. In a theological world that has sharp statements on the inerrancy and power of Scripture, why is it that people are waxing worse and worse? I believe that it is because we have privatized faith to where it has no power to speak to issues at all. Faith has become a thing we do in the morning for twenty minutes to fulfill our obligation to read through the Bible in a one-year period, rather than a visible presence in all that we think, say, and do.

And so, the tidal wave of concepts, the focus on the individual's rights, and the desire for preference all add up to a tolerance for whatever people desire. In 1 Corinthians 5, the Apostle Paul tells the believers at Corinth that Christians have the freedom and obligation to bring the sins of the people to light. If that is the case, one of the ways we sin against God and give in to the devices of Satan is by being tolerant of sin and evil.

The second tool of Satan that we must guard our hearts and lives against is **intolerance**. In 2 Corinthians 2:5-10, Paul instructs the Corinthian believers that if the man referred to in

1 Corinthians 5 has now repented, they must love and forgive him. If they continue to be intolerant of this man, they will fall into the ditch of intolerance. This ditch is just as deep and dangerous as the ditch of tolerance on the other side of the road.

I believe that this move toward intolerance emerges from several things, the first being the politicization of faith. Some of the most hateful language that I have ever heard has come from the religious right. Os Guinness tells a story of a major television network news anchor who was on a journey of exploration in the Christian faith. He says this man would have probably become a believer except for the fact that he received sacks of hate mail from the so-called "Christian right." In this account, where is the mercy and grace that ought to be extended to needy hearts? I am not speaking of condoning sin, but it seems extremely Pharisaic to condemn people instead of loving them. I believe that religious politicization has done more to harm the cause of Christ than to help it. And because of this, I do not identify myself as a member of the religious right.

The so-called "Christian right" in America today has taken several major issues and built an ideology around them; for example, the controversial topics of abortion and homosexuality. When the issue is the focal point, it becomes very easy to use language that does not convey Christ-like grace and mercy. While I am vehemently opposed to legalizing abortion and viewing homosexuality as a natural relationship, the way to convince others is not to assault our opponents with threats and hate mail. The only way that true changes will come in America concerning such issues will be when people's hearts change. The sad and awful thing is that the America of today is what people want and celebrate. I believe the way to bring about change is to expose

people to the grace and mercy of a loving Father who cares passionately about people.

We are surrounded by a culture that claims to be tolerant but in actuality is strongly intolerant. As a church, we must exemplify to the world what true godly tolerance looks like. Grace, mercy, and forgiveness must be extended to those who have sinned and repented and desire to walk with us again. However, in reality we often find ways to ostracize them and hold them at arm's length. While we may say "they have made their nest and now must live in it," the challenge for believers is to get into the nest with them and minister to their hearts. Jesus' words to Peter that forgiveness is to be extended as often as necessary are the basis for this. For all our speaking of grace, it is human nature to not be gracious when we feel people are getting what they deserve. In fact, the basis for our forgiveness and extension of mercy to people is the way in which the Lord Jesus Christ extends grace and mercy to us. Salvation is not something we deserve, nor can it be earned.

Intolerance also emerges when we are unwilling to be flexible with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Stories of dissensions, church splits, arguments, and broken marriages over trivial matters show a much deeper problem; a refusal to forgive and extend grace to others who have either sinned and repented or disagree with us. If Jesus would have waited to forgive us until we agreed and walked perfectly with Him, Heaven would be a rather empty place. I believe each of us must examine our own lives and see if we are doing what Paul was encouraging the believers in Corinth to do: "Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him" (2 Corinthians 2:8). Do you and I confirm our love toward those who have repented and even to those who disagree with us? Accounts of saints who

cannot get along on earth always cause me to question whether there will be divisions in heaven for those of differing views such as the Calvinists and the Arminians, the Premillennialists and the Amillennialists, the “liberals” and the “conservatives,” etc. I suspect that when we get to heaven we may be surprised at who our neighbors will be! So the challenge for us is to live here with our fellowman in peace and love as an extension of the kingdom of heaven on earth. Again, I am not speaking of the acceptance or tolerance of sin but rather of seeing people as God sees them.

Today it is as it was at the church in Corinth, for each side of the road has a ditch. On one side there is tolerance and the inability to speak to people of the

sins that God hates. On the other side is the inflexibility and intolerance of people who do not act like we think they should or do not agree with us. Each ditch is equally deep and dangerous. The challenge for the church and believer is to walk in the middle of the road and to speak “the truth in love” as our Lord did. His example is still ours today. Jesus’ harshest criticism was not reserved for the “bad” people but rather for the religiously harsh people. His willingness to confront sin and call it what it is should also spark us to speak out against the issues we are facing today. May God give us grace to not be tolerant of sin, but to be tolerant of people, lest Satan gain a foothold and entrap us. ■



For This the Martyrs Died?

by Ingrid Schlueter

One of the world’s best known evangelical megachurches featured the following promotion on their website this week:

Our dances have become some of the most anticipated of our social events with hundreds of people attending. This Summer’s Night dance in our Worship Center promises to be the same. It will begin with a light buffet-style dinner followed by dancing to the sounds of our DJ on a huge 3,000-square-foot ballroom competition floor. Professional lighting, effects and sound all blend together for a high-quality experience, all at an extremely reasonable price! Whether you bring a special friend, come alone or with a group, make sure you come ready to have fun! Music will consist of a wide variety providing for specific dances and freestyle. And what’s a summer night without some beach music and reggae?

On June 29, 2005, China Aid reported that the Chinese authorities had begun a brutal crackdown on house churches in a specific region in that country. Hundreds of Christian brothers and sisters in Christ have been held and some brutally beaten and tortured for their faith in the living Christ. These Chinese churches don’t feature 3,000- square-foot competition dance floors and dinner dances for the bored Christian singles of the congregation. If they did, the Chinese authorities would never have bothered them. All these Chinese churches have is an undying allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ and a willingness to die for the Saviour of their souls. The communist Chinese leaders have never liked competing for loyalty and they view the church of Jesus Christ as a threat to their regime. Today in over 40 countries, confessing Christ as your Saviour could

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

cost you everything you have, including your life.

Here in American churches, the party goes on. In many parts of our country, particularly in the Bible belt, it has become difficult to parody the excesses of the huge churches that are everywhere. Every evangelical extreme that makes news one year, becomes the status quo the next. The first church food court made headlines many years ago. Now it's difficult to register surprise at anything done in the name of the church whether it's Christian tattoo parlors on church property, hula praise dance troops, live animal shows, senior pastors in clown outfits, and so on.

The evangelical distaste for Christian history has produced generations of Christians in America who have no idea what price was paid so that they could have dancing poodle shows on Sunday morning. Names like Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer will bring a glazed look to the average Christian's eyes today. What a tragedy that men like this and so many others who paid the ultimate price for truth are virtually forgotten. The evangelical church prefers air-brushed celebrities today, not martyrs.

Amidst the throbbing of the dance music at the above mentioned evangelical church, would anyone care about two 16th century men who were burned to death next to each other for preaching the true Gospel of Jesus? Nicholas Ridley was in enormous pain as the flames began to crawl up his legs that day, October 16, 1555. At the stake Hugh Latimer, his fellow martyr, comforted him with these words:

“ . . . we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England as I trust shall never be put out.”

No, Mr. Latimer, your candle was not put out and the candle of truth came all the way to the shores of a vast wilderness known as North America. That

candle was held by the spiritual heirs of Ridley and Latimer and these heirs were known as the Pilgrims. Today we are the often ungrateful heirs of the men and women who forged our nation and who fought for the freedom to worship God that we now enjoy.

The small voice of a ten-year-old girl serves as an indictment to the rest of evangelicalism in America today. Back in the 1960s a family was serving Christ in one of the most difficult parts of the world. An Irish couple, Dennis and Nora Perry, went to Congo, Africa, and served the Lord by bringing the Gospel to this spiritually dark place. Then the Simba uprising took place. This couple and their two children, Andrew and Grace, were captured by the rebels and held in captivity for a number of months. During that time of horror, the family was kept together and their little Grace sang constantly, “Burdens are lifted at Calvary . . .” Her faith remained strong in the face of what must have seemed the most horrific circumstances a child could face. She was singing this when she was shot along with her brother. Their bodies were dumped in the river.

This family knew that the love of God could send them to a place where they could lose their lives. But they willingly and readily went anyway. They weren't interested in a celebrity Christian life or even a middle-class American life. Their lives and martyrdom have become a brilliant example of trusting Christ, even to death. This is something that the modern evangelical can never understand as he writhes across the dance floor at his local church. May the song of little Grace Parry be the song of those faithful to Jesus in an increasingly dark America. Burdens are lifted at Calvary because Jesus Christ gave everything he had for our souls. May we be willing to give up worldliness and sin to follow in His bleeding footsteps. ■

—Distributed by *ChristianWorldviewNetwork*

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David L. Miller
Val Yoder

RESPONDERS:

Roy Longenecker
Collier Berkshire
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