

The Heartbeat of



The Remnant

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Compassion:
One To whom the supplicating
eye is never raised in vain. p. 35



The Remnant

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From the Editor

Early this year, our comfortable American lives were once again reminded of the suffering of many of the world's poorest people, when a massive earthquake shook the impoverished nation of Haiti to its core. Pictures quickly surfaced of a devastation and suffering that make our biggest problems seem like absolutely nothing. This crisis made me ponder how insulated my life is from helping such people.

Fortunately, from the sound of it, the initial response from the world was impressive. Aid groups from around the world descended upon this tiny country in record time. Now, however, that support is greatly diminishing. The world is sometimes pretty good with a quick response, but lacks the longsuffering that comes from an inner strength and calling. I read a good devotional that a brother sent me via e-mail, which was taken from *Consider Jesus and Other Brief Devotionals* by Vance Havner. I thought it would be fitting to share it here:

The Middle Mile

"For consider him ... lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." He. 12:3

The hardest part of the journey is neither the start nor the finish, but the middle mile. There is the enthusiasm of a new undertaking that buoys you at the beginning and there is the thrill of reaching the goal that carries you down the home stretch; but it is the middle mile—when you are a long way from the start and home is still distant—that tests the mettle of the traveler.

On the middle mile of faith's pilgrimage, the believer needs most the grace of "patient continuance." Ro. 2:7 The soul can summon unusual strength for great sorrows and extra power for mighty deeds

better than it can master the commonplace and the day-by-day. When the body is sluggish, the mind in a haze, and the spirit stupid, when "a sense of things real comes doubly strong"—when the Bible seems dull and we cannot pray with a tongue that cleaves to the roof of the mouth—let us consider Him or we will be weary and faint in our minds.

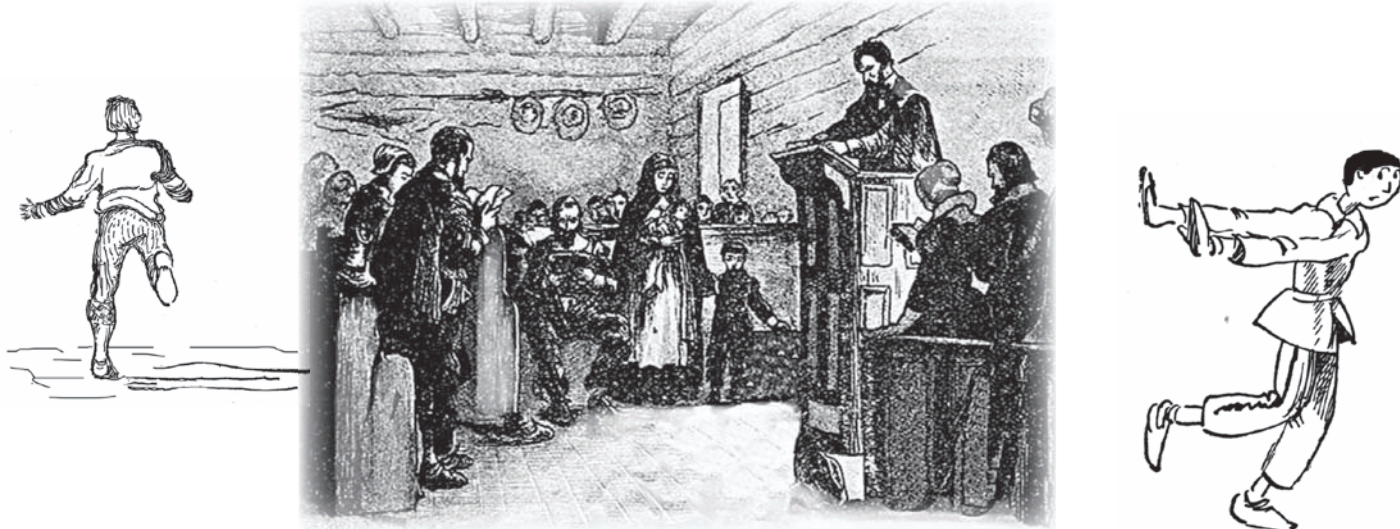
No one will know how much was wrapped in Paul's phrase "in weariness." 2 Co. 11:27 The dangers of fierce battle are preferable to the humdrum of the trenches. There are days when we fly and days when we run, but most days we walk. And the only way out is to "wait upon the Lord" and "consider Him" that we may "walk and not faint."

In this issue, our Seed Sower Award goes to a little group of people that responded to the need in Haiti. Their willingness to give their time and resources to these hurting people blessed us. This is just what we are looking for in the Seed Sower Award—a group of people who become inspired with an idea from God, and then put it into practice. Let's continue to allow God to inspire our hearts to greater service and devotion!

On the home front—at this moment—in literally minutes, I will be heading to Berne, Indiana for the Men's Leadership Seminar. It is always such a blessing to take a time out like this to take an inventory of my spiritual condition. It is also so encouraging to meet with the brethren.

May the Lord encourage your zeal for ministering to Jesus in the needs around us as you read this issue of *The Heartbeat of the Remnant!*

~Bro. Dean



THE DANGERS OF ANTIGROUPISM

Based on a sermon preached by Denny Kenaston, June 1991

“Antigroupism” is a broad word. One can place a multitude of names in place of “groupism,” but the goal of this article is to reveal the dangers that are lurking around anyone who has an antigroup attitude towards some church group in their past, or perhaps a church group around them. We are dealing with the attitude in this article, in a general way. You, the reader, need to make the application wherever the specific fits. We could say, for example, that we are concerned about the danger of anti-Amishism. Or, we could say, we are concerned about the danger of anti-Baptistism or anti-Pentecostalism.

Antigroupism stems from many different things, and many are the reasons that you may say, “Phew, Mennonites ...” Or, “Ugh, Baptists ...” There may be many different reasons why you have developed an attitude against some group—whatever name they might have. I warn you, there is some real danger behind that attitude!

It could be that you had a traumatic experience with a certain group in your past church life. One occasion that comes to my mind is a young man that went through a church split. Now church splits are not good—certainly an unfortunate experience. But usually when there is a church split, somebody gets hurt; usually young people who are confused and don’t understand what is right and who they are supposed to follow. So they get hurt.

Anyway, this one particular case I am thinking of was a young man that got hurt in a church split. It happened to be a Mennonite church that split. So his attitude was, “Mennonites, puh ... I don’t ever want to see another one. I never want to hear of one. And I am never going to go to a Mennonite church again as long as I live.”

He had a traumatic experience in his life, which caused him to develop an attitude that is detrimental to his spiritual life. He is half shipwrecked already because of this attitude.

You may have been hurt in a past church experience, in a situation where someone dealt with you in a wrong way. Perhaps they were too hard on you, and sort of kicked you

around spiritually—possibly you were even driven or excommunicated from that church. Because of that, you have developed an “antigroup attitude” within you.

Sometimes people grow up in a church setting that says, “This is the way we do things around here. We have the right way, and if you want to go to heaven, you do as we say and get baptized into the church, and everything will be alright.” Then someone wakes up to see that error exists in the church, and that salvation is by following Jesus, not the man-made rules. Often the immediate reaction is to develop an attitude about “that church” that taught them wrong things all their life.

Or maybe you were in a group that took an extreme position about some truth in the Bible. Because of that extreme position—after all, taking things to extreme is false doctrine—you developed an antigroup attitude.

Consider a pendulum. When a pendulum is pulled to one side and released, it swings to the opposite side an equal distance. How often we overreact to error, just like a pendulum! When we see something that is wrong, our natural tendency is to swing to the other side. In our zeal to get as far away from error as we can, we often end up in another error on the other extreme.

But praise God for the balancing of the Word and of other brothers and sisters, and of those gentle promptings of the Spirit of God! I think most of us could testify of where

our attitudes swung too far one way on some issue, and God had to bring them back to the middle.

In my own testimony, I went through one of those traumatic church experiences, and in reaction I wrote off everything from my past church experience. All of it! I said in my mind, “They hurt me. They have ruined me. They have taken care of future opportunities to minister. They must be totally wrong.” At that point, I quit witnessing and wrote off all my past church experience.

That is called antigroupism.

Of course, we all have different groups that we have reacted against, but the principle is still the same. Now God was very gracious to me in my experience. He was patient with me until the pendulum came back—truth was looked at properly and balance was restored. God worked out all of the antigroupism that was in my heart towards those people, and I thank God for that. People are sometimes shocked when I tell them that I now relate well with those who treated me wrong. It is all because that antigroup attitude got worked out of my heart.

There are several dangers in anti-group attitudes. Let’s look at them closely:

- If you hold those “anti” feelings in your heart, you will not be able to help the group you oppose.

It is God’s will that we reach out to those within our circle of influence. Each one of you has a circle of influence from your past into churches that I do not, and God wants to use that influence. But if you harbor “anti”—which signifies “opposed to, against”—attitudes, you will NEVER be able to minister to those people. We want to stand against the attitude that says, “I am against those people that I came from.”

What is very interesting to me is that often the very people that we hold attitudes against are the ones we want to reach out to the most; yet we cannot do it because of our attitude. When we reach out to them, they sense the attitude, and refuse to receive what we have to say. In reaction, they then will sometimes begin to “throw things back.” And I realize that this reaction of theirs will sometimes come even if we approach them in a pure way, but too often we carry an antigroup attitude towards the group we have left. So we then justify ourselves, and quote Paul’s words, “I go to the Gentiles ...” It is pretty hard to have a burden for people if you are disgusted with them for what they did to you in the past. It is hard to pray for them.

Paul had several reasons to have an anti-Jewish attitude. After all, he had been deceived by them in his childhood, being told that they had the right way, the only way. Paul be-

lieved this, so much so that he would imprison Christians to death for turning away from Judaism. Yes, he was deceived by his upbringing; he had plenty of “reason” to react against it. After he found faith in Jesus Christ, the Jews chased after him, wherever he went, causing him trouble. His name was well-known among the Jews, but in a negative way. They stoned him; they argued with him in all the public places; they had him thrown into prison; but not only that, he was even called by God to the Gentiles, so that he could have easily said, “Jews ... huh ... I am done with ’em! I’ve had enough of them! Somebody else minister to them: I am called to the Gentiles.” But listen to Paul’s heart in Romans 9:1-3:

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

Accursed from Christ for the sake of my people ... what an amazing attitude! There was no pendulum in his life. He kept the spirit and attitude of Christ through the whole thing; he still loved them. Even though they criticized him and persecuted him, he would not allow that antigroup attitude to rise up in his heart. In chapter 10 of the same letter, we can read some more of Paul’s heart to the Jews:

Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

We can hear the burdened heart of Paul as he ponders his people. We cannot sense any reactionary spirit in these verses, but rather a pure, sweet desire that the Jews would come to the light and understanding that he himself had come to. Even though Paul did say those words, “I go to the Gentiles,” we need to hear his heart in the spirit in which he spoke them. It is not wrong to say those words and mean them, but may we have the same attitude that Paul had.

When the time came for Paul to return to Jerusalem, he could joyfully submit to the Jewish customs and do things that he knew were not necessary for his salvation. Had he had an anti-Jewish attitude when James came to him and said, “Paul, I want you to shave your head and go on a fast so that while you are here in Jerusalem there won’t be any trouble,” what do you suppose his response would have been? He may have spouted out something really “holy,”

It's pretty hard to have a burden for people if you are disgusted with them!

like, “I am free from the Law; I don’t have to do those things!” There were a lot of Scriptures he could have quoted to James. But yet his love for those people, his people, caused him to act without any “anti” reaction.

So we see that the first and foremost danger of an anti-group attitude is that we cannot help the ones we oppose; they will not receive what we have to say if they sense that attitude in us.

- An antigroup attitude will cause you to do things that will offend those very people.

You will not consider them when making choices in your life. Paul was not that way. His testimony was, “To the Jew I am going to be like a Jew, and to the Greek a Greek.” Paul did not have an uncaring, inconsiderate attitude when it came time to make choices. No, he did not compromise (he did not mean that he would take part in their ungodly ways to win them), but he did consider and think, “Is this going to cause hurt among those people? Is this choice going to further the Gospel among the Jews?”

If you have, for example, an anti-Amish attitude, you will not think like Paul did. In fact, even if someone would try to suggest the idea of submitting to “those people’s” ideas, you will immediately come up with one of those “righteous” answers. There are times, yes, to have those “righteous” answers, but I challenge you to consider what your attitude is, and ask yourself at decision time: “Will this hurt my opportunity to speak to those people? Is this worth doing?” After all, it may be more than just “that group” you are dealing with; “that group” may include those who are your brother or sister in the Lord.

Hear the words of the apostle Paul: “If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.” Consider how an “anti” attitude will blind you to this principle. You will make choices—buy things, go places, wear clothes, and do things—that will offend those you are trying to win.

- An antigroup attitude will hurt the next generation.

Perhaps you may have already heard words coming from the mouth of your children ... words that made your conscience twinge. The next generation is at our mercy. They are making evaluations based on our attitudes. It has been said—and is very true—that what we do wrong in moderation, our children will do in excess. Ponder that!

Maybe for you it is a simple, “Ugh, Mennonites ...” But for your children, that little sigh will cause them to write off

the whole Anabaptist movement and cause them to become wholly Evangelical. If we have a reactionary spirit towards a certain group of people or a certain set of principles, our children will react even stronger than we have.

Have you ever heard the words from some of “those people,” such as, “Watch where you are going, you will lose your children”? These are words given from observation—wise words! Well, the answer is not necessarily to return to the old group, because, yes, there were valid reasons for leaving it. But let’s develop a Christ-like attitude toward it, not a reactionary one.

- An antigroup attitude will cause you to throw away truth—pitch it!

We have all seen people who have reacted and thrown away beautiful truths, because “such-and-such a group hurt me and taught me wrong. I am getting away from them!” It causes people to go from a church with strong authority—perhaps too strong—to completely abandon the idea of authority in the church. It causes people to go from a church where there was strong brotherhood accountability, to no church at all. These folks don’t even believe that there is a church, and they stay at home.

Of course, the coming generation hurts tremendously for this. The hills are filled with these “individualists,” people who cannot find anyone anywhere to fellowship with—no one they can agree with. What causes this? Many times it was a bad experience in the past with a group that perhaps abused church authority. I recognize that there are cases of people who are in an area where there is no good congregation—I am referring to people who are not even seriously looking for a church anymore.

People also react from churches that focus primarily on the outward, and they leap into the error that says the outward doesn’t matter, only the heart. In the process, many powerful Bible truths get thrown out the door. The Scriptures say, “Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.”

What happens is, because of our “anti” attitude, we develop a blind spot. For example, take the subject of clothes. You may hear someone saying, “Clothes! I am so sick of hearing about clothes! I am sick of “plain suits” and cape dresses!” So the whole “clothes” thing gets pitched out ... and blindness comes over that person. And we stand back amazed at what those people end up doing. This all stemmed from that “anti” attitude—reactionism.



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- An antigroup attitude fosters pride and deception.

Here's how it happens ... remember that pendulum. We say, "They are wrong, and I am right. And I have got to prove that I am right, and they are wrong." This whole attitude is not good for us. An attitude that says, "We are right, we have the answers, we have found it ... and they are wrong!" will foster pride in us.

I remember a preacher once saying, "We don't need revival; we already have revival!" Now, I had been in a number of their church services, and I knew they didn't have revival among them. It seems that man honestly thought they had revival. However, spiritual pride had arisen in his heart and had so darkened his mind, convincing him that they were right, even when they were wrong. May God help us! May He keep us from overreacting in pride in some of these areas.

There was once a church that took some firm stands against apostasy, biblical stands, and they were right to do that. God blessed them for it. But spiritual pride came in. And now, that same church is so convinced that they are right, they say, "It has got to be done exactly like we do it, or it is not right." Slowly but surely, an attitude begins to develop in the congregation, "We are IT. This is THE place, the place where everyone needs to be." We need to be on guard so we do not begin to think we are better than others. God help us!

This is how an "anti" attitude develops into spiritual pride.

- There exists a danger of building a fellowship around "anti" attitudes.

Have you ever had "fellowship" like that? "Fellowship" centered around "them" and what "they" said and what "they" did, and what's happening "over there"? Ever spent a Sunday afternoon like that? Well, I have, and it is NOT very edifying. What a terrible foundation to build a church upon! Sadly, this happens all the time. The bottom line is, fellowship based on others' faults will not build the church. If you find it really easy to open up about "those people" and start shooting from the hip at "them," I encourage you

to just cleanse your heart of all that. Such talk will cause you shipwreck. Let's talk about Jesus!

Examine yourself and ask, "Do I have an antigroup attitude?" If you cannot discern your own heart, then just ask a couple of honest people that know you well. They can tell you!

If you have found that you indeed are infected, here is how to come clean.

1. You need to acknowledge it. This is the first step.

You need to forgive those who did you wrong, if you haven't. The antigroup attitude is there because you got hurt or misused.

2. You need to open your heart up and retain any and every thing that was good in the group you came from. Some are so reactionary that they will not even consider a truth if "that" group also believed it.

3. You need to purpose to overcome those attitudes, because they will want to haunt you for a long time if you have harbored them.

We need to remember the Lord Jesus, who came unto His own, but His own did not receive Him. How did He respond to those who did not receive Him? He laid Himself on the cross and died for

them! This is the attitude that God would have us foster towards our background.

Antigroupism has been a real hindrance to the furtherance of the kingdom of God, and a real hindrance to the perfection of the saints. Overreaction has shipwrecked many a soul, and blinded many others. May we be on our guard!

This article is based upon a sermon preached by Denny Kenaston on June 2, 1991. It is not a literal transcription, but contains the essence of that message. You may receive a free cassette or CD of this message by writing to Charity Ministries, 400 W. Main St., Ephrata, PA, 17522. Ask for message #834 (The Dangers of Antigroup Attitudes). Or, it may be downloaded for free in mp3 format at http://www.charityministries.org/msg_detail.a5w?vlast_index=834

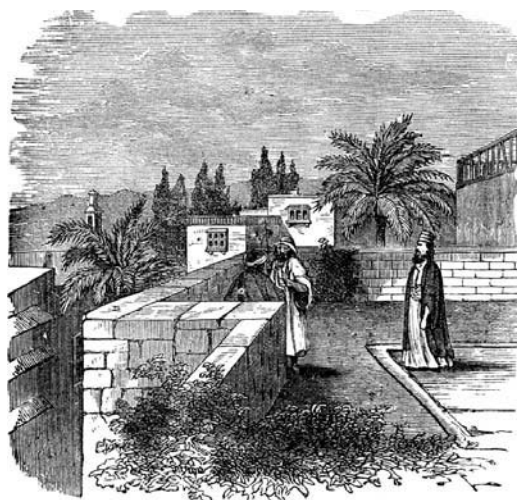


"fellowshipping" around "them" and what "they" said and what "they" did, and what's happening "over there"?

Well, I have, and it is NOT very edifying.

ON THE BUILDING OF BATTLEMENTS

Mike Atnip



Tucked away in the middle of the Mosaic Law is, of all things, the following building code:

When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.
De. 22:8

Now we know that the letter of the Law is not meant for the New Testament believer, but we understand that from its principle we can gain an insight into the Kingdom of God. Thus, from the prohibition of plowing with an ox and a donkey—just two verses below our text—Paul could admonish us to not be “unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” From another Mosaic precept, he instructs us that “muzzle not the ox that treadeth out the corn” means that we should materially support those who are laboring in the spread of the Gospel.

What can we, the citizens of the Kingdom, learn from a command to “make a battlement for thy roof”?

What is a battlement?

The first thing to settle is the definition of a “battlement.” The Hebrew word used for battlement comes from a root word meaning “to repress, or hold back” that is not used in any other place in the Bible. However, the context gives us a clear picture of the intention of a battlement: to keep people from falling off the roof, which in that culture was usually flat, and used for various purposes. So while the English word “battlement” has connotations of a defensive knee wall—such as might be found on top of the walls surrounding a castle or city—the whole gist of our text is simply that of keeping people from accidentally falling off the roof. And the builder of the house was responsible to see that an appropriate wall was built around his housetop. If someone fell off his roof because of the lack of a battlement, the owner of the house was responsible for his death.

What is a battlement not for?

This may seem to be a redundant question, but for the purpose of our study it will profit us to review a few things that a battlement is not intended for. First of all, a battlement is not a prison wall. In other words, the purpose of a battlement is not that of trying to make sure that the people on the roof can in no way, shape, nor form escape from the roof. Second, a battlement is not used to keep people on the street from getting onto the roof. Thirdly, a battlement is not meant to be used as a nice way to have seating all the way around the edges of the roof, nor a nice place to take a nap. Neither are they to be used for children as a place to play “follow the leader” and practice their balancing act. These are rather rudimentary facts, and it seems almost senseless to review them. Yet, as we proceed, we will find that many people are foolishly misusing battlements.

How tall should a battlement be?

Deuteronomy gives us no details on exactly how a battlement should look. God gave humanity common sense, and He expects us to use it sometimes. A three-inch wall simply will not serve to prevent someone from falling over the edge of a roof. In fact, such a ledge may well cause more falls than it stops. On the other hand, an eight-foot wall is unnecessary and will block off the fresh breezes and sunlight, making the rooftop an undesirable place to be.

An ideal height is somewhere in the range of the navel of an adult person. If it is much lower, whoever might happen to trip and fall against the wall will have the mass of his body weight to be higher than the top of the wall. The center of his gravity will be higher than the wall, making him unable to stop himself from going on over. While there is no reason forbidding one from building the wall higher, it is not necessary. Any person falling over a wall that is higher than his bottom rib had to be doing something abnormally

foolish. No one has ever accidentally fallen over a wall that was as high as his rib cage.

Building a spiritual battlement

From these few points, we will now move into the spiritual realm and determine what we can learn from this building code. First of all, the “house” that is being built by some man is the church of God. We, as believers, constitute this house, and Jesus is the master builder. But as coworkers with him, we also are involved in the building of the house, so the statute does concern us.

Let’s take it one step further. Instead of thinking in terms of the universal church of Christ, let’s look at a local congregation. Christ is building it, and we are his collaborators. His plan calls for a battlement, to keep men from accidentally falling off the roof. What does all this mean, in practical terms?

The battlement of the conscience

As men are called into the house to be a partaker of the benefits of its shelter and direction, there needs to be a “safety wall” built around its edges. This is the conscience, which warns men that “here is the edge; any further and you will drop off.” For those whose heart and goal is to stay on the roof, this wall is a blessing. Not that they need it every day, but during a lifetime of labors, sooner or later each person will likely make that stupid step backwards, or trip over that child’s toy, which would have sent them hurtling to the street. Thankfully, a wall was there to stop them!

As mentioned above, congregational battlements are not intended to be prison walls. If someone’s heart is not set on staying in the house, the battlement can seem like so much a nuisance; after all, they reason, are not we mature enough to know better than step off a roof?

But how many times has your conscience saved you in that weak moment? That time of temptation where you would have fallen to the street with a splat, except something hindered you? However, if you are trying to escape from the roof, the battlement is of little use: one hop or a stepstool will get you over with little effort. So it is with the conscience. If you really want to do something that is not allowed “in the house,” all you have to do is leap over the wall.

How to build a church conscience

How does a local congregation build a community conscience? Sure, building a personal conscience is easy; just read the Bible and let the Spirit guide you to the precepts that it contains. After a while, you have a personal conscience built up to what you have perceived as being the will of God. Even a family conscience is not that hard, if Dad and Mom and children are living in harmony. Dad takes the lead, Mom follows and supports, and the children respect them and allow Dad and Mom to specify what is good and right for the home. The children’s consciences are slowly built up to what Dad and Mom construct in the children. By the time the child is mature, he has a battlement built up within him that will keep him in those mistakes and close calls.

But all too often this same method does not work in local congregations. Why?

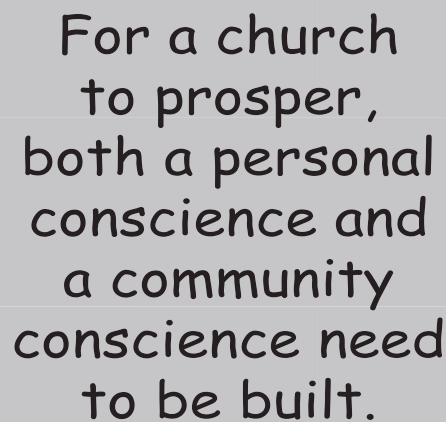
Actions and reactions

One of the biggest causes of failure in building a community conscience lies in reacting to others’ failures. People misuse battlements, and the next person reacts. For example, instead of using a church conscience to aid in mishaps, some have tried to use battlements as prison walls to fence in folks who obviously have more interest in what is going on in the street than in the activities of the

house. Seeing the youth lined up at the wall, leaning over and chattering with the people below, the builders laid a few more blocks on the battlement, making it head high. Then, when the same youth got some stools to stand on so they could see out and continue their communication with the people below, the builders built another layer or two on the battlement.

Did that stop those disinterested in the activities of the house from their activities? No, they simply got out some stepladders. Looking at this whole situation, some have shaken their heads and come to a conclusion: all this battlement building is useless! Determined to do things “the right way,” they moved down the street and decided that they were NOT going to use battlements to keep folks penned in. So they built a new house ... without any battlements.

“Who needs battlements?” they reasoned. “If a man is careful and minds his business, he can stay away from the edge. We just simply need to be mindful and be more faithful to warn each other, and no one will fall over the edge.” So they built “virtual” battlements, ever mindful that real



For a church to prosper, both a personal conscience and a community conscience need to be built.

battlements do not keep worldly folks in the house from fellowship with the world.

This is, of course, a reaction. What needs to happen to those whose heart is not in the activities of the house is that the elders need to gently but firmly take them downstairs and say to them: “It is obvious that your heart is on the street. Here you are, go. When your heart is changed, we welcome you back.” Hard decision, I know, but that is what the father of the prodigal son did. It was best for both of them.

Virtual battlements

Many years ago, I worked on a construction job in the State of Wyoming that required safety inspections by OSHA standards. One of the specifications was that any scaffolding over so many feet off the ground (I forget the details) had to have a safety railing around it. Now most construction workers look at OSHA rules like a lot of people look at the Bible: a list of rules that they try to see how much they can get away with, instead of how much they can better put into practice.

Since the inspector did show up about every day, we complied to the rules, at least outwardly. One incident stands out in my mind. We had built a scaffold about 20 feet high, but had not gotten around to putting the railing on yet. Suddenly, someone noticed that the inspector had showed up, and I was instructed to quickly build a railing for the scaffold. With a couple of 2X4s and some wire, I hurriedly tied on some uprights for posts, and with another long 2X4 I made a rail, tied on with a piece of wire. The inspector eventually made his way up to where I was working, and stood there looking over the situation.

As I was on good terms with him, I laughingly said something like “Look, we have a railing. Just don’t lean on it; it might fall off!”

I expected a shake of the head and possibly a reproof with orders to build a real railing. To my great surprise, he just quietly answered, “That’s fine. All that railing is needed for is a warning to someone who backs up into it that he is near the edge. It doesn’t need to be able to stop someone from falling.”

I felt relieved and happy to hear that on that day. But there is another side to the story ...

Had I tripped over something on the scaffold that day and hit that “virtual railing,” it would not have saved me from a trip to the pavement 20 feet below. Had that misfortune occurred, my opinion of “virtual railings” would have probably bottomed out.

The big question

This brings us to an important question for builders of battlements: Does a “virtual battlement” meet the requirements of Deuteronomy 22:8? Does a 2X4 tied loosely on a wobbly stake provide enough protection against falling off a roof, so that whoever trips over the edge is guilty of his own blood? For a temporary construction situation as I told about, a virtual railing is acceptable, perhaps even necessary, since the workers have to constantly be reaching out of the scaffold to do their work. But for a housetop, virtual railings do not work.

Let’s look at a real historical example. About a century before Martin Luther came along, a revival of primitive Christianity occurred in Bohemia. Fashioning their lives according to the Sermon on the Mount, these brothers built communities of believers throughout the land. Whoever desired to be a part of these churches had to agree to align his life to the teaching of Jesus, and to live that out in practical ways. Not every aspect of life was spelled out, but the brotherhood had come up with some practical applications—a battlement to surround them—that a person had to agree to before he could join. One example was to not engage in dice-making. Dice were used primarily for gambling, and the brotherhood did not want to be associated with dice-making.

Time passed and along came Martin Luther. At first, Luther was not impressed with these Bohemian brothers—“sour-looking hypocrites and self-grown saints” he called them. But as time went on, he had a change of mind. He told them later:

Tell your Brethren to hold fast what God has given them, and never give up their constitution and discipline. Let them take no heed of revilements. The world will behave foolishly. If you in Bohemia were to live as we do, what is said of us would be said of



Hopefully these foolish
dancers learn
—before it is too late—
not to depend on a
“virtual” battlement!

you, and if we were to live as you do, what is said of you would be said of us.

“We have never,” he added in a later letter to the Brethren, “attained to such a discipline and holy life as is found among you, but in the future we shall make it our aim to attain it.”

History tells us that neither Luther nor his churches ever attained it. His virtual battlement was too weak to hold his movement from falling into the street. The lesson? Churches without battlements eventually go over the edge.

The next big question

How does a church build a real battlement? How is a conscience—solid biblical convictions engraved into the heart—built?

Building a battlement consists of solid teaching of biblical principles, backed up by real-life applications to those principles. At the same time, it is made known that there is a line—or in this case a wall—that is not to be crossed on purpose. Whoever willfully climbs over the wall will not be allowed to climb back in, without genuine repentance. In this way, the person on the roof cannot claim that he never realized the danger. When he makes that forgetful step backwards, something will stop him: the teachings and admonishments that he received. When he trips over the toy on the floor, that pure doctrine with practical applications will be as a “battlement” to stop him from going all the way over.

The battle over written standards

Some churches have tried to build a stronger battlement by having a written standard that all members must adhere to. While the example of the Bohemian Brethren may have seemed to be just that, I do not think that all their applications were written out. The bottom line is, one would need a fat, fat book to spell out all the real-life applications to biblical principles.

Let’s consider dangers on both sides of the “written standards” issue. There is a danger with written standards, namely that only those applications that are spelled out become the battlement. In other words, suppose that we have 25 applications spelled out on a paper, but the reality is that biblical applications touch hundreds of other areas of our lives. The danger is that one can begin to think that there are no further applications than those that are written down.

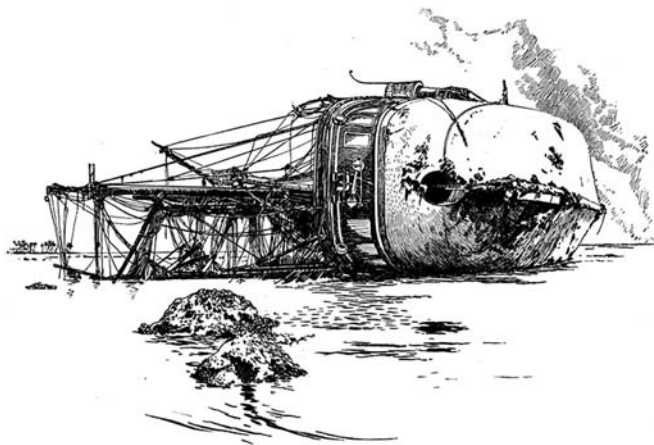
Now the reverse: there is a danger in not writing out any applications, namely that people get the idea that the congregation has no expectations. Everyone lives by his own application without regard to others.

I have seen both kinds of shipwreck; it is a toss-up as to which one is more disastrous. Let’s look at a real life example of both kinds.

Applications without principle

It is common knowledge that some Mennonite churches have a standard that all cars be black, some even requiring a black bumper. While some may snuff their noses immediately at such a requirement, I am slow to do so, even though I currently drive an all-white minivan.

Back when cars first began to be mass-produced, some of the Mennonites looked at the issue of horseless carriages and decided that there was no inherent spiritual harm in these contraptions, and that it could be consistent with Christian character to use them. Others were not sure about that and stuck to horses. However, those that did decide to use the motorized vehicle decided that if one did get a car, it should be a plain one, not all spiced up with fancy colors or shiny accessories.



I have seen both kinds of shipwreck; it is a tossup as to which is more disastrous.

Henry Ford had said concerning his product: “The customer can order any color of car he desires, as long as it is black.” And so every car that rolled off his new assembly line was black, just like all John Deeres are green. Keeping in line with the biblical principle of simplicity and modesty, the first Mennonites to get vehicles kept them simple: plain ol’ black cars.

Time moved on, and as cars began to be more common, some worldly folks wanted to stand out from the crowd and began to want other colors of cars besides plain ol’ black ones. Ford Motor Company caught on, and soon one could order other colors. Then came accessories: running lights, reflectors, chromed mirrors and bumpers, and a host of other options. The Mennonites, or at least some of them, kept right on using plain ol’ black cars.

More decades passed. Cars kept evolving, and the customer kept demanding more and more options, and car companies kept competing for the market by adding more

options. By this time, so many people wanted such a variety of colors, a solid black car was just one option out of maybe 25, and chrome bumpers became standard equipment.

Fast forward to 1985 . . . I am visiting a Mennonite congregation that requires black cars. On my visit to this particular congregation, I learned how the system operated. All of the young men would wash and wax their cars on Saturday evening, preparing them for the Sunday morning lineup, where they were all parked side by side in one gleaming black row. Once while riding with a friend that attended there, I became very puzzled when he turned onto a gravel road and began to drive about 10 mph—something extremely out of place for one who usually was on the other end of the speedometer. At my question as to why, he remarked, “Well, I already washed my car (it was a Saturday afternoon), and I don’t want to get it dusty before tomorrow. I am driving slow so I don’t stir up dust (and get my car dusty for the lineup tomorrow morning).”

Somewhere along the line, the application lost some of the principle . . .

Principles without applications

A scene comes to my mind that illustrates the opposite ditch. I was relaxing in my house one Sunday afternoon when a single, young man came to visit us. Knowing him well, I could tell he was disturbed about something. But rather than ask him about it, I thought I would just let it come out naturally. He chatted small talk for a few minutes, then suddenly burst out, “I thought this church didn’t have any standards?!”

He was referring to the fact that the congregation did not publish a written standard.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

He spilled out his story. He was from a far western state and was planning to go visit his family. At the same time, he found out an elderly lady in the congregation was planning on visiting the same state. As neither of them had much in material means, immediately the idea clicked in their minds: Why not him ride along with her, help her with the driving, and split the costs? They immediately made plans to leave in a couple of days.

But their plans were squashed by a concerned minister in the congregation. Hearing of their plans, he approached them and said, “I trust both of you, and know you mean well, but I do not think it would be a good testimony for an unmarried man and woman to drive 1500 miles together.”

The young man came to my place to let off his steam. “She’s old enough to be my grandmother! You can’t tell me

this church doesn’t have a standard!” He was thinking that no written standard meant no congregational applications to real-life, everyday situations; a sad mistake to make.

Rodeo in the church

For a final story, I will relate a true situation, as I was told it. The bishop of a conservative Mennonite church was once questioned why he did not want his church to take the no-written-standard approach for his congregation. “Why, it would be a rodeo!” he exclaimed.

Some ten years later, this same bishop had a change of heart concerning the matter.

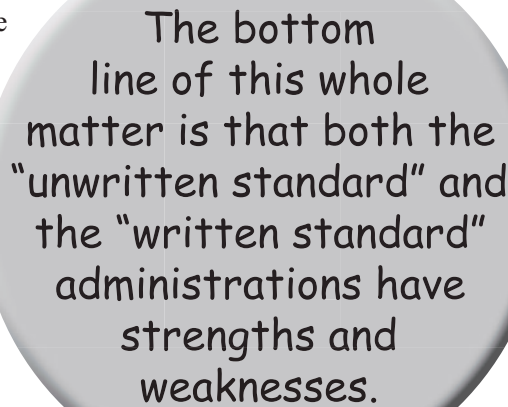
Following a brothers’ meeting, the congregation decided to do away with a written standard. When he was later reminded of his earlier statement and asked the outcome of that decision, the bishop replied, “Why, we had a rodeo! The very next Sunday all the clothes came out of the back of the closets!”

Let’s park here on this incident, and look at it with an objective mind. Which type of administration failed?

Immediately, we see the failure of the no-written-standard approach. The very next Sunday, the people of the congregation “took their liberty” and dressed themselves in clothes that, according to the bishop’s words, were not in line with the principles of a converted heart. Their changing from a written standard to an unwritten standard did not help them one iota. But upon a closer look, we also see the failure of the written standard administration. While the worldly clothes did not openly appear, they were there in the back of the closet all the time. In this case, both types of administration failed to deliver the people from their carnality.

The bottom line

The bottom line of this whole matter is that both the “unwritten standard” and the “written standard” administrations have strengths and weaknesses. The reality is that there is no type of church administration that can change a carnal heart, if that heart has decided to love what this earth holds out to him. When the members lose their interest in the business of the house and turn it towards the going on in the street below, a common response is to just add on another layer of rules, turning what was supposed to be a battlement into prison walls. On the other hand, others want nothing to do with “rules” and so they sigh and breathe a prayer, hoping that things will turn out alright in the end. And so the battlement turns into a yellow warning



The bottom line of this whole matter is that both the “unwritten standard” and the “written standard” administrations have strengths and weaknesses.

tape stretched around the perimeter of the rooftop, printed with “We recommend that you do not step beyond this line.”

Whose conscience rules?

Does individual conscience trump the community conscience, or does the church conscience overrule each individual’s perception of right and wrong? Again, we find extremes on both ends, and plenty of shipwrecks to learn from.

On the rocks of “church conscience only,” we find the remains of congregations who are like mindless zombies, able only to quote the 35 rules of the statute book. As to why Statute 25 states that such and such should be done, these folks can only tell you “because that is the way it has always been, and that is what the church says.” As far as any personal convictions to shield them from danger while operating outside the sphere of the 35 written rules—which is actually the majority of the time—they have none. And so a whole list of inconsistencies stare them in the face; but they are blind to them, since the rulebook has obliterated any personal conscience.

Meanwhile, on the reefs of “individual conscience only” we see the flotsam of congregations who have rejected any community conscience. Many of these ships have hit these reefs by trying to make really, really sure they miss the rocks of “church conscience only.” Their only compass was each man’s own opinion, and the ship wrecked because some turned the rudder right while others were turning the sails to make her go left.

The community conscience

Any group of people working together has to come to some common agreements. If two carpenters are building a house, one cannot make his walls eight feet tall while the other builds his section seven feet tall. One or the other has to give up his will, or the house will be one big mess.

In the same way, any congregation of believers has to develop a “community conscience.” Can a church survive if one member is telling everyone to get involved in politics and the next is telling everyone it is a sin to get involved in it? Will a congregation prosper if some families have a conscience against contemporary music, while other families

invite the children over and have them listen to it, telling them there is nothing wrong with it?

A brotherhood has to come to a common consensus on the basics of real-life, practical issues. Whether they then administrate this consensus by “written standards” or “unwritten standards” is somewhat beside the point. As mentioned, both administrations have strengths and weaknesses.

Submitting to my brother’s conscience

In 1 Corinthians 10:23-33, Paul gives us a great secret to achieving our goal of unity. The key phrases are “Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s *wealth* (well-being),” and “why is my liberty judged of (ruled by) another *man’s* conscience?”



The ship wrecked because some turned the rudder right while others were turning the sails to make her go left.

An example of being ruled by another’s conscience would be the case of the young man I mentioned earlier who was thinking to travel with the older lady. His conscience gave him liberty to do that, but his brother’s conscience did not. Whose conscience was to rule? According to Paul, the concerned brother’s conscience was to override the young man’s “freedom,” since his brother did not feel comfortable with the situation. This is called submission, a word our human nature hates with a passion. Needless to say, any congregation that does not practice this type of brotherly submission is headed for a shipwreck.

Romans 14 also deals with this submission. The verse often misused in this chapter is the following: “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy

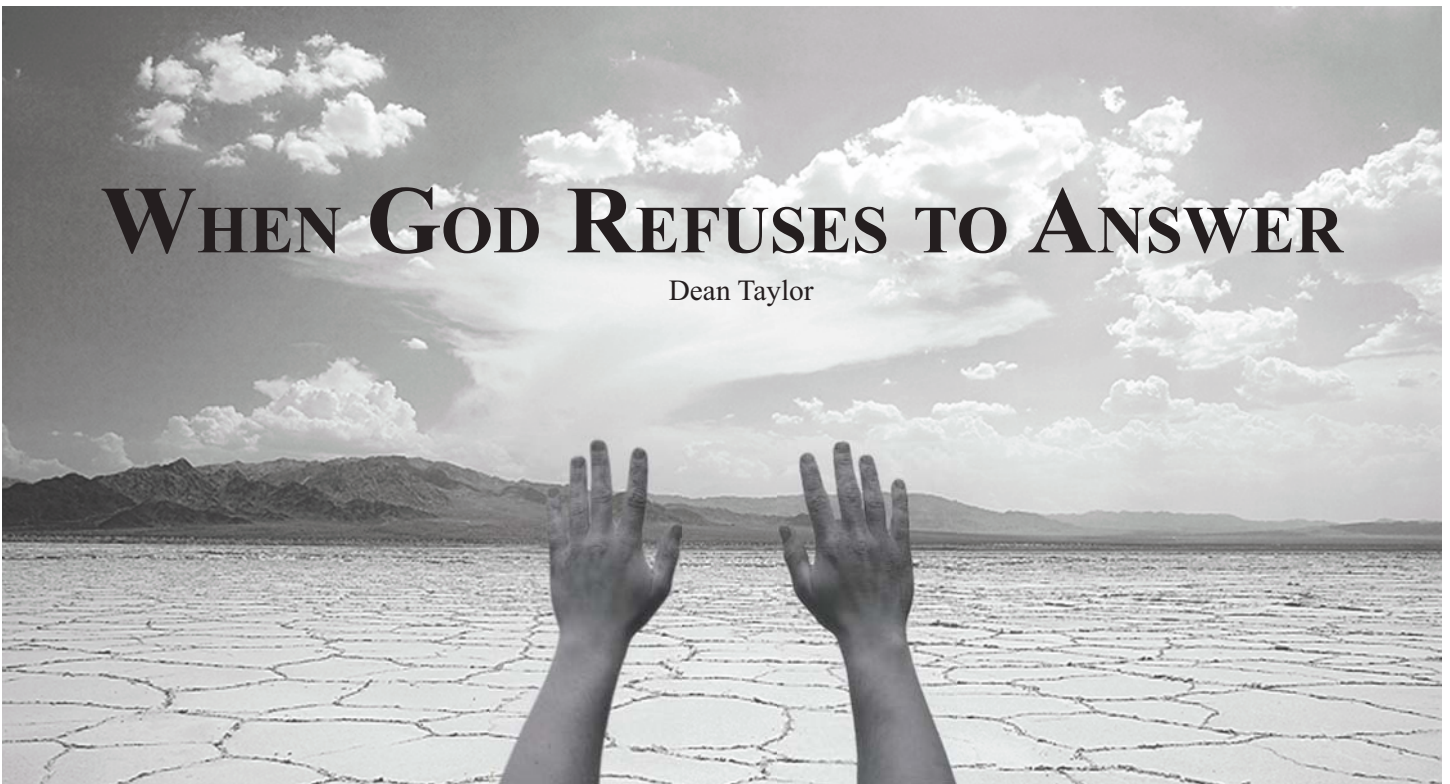
Ghost.” In a situation where there is a clash of opinions on an issue, this verse often comes up, with one side telling the other: “The kingdom of heaven is not about such issues, so I do not need to listen to you.” However, that is exactly the opposite of the meaning of that verse.

Paul is really saying, “Since the kingdom of heaven is not centered on what a person eats or drinks, then why do you fuss when your brother tries to forbid you from eating something? Submit yourself and give it up for his sake! It won’t hurt your walk with God to give it up, since the kingdom is not centered on that!”

Continued on p. 24

WHEN GOD REFUSES TO ANSWER

Dean Taylor



In the early morning hours of December 7, 1941, an Army radar base on the northern tip of Hawaii suddenly noticed a target echo, larger than they had ever seen before. They promptly notified a lieutenant at the Intercept Center: “Large number of planes coming in from the north, three points east.” Upon receiving the notification, the man in charge ignored the warning, assuming it was the scheduled arrival of six US B-17 bombers. The radar base had neglected to say just how large the target echo had been, and the warning went unheeded. Instead of six friendly B-17s, those blips on the radar were several hundred Japanese aircraft, which 55 minutes later began destroying the US fleet at Pearl Harbor.

Sometimes we hear people saying “Ignorance is bliss.” While this might be true for a moment, the fact is, the truth eventually comes out. What is more, like the US Military on Hawaii on December 7, 1941, I have found that ignorance, and especially deliberate neglect, only makes matters worse.

The prophet Jeremiah revealed God’s inner thought about us: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.” Je. 29:11-12

Jesus revealed even more clearly that God hears us and even answers our prayers in miraculous ways. Mark recorded Jesus saying: “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall

speaking with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” Mk. 16:17-18

The apostle John teaches that this awareness of God’s favor and benevolence should act as a source of strength and confidence. “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” 1 Jn. 5:14-15 That’s quite a promise! The problem is that too often I don’t seem to be experiencing the power of God like these passages clearly indicate. Why?

Perhaps the little phrase in the middle of this last promise can be a guide. It says “if we ask anything *according to his will*.” Apparently John is letting me know that it is possible to ask for things that are *not* according to God’s will. As much of a blessing as it is to read these scriptures about God hearing us, I find it sobering to read that the Bible also teaches us that there are certain times or circumstances in which God will *not* hear us. Because the gap between abiding in God’s will and the ruin of ignoring His will is so great, I have looked at a few instances in the Scripture that God specifically tells us that He will not hear. They are sobering. As you read through them, ponder your prayer life. Are your prayers being answered? Do you have a close connection with God? Read over these passages and let God speak to your heart.

Sin in general

Unfortunately, most of the time our perception of sin is too light. We too quickly forget that our benevolent God who keeps “mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” also said that He “will by no means clear the guilty.” Ex. 34:7 In other words, God does not just “forget about it.” Those sins must be paid for—and the price was great. In our Christian walk, if we go on presumptuously continuing in sin we destroy our relationship with God.

The following are just a few verses that speak about God refusing to answer because of sin in our life:

- “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Ps. 66:18
- “Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it ...” Ez. 14:13
- “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.” 1 Pe. 3:12

Have you have stopped listening to the Word of God?

The Bible lets us know that God continually desires to speak with us and pour His grace into us. Sadly however, many get a little of Him and then feel they have had enough. This is not acceptable to God. He lets us know that a Christian life is an entire life, not just one moment. When we turn away from Him, He removes even what we once had. Consider the following verses:

- “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.” Pr. 28:9
- “If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.” Mk. 4:23–25
- “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Ro. 10:17
- “And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.” Lu. 9:35

Strange fire

When we stop listening to God’s Word, we end up making things up. We think our inventions are great ideas, but to God they are a great offense. Sometimes in our worship of the Lord we may feel that we are pleasing Him, but in real-

ity we are flatly disobeying His Word. In these situations we once again ponder why God is not answering. After reading these examples of how God dealt with “*strange fire*,” we might reconsider this silence as mercy.

- “And they set the ark of God upon a new cart ... And when they came to Nachon’s threshing floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.” 2 Sa. 6:3,6-7

The
Christian
life is an
entire
life, not
just one
moment.

- “And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.” Le. 10:1-2
- “And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed. Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?” 1 Sa. 15:13-19

Covetousness

Another hindrance to an open relationship with God is the love of other things. We may think this is a light offense, but God calls it idolatry. As Paul says, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” Co. 3:5 Scriptures tell us that our Lord will not tolerate a halfhearted love of Him. He desires all of our heart. As Exodus records, “For the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.” Ex. 34:14

Perhaps the reason that we do not have a close relationship with God is because our heart really desires something else more than Him. In God's promises to hear our prayers and to answer them, the apostle John reminds us that our confidence comes from asking "according to God's will." Allow the following verses to examine what really is at the seat of your desire.

"From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Ja. 4:1-4

Is there a breach in your marriage relationship?

This might seem like a strange question to ask with regard to God hearing our prayers. Nevertheless, God has revealed that this relationship can have a direct correlation to God hearing us or not.

"And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant." MI. 2:13-14

The apostle Peter warns husbands: "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not **hindered**." 1 Pe. 3:7 That word *hindered*, by the way, comes from the Greek word "*ek-kop'-to*" which means, "to cut out, cut off of a tree." That's perhaps a stronger word than our common understanding of the word *hindered*.

Unforgiveness

Another big hindrance to answered prayer is unforgiveness. This sin is so serious that Jesus even let us know that if we continue in it, He will no longer forgive us!



Unresolved spats in family life result in hindered prayers, prayers that are "cut off."

- "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." Mk. 11:25-26
- "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Mt. 6:14-15
- "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." Mt. 18:35
- "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." He. 12:15

Double minded

God wants us to be full of faith, not doubting His promises. If we are only praying halfhearted prayers, then this could be why God is not answering.

- "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." Ja. 1:5-7
- "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Mk. 11:24
- "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." 1 Ki. 18:21
- "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." He. 10:22
- "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." Mt. 6:6-7

Not helping the poor

What we call “spiritual” is not always what God calls spiritual. In both the Old and the New Testaments, helping the poor and needy has always been close to the heart of God.

“He that oppreseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.” Pr. 14:31

“And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the LORD your God.” Le. 23:22

“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.” Is. 1:16-17

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 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.” Mt. 25:41-45

Are you fearful to confess Christ before men?

Finally, are we ashamed to name the name of Christ? Does being a follower of Christ embarrass us? Are we living a double life—holy at church, but worldly at work? Apparently our witness is very important to Jesus. So important, that Jesus told us that if we are too fearful to be an outward witness for Christ, then He will deny us before His Father. Is this why God is not answering?

“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.” Mt. 10:32-33

The promises that Jesus gave to His followers are too wonderful to just let slip away with the lust and cares of this world. If God is silent, we need to find out why. We don’t want to be like the US Military on Hawaii and ignore the early warnings, when in fact our life may well be on the brink of disaster. Oh, may God give us the grace to apprehend His promises and enjoy the fellowship and blessings that He had in store for us. “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” 2 Co. 7:1~

LET MINE BE PRAYER

Lord, I see the *pleasures* your creation offers:

The sights, the sounds,
The thrills, and passions,
Calling to me as I pass by,
“Come spend some time with me;
Come give yourself to me.”
I’m drawn, and yet I turn away,
Having in times past exhausted myself in pleasure
Until it could not be found for all the frantic seeking.

Lord, of all the *pleasures* I could choose,

Let mine be prayer.

Lord, I look at the *plans* that men have built;

Brick by careful brick in order laid,
Laid to do the job, to get things done.
Whether to honor You or not,
They advertise,
“Come join us; we need someone like you.
See what we, with your help, can do!”
Excited, I step to the brink of involvement,
Looking for that fellowship, that identity.
Then I stop and look to see if You are with me.

Lord, of all the *plans* I could choose,

Let mine be prayer.

Lord, I see *purposes* laid out like lines in the dust:

A place to walk, a destiny to seek,
A goal of life held before heart’s eyes.
“Walk this way; take this path.
Here you will find what you were made for.”
I gravitate towards a purpose that
Seems so high and noble,
But higher and nobler, I see
You seated, looking intensely and longingly in my direction

Lord, of all the *purposes* I could choose,

Let mine be prayer.

Lord, I look for *times* spent in Your presence,

Pursuing Your beauty,
Bathing in Your glory,
Feeding on Your love,
Releasing to You my concerns.
Your word becomes our shared secret,
The fount of pleasures,
Your plan for me,
The very heart of Your wisdom, joy, and mercy.
You receive my praise and thanks and all my asking.

Lord, of all the *pastimes* I could choose,

Let mine be prayer.

R., Georgia



Introduction

The following article is a sermon by Menno Simons, an early Anabaptist minister. Due to his influential leadership, the Anabaptist congregations in northern continental Europe came to be called Mennonites. I am sure Menno would have detested the thought of naming churches after him, but the name stuck. By the time some of the Swiss Brethren immigrated to North America in the early 1700s, the name “Mennonite” had become attached to them also. Most of the immigrants to Pennsylvania were actually Swiss Brethren, not Dutch “Mennonites.”

In the USA, over forty percent of the general population claims to be “born again.” Read this article, and then try to imagine a society with forty percent living it out! On the other hand, some of today’s “Anabaptists” almost deny that a new birth is necessary. This article provides a clear teaching on the subject.

Remember two things while reading this meaty article:

1. The spiritual resurrection, the new birth, is only a beginning. It is the starting line of a race, not the finish line. It matters little how great your birth was if you die three minutes later. One must continue alive in the spirit until the end of the race here on earth, when the body dies.

2. That said, we must also remember that to finish a race, we must start at the starting line. No exceptions.

A short word on the translation: This version has been reworked into modern English to make it easier to read. Some theological terms were replaced with synonyms to keep our mind out of common theological ruts that distract from the simple meaning of the words. All in all, this is how Menno might preach this sermon were he to preach it in your congregation this coming Lord’s day.

All footnotes are by me. ~Mike Atmip

The Spiritual Resurrection

The Scriptures point out to us two resurrections:

1. A bodily resurrection from the dead at the last day.
2. A spiritual resurrection from sin and death, to a new life and a change of heart.¹

The Scriptures plainly teach in different parts that a man should die to sin—that is, separate himself from it—in his spirit; be spiritually buried and rise again to a life of righteous living in God.

Paul exhorted us in this way: *“Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of*

¹ John 5:24-28. Notice that Jesus said “The hour is coming, **and now is ...**” for the resurrection mentioned in verse 25, which indicates that this resurrection (resurrection from spiritual death) was becoming available to humanity at that time. For the resurrection mentioned in verse 28 (the bodily resurrection at the last day), the words “and now is” are not there, indicating a future event.

The Spiritual

Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead
Menno



your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Ep. 4:22-24

“Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” Co. 3:9,10

Before a bodily resurrection from the dead can take place, the death of the body is necessary. Sickness, pain, and tribulation must precede death, which have a tendency to make death still more bitter to the flesh. The same happens with the spirit of man: there can be no resurrection from sin and spiritual death, unless the sinful element of us be first destroyed and buried, and has sensibly endured pain and the burden of sin, that is sorrowfulness of heart, remorse, and a sincere repentance on account of sin, as is clearly shown in the Scriptures.

David says, *“O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is*

Resurrection

lead, and Christ shall give thee light. Ep. 5:14
Simons



there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee. My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.” Ps. 38:1-10

We must endure sorrow and distress, according to James 4:9: “*Be afflicted and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.*” Paul says, “*Ye were made sorry after a godly manner;*” to repentance, “*For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death; seeing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness*

it wrought in you, what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, what fear, vehement desire, and revenge.”

Look, this is exactly how we have to die with Christ unto sin, if we desire to be made alive with Him. Because no one can rejoice with Christ, unless he first suffers with Him. It is so clear! Paul says, “*If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him, if we suffer, we shall also reign with him.*” 2 Ti. 2:11-12

The new created being

This resurrection includes the new created being, the spiritual birth, and sanctification, without which none shall see the Lord. Paul testifies to this in a few words, saying, “*In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.*” Again, “*If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*” He is speaking of the first resurrection, the resurrection that happens in our spirit: “*For, if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death—that is, through killing the sinful nature of the earthly Adam in us, with all his members or wicked lusts—we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.*” Then we can be assured that our “old man” is crucified with Him, that the sinful element in us is destroyed. We can then keep the true Sabbath in Christ, by putting off the sinful element of the flesh. In this way, we are also circumcised with the circumcision of Christ, a circumcision accomplished without hands. Our old life is also buried by means of baptism, in which we have also resurrected with him by means of faith.

This whole thing is the operation of God; we cease from all works of the flesh, are led by the Spirit, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. From that point on, we do not serve sin. It’s bad enough that we have spent our former days conforming to the culture of the gentiles, when we walked in vanity, sensual lust, drunkenness, eating and drinking, and in abominable idolatry. We dare not spend the remainder of our days pursuing after the natural desires of humanity, but should conform ourselves to the will of God so that we may say with Paul, “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*” Ga. 2:20 In the same way, “*He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*” 2 Co. 5:15

To have a more correct knowledge of this resurrection and remanufacturing,² we must bear in mind that all creatures bring forth more creatures just like they themselves are, and every creature partakes of the properties, tenden-

² I use the term “remanufacturing” instead of “regeneration,” since regeneration is often misunderstood. “Renovation” would also fit well into the thought.

cies, and character of that which brought it forth, as Christ says, “*That which is born of flesh is flesh*—which cannot see eternal life—and “*that which is born of Spirit is spirit*”: life and peace, which is eternal life.

That which is born of flesh originates out of the earth, by corruptible³ seed. It is naturally carnally minded, that is, earthly, and speaks of earthly things and longs after the earthly and perishable. All his thoughts, feelings, and desires are directed towards earthly, temporal, or visible things; in other words, it seeks those things from which it was born, or from which it proceeds. That which is born of flesh and blood is flesh and blood, and is carnally minded.⁴

“*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*” Therefore, those who are born of the flesh, but not of the Spirit, cannot please God; for such are altogether deaf, blind, and ignorant in divine things. A carnal man cannot get ahold of nor understand divine things, for by nature he does not have that discernment. Rather, his mind is depraved; God is not in his mind. A carnal man cannot understand spiritual things, for he is by nature a child of the devil, and is not spiritually minded. Hence, he comprehends nothing spiritual; for by nature he is a stranger to God. He:

- has nothing of a godly nature dwelling in him
- does not have communion with God, rather he is at odds with Him
- is unmerciful, unjust, and impure
- is not peaceable
- is impatient, disobedient, and without understanding
- is also unhappy.

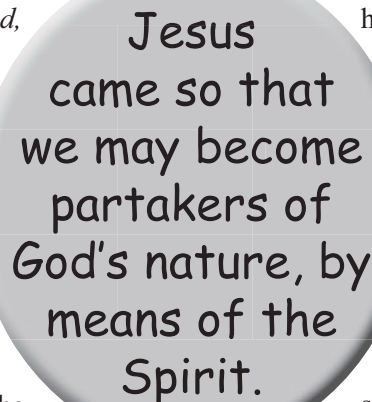
So, all men—because of their birth and origin—naturally live after the flesh’s desires. This is called the first (or old) Adam, and is summed up in the Scriptures with a single word: un-godly, that is, without God, separated from Him and destitute of His nature (character).

3 Think of seed that has deteriorated in quality from the original plant (by being cross-fertilized with another inferior plant), such as a tomato that only gives fruits that are one inch in diameter. The seed has become “corrupted,” or degenerated, from what the original plant was. The human race has become corrupted from what God originally made Adam to be, and this corruption is passed down through the generations. That is the reason all babies are—in spite of the fact that they can be quite cute—born selfish little fellows. No one has to teach children to be self-centered: they inherit that quality from Adam. “Self” is a corruption from the original character of God.

4 The root “carn” (carnal, etc.) means “flesh.” “Carnal” simply means “flesh-centered.”

This is the nature and character of the earthly and devilish seed. Because as the seed is, so is the fruit; for “*whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption*”—and bring forth fruit unto death! The natural man sins just like his father, of and through whose seed he is born. Because he is the father of lies and sinned from the beginning, and did not abide in the truth. For this reason, he that sins is of the devil, because sin is not of God, but of the devil, and he that sins has not seen God, nor known Him.

Now, we know that the Son of God was made manifest to take away sins and destroy the works of the devil, and through His death deprive him of power who had the power of death, that is the devil. As well, He wanted to rescue them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For by the sin of one man—Adam—all were made sinners. He that sins is the slave of sin and does the will and works of his master ... whose spirit leads Him.



Jesus
came so that
we may become
partakers of
God's nature, by
means of the
Spirit.

Whose slave are you?

Everyone is a slave to the one whom he serves, whether a slave of sin unto death, or a slave of obedience unto righteous living. He that acts unjustly shall receive according to his works. To such a person, Paul says that they should awaken from the sleep of sin and death, so that the second death shall have no power over them; saying, “*Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*” Ep. 5:14

On the other hand, all those who are born the second time and renewed from above—from out of God—through the living Word, are also of the mind and character (and have the same tendency towards good!) as the One they are born and begotten of. We may easily learn from the sacred Scriptures what the nature of God or Christ is, because Christ has explicitly portrayed Himself in His word.

Jesus is the true image of the invisible God, the brightness of His glory, and the exact outward manifestation of His person (character), who dwells in inexpressible light, whom none can approach or see. He did this so that we may follow Him and conform unto Him in His life and walk upon earth, as exemplified in words and works. In other words, Jesus came so that we may become partakers of God’s nature, by means of the Spirit.

In the Scriptures, Christ is everywhere represented to us as being humble, meek, merciful, just, holy, wise, spiritual, long-suffering, patient, peaceable, lovely, obedient, and good. He is the perfection of all things; for in Him there is sincerity. Look, this is the image of God, or Christ in the

Spirit, whose example we should follow until we become like it in nature, and demonstrate it by our walk! All the remanufactured children of God are thus minded, for they partake of the nature of Him who has begotten them. They are—to sum it up in one word—Godlike, or godly persons. They have communion with Him, are of one mind and character with Him, and have the image of God in them.

The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, abundantly show this, especially in the epistle of Paul to the Colossians, where he says, *“Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.”* Co. 3:9-15 *“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,” “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,”* for Christ is the image of God to whom we must mold ourselves to. *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.”* Those, therefore, who have been molded into the image of Christ Jesus, are the truly remanufactured children of God. They have “put off” the old man, and “put on” the new, which is created after God’s character, in true uprightness and holiness.

Conformed to God’s character

When these have conformed to the image of God, have been born of God, and afterwards continue in God, they will not commit sin, for the seed of God remains in them. They have overcome the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—are crucified to the world, and the world unto them. They have killed their fleshly desires, and buried their sinful element with Christ in baptism, with their lusts and desires. They no longer serve sin until it brings unrighteous deeds, but much more they serve uprightness unto salvation. All this happens because they have clothed themselves with Christ, and are purified through the Holy Ghost—in their consciences—from dead works to serve the living God. They go forth bearing the fruits of the Spirit, the end of which is eternal life.

Because they have renounced the devil, the flesh, and the world, and have quit serving sin, they have—as faithful servants—voluntarily obligated themselves to God, with David, to live according to His blessed will all the rest of their days. On the other hand, the devil and his adherents—the world and flesh—being very envious, are waging war against them and are their deadly enemies. The remanufactured ones have now become enemies of sin and the devil. They have put themselves on the battlefield against all their enemies, with their Prince of life and faith, under the banner of the red cross. They go to battle armed with the armor of God and surrounded with angels of the Lord, always watching with much prayer so that they are not overcome by their enemies, who never slumber, but go about like roaring lions seeking whom they may devour.

Although they occasionally receive a wound and are overtaken by their enemies, still their souls remain uninjured. This wound is not unto death; for they have the anointing of God. They have the true Samaritan and the true Physician with them, who binds up and heals their wounds; for He has compassion over our weakness and sickness. Through His stripes and wounds we are made whole. Nor are they so thoroughly overcome that they will cast aside their weapons and surrender themselves again to become slaves of sin and be ruled by it.

But being encouraged anew of the Lord and in the strength of His power, they persevere valiantly in battle, until they, through Him by whom they can do all things, have gloriously conquered their enemy, and say to him, *“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”* And with Paul say, *“Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* *“The Lord,”* says Jeremiah, *“is with me as a mighty, terrible one, therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail.”* They say with David, *“Blessed be the Lord, my strength, which teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight, and they are not moved till they have broken their enemies to pieces. Blessed be the Lord who hath not given us as a prey in their teeth; our soul is escaped, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler: the snare is broken, and we are escaped from our enemies, and out of the hand of those who hate us.”*

The Lord is a rewarder of them who diligently seek, love, and serve Him; as it is written, *“Behold the Lord cometh, and his reward is with him.”* Yes, His reward and the gift of God are eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Because if you serve the Lord Jesus Christ, you will receive the reward of your inheritance, the crown of life, which God has promised those who love Him.



The nature of the seed

As stated above, every creature has the nature and character of that of which it is born. Therefore, we will speak a few words concerning the nature, character, and effects of the seed of the divine word, by which we are begotten in the image of God. Where this seed is sown upon good ground—into the heart of man—there it grows and reproduces its nature and character. It changes and renews the whole man; it changes him from a flesh-follower into a spirit-follower, from earthly into heavenly. It transforms from death unto life, from unbelief to belief, and makes man happy; for through this seed all nations upon the earth are blessed. Therefore, says James, *“Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.”*

The word of God is also the pure, unadulterated milk, by which the young and reborn children of God are nurtured, until they attain to a mature man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. It is also solid food for the mature and aged in Christ Jesus. In short, this seed of the divine word is spiritual food, by which the whole inner man is established, so that he doesn't perish and faint in this wilderness and desolate world. Everyone who does not daily gather the bread of the divine word to satisfy their starving souls will starve and faint, because *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”* Therefore, whoever hungers after this heavenly bread is blessed and receives the ingrafted word; because it will bring forth in due time, according to its nature, an hundredfold. For, says the Lord, *“As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please.”* Is. 55:10,11

Look, this is the nature, character, and effects of the seed—the word of God—by which man is renewed, remanufactured, sanctified, and salvaged! It is the incorruptible seed, namely, the living word of God which abides forever. And whoever is clothed with this power from above, filled with the Holy Ghost, and thus united to God, may become a partaker of God's character and be conformed to the image of His Son. He, Jesus, is the first of the remanufactured

ones and the first of those who resurrected with Him from the sleep and death of sin. From there on, they serve Him not in the oldness of the letter, but in newness of the Spirit.

Putting on Christ

He that is real, and has this nature and character in his heart, has “put on” Christ Jesus. Such a person has become like He is, has the image of God in his heart, and is spiritually minded. He is led by the Spirit in his spirit, and spiritual fruits are brought forth as a well springing up unto eternal life. For they are remanufactured through the word which was sown in their hearts, begotten of God, and born the second time to bring forth fruit of eternal life. They are therefore—as children born of God—the same as the Father; of one mind and character. They have the godly nature of their Father, who has begotten them. Such a person's thoughts are heavenly, his words are truth, well seasoned, and his good works are holy, acceptable to God and man; because they are holy vessels of honor, useful, and ready to do every good work.

Paul exhorts those who are born of the corruptible seed of flesh and blood—who are earthly, carnal, without understanding and blind in divine things, yes, children of wrath—that they should die unto sin; kill and bury the lusts and desires of the flesh. Then, they should rise by virtue of the heavenly seed from the sleep and death of sin, and be remanufactured, and walk in newness of life. This is the first resurrection. Paul tells them, *“Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”*

Likewise, he also admonishes all remanufactured children of God, who have been changed in mind and outlook through the eternal, saving seed of God and who have been regenerated and are risen, that they should be godly, spiritually, and heavenly minded, and strive for and desire heavenly, incorruptible things. He also admonishes them that their heart should be where their treasure is, and their conduct “in heaven,” telling them, *“If then ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God; set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God, when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”* Co. 3:1-4 These verses declare that the remanufactured children of God who have risen with Christ from the dead, and now



Have you had a funeral
yet for your old way
of living and thinking?

live with him, talk about heavenly things. To the world, they appear as if they are virtually dead, for their life is hid in God. John says it this way, “*Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*” 1 Jo. 3:2

With these and similar words, the Scriptures admonish the truly remanufactured and those who have resurrected, that they should take heed to their calling, and continue perfect in a new, godly walk. Because if they have been made partakers of Christ, they should persevere to the end, so that they do not again depart from the living God through the deceitfulness of sin and an evil heart of unbelief. They should remain steadfast and whole, as the chosen children of God, and inherit the kingdom of their Father. They should reign in eternity and rule over sin, death, the devil, and hell, and all the enemies of the kingdom, whom they overcome by means of Christ, as valiant men. If they do so, they will also sit with Christ at the table of the Lord, and eat the bread and drink the wine of the kingdom of heaven; just like Christ overcame, and sits with His Father in His kingdom which is prepared for them. They shall be as a city well fortified; free from all care of their enemies; in full rest, full of life and joy. Such overcomers eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of Paradise. This pleasure-garden is ever so close to the unregenerated, but they are still earthly and carnally minded and have by nature the veil and partition-wall of sin in front of their hearts.

The regenerated

These remanufactured ones are they who:

- died unto sin with Christ, and have truly risen again
- are the born anew, to whom the power is given to become the sons of God
- were repurchased out of all nations and have on the wedding garments for the marriage of the Lamb
- have received the sign TAU⁵ in their foreheads, by which the servants of God are designated
- are the spiritual bride of Christ, His holy church, His spiritual body, flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone
- have come to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, which came down from heaven
- have come to an innumerable company of angels, to

5 Some early Anabaptists taught that the seal of Revelation 9:4 and Ezekiel 9 was the Hebrew letter tav, which originally was written as a cross, or the Greek letter tau—a ‘t’, or cross. This mark or seal represented all who had taken up the cross of self-denial and were following Jesus in discipleship.

the general assembly of the church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant

- are fellow citizens in the household of God, who have put off the corruptible garment and put on the incorruptible
- have acknowledged the name of God, and kept His commandments, and the faith of Jesus
- are the true sheep of Christ, who hear His voice, and follow no other
- are the firstfruits of His created things, who have the Spirit and mind of Christ, therefore, they know what the will of the Lord is



**Like begets like:
What God
begets is like Him
in character.**

Summary

Yes, these are the chosen generation, the spiritual and royal priesthood, a holy nation, a unique people; who in times past were not a people, but now the people of God, for God had compassion on them. These are the souls who were slain, under the altar, for the word of God.

In short, with them old things have passed away; behold all things have become new. But this has all happened because of God, who has reunited us unto

Himself through Jesus Christ. These are they who stand before the throne of God, with palms in their hands, and clothed in white, saying, “*Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power and might be unto our God forever and ever, Amen.*” Re. 7:12

This is a short instruction concerning the spiritual resurrection, or new birth. It reveals the difference between the natural and spiritual, between the earthly and the heavenly, and makes it clear how each type is disposed, inclined, and of what mind he is: it declares what a man’s birth or origin is. It clearly shows that a person is of the same character—of the identical mind and of the same nature—as that is of which he is born, that which generated him. Because man by nature is not inclined to follow after the spiritual. Likewise, the spiritual rebirth of God does not occur by means of flesh and blood. In short, like produces like: flesh births flesh, and Spirit births spirit. As the natural father is, so are they who are naturally born of him. Such as God is—who is a Spirit and dwells in heaven—such are also they who are spiritually born from heaven. The rebirth of God goes way deeper than the birth of flesh.

Here, as in a mirror, one may view and examine himself and judge of what birth, mind, character, nature, life, and conduct he is. Here a man, by taking a little pains, can judge and test himself. Because a man’s walk, words, and actions—and the thoughts of his heart—all show what he

really is. A man knows himself best, and no one knows what is in man, but the spirit which is in him.

I will repeat: all those who find upon testing themselves that they are not renewed and remanufactured in mind, understanding, spirit, and character, but are still carnally,

Have you been remanufactured to original specifications by God—born again?

earthly, worldly, and devilishly minded—and from their degenerate, ingrained nature are prone and willing to do all kinds of evil—should humble themselves before God. As Jeremiah said, “*Let us examine and prove our ways, and let us turn unto the Lord, let us lift our hands and hearts to God in heaven, and say, We have sinned before heaven and in thy sight, and have excited thy wrath; Let us weep and let our eyes run over with water.*” They should also say with David, “*O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.*” We should beg Him that He would make glad the work of His hands, and renew us whom He created. Let us humbly ask Him for His Spirit, saying, “*Lord, send forth your Spirit, and they will be created, and you will renew the face of the earth.*” That is how they should continue in prayer until they are clothed with the power of the Spirit from on high, changed, and made new again in the spirit of their mind. Then with astonishment they will say, “*This is the change wrought by the right hand of God, the most High.*” Ps. 104:30; 95:6

Also let those, who, on examining themselves, find that they are born from above by the grace of God—and that they are new creatures in Christ, and have become a temple of God—take heed to themselves according to the counsel of the Scriptures, in order that, since they are washed, purified, regenerated and sanctified, they do not again defile themselves and pollute the temple of God. Because if any man defiles the temple of God, God shall destroy him. These pray in the Spirit with assured confidence, to God their Father, with David: “O God, strengthen us and confirm in us that which You caused in us!” He will then hear in His holy temple, according to His promise, because He is faithful who has begun the good work in you. He will also continue doing it until the coming of Jesus Christ. Peter says, “*And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore*

the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” 2 Pe. 1:5-11

May the God of all grace, who will gather all His chosen in the last resurrection into His kingdom, grant us such hearts, minds, and characters, that we, by means of true faith, may die unto ourselves. May we deny and renounce ourselves, that we may have part in the first resurrection spoken of. This first resurrection does not take place at the resurrection of the body from the dead at the last day. That is the second resurrection. But this first resurrection consists alone in dying unto, killing, and burying the sinful element by means of putting off and dying unto the old life, and to rise and be received into a new, godly conduct and pious life. Amen! ~

Continued from p. 13 ... Battlements

A final word on the conscience

Before leaving this theme, a warning is necessary. Don't depend entirely on conscience—either community or personal. The conscience is not the final rule of authority in the Christian life. Jesus the Word and the Holy Spirit are the final authorities; the conscience is only a tool in their hands. Some people make the grievous error of letting their—or the community's—conscience be their lord. In fact, such people are idolizing the conscience by making it lord of their life. These folks never grow in their Christian life, and usually end up drifting into more and more worldliness, slowly but surely, since their conscience has no outside input. Let Jesus—not your conscience—be your Lord. Let Him define your battlement, not your battlement define Him.

To depend on the conscience without the lordship of Jesus is like Eutychus in Acts 20, who misused the windowsill. Windowsills are not beds. Neither are battlements. Don't sleep on them!

In conclusion

The conscience—both personal and community—is our battlement, a safety wall in times of weakness and mishap, and a gentle, constant reminder of the line between the roof and the ground below. Used correctly, they are a great blessing. Remove them, and you may someday find yourself lying on the pavement below, one mangled mess.

May we recognize there are “diversities of operations” and be careful in condemning those who don't “operate” exactly like we do. May we act—and not react—when we see others misusing battlements. And finally, may God bless you as you build battlements for your house! ~



The Sisters' Corner



That they may teach the young women ...

LEAN HARD ON HIM

Rachel Weaver

Today I come to you with tear-dimmed eyes. I feel my weakness and my need of leaning on Jesus and learning to wait! I am so impatient. Again and again I seem to need the reminder to wait. I know it in my head, but I must understand it in my heart so that my life can live it out. So He comes to me again and again with lessons designed to teach me this truth of waiting. The poem on the right by Grace Null Crowell that I found today—after listening to a message on “Trust”—ministered just the right thing to my heart, and I thought that it might bless you too. Let me take you through the meditations of my heart and what God spoke to me.

God reminded me of the verse, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.” Is. 26:3 He reminded me that when I do not lean on Him, when I am afraid, or when I cannot sing in my trials, I am not trusting Him. It is so easy for me to look at Peter and say, “What a foolish man. He had just seen the feeding of the five thousand. He had seen the Master do all the miracles. Why did he not trust? Why did he look at the water?” But those words come back to haunt me. I have seen marvelous things at the hand of the Master. I have watched time and again as He answered my prayers and did miracles for me. Why then should my faith falter and why should I begin to be anxious. I am so much like Peter!

I can hear the Master saying to Peter, “Oh thou

Wait

Grace Null Crowell

If but one message I may leave behind,
One single word of courage for my kind,
It would be this, oh brother, sister, friend.
Whatever life may bring, what God may send—
No matter whether clouds lift soon or late—
Take heart and wait!

Despair may tangle darkly at your feet,
Your faith be dimmed, and hope, once cool and sweet
Be lost—but suddenly, above a hill,
A heavenly lamp, set on a heavenly sill,
Will shine for you and point the way to go—
How well I know!

For I have waited through the dark and I
Have seen a star rise in the blackest sky,
Repeatedly—it has not failed me yet.
And I have learned, God never will forget
To light His lamp. If we but wait for it—
It will be lit!

~~~~~

Wait on the LORD: be of good courage,  
and he shall strengthen thine heart:  
wait, I say, on the LORD. Ps. 27:14

of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" I can hear Him saying the same thing to me. How patient He is and how kind, when time after time I take my eyes off Him and I face the stormy winds and waves. Then I tremble and I falter, but He calls to me, "Be of good cheer. It is I. Be not afraid." He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Mt. 11:28-30

Rest is a state of quiet, a place of trust. When I rest like a child, I do not struggle or fret. The picture (on the opposing page) of my little daughter snuggling up to her daddy and resting quietly on his shoulder is etched deeply on my heart. No fretting, no wiggling to be down, just a quiet contentment to be in a safe, strong resting place. Ah, what a wonderful Father we have! The older I get, the more I understand my frailness and His strength. I cannot walk alone. I must wait and hold fast to His hand. "But he knoweth the way that I take: and when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Job 23:10 Tonight, as I ponder over the message that I heard today on trusting, I am challenged to higher heights. I would love to have learned this lesson and been done with it, but I will be learning it better and deeper until He bids me "come home."

I looked at Elijah under the juniper tree, where the Lord found him when Jezebel was out hunting for him. He was so discouraged that he wanted to die. Where had he been just before that? He had been on Carmel, where he called fire down from heaven and God had vindicated Himself through this man. Now here he was, just a short bit later, alone and discouraged. But God is so faithful. He did not leave Elijah there. God took him away and showed Himself to Elijah.

He does that for me time and again. He gives me victories and then He lets me alone so that I understand that the victory was not by power or by might, but by His Spirit. He lets me come to the end of myself in the dark, and then when I see my need of Him and call out to Him; He lights His lamp for me to see the way. He does not want me to

walk alone. He wants me to follow Him. He is fitting me for heaven, to be with Him. I could not enter in, in my self-sufficiency and my pride.

God does not leave us, weary mother friend. He will come to us and show us Himself. He is the Mighty God, the Comforter, the Prince of Peace! (How I need that part of Him!) He is the good Shepherd, the Bread of Life, the Everlasting Father. He is good! He is good all the time. Our problems are nothing for Him.

- He is bigger than a bill that must be payed. All the cattle on the hills are His.
- He is bigger than the problem in your home. He knows the answers and will show you how to walk when you seek Him with all your heart.
- He has the answers for your child training. He knows how to help you deal with the needs of each child, even the difficult one. He especially seeks after lost sheep. Do not give up hope. The Shepherd went out after the one lost sheep and brought him home, rejoicing.
- He is there when your strength is gone. "He giveth

power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." Is. 40:29

- When your child is so sick that you are not sure that he will live, He is there to hold your hand and walk with you through the valley and the shadow.
- He is bigger than the confusion that surrounds you. "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." Ps. 56:3
- He is a Father to the fatherless and a Husband to the widow. (And, to those who are like a widow, without a father or husband in the home.) What an awesome Father He is. He never makes a mistake. He is always there and never too busy to listen.
- He hears us when we call. He has said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Ps. 50:15

We can walk on water with Him, but only when we are looking into His face. Men may disappoint us. Friends may turn against us, but when the Master says "Come," He will



**It is in the darkest hours  
that we find His light on  
the hill the brightest.**



never let us down. I find it so often that when I begin to sink, He holds out His hand to me and walks with me to the safety of the boat. Then when I am in the boat ... He stills the storm. Sometimes He waits until all seems lost before He comes, but He always comes. I think that He might wait until it is so dark so that we KNOW it is Him when He comes. He does not want us to put our confidence in men, in friends, or in things. He wants us to put our complete trust in Him.



*Resting on daddy!*

He says again, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you... Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Jn. 14:27 God gives peace to obedient, broken hearts. When we are anxious, we must check our hearts. Have we taken our eyes off of Jesus? It is in my darkest hours that I sense His Presence and His peace the most. And what He wants is for me to KNOW HIM. If all my life were easy, I would not seek to know Him, and so He brings me trials to turn my heart to Him. He wants me to really, really know Him and depend on Him. He wants me to have a deep, abiding relationship with Him. So, He keeps bringing me back to the place where I seek Him and lean on Him.

I have watched as God has taken those I love through trials. I have stood by, trembling as they walked through deep waters. But I have seen them come through with a faith and a trust that shines. I have felt His hand as He took hold of mine in a dark hour. I saw the light He lit upon a heavenly sill. It guided me through my trial. I had no one to lean on except Him. He did not fail me. The longer I live, dear mother friend, the more I see that it is in the darkest hours that we find His light on the hill the brightest. He has come through for me in sickness, in rejection, in sorrow, and in weakness. He always comes when I call on Him!! So learn with me to wait, to hope, and to trust. Lean hard on Jesus. He is our Rock and our Strength. ~

This article was inspired by a message titled "Leaning Trust Will Produce Faith," preached by Gerald Nolt. You can receive a free copy of this message on cassette or CD by writing to, Charity Ministries, 400 W. Main St. Ste. 1, Ephrata, PA 17522. Or, you can call 1-800-227-7902 and ask for message #4312. This message is also available for free MP3 download at [http://www.charityministries.org/msg\\_detail.a5w?vlast\\_index=4312](http://www.charityministries.org/msg_detail.a5w?vlast_index=4312)

## HOW TO BE PERFECTLY MISERABLE

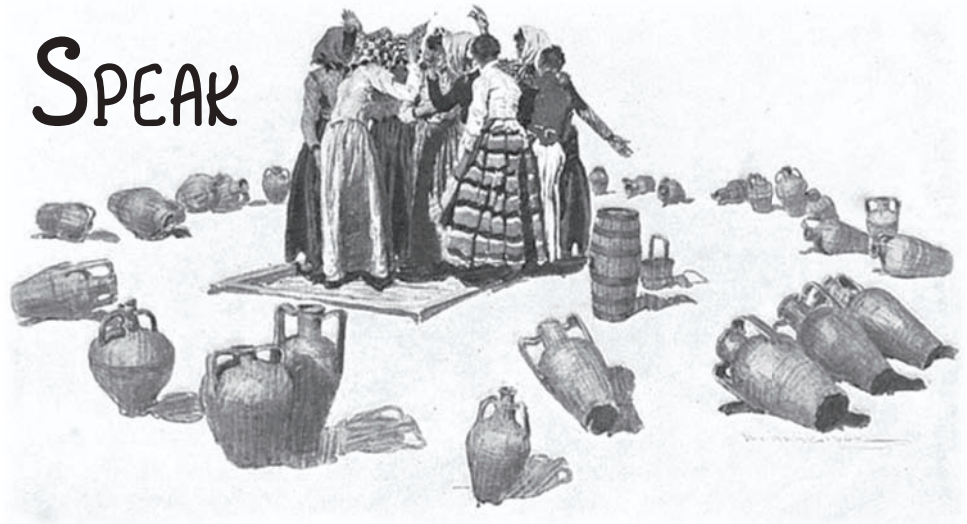
- Think about yourself.
- Talk about yourself.
- Use "I" as often as possible.
- Mirror yourself continually in the opinion of others.
- Listen greedily to what people have to say about you.
- Expect to be appreciated.
- Be suspicious.
- Be jealous and envious.
- Be sensitive to slights.
- Never forgive a criticism.
- Trust no one but yourself.
- Insist on consideration and respect.
- Demand agreement with your own views on everything.
- Sulk if people are not grateful to you for favors shown them.
- Never forget a service you may have rendered.
- Be on the lookout for a good time for yourself.
- Shirk your duties if you can.
- Do as little as possible for others.
- Love yourself supremely.
- Be selfish.

This recipe is guaranteed to be infallible.

—Author unknown

# WORDS WE SPEAK

A meditation based on Proverbs 25



by Clifford Fox

This morning in our family devotions time we read Proverbs 25. I was impressed with how much the Bible has to say about our words. It has plenty of warnings against sharp words, as well as encouragements to say the right word at the right time.

The words we speak are important. We can change many things by the words we say. A child learns early on how to persuade his parents to allow him a favor. An attorney chooses his words carefully to persuade the judge to decide in favor of his client. Words can be spoken to bring joy or sorrow, comfort or pain, love or hate. You may hear a president make a declaration of war and the course of history may be changed. When the auctioneer looked at me and said “Sold,” I immediately had the obligation to pay ten percent of the price I had bid on a house for myself and my bride-to-be. Later, we said “I do,” and we were pronounced husband and wife for as long as both of us would live. At another time, words expressed the deep feelings of my heart, and my eternal destiny was changed!

Although words can be momentous, many times they are not quite so life-changing. Yet they may have more effect than we realize. A kind word to a sad child or a lonely elderly widow—or perhaps an encouragement to one who is struggling with the perplexities of life—may be the spark that changes their outlook on life. One day soon after we were married I came home from work to find my wife in tears. What was wrong? It was the first time she had burned the food to serve her new husband! She needed some comforting, reassuring words to be spoken to her. It meant so much to her to hear that I still loved her just the same and it really didn’t matter if things weren’t perfect.

If we have a disagreement with someone or hear something negative about someone we do not appreciate, it is tempting to spread the gossip. Our hearts can be very deceitful in this. We persuade ourselves that we must ask others to pray for this individual, and then tell them all the details “so

they know how to pray for them.” However, the Bible tells us to work things out between ourselves where possible and not tell others. Proverbs 25:9-10 tells us, “Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another: Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.”

Turning to Matthew 18:15 we find, “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”

Consider now how much good you can accomplish with your words. Remember how Abigail stopped David’s men from destroying her husband Nabal’s men by her humble, apologetic words. Remember also how a wise woman prevented a city from being destroyed when she spoke to Joab over the wall. Proverbs 25:11 teaches us that “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.” (NKJV) I can just picture the person in charge of decorating Solomon’s mansion putting some golden apples on a silver platter for the centerpiece on his table. Perhaps Solomon came from the judgment hall to his dinner and thought how beautiful and precious it was, and realized that a word fitly spoken is just as precious and beautiful. Isaiah also knew the value of such words. He said: “The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.” Is. 50:4

A word of reproof to a willing learner is also of much value. When I correct my son and he amends his ways, it can save him from much heartache. If I am too busy to take the time to correct him, I may well regret it in later years. Proverbs 25:12 tells us that “As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reproof upon an obedient ear.” Proverbs 29:17 then instructs us to “Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.”



Words spoken to lift up ourselves are obnoxious to the listeners. The bragging Pharisee who prayed in the temple did not go to his house justified. The lowly, humble publican did. Consider Proverbs 25:14: “Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain.” As a farmer is disappointed when clouds pass over and fail to bring much-needed rain, so we are disappointed when someone does not do what he promised to do. Proverbs 20:6 asks, “Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?”

Sometimes people will say “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” While a child has to learn not to take offense too easily, the Bible tells us that our words can “break” someone’s bones. Proverbs 25:15b says that “a soft tongue breaketh the bone.”

False words are among the worst words, especially when mixed with partial truth. Men have gone to prison for crimes they haven’t done because of a false testimony given in court under oath before God that they are speaking the truth. What pain we feel when someone unjustly accuses us of wrongdoing! Proverbs 25:18: “A man that beareth false witness against his neighbor is a maul [a mallet, or hammer], and a sword, and a sharp arrow.”

There are also times when silence is “golden.” Sometimes just a few compassionate words are better than many words. And lighthearted talk is not fitting for someone who is grieving. Proverbs 25:20 teaches us that “As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.”

Have you ever been with someone who is complaining and quarrelling? You just want to get away from the person because they find something bad to say about everything that happens. Maybe one of Solomon’s many wives was this way! Ponder Proverbs 25:24: “It is better to dwell in the

corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house.”

Ah! How good to hear a word of good news from friends from far away. Maybe we haven’t heard from them for some time, and then they send a letter bringing good news, perhaps of a loved one giving their life to God. We rejoice with them, just as it says in Proverbs 25:25: “As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.”

Proverbs 18:21 says “Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.” I have heard someone interpret this verse to mean that I can claim life verbally for myself and God *will* heal me. (Unfortunately, that person died anyway.) I believe this is a wrong interpretation. The second half of the verse explains that the things we say affect those around us. Many times we say to our Christian friends, “God bless you.” Are we not asking God to give them the blessings of spiritual and physical life? And, conversely, you have probably heard an angry person say words of cursing on another person. Are they not asking for eternal death by those curses?

James has many warnings of the dangers of a tongue, calling it a world of iniquity! He tells us that if we do not offend with our words, we are perfect and are able to control the rest of our body. O Lord, teach us to be careful not to send any cutting, harsh, or hurtful words from our mouth!

Jesus told us that the words He speaks to us are spirit and life! The people who met Jesus were impressed with how gracious His words were. May it be said of us that we have been with Jesus, because of our gracious words.

*Clifford and Marlene Fox live at Ephrata, Pennsylvania, where they—along with their five children—attend Living Hope Christian Fellowship. Clifford enjoys reading about how God has worked in the lives of others and how they faced the challenges of the circumstances God placed them in.*



**Death and life are in the power of the tongue.**  
(Proverbs 18:21)

**Is your tongue an axe, or a cup of cold water?**



# SEEDS OF THE KINGDOM

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## *Seed Sower Award*



*The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. Matthew 13:24  
And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. Hebrews 10:24*

In this series, we intend to highlight the work of those who are currently busy introducing the seeds of righteousness, peace, and joy into this sin-filled earth, with the hopes that at least a few lives will receive the Word and be eternally changed. The purpose in turning the spotlight on these works is not to glorify those men and women who are actively advancing the kingdom of God, but rather to stimulate YOU, the reader, into doing YOUR part in YOUR corner. Neither is the purpose meant to be that of asking the readers to donate financially or personally participate in these projects, although that is certainly an option in some cases. Take these ideas, tweak them to fit your situation, and begin to plant the kingdom of God in your environs. The inclusion of any person or church in these articles is not an endorsement by *The Heartbeat of the Remnant* of every doctrine and practice that the spotlighted individuals or churches may represent in other areas of their life. As well, the spotlighted person/group may not endorse all aspects of *The Heartbeat of the Remnant*.

*This issue features an interview with a brother from Ohio who reached out in compassion in the recent Haiti earthquake. He prefers to remain anonymous, so that God be glorified, and not him.*

**(The Heartbeat of the Remnant)** Hello, brother. I understand that you went to Haiti to help in the aftermath of the recent earthquake. Could you share with us what you experienced down there?

**(Brother in Ohio)** Well, I don't want to lift up myself.

**(THR)** Well, that is not our intention either. But you are just a common brother that tried to do something for the kingdom of God, and we are looking for practical, real-life examples to encourage others that they can have a part in spreading righteousness, peace, and joy in this world.

**(BO)** I went with Christian Aid Ministries (CAM). It took us a couple of days to get there, and a couple of days to get back. We were actually there about six or seven days. Things were pretty well cleaned up by that time, as far as dead people. I think I saw one or two dead bodies and occasionally there was a bad smell, but for the most part that

had been taken care of. There were still a lot of collapsed buildings around, and people just wandering around. People were living in homemade shelters, etc. We saw a lot of people with wounds, not real bad where we were at. And we saw a lot of improvement in that area while we were there. My wife was able to go with me, and we divided up into teams of about half a dozen people and went out during the day to help.

**(THR)** I assume that since you have some medical training that you were involved in cleaning wounds and that sort of thing?

**(BO)** Yes, at the beginning we were involved in a lot of that, but toward the end it involved just some general sort of medical things as well. We could see quite a bit of improvement in the wounds that we saw, while we were there.

**(THR)** Did you get involved in trying to dig people from out of the rubble?

**(BO)** No. We stayed at the CAM base, where we were well taken care of. We went in the morning and returned in the late afternoon.



**(THR)** Did you get involved in any amputations, or was it more basic things that you were doing?

**(BO)** No, we didn't see anybody that needed any amputations. There were quite a few clinics around. Actually there seemed to be quite a bit of help there. The worst cases seemed to have already been taken care of. Anchored nearby was a 1000-bed hospital ship, and I think the worst cases were being treated there.

**(THR)** In these articles, we are trying to focus on common, everyday sort of people like you and me, and what we "little folks" can do. What would you say would be something that people like us can do in terrible scenes like this earthquake? I am thinking of suggestions you might have for someone who wants to help the next time something like this occurs.

**(BO)** I think one of the best things is to show them kindness, love, and respect. I cannot speak Creole, so I used an interpreter. But just to look people in the eyes and give them a smile, and show concern and to let them know that they are valuable; those things are very important. And we had opportunities to pray with people. These are things any Christian can do. Just let people know that they are important. Especially in a case like this earthquake, where so many people died in a 30-second time period. Dead bodies were everywhere, and bodies—human beings—were being just loaded into a big dump truck and dumped into mass graves. Just to show them that God loves them and counts them as precious individuals probably meant a lot to the people we worked with.

**(THR)** And that would be something anyone can do. A person doesn't need medical training to show compassion.

**(BO)** Showing compassion is more valuable to them than dressing a wound.

**(THR)** Was there any personal lesson that you learned through your experience? Something that God spoke to your heart through it all?

**(BO)** Well, I suppose just the joy of seeing up close God reaching out in compassion. It makes you fall in love with the Word more, just seeing Him reach out in love to poor people. And also, another thing again, it encourages one to

be thankful for what we have and puts shame on us when we complain about stuff.

**(THR)** I thought about that very thing, especially while this was going on. We complain about food that doesn't taste just the best; meanwhile there were people who literally did not have any food and would have been very, very happy for our "yucky" food!

**(BO)** That's right.

**(THR)** I assume there is still a lot a common person could do in Haiti, in the reconstruction. Even just being there and showing that smile of compassion?

**(BO)** Yes. There were more people that wanted to go through CAM, but they were limited in how many they could take, so our group was basically limited to those with medical training.

**(THR)** So do you have any plans to go back down?

**(BO)** I don't know. I just want to be obedient to what He shows me, and follow Him and be faithful each day where I am at. I would be very open to going back. Working in situations like that is the very kind of thing that is so meaningful to me.

**(THR)** Would you have some pictures of your experiences there that you could share with us?

**(BO)** No, I didn't take a camera along. I figured that there were so many pictures available on the Internet, etc, and it would just take time and trouble for me, so I didn't even take a camera.

**(THR)** That's good. They needed your time and compassion shown to them, not pictures taken of them.

**(BO)** Yes, that's right.

**(THR)** Well, thank you for your time. We are just looking for examples of how a person can do some good in this world. One person cannot change the whole world, but he/she can change or touch a few lives around them. If you sit back and think, "Since I cannot do much, I am not going to do anything." Then I sit back and say, "Since I cannot change the whole world, I won't do anything either." And on it goes. But if you bless someone, and I do my part, and the next Christian does his/hers, the accumulative effect is enough to indeed make a noticeable change.

*Continued on p. 35*

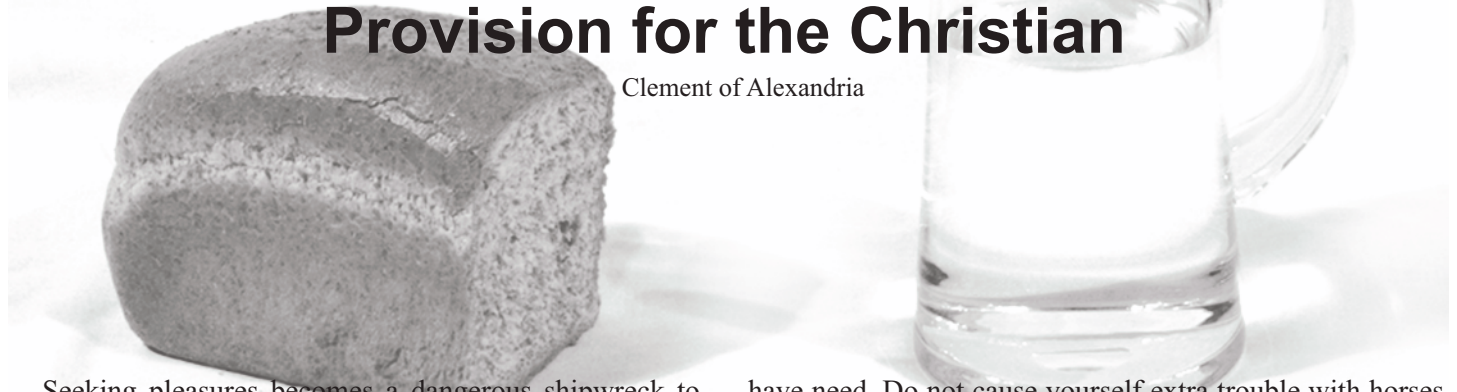


**An important aspect of compassion is to simply take some time to let people know they are important.**

# VOICES FROM THE EARLY CHURCH

## Frugality: A Good Provision for the Christian

Clement of Alexandria



Seeking pleasures becomes a dangerous shipwreck to men; for this luxurious and dishonorable life that so many seek is alien to true love for the beautiful and for the best pleasures. For man is by nature an erect and majestic being, aspiring after the good, as is proper for a creature of The One. But the life which crawls on its belly is destitute of dignity, is scandalous, hateful, and ridiculous.

And to the godly nature, living for good feelings in the body is a thing most alien; it is like a man to imitate sparrows in feeding or pigs and goats in reproduction. For to regard sensual pleasure as a thing to strive for is the sign of utter ignorance of what is excellent.

Love of wealth removes a man from an upright manner of life, and entices him to stop feeling shame at what is shameful. If he could only, like an animal, eat and drink all sorts of things and gratify in every way his lewd desires! Very rarely does such a person inherit the kingdom of God.

Why do we fix such dainty dishes, only to fill one belly? The filthiness of gluttony is proved by the sewers into which our bellies discharge the unused portions of our food. Why do the rich have so many cupbearers, when they might satisfy themselves with one cup? Why the closets full of clothes? And the adornments ... why? Those things are prepared for thieves, and crooks, and for greedy eyes.

Look, for instance, to Elijah the Tishbite, in whom we have a beautiful example of frugality, when he sat down beneath the thorn tree and the angel brought him food. "It was a cake of barley and a jar of water." 1 Ki. 19:4-6 This is what the Lord sent, knowing what was best for him.

We, then, on our journey to the truth, must be unencumbered. "Carry not," said the Lord, "purse, nor scrip, nor shoes." Lu. 10:4 That is, possess not wealth, which is only treasured up in a purse; fill not your own storage bins, as if hoarding up supplies in a bag, but share with those who

have need. Do not cause yourself extra trouble with horses and servants, who—as carrying the extra supplies when the rich are travelling—are allegorically called "shoes" in Luke 10:4.

We must, then, cast away the multitude of vessels, silver and gold drinking cups, and the crowd of domestic servants, receiving from the Teacher the beautiful and sober servants: Self-help and Simplicity. We must walk conformably to the Word. If we have a wife and children, having a house should not become a burden; they need to learn to fit into their place in the life of a sound-minded traveler. The wife who loves her husband must be furnished for travel through this life just like her husband is. A sufficient provision for the journey to heaven belongs to those who take frugality and chaste seriousness along with them.

As the foot is the measure of the shoe, so also the "size" of the body is an indicator of what each person needs. But whatever is extra—mere ornaments and excess stuff of the rich—is really a burden, not an ornament to the body. **He who climbs to the heavens by force must take with him the beautiful walking stick of generosity**, and attain to the true rest by sharing with those who are in distress.

Just like gushing wells rise again to their former level when pumped out, so giving away and sharing a drink to the thirsty (since this is the compassionate spring of love) refills the supply again, and the well is replenished. It works in the same way that milk flows into the breasts that are sucked or milked. For he who has the almighty God, the Word, is in need of nothing, and never is in a hard place because of what he lacks.

This Word, who trains us, gives us the true riches. Nor is getting materially rich something desirable to those who possess—through Him—the privilege of lacking nothing. He that has *this* wealth shall inherit the kingdom of God!~



# Everyday Evangelism

—Abner Showalter

I would like to tell you about a way that I have found to be a witness for the Lord.

You see, I have heard many sermons about the need to witness and share my faith with the lost around me. So as I heard these types of things being preached, I found myself desiring to be obedient and tell others about the gospel. The only problem was that, in spite of all my desires and good intentions, I did very little of it. I many times intended to do better, but it seemed that it went no further than intention.

One of the problems was that I never just took the time to do it. Life can be so busy with all the things that I am doing that, before I know it, another week is gone and I have done nothing to further the kingdom.

It was over a year ago that I began to be aware of the opportunity that lay at my fingertips. I work a public job and encounter many people each day. Normally, I would make excuses for myself, like, “I don’t have enough time to really interact with this person.” Especially if it was a busy time; you get the person’s items loaded on the truck, and away he goes and the next guy backs in.

I have found by experience that the flesh is extremely gifted in excuse manufacturing. As I became aware of the wonderful mission field that I am in every day, I also knew that I had quite a few *Prepare to Die* CDs lying around.

One day I decided to try it. Why not? Why should I continue to miss this perfect opportunity that presented itself to me daily? No! I would not continue this way. You should have been there that morning! I was going to do it.

Then the first customer came. I loaded his roofing metal and accessories, then I was going to talk to him a little and then give him a CD. We talked for a while, but I just couldn’t manage to get enough courage to give it to him. So after a brief conversation, he got in his truck and was gone, leaving me standing there with the CD still in my pocket.

I felt defeated. Why couldn’t I do it? This cannot be right, I thought to myself. I don’t know what all transpired in my heart by the time I had loaded the next customer, but I had resolved not to be a coward this time. And thank God, He enabled me. I gave out that first CD that morning and realized it’s really not that bad.

That started a routine for me. I began to consistently give out these gospel CDs. I can say that the Lord has helped

me very much. Sometimes people come in and

I find myself full of compassion and so desirous to give them a CD. Then sometimes with other people (usually more high-class) I find myself almost scared to give them a CD. But God has given strength, and I thank God for making me a witness for Him in this way. There are many other areas the Lord would have me to grow in; especially the area of being willing to verbally “reprove the unfruitful works of darkness.”

I think the *Prepare to Die* CD is a wonderful medium, especially if you give it to a person that you ordinarily would not be able to spend much time with. I do want to quickly say, let’s not neglect to use our own mouth in the process.

I want to encourage you too. You can be a witness. I am sure that some time or another you encounter people. For Christ’s sake, use those opportunities to share the gospel.

This encouragement is especially for you, if you do work in the public and encounter many people every day. You have the opportunity of a lifetime! Use it! Heaven alone will reveal the impact. The reason this opportunity thrills me so much is this: you have a legitimate reason to interact with the person. If you do any conventional witnessing, you know the frustration of trying to get into a conversation with someone who has places to go, things to do, and people to see. It’s almost like you have to interrupt them. (That’s not all bad!) But my point here is that you already have the person’s attention. They are expecting you to talk to them. You have, dropped into your lap, the very thing that you have to work so hard for when you “go witnessing.” I trust you see my point.

So please, by God’s grace let us not squander the opportunities that present themselves each day. Instead, may we take advantage of this wide open window of our work place, where people expect us to speak to and interact with them.

Knowing the terror of the Lord, let us persuade men!

*Abner Showalter is from Windsor, Kentucky, where he attended Blessed Hope Fellowship and worked loading metal and doing office work for Dutchman’s Metal. He has now left both congregation and job to spend two years in Ghana, Africa, in the service of his King. The picture in the background is of Abner handing a gospel CD to a potential brother in Christ, at his former worksite.*



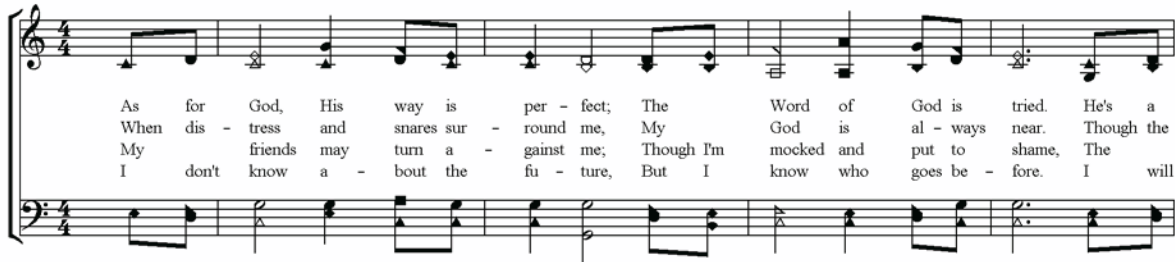
# GOD'S PEOPLE KEEP SINGING

## His Way Is Perfect!

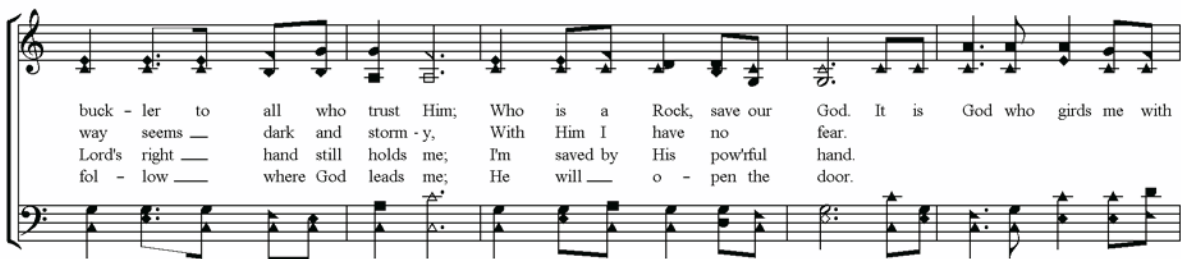
Psalm 18

Karen A. Heisey

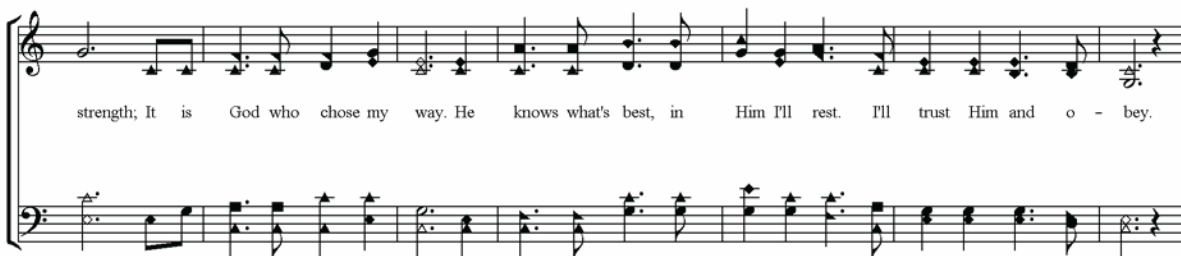
Karen A. Heisey



As for God, His way is per - fect; The Word of God is tried. He's a  
When dis - tress and snares sur - round me, My God is al - ways near. Though the  
My friends may turn a - gainst me; Though I'm mocked and put to shame, The  
I don't know a - bout the fu - ture, But I know who goes be - fore. I will



buck - ler to all who trust Him; Who is a Rock, save our God. It is God who girds me with  
way seems — dark and storm - y, With Him I have no fear.  
Lord's right — hand still holds me; I'm saved by His pow'ful hand.  
fol - low — where God leads me; He will — o - pen the door.



strength; It is God who chose my way. He knows what's best, in Him I'll rest. I'll trust Him and o - bey.

Joel and Karen Heisey live at Schaefferstown, PA, where Joel earns his daily bread on the family dairy farm and as an auctioneer. They attend Heidelberg Church of the Brethren and enjoy the blessing of being able to participate as deacons. The above song was birthed while Karen passed through some troublesome waters on a foreign mission field, prior to her marriage to Joel. When the words of Psalm 18 jumped off the Bible at her one day, she knew in her heart that they needed to be sung back to the LORD. With Bible, pen, and paper—and the help of a few friends with the harmony—*His Way is Perfect* was born. She has since returned to the USA and serves as a missionary to her two precious boys.





Continued from p. 31

**(BO)** Yes, that is where it is at, all of the church doing their little part. It is not about one person being “the hero” and changing the whole world.

**(THR)** Thank you again for sharing with us. Another brother told me that you went down to Haiti, so I thought I would share your story. God bless you, and be not weary in well-doing! ~

## The Supplicating Eye

*Blest is the man whose softening heart  
Feels all another's pain;  
To whom the supplicating eye  
Is never raised in vain:  
Whose breast expands with generous  
warmth,  
A brother's woes to feel;  
And bleeds in pity o'er the wound  
He lacks the power to heal.*

*He spreads his kind supporting arms  
To every child of grief.  
His secret bounty largely flows  
To bring unasked relief.  
To gentle offices of love  
His feet are never slow.  
He views through mercy's melting eye  
A neighbor in a foe.*

*Blest is the man whose softening heart  
Feel's all another's pain;  
To whom the supplicating eye  
Is never raised in vain.  
Himself, thru' Christ has mercy found,  
Free mercy from above.  
That mercy moves him to fulfill  
The perfect law of love.*

- Anna Barbauld, Song #152 in *Pilgrim's Praises*

## 4th Quarter 2009 Financial Report

**Thank you for your support!**



|                                   |                     |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>01/01/09 Beginning Balance</b> | <b>\$48,083.70</b>  |
| <b>Receipts</b>                   |                     |
| Tape Ministry Donations           | \$151,011.58        |
| Remnant Subscription Donations    | \$28,540.04         |
| <b>Total Receipts</b>             | <b>\$179,551.62</b> |
| <b>Disbursements</b>              |                     |
| UPS & Postage                     | \$21,111.72         |
| Tapes, Albums, CD's & Labels      | \$42,601.14         |
| Equipment & Software Purchases    | \$3,362.38          |
| Equipment Maintenance & Repairs   | \$410.86            |
| Mailing & Office Supplies         | \$5,484.86          |
| Rent                              | \$9,000.00          |
| Telephone                         | \$2,980.67          |
| Website Development & Maintenance | \$3,608.58          |
| Miscellaneous                     | \$1,718.98          |
| Payroll Expense                   | \$74,772.36         |
| Books & Catalogs                  | \$3,680.01          |
| Remnant Publishing & Mailing      | \$23,601.92         |
| <b>Total Disbursements</b>        | <b>\$192,333.48</b> |
| <b>12/31/09 Ending Balance</b>    | <b>\$35,301.84</b>  |
| Difference                        | -\$12,781.86        |

The Heartbeat of

# The Remnant

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## *The night ends with you!*

*Thick darkness that strangles the world  
must immediately flee from your radiance!*

*Renew our hearts!*

## *Send us your Spirit and make us strong!*

*Though the world hinders us,  
let us press on through great tribulation, until we reach the goal.  
Let us not allow our clothes to become spotted with sin or guilt.*

## *Let your light shine in us, Lord!*

*Illuminate our way!  
Ignite within us the fire of your love,  
and let it burn until we are perfectly clean.  
Cleansed with the fire of love, let us live in truth!*

—Peter Riedemann, (1506-1556)

Free translation made from:

Lieder der Hutterischen Brüder

(Songs of the Hutterian Brethren)

