

The Heartbeat of 
The Remnant

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A ministry of
The Berean Voice 



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~ *The Berean Voice Board*

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Greetings of Christian love to one and all. This past year and a half have been challenging in one way or another for most people. *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing* –James 1:2-4.

We trust that no matter what each of you has faced your inner motivation echoes with the words of Apostle Paul, ... *for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.* –Philippians 4:11-13.

As we are already almost halfway through another year, I stop to consider how time keeps disappearing at an ever-increasing rate of speed. For many, the last 16 to 18 months have been quite challenging as the Covid-19 pandemic and its aftereffects continue to wreak havoc with all that used to be considered normal. For us, some of these aftereffects have hindered us from getting this issue of the magazine out in a timely manner. Our apologies. However, things are back on track to be able to get the next issue out within the next several months, thus allowing us to get back onto our normal schedule once more.

I see the pandemic and the resulting aftereffects as quite similar to one big traffic jam. First, many vehicles are all traveling along quite smoothly at the speed limit. Gradually more and more vehicles join the flow, until the highway becomes quite congested. However, things still continue to flow unhindered until suddenly one vehicle brakes sharply and swerves to avoid some debris on the roadway. Immediately, there is a ripple-effect or domino-effect, as each vehicle brakes to avoid hitting the one in front of them that just applied their brakes. I have seen this type of situation create stop-and-go traffic for a mile or more as traffic slows to a crawl, then once each vehicle finally gets past the offending object they can once more accelerate to their previous rate of speed.

With our world's economies, both local and global, the same thing seemingly has happened, howbeit on a much, much larger scale. First came the shutdowns, both local and national, causing businesses to lose production and sales. Then as businesses reopened and their workers

began to get sick, further production was lost. Suddenly, many manufacturers found themselves behind in their inventory reserve, which graduated into being behind in their ability to supply the demand. Since so much of our world's businesses have developed trade at a global level, there are many products that are not available for sale as manufacturers wait for the "company overseas" to once more have enough supply to meet the global demand. Another problem that has developed more recently is that due to the major imbalance of supply versus demand on a global level, the cost of purchase for many products has skyrocketed awakening fears among some economists of a global crisis due to inflation.

Where does this leave the church? It seems that the "enemy of our souls" has used this global event to cause churches everywhere to struggle on many levels. I have on my bookshelf a book titled CONSCIENCE IN CRISIS, which is about church history. This book specifically examines the struggle of the "peace" churches in colonial America. One of the key points the book focuses on is that the global events of that time period shook the very foundations of their faith and practice. This caused the collective conscience of the churches to face an unprecedented crisis level, which many individuals never overcame. Some gave up the faith, some quit going to church, some walked away from their church and started going to more worldly churches. And the ones that remained, struggled substantially through many issues until they once more were considered stable.

Our Perspective Matters

When I think of the word perspective, the definition I am using is: *a particular attitude toward, or way, of regarding something; a point of view.* It is like the prescription of the **glasses** we have in front of our eyes causing us to see things in a distorted manner or with a clear 20/20 view. Or it is like using a **filter** in your computer or in your vehicle engine, which only lets through that which is pre-determined should be allowed.

So, our perspective is akin to using a *filter* or a *pair of glasses*. Our perspective is shaped by many things: the way we were trained as children, the role models we chose to follow during our formative years, the reading material we absorbed, the spiritual mentors we opened our hearts to, and the peers we embraced throughout our lifetime. Also, our perspective determines how we look at situations, how we interact with God, how we view sin and salvation, and how we respond to both friends and enemies.

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CONFIDENCE

by Barry Grant
Titanyen, Haiti

Something that I have noticed repeatedly as I read God's Word is that God's people are *confident*. Consider Noah. When God told him to build an ark, there was no wavering. He spent the next 120 years confidently doing just that. Then I think of Abraham confidently doing whatever God asked of him, even when He asked him to sacrifice his only son. We cannot speak of confidence without mentioning Caleb and Joshua, who after hearing all their comrades give their doubting reports, confidently described what they should do with this new land of Canaan: *...Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it* —Numbers 13:30.

We cannot forget about David who went out and silenced the large naysayer—Goliath. Nor can we forget Daniel, Gideon, Job, Ezekiel, Isaiah, or Jeremiah and all that they did with confidence. As we study each of these men of faith and many others, we clearly see that they had a great amount of confidence in their God!

Some might say that if God worked the same way today as He did back then, we would be more confident. Maybe

if God were still an Old Testament God, it would be easier. If He led us into battle, destroyed our enemies, parted seas, and caused bread to fall from heaven, then we would have more confidence in Him.

Now let us consider the New Testament. It is quite different. God's people are commanded to leave everything for the sake of Christ. They are promised that the world will hate them. They are told that it is difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. They are guaranteed that they will be blessed if they suffer, if they are poor, if they are hungry, and if they mourn.

Can people still have confidence in a God that asks His people to follow Him under these circumstances? Yes! The disciples proved it. They went about preaching and teaching. They were hunted and beaten repeatedly. The deacon, Stephen, showed great confidence when he was brought before his oppressors, even when they began to gnash their teeth at him, and stone him. Stephen showed confidence until he took his last agonizing breath.



Before he became the apostle Paul, Saul was an enemy of the cross, the chiefest of sinners, and a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He was a prominent man, taught by the best. Then he met the living God, and everything changed. After Paul was baptized, ...*straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God* –Acts 9:20. The next verse says the people were amazed, then in verse 23, five verses after he was baptized, it says that *the Jews took counsel to kill him*.

It takes a lot of confidence in God to change a man like that, to cause him to, overnight, completely change allegiance. According to his own testimony, Paul was faithful until his death: *For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:* –2 Timothy 4:6-7.

God did amazing things in the New Testament. He healed the blind and raised the dead to life again. He released prisoners and struck people dead. Some may say it would be easier to have great confidence in God if we were still living in the New Testament Bible times when Jesus physically walked and talked here on this earth.

What about after the Bible?

In the early church, we again see a group of people that did not waver; they had confidence in their God, a God they could not see. Tens of thousands of God's people stood boldly before the world and proclaimed its wickedness, and tens of thousands of God's people were killed. The confidence of these people was never questioned. They were called fools, for believing in a "God they could not see". They were mocked and scorned for their 'foolishness', they were ...*killed all the day long...* –Psalm 44:22. People questioned their practices, they questioned their religious structure, they questioned the message they preached, they questioned many things, but they never questioned their confidence. These Christians believed in their God, of that there was no doubt.

Strangely, they were not interested in the pleasures of this life; they did not care about the things of this world, and even their very lives were a small thing to give up for their God. Families were torn apart, houses and lands were confiscated, churches were burned, but it did not faze stop them. They lived for something greater, something the heathen could not understand.

Through the time of the early church and the time of the Reformation, people were added to the Kingdom in great numbers. Yes, children did grow up and join their parents' church, but there were also great masses of new converts from the world. How could anyone convince a worldly person to join a group that was hunted and killed—a

group that suffered like the church of Jesus Christ suffered? Yes, we know that salvation is of the Lord, but it was the confidence of God's people that caused others to wonder, that caused them to seriously consider this new religion of *heretics*. This was a group of people that would gladly accept the spoiling of their goods, be happy to give all they had to help others, and not resist their capture by the authorities. The true church of Jesus Christ was a group of people that always caused others to wonder, "Who are these people?" They clearly put all their faith in their God, and that was not a common occurrence. They stood up for God's Truth no matter how hot the fire burned, no matter how miserable their lives were made. It all showed a great confidence, not in themselves, but in their God.

As we look at the church today, what do we see? Some of God's people are taking up their crosses, and denying the world and the lust thereof, other people are not. Is the church of today still known for being confident in their God?

As professing Christians, have we lost some of this biblical confidence? Are we still out there undeniably serving the one true God? Do people look at us, and stand in awe of the confidence we are displaying in our God? Too many people of today are saying they are Christians, but they demonstrate very little confidence in God. They live quite closely to the ways of the world. Instead of enjoying persecution, they enjoy many of the same things that the world does. Each of us needs the fire of God burning deep within our hearts, a fire that cannot be quenched.

Confidence equals obedience. I have met many Christians of our day whose ancestors gave their lives for Christ, and their grandfathers bravely led the church, but there now seems to be something missing. As I interact with many God-fearing Christians, it seems that there is a prevailing struggle with confidence—a confidence in a living God who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-present.

In the uncertainty of our world today, we need to once more boldly proclaim the gospel message just like true believers did in times past. We need to clearly draw distinct biblical lines between right and wrong. We need to rid ourselves of all these wretched gray areas and call sin, sin. It seems that we have lost the confidence to speak out against the sin of our day. If we confidently proclaim what God has declared, there are some people who will not like us. We need brethren that are not afraid to be scoffed at and are willing to take the road less traveled.

Right before our Lord ascended on high, He gave His disciples a glorious promise, ...*ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in*

Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth –Acts 1:8.

Ye shall receive power! Not power from men, not power from kingdoms of this world, but real, overcoming power—power that comes only from the Holy Ghost! After we receive this power, we go forward as a new creature, confidently proclaiming the blessed Gospel of our Redeemer.

We need hearts that burn with God’s will and God’s word. We need hearts aflame!

I was eating lunch one day when a couple approached me with a serious question, “Why does the church think it has to control us?” After they explained how they think they should be able to be ‘free in Christ’, I was excited to answer their questions. However, there was another ordained brother sitting beside me. So, I decided to wait, hoping that he would engage the couple, but he said nothing. As another forty-five minutes passed, I tried to explain to the couple how they needed to deny themselves and submit to the church. And that if they laid down their lives fully, if they surrendered all, they would no longer have such a struggle with church structure.

The couple seemed encouraged and ready to give things another try. However, the minister beside me did not seem too pleased, so I asked him what he thought. He said that his father told him years ago that when he was young, he thought he had all the answers. After he got old, he realized he did not know anything, and that church issues are too complicated to solve. We need to just try to get along.

Is this the answer, to just act like we don’t know anything and hope that it all works out in the end? I do understand that we don’t have all the answers. After all, I realize that I have more questions than answers most times. However, I do know what God wants for His church! ...*Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish –Ephesians 5:25-27.*

A glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish! Will we, as God’s people, once again stand for truth, deny the world, and like sheep allow ourselves to be led to the slaughter? Or have we made our lives too comfortable to deny, have we chosen the easy (broad) way and denied the straight and narrow? Have we signed a peace deal with the servants of sin? If I weep as I write, will you weep as you read?

The definition of the word *confidence* is *a feeling or consciousness of one’s powers*. Many people today have confused confidence with pride, and for good reason. Most people that are confident are confident in themselves, instead of being confident in Christ. We see this self-confidence all

around us. There are life coaches and counselors all over the globe, telling people to believe in themselves, telling them to be confident in themselves. When one is confident in themselves, they often do become proud. Remember the world does not look down on pride. You can hear the world boast of its pride everywhere you look. People are proud of their children, proud of their country, proud of their favorite sports team, proud of their lawns, proud of basically everything that is good in their lives. We must remember that pride is sin and will not enter heaven. While confidence in one’s self or things is pride, confidence in God is not!

It is not a new concept to confuse confidence in God, with pride. David’s oldest brother Eliab said to him, “I know thy pride”. Was David proud? No, he simply had a great deal of confidence in his God.

Could it be that a false sense of humility has silenced the church? Could it be that this tactic of the enemy is one of Satan’s current weapons against Christians? Could it also be the reason that the Church seems to be struggling in all parts of the world? What if faithful men would once again step out in faith in their God with great confidence and by their words and actions show this sinned-stained world the straight and narrow way—into the Kingdom of God?!

We all must agree, we live in a confused world—one that is confused as to what is right and what is wrong. What if the world could look at the Church and once again find a group of people that know exactly where they are going—a church that has no doubt which way is the right way—a church that can boldly proclaim the answer to the problems of our day—a church that is nothing less than **completely confident** in their GOD?

Let us come before our God on bended knee, with our hearts bowed low, demonstrating genuine godly sorrow for where we have lost our way. Let us earnestly seek God’s will for ourselves, for our families, for our churches, and for our neighbors. Let us ask God to show us how we can be His examples to the world around us. *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified –Isaiah 61:1-3.*



CONFIDENCE

With a God so big, why would one fear?
He controls the sea, the storms that appear.
He knows tomorrow, before it has come.
The hairs of our head, He knows the sum.

Why would one question a God like this?
Why do some doubt, or ask amiss?
“Trust in the Lord” the Scripture has said.
But our own understanding, we lean on instead?

I’m sure it’s confusing, to the all-knowing One.
All the miracles, with a word, they were done!
He looks to and fro in this world today,
For one that will trust, without a delay.

The things of this world are so brilliant and fast.
Do we even need God, maybe old-fashioned at last?!
Enough with the folly, we all know the truth.
We have seen God working, yes, from our youth.

Nothing can replace our almighty God;
To say any different would certainly sound odd.
He’s waiting for the church to trust Him once more.
He stands and knocks; will you open the door?

Not just in a pinch, or when life’s too hard,
But every moment, your fears disregard.
He’s looking for a people once more in our day,
With **confidence** in God, His power to display.

by Barry Grant

Sparrows

by Lee Rufener
Athens, WI

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father –Matthew 10:29.

Of all the many, various winged creatures that frequent the skies, the sparrow is certainly esteemed among the lowest. People usually regard these drab birds as noisy, troublesome, and way overabundant. The original sparrows native to North America are shy birds of the fields and meadows. They are neither abundant nor bothersome. But the birds with a dour reputation for being disagreeable are house sparrows, which are native to Europe. They were introduced to our shores in the nineteenth century and with no natural controls present, increased rapidly. These are the “sparrows” spoken of in the Bible.

The sparrows to which Jesus referred are the world’s best-known sparrow and belong to the weaver finch family, which includes nearly three-hundred different species. It adapts so well to human habitation that it rarely breeds very far from civilization. Instead of admiring the sparrow’s adaptability, we view it as a pest. This bird was not esteemed much higher in Christ’s day and two were sold for a farthing (about a half cent).

The poorest of the poor in Israel would arrive at the meat market and scan the display. Beef, lamb, and fish were priced out of their budget. One copper farthing would purchase two sparrows. If they were to place two coins on the counter, they would receive four birds. Then possibly they would stare into the eyes of the store owner: *Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings...* –Luke 12:6. Like the present day “baker’s dozen”, this typical scene had repeated itself so often that it had become tradition: the merchant would then produce an extra bird and present it to his patron for free.

As a little boy with poor parents, it is highly probable that in the days of Jesus’ young life this scene had repeated itself before His own eyes. The fifth sparrow, of no value, had been thrown into the deal as a measure of goodwill and grace. Yet, this sordid specimen did not fall on the ground without the notice of the divine Father. Thus, streamed out the sublime and benedictory words, *But even the very*

hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows –Luke 12:7. This is foundational to understanding the mind of God.

The message of the sparrow is plain, personal, pertinent, and poignant. The things that man esteems as trivial, trifling, and insignificant are never overlooked under the gaze of God. Any man, endeavoring to explore the daunting depths of God, is susceptible to missing the heartbeat of the heavenly Father. For he who would dive to explore the recesses of the deep must first pass through the surface bubbles on the wave. Though one may have no interest in bubbles and has chosen to ignore them, it is the simple truths that give God His greatness. The infinite grace of our God is wrapped in the package of a common house sparrow. This must arrest our attention if we are ever to attain an ounce of His likeness.

The convergent link drawn to the worthless bird is a worthless person. There are so many things that argue for our worthlessness. While modern inventions create a larger field for man, his arrogance creeps steadily higher, and his real significance erodes. Huge corporations have been constructed to employ him. Major shopping centers clothe and feed him. Mega churches have risen to console him. And the vast world of the Internet shall educate, entertain, and engulf him with a gigantic array of options to occupy any pursuit he may imagine. In this world of accumulated intelligence, man is drowning in indescribable despair. In such a vast domain he is nothing more than a bubble on the wave drifting without purpose in the infinitude of this universe.

There was a minister who was asked by a funeral director to come and hold a funeral service. The funeral service was announced, the hour was set, the place was stated, and when the minister stood up to preach there was no one in attendance but himself and the director. While most people never experience a despondency this acute, it is real to some,

and it underscores the fact that some men are esteemed of little more significance than the sparrow, yet not in the sight of God.

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones – Isaiah 57:15. In a day when men smile and stretch their hands to receive the super-size fries, 20% more mustard in the bottle, or more footage on the roll of toilet paper... God still values the soul.

His delight is not merely in the sophisticated and prospering, but He makes His habitations among the...

...Little Ones

Such are the sparrows. The much-heralded eagles bear some disgusting traits such as feeding on dead carcasses, and we choose to overlook that they are gruesome, ravenous birds of prey. Instead, they are presented as the image of

the mighty, to remind us of the glorious freedom of liberty and independence.

Children are the opposite. They are the emblem of innocence, dependance, and ignorance. *And they [mothers] brought young children to him, that he [Jesus] should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them – Mark 10:13.* It is rather natural for busy people to despise such little ones. For many wombs of the unborn, the life within is a cumbersome bother that is not worth the sacrifice required to retain it. Perhaps these souls, percentage wise, are the most despised humans on the face of the earth. The laws of our land have legalized the murder of them if anyone cares not for their existence. But Christ deems them otherwise. *And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them – Mark 10:16.*

Not only are little children despised, so likewise, are small efforts. The addition of the widow's two mites to the treasury arrested the attention of the general populace, though not in a positive fashion. Yet God attests that her little copper





coins added more to His treasury than all the noisy sacks of silver that resonated down the chute. So insignificant was the lunch provided by the lad, that the disciples declared, *...but what are they among so many?* –John 6:9. Despite it all, God will never miss a sparrow, and neither can He ignore the smallest sacrifice offered freely by the hands of His little ones.

...Latter Ones

Such are the sparrows. Are not the native birds of North America far superior to these newcomers? We have grown accustomed to our own preferences and traditions and have little esteem for the input of another. *The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason* –Proverbs 26:16. And so is the “early bird”. Folks stand for hours outside a store front in an effort to have the first chance at a bargain. These ignore the fact that their pursuit is entirely selfish, and they are driven by emotional frenzy to attain some piece of merchandise before someone else “gets it”. Life in America is offered on a “first come—first serve” basis and the thought of showing deference to another is often despised.

But this selfishness is nothing new. Christ was confronted with the same hardness when He introduced the new “wine” to the religious throng, but they insisted that the old was better. *He [was] despised and rejected of men...* –Isaiah

53:3, and He was deposed of at the earliest opportunity. Many will avidly spend their time in nothing else, *...but either to tell, or to hear [or to purchase] some new thing.* Acts 17:21, so long as it serves to gratify their curiosity or their fleshly lusts. But if that some new thing requires a sacrifice, commitment, or servanthood, it is generally destined for a sound rejection. *Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:* –Acts 10:34. He despises not the presence of the sparrow, nor the rude Gentile arriving at the eleventh hour under His divine surveillance.

...Lesser Ones

Such are the sparrows. An orange for the orioles, sugar water for the hummingbird, a row of cottages for the blue bird, a mansion for the martins, a suet cake for the woodpeckers... and a BB gun for the sparrows—for they are worthless. This attitude is for the birds, but it is also intricately woven into our estimation of people. Humans are considered a resource. Those that are useful are esteemed highly, but those who are not, are ignored. But God does not place His values upon human standards of excellence. *The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all* –Proverbs 22:2.

Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom

... *But ye have despised the poor...* James 2:5-6. Herein lies the difference in the eyes of the beholder. A cup of cold water given in charity will not go unnoticed by God. Neither will the praise of a sparrow.

The totalitarian governments of communist regimes have been blatant offenders. Any human who could not or would not contribute to the furtherance of the political vision was exterminated. In our western society, we sigh and lament at the vast ignorance and injustice of such prejudice precinct, while our own nursing homes are full of discarded souls that are regarded as worthless and unworthy of our time and attention. We are too busy for our children and too busy for our parents, but the God who watches every sparrow fall esteems the lesser ones of much greater value than we do.

...Lackluster Ones

Such are the sparrows. The robin boasts his red breast and the cardinal his red crest, but the sparrow is drab brown. We have an innate insistence for beauty. If our hair is gray, it must be dyed. If our teeth are crooked, they must be straightened. If our car has rust, it must be replaced. Most are infernally infatuated with that which is beautiful. Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder, and our God looks far past the surface. ...*let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price* –1 Peter 3:3-4. Many will go to extra efforts to deplete their outward ostentation but forget that the emphasis of the verse is to make the inner heart beautiful.

God obviously has no qualms with physical beauty. He paints the sky with golden hues and adorns the rose in scarlet. But there are also sparrows that lack the splendor to attract human appreciation that do not go unnoticed by God. So are the anonymous earth dwellers who can do no more than weep at the feet of their Lord and wipe His dirty feet with their hair. These despised “sparrows” are royal diadems in the crown of Christ.

...Lost Ones

The woman who lost her silver searched her house until it was found, likewise, the shepherd with his lost lamb. But the search was made based upon the perceived value placed upon the lost item. Society is brimming over with an overabundance of lost souls. Not just lost to the salvation plan of God, but totally clueless to the laws of happiness. Perhaps, like the sparrows, they are overlooked because there are so many of them. At times, some caring souls venture from the beaten path of common words to help them, but soon retreat when attempts prove too meager to improve their condition. Despite it all, these misfits are

noticed by God and their value is far above the sparrows.

While some will thrust all their evangelical energies toward the lost heathen on foreign soils, there is another lost entity here on our own turf. This is a lost respect and appreciation for the local church. Para-church Outreaches, personal ministries, retreats, and seminars lend an exciting appeal, to religious zealots, while the weekly meetings in the local church seem rather common and drab. While man runs from shore to shore to find his lost inspiration, Christ asks ...*Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* –Luke 18:8.

...Two farthings

The encouraging dimension of this comparison is that sparrows are relatively easy to obtain: *For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good...* –Mark 14:7. And a farthing is not a major expenditure. The only thing we must do is adjust our value system. If we wonder what we value most, we need not look farther than our own farthings. The avenues of life that reach out to receive our copper coins are the shrines that hold our hands and our hearts: *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also* –Matthew 6:21. Once our heart is open, our hands are sure to follow. For us, the fifth sparrow is somebody in need for whom Christ died. The great destiny and the call of the church is to extend a sensitive heart and a saving hand to the despised and neglected of our land. At the arrival of every humble sacrifice laid on the counter, God’s ready smile imparts the fifth sparrow for free.

*Why do trees along the river,
Lean so far out o’er the tide?
Very wise men tell me why,
But I am never satisfied.
And so I keep my fancy still,
That trees lean out to save
The drowning from the clutches of
The cold remorseless wave.*

–Alex Posey

Alex Posey – 1873-1908, a Creek Indian poet, died when he was trying to help two white people across the flooded North Canadian River. He held onto a branch of a tree until help came, but by the time they could throw him a rope his hands had paralyzed, and he couldn’t unmold them to clasp the rope, so he sank out of sight beneath the waters and died in the tide.



Rejoicing with Her

by Sue Hooley
Holmesville, OH

“How is the new curriculum selling?” Sandra asked, wrapping her hands around her mug of coffee.

“It’s slow,” Abby answered. “I need to do more advertising, but now that the product is finished, I find it difficult to promote.”

“What’s wrong?” Sandra asked. Abby had spent years developing a curriculum for special needs children. Her passion and dedication to the project was amazing, but now her zeal seemed stifled.

“Well,” Abby said slowly. “I feel like my co-worker constantly criticizes me. ‘The cover design is tacky, there is a misspelling on page 11, I should have said this, this, and this. My project advisor wants me to work on advertising, but every time I move forward, she tells me I did something wrong.’”

“Does it feel like jealousy?” Sandra asked.

“I hadn’t thought of that. I’m staying in the background, but that’s not helping. I feel crippled and I don’t know what to do.”

Sandra nodded. “It’s difficult to be the recipient of another person’s jealousy. But it’s worse to be the one who’s jealous. I’ve been there. It’s miserable.”

“How did you work through it?” Abby asked. “You don’t seem like a jealous person now.”

“It was one point in a message,” Sandra answered. “The minister said, ‘If you feel critical toward someone who is rejoicing, likely you are struggling with jealousy.’ I don’t remember anything else he said,” Sandra chuckled, “but, I knew he had identified my problem. I often found it hard to be happy for my peers. I didn’t realize jealousy was my root problem.”

“That makes sense,” replied Abby.

“It is harder for jealousy to take root if I face the negative thoughts right away,” Sandra replied. “It’s a battle worth fighting. I am happier when I can ‘rejoice with them that do rejoice,’ like the Bible says to do.”

“Maybe my co-worker is dealing with negative thoughts about the success more than feeling annoyed at me,” mused Abby.

“That’s likely true,” replied Sandra. “Aim to put her fears to rest so that you can work together productively. Don’t react to her behavior.”



Like Sandra, I too, have had critical thoughts when peers shared good news, or I noticed their accomplishments. Unless checked immediately, that tinge of jealousy keeps me from being happy for others.

The Bible describes the brutality of envy and jealousy. Jealousy is as cruel as the grave. (see Song of Solomon 8:6). *Envy [is] the rottenness of the bones –Proverbs 14:30. And, Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy? –Proverbs 27:4.* Jealousy is extremely subtle. It can be covered with an aura of godliness. Not only does it have the potential to destroy my relationships now, but also those of my children and grandchildren.

Women don’t decide to be jealous. They don’t say, “Today I’m going to be jealous.” Often, it’s hard to pinpoint when jealousy enters the heart, or even if it is there. But if it is hard to be happy for others, maybe it’s time to search our souls. We are prepared to fight against jealousy when we understand how and where jealousy thrives—within the heart of each of us.

Peers Test Our Rejoicing

Generally, we aren't envious of people that we're not close to. Women all around the world get married, have babies, or move into a new house, and we scarcely notice. But it's hard to rejoice when those near us in time, place, age, or reputation enjoy blessings that we wish for. More than once, a jubilant phone call announcing a milestone challenged my resolve to rejoice with a rejoicing friend. God understands the struggle and He leads me to rest and acceptance.

Recognize Jealousy

The definition of jealous is: 'Feeling or showing envy of someone or their achievements and advantages.' Jealousy pops up in many ways, such as craving to copy a peer. Jealousy belittles the achievements of another and tries to control the way others think of that person. Jealousy gloats about the distresses and failures of others, while basking in a spiritual bubble. Jealous people keep the rumor mill in full production by feeding it twisted truths.

Safeguard Your Thoughts

Jealousy starts in the mind. Dwelling on a suspicion or envying another person distorts truth. This is dangerous, because what you perceive as a truth, is a lie.

We decide someone is proud because they brought a beautiful dessert to a potluck. Or we think a sister is a negligent homemaker because she visited a woman at a nursing home. Why? We tend to judge others by our own motives. Isn't it feelings of guilt, self-justification, or envy that cause us to heap a negligent title on someone who is visiting the elderly? We don't know how long she thought about that visit or how her husband made it possible. Divisive thoughts converted into words wreak havoc among godly women. It causes extra work for church leaders and stunts the growth of a body of believers.

Embrace The Thought: "Life Isn't Fair"

Sometimes someone will have something you desire. On the flipside, there are times you will have something another woman wishes for. "Life isn't fair" is a fact of life that we cannot change; we can only adjust our attitude.

There were friends in the same church who each had a daughter of dating age. As life would have it, one daughter dated and married long before the other one began a courtship. The mother of the single girl determined that she would rejoice with her friend and her daughter. As a result, the mothers are still friends, the girls are friends, and it's likely their children will be friends.

Count Your Own Blessings

Looking at the blessings of others and making comparisons makes it difficult to be happy and satisfied. The Apostle Paul warns of this: *...but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise -2 Corinthians 10:12.* Happiness will not come to women who neglect to appreciate what they already have. Neither will they happily rejoice with those who rejoice.

Know Who You Are In Christ

Jealousy stems from feelings of fear and insecurity. God created you for His honor and glory. There isn't a need for competition, rather we ought to be content in knowing who we are in Jesus. *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them -Ephesians 2:8-10.*

Have Friends, Not Rivals

We might hesitate to admit that we have a rival, but that's what a friend will become if we aren't able to celebrate the blessings in her life. Pray for her regularly, asking God to bless her. Letting go of suspicion and doing something nice for her will help dissipate the negative feelings you have developed.

The Scripture is clear about enmity toward our brother (or sister): *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes -1 John 2:9-11.*

Replace Jealousy With Gratitude And Contentment

Negative thoughts come without invitation, but we can decide if they will stay or leave. Learn to redirect your attention to truth. Philippians gives us an excellent blueprint: *Finally, brethren [sisters], whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things -Philippians 4:8.*

When we are at peace with God, with ourselves, and with our fellow women, we will be content with our abilities and with the circumstances in which God has placed us. With our focus on God, we will find joy and the power to rejoice with them that rejoice.



Church and Kingdom

Editor's Note:

Over the last number of years there seems to be a shift occurring on a variety of specific issues for some conservative Anabaptists. This changing of ideas and practice is not happening in a vacuum, rather we are simply following the leader. Once we start researching this matter further, we soon realize that this same migration on issues of faith and practice has been at work for some years now within the greater Evangelical community. Let's stop and consider whether we are following God's Word, or man's influence.

Some Anabaptists are becoming dissatisfied with a traditional structure of church, so they gravitate towards "cell-group church" or "house-church" models. Others react to overbearing and authoritative church leadership from their past and start emphasizing a more democratic function of church. Then there are the folks who are moving away from a "local" church body emphasis to that of focusing more on a "universal" or a "global" church body. Still others don't have a problem with what is considered "normal" church, instead they are the type that gets tired of the "old-fashioned" and the "boring." These folks welcome "new ideas" that are presented in present-day books and at various conferences which are held around the country. These conferences are not all intrinsically wrong, nor are they all selling "new" interpretations, yet there are some that bring in "fresh" ideas originating from "outside" sources in the hope that they will bring "new life" to the lack of zeal within the "normal."

Another area of shift is that of focusing on the Gospels while ignoring specific teachings in the Epistles. Some folks stress that we should "just follow Jesus" while not allowing the teachings of the Apostles to further detail the application of Jesus' teachings. Others lift up the "Sermon on the Mount," the "red letter Scriptures," or walking in the "footsteps of Jesus," without realizing that a default outcome of this focus tends to leave out specific teachings of the Epistles regarding practical church functioning and Christian living. Some of these include ...exhort[ing] one another daily... -Hebrews 3:13, All scripture ... is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, [and] for correction... -2 Timothy 3:16, and the fact that we should be careful because Satan and his agents will transform themselves ...into the apostles of Christ and present themselves as ...an angel of light -2 Corinthians 11:13-14.

Some individuals believe it is wrong for spiritual authorities

to "take the oversight thereof," or to give clear admonition over the pulpit. They shrink back from churches that have ordained leaders, or they don't like the thought of spiritual authorities in their lives. Others feel their church doesn't have much to offer so they attend various group events with others of "like precious faith" (who believe as they do), thus developing a disjointed spiritual body of individuals from many various local churches, fellowshiping together at large events. Many times, these believers allow someone outside of their local church fellowship to become their spiritual advisor, thus feeling justified in not giving their loyalty to their church leaders at home. They come to believe that the traditional way of having church the Anabaptist way is "not the way it used to be" or "not according to the early church". They believe that structured church brings deadness to local bodies, never mind that the Epistles provide clear details on church structure and practice.

Many of these individuals are interacting and fellowshiping so closely with others from various other groups and churches instead of their own home church, that they do not realize they are actually functioning in a very individualistic manner. This manner of being an alone "local" Christian is categorically opposite from the "group spirituality" that our Anabaptist forefathers specifically believed and taught. Another area of misunderstanding in this whole issue, is that there is a very clear difference between the expression of the kingdom **now** and the kingdom **future**. Remember that Jesus said, "my kingdom is not of this world," yet an extreme focus on kingdom this and kingdom that, will by default cause Christians to ignore this Truth, as they try to express the kingdom "on the earth," and "in the now."

The full effect of the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus in the life of a believer can never fully be understood without allowing the Epistles to bring more clear application to the Gospels or to the Sermon on the Mount. Simply following the words of Jesus in red ink will never help us know how to be a part of the "power of His resurrection," or "the fellowship of His sufferings." For this we need the balance of the rest of the New Testament.

Many of these points will require their own complete article to sort out all the nuances, which we plan to do as the Lord continues to allow time to continue. Considering all this, we felt that this article is a balanced, yet basic introduction to the many issues at stake and we have chosen it based on those thoughts.

Curvin L Wenger



Church and Kingdom

by Wendell Heatwole
Olar, SC

When Jesus blessed Simon Peter for his confident confession that Jesus was *the Christ, the Son of the living God* –Matthew 16:16, He brought together two overarching New Testament themes: **the church** and **the kingdom**—...*I will build my church ... And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven...* –Matthew 16:18-19. Ever since, Christ’s followers have deliberated, with varying opinions, on the meaning and the nature of the kingdom, and its relation to the church.

Jesus began His preaching by declaring that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (see Matthew 4:17). Throughout the Gospels, the kingdom was the unifying theme of His teaching. In fact, Scripture only records two occasions when Christ mentioned the church. The church, on the other hand, is more prominent in the Acts, the Epistles, and the Revelation. Why this difference? Is there some conflict or incompatible tension between what Jesus taught and emphasized, and that of the apostles?

Recent years seem to have brought an increased interest and reference to **the kingdom** within Evangelical circles as well as conservative Anabaptist circles. Many are using terms such as working for the kingdom, building up the kingdom, growing the kingdom, kingdom service, kingdom finances, and even funding the kingdom. Kingdom Theology has been offered as a course of study, and the expression Kingdom Christian has been coined to demarcate a particular kind of Christian—one who believes and practices Jesus’ teachings. Among many conservative Anabaptist people, kingdom terminology has practically drowned out the language

expressed by Eliza Hewitt who wrote, “**For Christ and the Church** let our voices ring.”

Among the various factors which have nurtured this renewed kingdom emphasis among some Anabaptists, two stand out. Both of these concerns reflect the influence of Christians from without the conservative Anabaptist tradition, yet who profess to be Bible-believing and born-again.

1. The first is that some people seem to be more concerned about *being Biblical* than about *being Christ-like*. We, conservative Anabaptists, can stand on the Bible to formulate all the right doctrines and positions while our lives fall short in reflecting the character and values of Jesus Christ our Lord, the One with whom we claim to be united in a living relationship.
2. The second matter involves a fixation on the act of *getting saved* to the neglect of *living a saved life*; that is, a life of obedient discipleship, particularly to the very teachings of Jesus who we are to follow. While most conservative Anabaptists profess to practice Christ’s teachings, we are not immune to a careless discipleship.

There are individuals within conservative Anabaptism that address these concerns somewhat in the following manner. They say that while Evangelicals believe in the person and work of Christ, they tend to focus on Paul. For all practical purposes, they (Evangelicals) are more concerned about correct Bible interpretations, theological systems, and assenting to correct beliefs than they are with obedient Christian living, particularly regarding the **hard**

teachings of Christ. In contrast, these Anabaptists claim that the kingdom of God, which Jesus inaugurated and was the theme of His teaching, should set the norm for understanding and living the Christian life. Consequently, for them, the Gospels (and the kingdom) then become primary in interpreting the rest of the New Testament.

What do we make of this? While sweeping generalizations don't do justice to the exceptions and the qualifiers, the concerns are valid, and this critique regarding our Evangelical friends does hold some measure of truth. These things have their roots in the thinking of Augustine (354-430), in the imbalanced Reformation emphasis regarding justification by faith, and in the work of John Calvin. But what about the antidote of focusing mostly on Christ and the kingdom? Certainly, Christ is central to interpreting, not only the New Testament, but actually the entire Bible. And there is value in holding forth those teachings of Christ, which are so often brushed aside, yet are required of any church that would be worthy of His name. However, I would like to offer three points of caution or critique about taking this antidote unreservedly.

Do the Gospels dominate the rest of Scripture?

First, I believe it's a mistake to assume that the Gospels (the life and teachings of Jesus) should *dominate* and *control* the interpretation of the New Testament scriptures. Rather, the New Testament, as it moves through the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, and lastly the Revelation, contains a divinely inspired progression of fuller revelation and doctrinal explanation. This is seen when we consider the words of Jesus regarding the coming of the Holy Spirit: *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come* –John 16:12-13. Those New Testament books following the Gospels are the anticipated fulfillment of these words. They bring the teachings and work of Christ to full development and understanding.

Christ's ministry and teaching about the kingdom laid the groundwork, then His death and resurrection placed the foundation on which He would build His church. The Scriptures which follow the Gospels give us greater comprehension about the meaning of Christ's death on the cross and its relation and effect on us that comes through faith and obedience. It also develops the whole doctrine of the church. So, the entire New Testament fits together in beautiful harmony. Both the Gospels and the Epistles need to be interpreted in reference to each other. The teachings of Christ do not take precedence over the Epistles, rather the Epistles help interpret the Gospels—they give us a more

complete understanding and practical application to the principles Christ gave His Disciples.

Does Theology Militate Against Discipleship?

Secondly, we should be careful to not set correct interpretation and correct practice against one another. To say it another way, we should not pit theology against discipleship. To whatever degree some Evangelicals may overemphasize theology at the expense of discipleship, it should not prejudice us into making a whipping boy out of theology. Theology is the study of God and the things of God. We are forming a personal theology when we study God's Word and compare Scripture with Scripture in our efforts to come to a unified and harmonious understanding of its various parts.

Every Christian has a theology, whether he can express it well or not. Our theology (or doctrinal understanding, if you want to say it that way) is our belief system and the soil out of which our behavior grows. Some theologies are very elementary, others reflect a lifetime of study, most are incomplete, some are inconsistent, others are dogmatic or laced with philosophy, and some are dreadfully wrong. Hopefully, all of us have a growing, and increasingly accurate understanding of God and His Word. This is quite necessary since our theology, which is the sum of our beliefs about God and our understanding of His Word and the Christian life, is what affects our discipleship—our daily walk with God. A good theology *undergirds* discipleship. A poor theology *undermines* discipleship.

Are “Kingdom” and “Church” Interchangeable?

Finally, we should think correctly about the kingdom in relation to the church. What is the relationship of the kingdom to the church? The kingdom is **not**, as contemporary usage would almost have us think, a generic version **of**, or a substitute word **for**, the church. Rather, the kingdom has to do with the reign or rule of God. It is both a *present reality*, having been inaugurated in the person and mission of Jesus, and a *future expectation* which God will bring to completion at the end of time. The church, while not the kingdom, is composed of those who are in the kingdom; those who, through the work of Christ, have submitted to the rule of God.

While we struggle for the precise word to express the relationship of the kingdom to the church, as a holy, loving, and obedient community of believers, the church **is the earthly manifestation of God's rule—His kingdom**. Christ did not say “I will build my kingdom”; rather He said, “I will build my church.” Likewise, Paul did not *build kingdom halls*; He *started churches*. It is possible for us to have an idealistic and romantic view of the kingdom that gets separated from

the hard work of living on earth with our fellow believers in a local church body. We can elevate the kingdom and diminish the church. We can get enthusiastic about the concept of the kingdom, the teachings of the kingdom, the growth of the kingdom, and conferences about the kingdom, and yet be cynical, critical, and sorry members of our local church.

Do you want to work for the kingdom (see Colossians 4:11)? Then commit yourself wholeheartedly to Christ and His church. That starts with your local church. Love and serve your church. Accept responsibility in it. Be accountable and loyal to your local church. Work for the good and growth of the church—your local church, and beyond.

Timothy Dwight wrote:*

*I love Thy Kingdom, Lord,
The house of Thine abode,
The church our blest Redeemer
Saved with His own precious blood.
I love Thy church, O God:
Her walls before Thee stand,
Dear as the apple of Thine eye,
And graven on Thy hand.*

What he was saying about the precise relationship of the kingdom to the church may be different from what I conceive it to be. However, what I would like for us to appreciate is that when he thought of the kingdom, he thought of the church. And so should we! Are his words yours, as he writes on?

*For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend;
To her my cares and toils be giv'n,
Till toils and cares shall end.
Beyond my highest joy
I prize her heav'nly ways,
Her sweet communion, solemn vows,
Her hymns of love and praise.*

* See page 32 for the entire song.





Be Thankful

by Marian Martin
Glenmont OH

One Sunday morning a little girl, whom we will call Jennika, woke up to the sun shining into her bedroom. She dressed in her Sunday dress just like she did every other Sunday morning. This Sunday morning was quite different, though. While she was sitting at the breakfast table waiting for her mom to fill her plate, her mom's chest suddenly started hurting very badly. It hurt so badly, she had to go lie on the couch. Jennika felt scared. She didn't know what was going to happen. About ten minutes later, her dad took her mom to the hospital. Later that afternoon, she and her siblings heard that their mom had suffered a heart attack.

The next Wednesday evening, her dad asked, "Jennika, would you like to go along to the hospital tomorrow to see Mom?"

"Yes!" she beamed.

The next morning after breakfast, her older sister and baby brother went with her and her dad to the hospital. That day she had lots of fun. She enjoyed looking out the window of the waiting room and watching the helicopters take off and land. One time she even saw an ambulance come with its lights and sirens on. That was exciting! One time she almost got lost in the halls, but one of her mom's nurses saw her and showed her the right room.



That night she was going to spend the night with her mom. She was so excited! She thought sleeping on the chair in her mom's room would be fun. Her mom was going to ask the nurses for a pillow and some blankets. About fifteen minutes after her dad left, a nurse came in and said she couldn't spend the night there after all! Her dad needed to come back to pick her up. She was so disappointed! She cried almost the whole way home. That night they dropped off her two-week-old brother at one of the church families to give her older sisters a break from taking care of him.

The next day she had a wonderful surprise. First, her cousins, who lived about three hours away, came to visit. And she found out that her mom was going to come home that day! She helped her siblings decorate the house. Her older sister made two welcome-home signs for inside the house and her older brother made one for out by the driveway.

"Mom is home!" yelled her younger brother when he saw the car pull up outside the house. Jennika and her siblings dashed to the front door. They led their mom to her favorite recliner which was close to the air conditioner that their uncle had just installed that morning.

That evening Jennika snuggled up to her mom. "I'm glad you're home," she whispered. "I like it when you're home." Because her mom had been gone so long, Jennika learned to be more thankful for her mom.

Jennika is older now and is still very thankful for her mom. Maybe your mom didn't need to be in the hospital for a week, but you should still be thankful for her. Don't forget to tell her!



Truth about Heaven AND HELL

By Harold S. Martin

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One time there was a preacher preaching the doctrine of universalism in a small village church in one of the New England states. He maintained that there is no Hell, no punishment after death, and that all human beings will be universally saved. He said that “Hell” is the cruel invention of the human imagination, and that it is contrary to the principle of the love of God. When he had finished his address, he informed the people of the small church that he could preach for them again within a few weeks. One of the men on the church board said: “If your doctrine is true (if it’s true that there is no Hell and we’re all going to Heaven anyhow), we don’t need you.” And he said, “If your doctrine is false (if there is a Hell, when you say there isn’t any), we don’t want you”—and he was not invited back to preach at that church.

It is the purpose of this message to tell the truth about Heaven and Hell—the truth as given in the Holy Scriptures. In Luke 16 we find Jesus describing the death of two men. The one died and was carried by the angels into the presence of God. When a child of God dies, there is a Heavenly escort of angels, waiting to carry that soul in triumph into the Father’s house (Luke 16:22a). And then Jesus says, ... *the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments...* –Luke 16:22-23.

The account in Luke 16 is a record of two men who lived and walked on the earth as we are doing today. When they died, they found themselves in eternity, the one, in a place of torment, and the other, in a place of comfort by the side of Abraham. There are two places for the departed dead—the Bible says it over and over again—there is the broad way that leads to destruction, and the narrow way that leads to life. There are the tares cast into fire to be burned, and the wheat gathered into barns. There is the unprofitable servant who is cast into outer darkness, and the faithful servant who enters the joys of his lord.

1. The Truth about Heaven

Heaven will be the future dwelling place of God’s people; it will be the eternal presence of everything that can make the believer happy, and the eternal absence of everything that can cause sorrow. There is much that we don’t know about Heaven—its location, its geography, its temperature—but there are some things we do know.

a) Heaven will be a perfect place.

Heaven is a real place, as real and as material and as literal as the cities of Detroit and Chicago and London. Heaven is not merely some “blissful state of being” and it is not a cloudy, hazy mixture of nothing; rather it is a prepared place for a prepared people.

It is true that many folks sneer at Heaven and say that it’s only a land of make-believe. Some scoff at Heaven and say it’s merely “pie in the sky”. Still others say that the only Heaven which humans will experience is the Heaven on earth that they are able to achieve. But Jesus set the record straight, when He said to His disciples, *In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you* –John 14:2. Jesus says that Heaven is a real place, and His word should be good enough for every one of us.

But not only is Heaven a real place; Heaven is a perfect place. It is perfect in the sense that nothing will ever come to mar its beauty. *And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie...* –Revelation 21:27. There will never be a cloud in Heaven; there won’t be any tears to choke back; there won’t be any good-byes in Heaven. In fact, nothing will ever mar the splendor of that glorious land.

There is a place called Heaven. There is a city ... *which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God* –Hebrews 11:10. So Christians can triumphantly sing the song, “There

is a land that is fairer than day, and by faith we can see it afar; for the Father waits over the way to prepare us a dwelling place there.” Heaven is a real place with real people and a real Savior and a real God! It is being prepared by a peerless Contractor, the Carpenter of Nazareth—even Christ Himself. Jesus says, ...*I go to prepare a place for you* –John 14:2.

b) Heaven will be a habitation with God.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God –Revelation 21:3. The greatest thing about Heaven will not be the rewards, the crowns, the white robes, the walls of jasper, or the streets of gold. The greatest joy about Heaven will be our eternal fellowship with God the Father, and with Jesus our Savior forever.

It will be an added joy to be with our friends and loved ones who have been saved and have gone on before. The question is sometimes asked, “Will we know our loved ones in Heaven?” The obvious answer is this: “If we know them in this life, where we have only a partial and incomplete knowledge, surely we will know them in Heaven, where our knowledge will be perfect and complete.”

Most of us have taken a loved one out to “the silent city of the dead.” Perhaps it was a father who departed from this life, or a mother who slipped on to the eternal world, or a child that was laid away in infancy, or a daughter who fell in the prime of young womanhood, or a husband or wife who was so dearly loved. In 2 Samuel 12:15 we begin reading about David’s sick child. The Bible says that for seven days and seven nights David fasted and wept and prayed that God would spare his child, but finally he received notice that the child was dead. Two little eyelids had been gently closed; two little hands were folded over the silent bosom; one little heart was forever still. The child was dead. When David received notice that the child had died, he wiped the tears from his eyes, ate food, and found comfort in these words: ...*I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me* –2 Samuel 12:23.

David found comfort in the words, *I shall go to him*, because he looked forward to seeing the child in Heaven. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul speaks about those who have died in former generations (when he mentions the second coming of Christ). He says, ...*the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.* 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. Those words speak of reunion. **We ... shall be caught up together with them**—that is, with those who had previously died.

c) Heaven will be a haven of rest.

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God – Hebrews 4:9. Heaven is a place of rest from labor. There will be work to do in Heaven. The Bible says that His servants shall serve Him. Heaven will not be a great big holiday! We’ll not sit down and do nothing. There’ll be work to do. Jesus speaks about “ruling cities” and “judging angels.” But the element of toil will be gone. *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them* –Revelation 14:13.

We are told also that Heaven will be a place of rest from suffering. *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away* –Revelation 21:4. Anyone who is familiar with suffering and physical affliction in this life, and has walked up and down the corridors of our hospitals, and has seen the tremendous pain and anguish that human beings are sometimes called upon to pass through, must marvel exceedingly at the extent of this glorious promise. There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, nor shall there be any more pain. Tears, pain, sorrow, and crying will be former things!

2. The Truth about Hell

In our day, many people consider Hell a mere joke. Charlie Chaplin has often been praised as one of the world’s greatest comedians. He died a number of years ago at age 88. One of his typical jokes was this: He said, “It seems like I’m always cold; I hope to go to Hell when I die so that I can keep warm.” For all we know he may have been granted his wish.

The “Lake of Fire” is the theme for more jokes than any other single subject, except for stories about illicit sexual activity. Usually, the devil is pictured in a long flannel outfit; he has horns and a tail; sometimes he wears an asbestos suit, and he gives orders about how fast to shovel coal. And then after the story is told, the crowd sits back and bursts into gales of laughter. They think the matter of Hell is just a great big joke.

One man said, “The nearest I’ll ever get to Heaven is when I’m riding in an airplane; I’m going to Hell, and when I get there, I’m going to help the devil shovel coal so that it will be all the hotter.” Another person said, “I don’t care whether I go to Heaven or to Hell; I’ve got friends in both places.” Another said, “I’m going to Hell, and when I get there I’m going to laugh at all the church members coming in.” The fact is, those who reject Jesus Christ will go there; some church members will likely go there too; but there won’t be any laughing. Instead, seven times over, Jesus says that ... *there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth* –Matthew 22:13.



Years ago, a lady from Canada wrote to the Michigan state highway department and told of a visit she was planning to make to the Detroit area. She asked for directions to the small community in Michigan named “Hell.” She said in her letter, “We thought it would be fun to go back home and be able to say to our friends that we had been in Hell.” The man who replied on behalf of the State Department sent her a small map showing the location of the tiny unincorporated community, and then added, “To complete your trip you may also want to visit the town of Paradise in the upper part of Michigan.” We don’t know whether the one who inquired will spend eternity in Hell or in Paradise, but one thing certain—she will spend eternity in one place or the other.

The attitude of this lady from Montreal is typical of the attitude of people almost everywhere. They speak lightly of Heaven, and joke about Hell, seemingly supposing that if they ridicule enough, and joke enough, they can laugh Hell right out of existence. But life is not a joke on this side of the grave, and it is not a joke on the other side either. The kindest Man who ever lived says that we ought to *...fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell –Matthew 10:28*. Jesus said this! It is a remarkable fact that the most fearful accounts of Hell to be found anywhere in the Bible come from the lips of Jesus himself. The word “Hell” is used twenty-four times in the New Testament, and twenty-two of those times the word was used by Jesus.

There is much about the subject of Hell that we don’t know, but there are three things that we do know for sure.

a) Hell is a real place.

Hell is not merely some spirit-state of being. The rich man in Luke 16 knew that he was not merely in some hazy, spirit-state of existence, because he wanted his five brothers warned “lest they also come into this place of torment.” Just as Heaven is a real place (remember that Jesus said, *...I go to prepare a place for you –John 14:2*), so Hell is a real and literal place. The Bible says so. The man in Jesus’ parable said, *...I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment –Luke 16:27-28*.

The final testimonies of those who have died unsaved, especially before the days of sedatives, confirm our belief that these words of the Bible are true. It is not a pleasant thing to see the ungodly die. Voltaire, the skeptic, died a horrible death; his condition became so frightful in the closing moments of his life that the nurse who was standing by later said, “For all the wealth of Europe, I never want to see another infidel die.” Charteres (a wealthy man), on his death bed, said, “I would gladly give \$150,000 to have it proved that there is no Hell.” M. F. Rich (a poor man), a few moments before his death, pointed to an almost red-hot stove, and said, “I would sooner lie on the stove and boil for a hundred years, than to go into eternity with the awful torments that are hanging over my soul.”

Friends, if it is reasonable to hold up the hope of Heaven as the home of the saved, it is just as reasonable to hold out the fear of Hell as a penalty for rejecting God’s salvation.

If you are still not sure that Hell exists as a real place, why would you even needlessly take a chance? A skeptic was teasing his Christian friend who talked often about Heaven: “George, what would you say, if, when you died, you found that there wasn’t such a place as Heaven after all?” George smiled and said, “Well, I’d say that I had a fine time getting there anyway.” (He enjoyed his Christian experience.) And then George responded with a more difficult question: he said, “Fred, what would you say, if when you die, you found that there was such a place as Hell after all?” That is the real question to consider if you are a person who scoffs at the idea of eternal damnation in Hell. “What if there was such a place as Hell after all?”

b) Hell is a place of torment.

Make no mistake about it—Hell is a horrible place; it is a land of unspeakable torments. The Bible describes Hell with a number of words.

One of the words is darkness. Jude calls it “the blackness of darkness” (Jude 1:13). Jesus calls it “outer darkness” (Matthew 8:12). Peter describes it as “chains of darkness” (2 Peter 2:4). Hell will be a land of darkness—a land where the sun never shines; a land where the day never comes; a land where there is blackness, darkness, and night time forever.

The Bible also uses the word fire to describe Hell. In Matthew 5:22 Jesus speaks of “hell fire.” In Matthew 13:42 He speaks of a “furnace of fire.” In Matthew 25:41 He says, “everlasting fire.” In Mark 9 He says, “unquenchable fire.” In Revelation 20 we read about the “lake of fire.” Someone says, “But this is only figurative language.” Perhaps it is. I believe it is literal language, but if these are only figurative words, we must remember that the real thing is always worse than the symbol is.

Another responds by saying, “But you said that Hell is a place of darkness; now you say it is a place where there is fire. How can that be?” It is God who said these things, but it is not hard to believe that God can create a fire that doesn’t give light. Still another says, “But surely God is too good and too loving to permit a person to burn in Hell.” By way of response, I challenge you to put your finger on a red-hot stove and see if God is too good to keep you from getting burned! If God permitted His only begotten Son to be whipped and spit upon and then nailed to a cross, don’t fool yourself into thinking that God won’t permit human beings to burn in Hell if they ignore Him and refuse to accept His offer of salvation. God’s love was revealed at Calvary, and if you reject that love, there’ll be nothing left but the wrath of God (see Hebrews 10:28-31).

Jesus also uses the theme of extreme thirst to describe the torments of Hell. The rich man in Luke 16 cried for

water—only a drop of water to cool his tongue. He called for Lazarus to dip his finger in water, and said, *...cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame* –Luke 16:24.

During the Battle of the Dardanelles in World War I, a company of marines was stranded on an island. They had only meager supplies; their canteens one by one went dry; some tried to quench their thirst by drinking ocean water, but the salt added to their misery. Others put their parched tongues against the damp ground, but it did not satisfy. Some tried to quench their thirst by chewing on the soles of their shoes just to find a little moisture. They were so thirsty that their tongues literally hung out of their mouths. A news correspondent who later came on the scene and saw the sight and heard the groans and cries of those thirsty men, said in his report the next day in newspapers all across America: “If Hell can be worse than that, O God! save me from Hell!”

Hell is a real place of torment. If there is no fire in Hell; if there is no real torment there; if souls don’t beg for water in Hell—then why are these passages in the Bible?

c) Hell is eternal punishment.

Hell is a miserable land of weeping and bitterness, but perhaps most tragic of all—those who go there will be there for eternity. Jesus says, *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment... Matthew 25:46.* Daniel says, *... some [shall awake] to shame and everlasting contempt – Daniel 12:2.* Jesus describes Hell as, *...the fire that never shall be quenched –Mark 9:43.* The Scriptures teach that the torments of Hell will never end. If men and women die in their sins, the Bible indicates that they will suffer consciously under the judgment of God for all eternity.

Each human being can either open the door of his heart to Jesus, and respond to God’s love, and live with Him forever, or, each can continue on in the path of rejection, and suffer conscious torment in the place of outer darkness. If you have never committed your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, why not turn your life over to Him today? *For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death –2 Corinthians 7:10.* Weep your way to God before the door of opportunity for salvation closes forever.

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The Desires of Thine Heart

by Laban Landes
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Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart –Psalm 37:4.

Down deep within every person is a desire to be, or to do, something of value. If we, as humans, had no desire to do anything, life would be boring, and we would be nothing more than a robot. We all know that God wants more from us than to be a robot; He wants us to serve Him with our whole heart.

The meaning for the word desire is: to wish or long for; to crave; to want. Wish, want, crave, and covet all mean **to have a longing for**. Desire stresses the strength of feeling and often implies strong intention or aim.

Isn't that what God wants from us—a desire with craving and intentional aim? Yes, it is, but this doesn't happen on its own, nor does it happen automatically. Our desires are so strong that of ourselves we are no match for them; we need something outside of ourselves to be in control. According to the Bible, we must become born again. When we get born again, we become a new creature in Christ with new desires that God puts inside us. The way He does this, is by giving us a new heart.

God allows each of us to choose if we will serve Him or if we will not. He will not force us to yield ourselves to His will, nor will He force us to serve Him. But, if we are truly born again and serve the Lord joyfully and willingly, then He will give us godly desires which we will want to fulfill.

Does the Christian life become like clockwork just because we get a new heart and our desires have been turned towards serving God? I believe the answer is both yes and no. After we are walking with Christ for some time, we discover that Satan wants to change our desires in such a way that we would rather please him (Satan) instead of the Lord. Because of this, we need to be on guard. Satan wants to set spiritual snares for us. One of the ways he does this is by enticing our flesh.

There are good desires and bad desires. Some desires will bring us closer to Christ and some will draw us away. As

Jesus walked on this earth, we know that His desire was to do the will of His Father. Out of His desire, He stayed focused on what He needed to do, even when His flesh was weak. There are two examples of this: one was when Jesus was tempted in the desert to make stones into bread, and the other was when He was in the garden praying right before He was crucified.

When we look at the account in the garden, we see that He did not want to take the cup that was before Him. In other words, Jesus *desired* to not go through the suffering, but praise God, He chose to please His Father. He laid down His flesh, obeyed the will of God, and allowed Himself to be crucified for our sins. Jesus looked at the long-term effect, and poured Himself into what He knew was right, rather than going by His own feelings. However, He did acknowledge His feelings by expressing them to God when He was praying in the garden. It is the same way with us—there are times that we need to be honest about our feelings and express them to God or to someone else. Yet we cannot walk by our feelings because we must act and do what we know is right according to the word of God.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life –Proverbs 4:23. If Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived says this, then we should take heed to it. The desires of the heart will make a difference on where we will end up in life. As we are fulfilling one of our desires by acting on it... *with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength...* –Mark 12:30, we actually feed that desire, causing it to develop into an even deeper longing and passion. As we then act on this stronger, passionate desire, we end up feeding that desire even more. Thus, the vicious cycle continues, repeating itself again and again.

Instead of feeding your desire, you can choose to hinder it—by acting against it. If you have a desire that is not good, and you need to change it to a godly desire, you can act against your original desire and do what is right. In so

doing it will start to change your bad desire into one that is right. *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also* –Matthew 6:21; Luke 12:34.

And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth –Luke 12:15. Covetousness is an ungodly desire. Without bringing it into check, it will become a snare. Money is something that we all need, yet it is something that almost everyone at some point in life covets. Every day we spend much of our time working in some way to earn money. In so doing, our heart's desires tend to become focused on our work. Instead, we should see our job as a way of doing God's work by being a light and encouragement to the ones around us. *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him* – Colossians 3:17.

Here and there we hear a lot about coveting money; however, we don't hear much about coveting positions that are not lawful for us. It is not wrong to desire leadership in business or whatever it may be. In fact, it is a blessing for others if someone will stand up and provide leadership as a way to bless others. However, it is a wrong desire to want leadership for our own reputation, which is pride. We are all human and we are not perfect, yet we need to rise above our weaknesses and be a blessing. We all know that God gave each of us different gifts. Let's use those gifts for the kingdom of God.

Sometimes we are trying so hard to fulfill our fleshly comforts that we lose sight of the real purpose that God has put us here. Our flesh stands in the way. It was this way with Achan. Instead of Achan putting his whole focus on the fight against the enemy, he said that, *When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them...* –Joshua 7:21.

I don't know what it was like, but I picture there being loud noises and a bloody mess. If that's the case, what was Achan



thinking in the midst of a bloody battle that made him covet? The only thing I can think of, is that Achan's number one desire was not on God's will but was on fulfilling his own desires. It's very sad that there were so many of God's people killed because of Achan's sin. If we see that we have a desire that is not godly, then let's flee from that desire and work towards gaining a desire that is godly.

We see it is important to develop a godly desire that will encourage or lead us closer to God. The most important desire is to truly know God. That would be very close to the greatest commandment—to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. To love the Lord thy God with all thy heart you obviously also need to have a *desire* to love Him. However, there are times in our life that we will need to take a specific action or purpose to love God with all our heart. There are many things that God may want us to surrender.

We all know that peer pressure influences our desires. We need brothers and sisters to walk beside us and encourage us in our relationship with Christ. Friends can draw our attention to something other than Christ. That is why we need to be careful who our close friends are. We need to seek out friends who will be upbuilding. A friend that can walk beside us and encourage us in our walk with God, is worth everything. As humans, we can't always see everything correctly by ourselves. We need others to help us see our blind spots. A close friend who genuinely wants to help us follow God, will help us look at what is right in God's eyes. Maybe we need to surrender our flesh and get right with God so we can develop desires that are pure and godly.

As we look at the heart's desires, we see they have a major impact on who we are and who we will become. When our heart desires something, we pursue it with a deep longing. In fact, there are examples in the Bible where God gave people desires to serve Him. *And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon –Nehemiah 2:12.* Reading further... *And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it –Exodus 36:2.*

Remember, the word *desire* is a deep longing, craving, or wish. If we are wanting a walk with God that is flourishing, then we must have the desires that God has, since His desires will change our life. *So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire; They were not estranged from their lust. But while their meat was yet in their mouths, The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel –Psalm 78:29-31.* Even though God led the Israelites into the wilderness,

gave them water and manna, and even a place to worship Him, they were still not satisfied and desired other things. The children of Israel were granted their desires, but they ended up needing to pay with their own lives.

Another good example of God giving people their own desires is found in 1 Samuel 8 when the children of Israel wanted a king over them just like all the other nations. *And [they] said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them –1 Samuel 8:5-7.* Oh Israel, ...*for he (God) gave them their own desire –Psalm 78:29.*

It sounds like the Lord is saying, "Let's let them have their own way and give them a king." However, later in the chapter He lists all the bad things that will come with having a king. The Lord also tells Samuel who will rule over the children of Israel. After their king was anointed, they needed to serve him and could no longer serve God only. Consider why God brought them out of Egypt in the first place. Wasn't it so they could serve the only true God?

Just like the children of Israel, we have seen God's wonderful works. If we have been born of God's Spirit, He led us out of our "Egypt"; He showed us the path of life; He brought us out of the miry clay; He set our feet on a solid rock. Still, we as humans tend to covet and long for something that we think is better. We ask God to give us wisdom and that He would provide for our needs, yet down deep inside we beg for God to give us our selfish desires.

We need to surrender every area of our life to God's control. God knows what is best for us, however, if we insist, He will give us according to our selfish desires.

Remember, this earth is not our home. The end is coming, which is what God has in mind. We don't know what is best for us, but God does. Let's have faith and change our desires for that which God wants us to fulfill in this life. *Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart –Psalms 37:4.* And, *Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it–Isaiah 58:14*



A Healthy Immune System

by Vincent “John” Waldron MD
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*I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well
–Psalm 139:14.*

We live in a world full of bacteria and viruses. It is estimated that there are 100 trillion bacteria in the average human body. This is a huge number and one that I can't wrap my mind around. Normally, these bacteria aren't toxic until they get out of balance or get to a place where they are not intended to be. God has made us in such a way that our bodies have immune capabilities that are amazing.

Antibody-making cells and T cells float around our blood streams like sentinels, waiting for foreign cells or toxins to appear. A simple activity, like brushing your teeth or getting a scratch on your arm, can release bacteria into your blood stream. If it wasn't for our God-given immune systems, those bacteria could attach to different tissues and cause serious infections.

It is important that we understand some about our immune system and think about ways in which we can help it function better.

In the Beginning

After He finished, ...God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good... –Genesis 1:31. This doesn't just mean that it looked beautiful, although it did. It also means at that point in time all of Creation was working together. There were no pathogenic bacteria and no harmful viruses. Adam and Eve were created perfectly and did not require antibiotics or probiotics to fight off infections.

Before the Fall, there was no need for an immune system the way we need it today. Most likely, the immune system of that era probably served more like a disposal system, getting rid of cells that needed to be cleaned up.

After the Fall, everything was different. Bacteria and viruses began to be “pathogenic” or disease-causing.

Components of Our Immune Systems

When people think of the immune system, they mostly

think of cells that make antibodies. These are a very important part of our bodies' defenses, but there are also many others.

a. *Skin...*

Our first line of defense against many infections is our skin. Having our body covered with an intact coating of skin with healthy bacteria on its surface can prevent unhealthy organisms from getting into the tissue underneath the skin and even into the blood stream.

I have seen plenty of severe infections that followed incidents during which the skin was broken. Anything from stepping on a nail to a dog bite can lead to infection.

b. *Lymphatic System...*

When we think about our circulation, the first thing that comes to mind is the blood system with veins, arteries, and the heart. There is another system, called the lymphatic system, that is charged with carrying infection-fighting blood cells throughout the body and getting rid of toxic materials.

There are little filtration areas along this system called lymph nodes that swell up when dealing with infections. Often when someone has an upper respiratory infection, they will notice that the lymph glands in their neck swell up. This is a sign that the immune system is doing what it is supposed to.

c. *Bone Marrow/Spleen...*

The bone marrow makes infection-fighting cells. Many of these cells are stored in the spleen which acts as a huge filter for the blood. When the body detects any type of infection, these infection-fighting cells are released into the blood stream and into the lymphatic system to fight off the bacteria or virus which is causing that infection.

Thus, people who are missing their spleen have an increased risk for certain types of infection.



d. *Immune Cells...*

The “soldiers” of our immune system are: white blood cells, B cells (which make antibodies), and T cells. These are the cells that respond to any invasion of our body.

e. *Complement System...*

This is a system that many people do not know as much about. This system includes the liver, which makes small proteins that help immune cells perform better and causes antibodies to be more effective. These proteins are floating around in an inactive state until there is a sign of infection, then certain enzymes activate them to be ready to help with an infection-fighting response.

Things that Damage our Immune Systems

There are a number of things that weaken our immune systems and make them less able to respond to infections. In fact, all of these things contribute to stunting our bodies’ defenses.

- a. A poor diet
- b. Bad sleep patterns
- c. Certain medications (particularly steroids)
- d. Poorly controlled diabetes (or any other debilitating illness)

Additionally, high levels of anxiety release stress hormones into the body that can lead to poor immunity.

Attempting to eliminate these things is a start, but we should also make certain to replace them with a healthy lifestyle. Many of the things that make our immune systems stronger are obvious, but that doesn’t mean we are always good at doing these things. We may have developed unhealthy habits or perhaps we were never taught certain healthy lifestyle choices.

Eat the Right Foods

There is no one specific food or juice we can consume that will push us towards a healthy ideal. Rather we need to have a mixture of healthy foods which we eat and unhealthy ones which we limit.

The first thing I think about when it comes to “the right foods,” is antioxidants. Antioxidants are chemicals that bind up damaging molecules in our bodies called “free radicals.” Too many free radicals can lead to all sorts of diseases, including diabetes and cancer. Of course, other parts of our bodies, such as our immune system, don’t function as well in this situation either.

Foods that are high in added nitrates, like cured meats, tend to greatly increase these free radicals and should be avoided.

Eating lots of fruits and vegetables really helps to naturally increase our vitamin levels (particularly Vitamin C). Eating healthy fats (those high in omega-3 fatty acids) and avoiding unhealthy ones (those high in saturated fat) probably also positively impact our ability to fight infection.

Get Adequate (Good) Sleep

Studies have looked at the risk of catching the common cold and found that people who slept less were more likely to catch colds. The cutoff point seemed to be around six hours for adults (it is probably more for teens and children).¹

This makes sense since our bodies heal the most when we are sleeping. If you are waking up feeling unrested, it is important to figure out why. Things like simply not sleeping long enough, poor sleep hygiene (such as going to sleep thinking about worries, or working right up until bedtime), and sleep apnea can all cause sleep that is not restorative to our bodies.

God made our bodies with a need to rest, and He made a day for that purpose. If nothing else, this is the message of the Sabbath Day (see Exodus 20:8-11).

Consider Probiotics

In the 1800s, men like Joseph Lister and Louis Pasteur pushed forward the germ theory of disease. They believed that bacteria (at that time they didn't yet know about viruses) were the causes behind many diseases. This led to Joseph Lister pioneering the sterilization of surgical instruments.

In the years since, we have concluded that not all bacteria are "pathogenic" or disease-causing. Many of the bacteria on our skin and in our digestive tract are good bacteria. These good bacteria aid with digestion and protect us from the pathogenic (or bad) bacteria moving in to cause us problems.

Probiotics are found in yogurt and kefir, plus many other foods. Probiotics can also be taken as supplements via capsules or drops.

One study gave 326 children probiotics or a placebo during the cold season. The children who were receiving the probiotics had significantly fewer respiratory illnesses and fevers during those six months.²

People who include these foods in their diet and take some probiotic supplements tend to be healthier and have stronger immune systems.

Cut Down on Sugar Intake

We know that obesity and uncontrolled diabetes increase the risk of infections, both minor and severe. It seems that when there is too much sugar floating around in the blood stream, it gives bad bacteria the nutrients they need to grow quickly, and it causes immune systems to not function as well.

When white blood cells are surrounded by lots of sugar, they are less able to perform "phagocytosis" (the process of swallowing) and they are less able to prevent the invasion of bad bacteria or viruses.³

We may have difficulty cutting all sugar out of our diet, but limiting it seems to make a big difference with regard to how well our bodies can fight off infection.

Exercise Regularly

It probably goes without saying but waiting until you feel like you have a cold coming on and then rushing out to run three miles is probably not going to be helpful. In fact, it could make you feel a lot worse as you deal with a body that is unused to exercise, which is also dealing with an infection.

The key here is moderation. Extreme high levels of activity, like that of performance athletes preparing for a big race or event, seem to increase the risk of infections. However, moderate levels of exercising 30 minutes per day for five days a week is good advice to follow so we can condition our bodies so we will have healthy hearts as well as other healthy systems to protect us from those unseen outside invaders.

Cut Down on Stress

"Dear God...

Grant me the [grace] to accept the things I cannot change,
[the] courage to change the things [that] I can,
and [the] wisdom to know the difference."

Chronic elevation of stress hormones is harmful for our bodies. Stress hormones increase blood pressure and pulse rate. They push up blood sugars and tend to increase inflammatory responses in our bodies.⁴

Basically, stress hormones do all of the necessary things within your body to prepare you if the situation should arise that you would need to run away from serious danger, such as a charging grizzly bear. However, this high of a level of stress hormones isn't particularly helpful when it comes to dealing with a child's health problem, or the family's financial difficulty.

Every one of us has dealt with worry at one time or another. Yet, living in a chronic state of worry is not healthy, nor is it a place where God wants to see His people living. From a Christian standpoint, our goal must be to give these concerns to God. *Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you -I Peter 5:7.* We don't need to live with anxiety and all of the negative changes it can inflict on our physical health.



Spend Time Outdoors

When people think of sunlight, they mainly seem to think about Vitamin D.

It is true that Vitamin D is produced when our skin is exposed to sunlight, but sun exposure actually does much more. For example, sunlight seems to get our immune cells functioning in top condition to fight infections. Basically, T cells move much faster and more effectively when they have exposure to sunlight.⁵ Also, sun exposure increases nitric oxide levels in our bodies. This helps dilate blood vessels, lower blood pressure, and is a heart healthy chemical.

As with all the things I have mentioned, moderation is the key. Overexposure in the hot sun can cause sun stroke, and too much ultraviolet light is damaging to our skin cells, which can lead to burns and even skin cancers.

Targeted Supplements

Supplements can be helpful to fill in the gaps in our diet or places where our bodies are simply not absorbing as much of something as they should.

Vitamin D is one that jumps to my mind as we know that low Vitamin D levels increase the risk of severe infections. Our bodies don't really know where the Vitamin D comes from. While it is probably best to get this from a combination of food and sun exposure, including supplements of Vitamin D may be helpful for older people or for anyone who has trouble achieving this.⁶

Zinc has been shown (short term) to reduce duration of colds. I would caution here that it isn't really meant to be taken every day, but more should be taken at the first symptom of an upper respiratory infection coming on. This isn't a miracle supplement and in studies it only reduced cold symptom duration by about one day.⁷

Vitamin C is another thing that many take when they feel colds coming on. Studies seem to indicate that it is well tolerated and effective.⁸ It is probably best to get most of your Vitamin C from your diet and only to introduce extra Vitamin C when you feel infection symptoms coming on.

There are many other supplements that people take; these are just three of the more common ones.

God made our bodies with multiple different systems. These systems heal injuries, maintain our body, and protect it from a world damaged by the introduction of sin at the Fall of man, in the Garden of Eden. We are indeed fearfully and wonderfully made. These systems work without our even thinking about them.

It is important that we are conscious of ways in which we can help, and not impede, these wonderfully designed cells and structures that prevent damaging organisms from entering our bodies and causing infection. It isn't that healthy living or being a child of God will prevent us from ever getting sick, but rather that making a conscious decision to follow the right path will improve our body's function. I believe that if we are healthy, it will make it easier for us to fulfil our mission—to reach the world around us with the Gospel message.

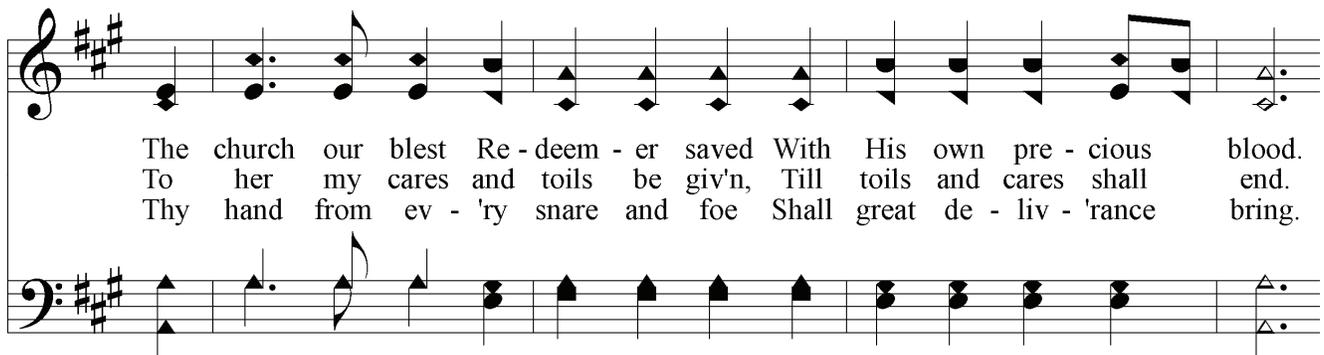
Endnotes:

- 1 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26118561/>
- 2 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19651563/>
- 3 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/9277089/>
- 4 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24798553/>
- 5 <https://gumc.georgetown.edu/news-release/sunlight-offers-surprise-benefit-it-energizes-infection-fighting-t-cells/>
- 6 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3756814/>
- 7 <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/common-cold/expert-answers/zinc-for-colds/faq-20057769#:~:text=Since%20then%2C%20research%20has%20turned,and%20symptoms%20of%20a%20cold.>
- 8 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6124957/#:~:text=The%20results%20indicated%20that%20regular,cold%20symptoms%20was%20also%20reduced.>

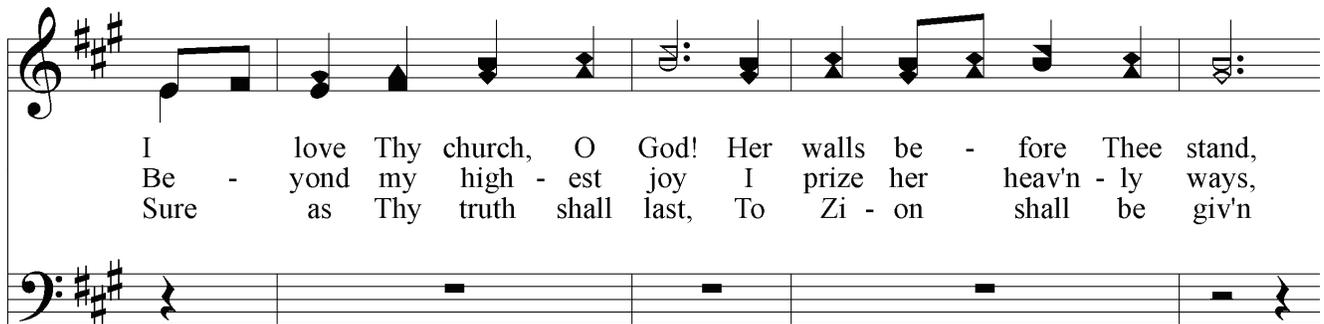
I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord



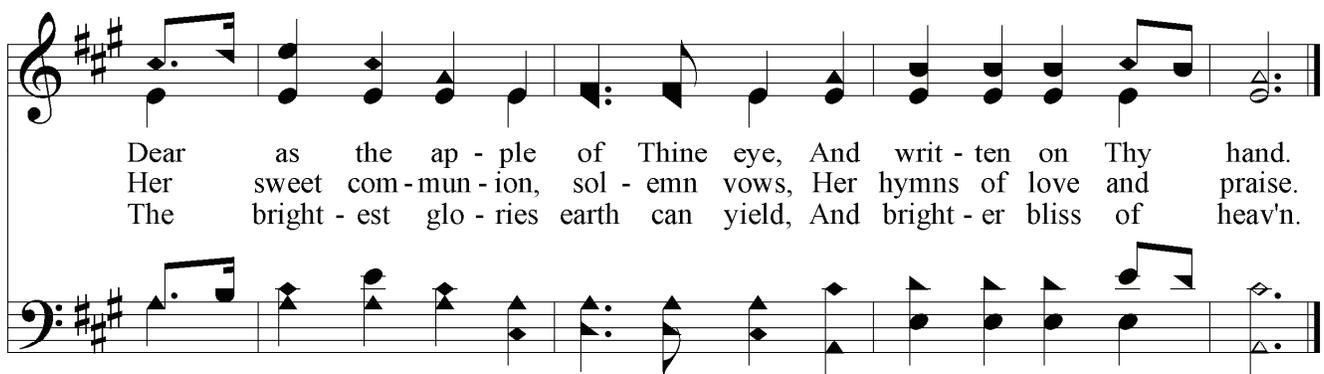
1. I love Thy king - dom, Lord, The house of Thine a - bode;
2. For her my tears shall fall, For her my prayers as - cend;
3. Je - sus, Thou Friend di - vine, Our Sav - ior and our King!



The church our blest Re - deem - er saved With His own pre - cious blood.
To her my cares and toils be giv'n, Till toils and cares shall end.
Thy hand from ev - ry snare and foe Shall great de - liv - rance bring.



I love Thy church, O God! Her walls be - fore Thee stand,
Be - yond my high - est joy I prize her heav'n - ly ways,
Sure as Thy truth shall last, To Zi - on shall be giv'n



Dear as the ap - ple of Thine eye, And writ - ten on Thy hand.
Her sweet com - mun - ion, sol - emn vows, Her hymns of love and praise.
The bright - est glo - ries earth can yield, And bright - er bliss of heav'n.



...continued from page 3

In our world today, there are many perspectives, all vying for our allegiance. Many are the “special interest” groups clamoring for our support of their cause. There’s race discrimination on both sides of the matter. There are voices crying “foul” in their effort to gain support and an advantage against their opponents regarding voting rights, honesty of the election outcomes, and desired legislative changes to the judicial system and the Constitution. While there have always been multiple sides to an issue, there has usually been an effort to work together for the good of all. However, in the last number of years it seems that numerous issues have become quite divisive to the point of polarizing the people into two camps. The balance of power in government has been swinging back and forth from the one side to the other. This polarization has been causing bitterness and anger to build, in some instances erupting into violence and vandalism. In other instances, it has caused normally level-headed individuals to lose their cool and make “knee-jerk” reactionary decisions which are totally out of character for them.

In the midst of all this chaos and confusion, what is our perspective as the church? Are we remaining steadfast in allowing God and His Word to mold and shape our perspective to be aligned with His perspective? Or have we allowed the pressure of one peer group or another to start pushing us off-course in our walk as strangers and pilgrims?

I have heard reports of some churches in other parts of the world being pushed by their local government to not meet for fellowship and group worship. There are families whose conscience chooses to obey the government in long-term mask wearing and social distancing. Individuals have become discouraged. Families have become isolated. And churches have struggled through one issue after another in their efforts to maintain peace among the brethren.

As I have interacted with people who are not regular church goers, or those who attend a “dying” church, an

“older” church, or a “small country” church, there are numerous things I have heard them testify regarding the churches of the conservative, Anabaptist persuasion. These people are awed by the way we help each other both on a regular basis and when tragedy strikes. They can’t comprehend the large size of our weddings and especially our funerals. They don’t understand how our children are mild-mannered and respectful of others.

Let’s take heed and use wisdom as we continue facing the challenges in the days to come. From my limited vantage point, I believe that long-term mask wearing and social distancing that is practiced at the expense of normal worship as we understand the Scriptures to teach, will eventually have a negative ripple effect on us as believers.

Many years ago, as I was involved in learning from the “counseling model”, it was spoken of as quite troubling and detrimental to interpersonal relationships IF someone had a “mask” on (figuratively). As I have evaluated and considered the long-term effect of a person having a “mask” on (literally), I believe it WILL cause as much and more detriment to interpersonal relationships. There is something about visiting with brothers and sisters of the faith when you can see their whole face. Without even realizing it, we read body language and facial expressions, which aids in understanding and conveying thoughts as we communicate with one another. Thus, it is my personal opinion that long-term mask wearing and social distancing by a local church body will eventually degrade the level of spiritual life and fervor to the point of someday that local body will no longer stand out from all the rest of the nominal Christians around them.

May God bless each one. May we not give up the spiritual fight. May we ever keep our eyes fixed on our Father, our Saviour, and our eternal home.

Curvin L Wenger







Pots

God the Potter is molding me.
What kind of vessel will I be:
To carry, to store, or for a drink?
A lamp, or a plate, or a kitchen sink?

I'm a little bit shallow, I admit,
For I'm focusing on me quite a bit.
But here is a thought,
I'm not the only pot.

About my life
are many others,
A husband, a daughter,
and some brothers.

The Potter's hand is on them, too,
Making each of us, something new.
Another pot gives me a bump,
And now I have a little lump.

Into another pot I smack,
It seems they now have a crack.
Back to the Potter's wheel we go,
Until His likeness, again does show.

If what I do, and what I say,
Changes the course of other's clay,
Then with great care, I must behave,
Lest other's pots become concave.

Useful pots are God's desire,
Ones that can withstand the fire.
It's not just me, and it's not just you;
God's working with other vessels too.

by Elizabeth Rust

This poem was inspired by the Scripture passage in Jeremiah 18:1-6.

The Heartbeat of
The Remnant

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Jesus said:

I am come a
light
into the world,
that whosoever
believeth
on me **should not**
abide in darkness.

John 12:46